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# Bridging the gap: Journalists' role orientation and role performance on Twitter

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## Abstract
*Combining a content analysis of 760 tweets and a survey of journalists who tweeted them, this study revisits the questioned assumption that journalists' conception of their roles manifests in their journalistic outputs. Studies that have tested this assumption instead found a gap between role orientation and performance, possibly explained by how journalistic outputs are organiz- ational products. Thus, this study focused on role performance as observed in journalists' individual posts on Twitter, a social media platform that has been normalized and now embedded in news routines. If tweets are personal outputs, they should bear the imprint of the journalists who posted them. The findings of this study lend support to this claim.*

## Keywords
*content analysis; journalistic role; role theory; survey; Twitter*

What affects what becomes news has long intrigued scholars. On one hand, news as a journalistic output occupies a crucial place in society, with the potential to shape public opinion (Schudson 2003). This makes it important to understand what factors influence news content. On the other hand, news construction is a complex, multi-layered process (Shoemaker and Reese 2014), so that pinpointing the reason it turns out the way it does can be challenging. What is common across different theories of news construction is the basic role of journalists: what they think news should be, what they like to write about, what their personal values are, and what they think is expected of them can affect how they do their work (White 1950; Gans 1979; Hanitzsch et al. 2010; Shoemaker and Reese 2014). One area that has caught scholarly attention is the study of journalistic roles, with the assumption that how journalists conceive of their roles manifests in their journalistic outputs (Donsbach 2008). Thus, from the study of journalistic role conceptions (Weaver and Wilhoit 1986), the study of roles in journalism has moved to examining role enactment (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013) and performance (Mellado 2015).

Others, however, question the assumption of a direct link between journalists' individual role conceptions and the roles that manifest in their output (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013; Mellado and Van Dalen 2014). News, at least traditionally, is an organizational output—with bits of pieces of information gathered by a reporter going into different levels of editing before they are assembled into news, making it challenging to isolate an individual journalist's imprint (Berkowitz 1990; Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013). But new communication technologies, now embedded in journalism processes, allow some degree of personalization not only in terms of news consumption but also news distribution. Specifically, social media platforms, such as Twitter, now allow journalists to directly communicate with their readers without going through traditional news construction processes (Molyneux 2015).

While many newsrooms operate organizational social media accounts that are also subject to traditional editing routines (Broersma and Graham 2012), individual journalists are also encouraged to maintain their personal accounts to engage with readers (Tandoc and Vos 2016). Individual journalists also use social media more interactively than their news organizations (Canter 2013). Indeed, many journalists using social media "are crossing the line between professional and personal and indeed see this as beneficial to their work as a journalist rather than detrimental" (Canter 2013, 492). They do not just promote links to articles they have written, but also "pass along a mix of opinion, humor, and personal branding" (Molyneux 2015, 932). Thus, unlike their news outputs, journalists' posts on their social media accounts bear their personal imprints. These outputs, then, might bear journalists' individual role conceptions.

This study tests this assumption, using a combination of research methods. First, journalists' role conceptions are examined through a survey. Second, their corresponding role performances on social media, in this case Twitter, are examined using content analysis. This study is done in the context of the Philippines, an Asian country with a vibrant press system matched by high levels of social media use.

## Literature review

There is already a well-established, if heavily contested, literature about what key tasks should be central to the practice of journalism. Conceptualized in relation to newsrooms across different places, times, and crucially, socio-political contexts, these works addressed the diverse ways in which the roles of journalists might be typologized. Initially marked by different role typologies and terminologies, the study of journalistic roles has started to take a more definite shape. From initial conceptualizations of a passive or active role (Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman 1972; Janowitz 1975), journalistic roles are now studied in terms of both orientations and performance (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). Generally, roles refer to "a composite of occupational tasks and purposes that is widely recognizable and has a stable and enduring form" (Christians et al. 2009, 119). In the journalism context, roles refer to "a set of normative and cognitive beliefs as well as real-world and perceived practices of journalists situated and understood within the institutional frame- work of journalism" (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017, 123). This definition, which serves as the theoretical framework for this current study, distinguishes between role orientation and role performance.

*Role orientation*

Some scholars have taken an abstract approach to conceptualizing the key roles of a journalist. For instance, it has been argued that these roles can be defined in relation to normative ideals, such as the social tasks that the public expects of journalists (Patterson 1995). Such a typology defines journalists as signallers who act as an early warning system for society, common carriers who act as channels of information between the government and the people, watchdogs who monitor institutions and issue warnings to the actors in politics and commerce, or public representatives who become spokespersons on behalf of public opinion (Patterson 1995). Taking a more grounded approach, other scholars have sought to conceptualize the key roles of a journalist in relation to the characteristics of specific news audiences (Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman 1972; Janowitz 1975). Within this approach, journalists should ideally act as an advocate in situations where many members of the audience cannot either recognize or pursue their own interests in society. The journalists' primary role then is to act on behalf of these audiences. In contrast, journalists should also ideally act as a gatekeeper in contexts where audience members are mature enough to be able to pursue their own needs. Here, journalists can select the news exclusively according to professional criteria, such as perceived news value. This is similar to Cohen's (1963) work that distinguished between the neutral and the participant journalist.

Since these initial works, various terminologies have been used to denote journalistic roles. Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) identified four distinct professional roles assumed by journalists, namely: disseminator, interpreter, adversarial, and populist mobilizer. Christians et al. (2009) came up with the following four media roles: monitorial, collaborative, facilitative, and radical. Hanitzsch (2011, 478) proposed four different professional milieus of journalists, or "different groups of journalists who share similar understandings of the social functions of journalism". These milieus, drawn from a survey of journalists in 18 countries, refer to populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent, and opportunist facilitator. The populist disseminator milieu is marked by a strong orientation to the audience, with journalists seeking to provide interesting information and attract a large audience. The detached watchdog milieu prioritizes a detached observer role, from which journalists articulate a critical attitude toward the power elite. The critical change agent also maintains a critical attitude toward the power elite, but unlike the detached watchdog, journalists in this milieu take a more involved and active stance. Finally, the opportunist facilitator milieu includes journalists who see their role as "constructive partners of the government" (Hanitzsch 2011, 486). Despite these variations, the tasks involved in these different typologies of roles are similar in nature, with most revolving around the provision of information, surveillance, advice, and participation in social life (Christians et al. 2009; Hanitzsch and Vos 2016).

Studies that problematized what roles journalists identify with have referred to role conceptions (Cassidy 2005; van Dalen, de Vreese, and Albæk 2012; Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013), perceptions (Hanitzsch 2007; Donsbach 2008), and orientations (Hanusch and Tandoc 2017). In proposing a classification of journalistic roles, Hanitzsch and Vos (2017, 123) classified these different terms into role orientations, defined as "discursive constructions of the institutional values, attitudes, and beliefs with regards to the position of journalism in society and, consequently, to

the communicative ideals journalists are embracing in their work". Role orientations can be further classified into normative roles and cognitive roles. While normative roles "indicate what is generally desirable to think or do in a given context", cognitive roles refer to "the institutional values, attitudes, and beliefs individual journalists embrace as a result of their socialization" (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017, 124–125).

Hanitzsch and Vos (2017) pointed out that it is important to refer to the institutional roles of journalists, not just their professional roles, in order to avoid prematurely limiting journalism to an occupational engagement. This distinction is crucial given the myriad of digital communication technologies currently available in today's increasingly technological society. Social media, in particular, function as a platform for journalists to communicate to the public both their professional and personal opinions and experiences (Molyneux 2015; Tandoc and Vos 2016). Given these online platforms, the scope of journalistic roles becomes even wider as journalists reach a broader and more diverse audience with both traditional and non-traditional outputs.

*Role performance*

Journalistic role performance can be defined as the process wherein journalists materialize what they consider to be their appropriate professional roles into their practice and, consequently, into the news materials they produce (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). An important distinction to make here is between narrated role performance, which is about how journalists narrate or articulate their practice of these roles, and practised role performance, which is about how they perform their practice within specific institutional contexts (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). Thus, practised roles are observed based on journalistic outputs, while narrated roles are based on what journalists say they do. It is often the case that journalists attempt to align their narration with their practice of their role performance, but they are not always successful in doing so (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017).

Role enactment is defined as "the process by which cognitive roles of journalists—and normative roles by extension—translate into action" (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017, 126). Studies that have investigated role enactment focused on practised performance by com- paring role orientations measured through surveys with content analysis of the articles from the surveyed journalists (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013; Mellado and Van Dalen 2014). To examine whether journalists' role conceptions are consistent with the journalistic work they craft, Mellado (2015) proposed looking at three dimensions of journalistic outputs: the presence of the journalistic voice, which is about how a piece takes either an active or passive stance; power relations, which is about how a piece takes either a watchdog or loyal-facilitator stance to those in power; and audience approach, which is about how a piece takes either a public service or commercial stance to audiences. These dimensions have been tested and validated in the context of role performance in a cross-national study that involved the analysis of news articles from 19 countries (Mellado et al. 2017).

However, the assumption that role orientations manifest in performance has been questioned. Indeed, studies have found a gap between what roles journalists report they embrace and what roles manifest in their news outputs (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013; Mellado and Van Dalen 2014). However, a more nuanced approach to understanding this, one that situates news work within an organizational context, is to

move beyond investigating the gap between role orientation and performance and explore the linkages between what journalists believe and what they actually, or are able to, do. Indeed, practised roles were found to be better predicted by perceived routine-level influences than by individual role orientations (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013). The various news content that journalists create are imbricated in broader routines in the newsroom and in the field of journalism. However, social media platforms now allow journalists to jump over those routines to directly communicate with the audience (Molyneux 2015). Therefore, finding a direct link between role orientation and role performance might be better suited to journalism as practised on social media.

*Journalists and social media*

In the beginning, journalists considered social media as mere extensions of their websites, using these platforms only to promote their stories (Lariscy et al. 2009). But since then social media use has become an important routine in newsrooms (Rogstad 2014). Not only do journalists now use social media to interact with news audiences (Said-Hung et al. 2014), but they also use it as a news source (Paulussen and Harder 2014) and as a platform for personal commentary (Canter 2013). For example, Twitter provided an avenue for journalists to challenge the norm of objectivity by tweeting their personal views on particular issues (Molyneux 2015).

In explaining journalists' tweets that include both opinion and humour—which are often absent in traditional news articles—Molyneux (2015, 932) referred to "journalists' gatekeeping decisions" on Twitter as seemingly "influenced more by personal tastes and interests than by organizational or institutional norms". This can be explained by the affordances of Twitter. While news organizations maintain organizational accounts controlled by designated social media editors (Tandoc and Vos 2016), many individual journalists also maintain their personal accounts. It is in these personal accounts where the line between a journalist's organizational identity blends with personal identity as decisions on what to post becomes more personal than organizational. It is in this space where this current study attempts to examine the impact of individual role orientations.

Technologies matter insofar as they provide the "functional and relational aspects which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object" (Hutchby 2001, 447). Indeed, Twitter does not only provide a space for journalists to quickly and easily convey their personal thoughts, even background information about their work or stories, in 140-characters or less, but through various affordances, it also allows journalists to repeat or even endorse other posts (via the retweet function), engage in conversations (via the reply function), and join ongoing conversations (via the hashtag function). A survey of journalists in the United States found that many journalists use Twitter for branding, which includes posting tweets related to public affairs while promoting their own work or that of their colleagues in the newsroom in the process (Molyneux, Holton, and Lewis 2017). During unexpected events, such as disasters, journalists have also been documented to use Twitter to quickly disseminate information, such as during the destructive Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (Tandoc and Takahashi 2016). Therefore, journalists have used Twitter not only for personal reasons but also for professional, even journalistic, uses. As news consumption increasingly moves to social media platforms (Hermida et al. 2012;

Lee and Ma 2012; Antunovic, Parsons, and Cooke 2016), where news audiences are bound to see not just news organizations' tweets and links to news articles but also posts from individual journalists, examining journalistic role performance on social media has become not only timely and relevant, but also particularly important.

*Synthesis*

Initial attempts to match journalists' role orientations and their role performances based on their news outputs have found a gap instead (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013; Mellado and Van Dalen 2014). This can be explained by the nature of news as an output—it is often a product of multiple layers of editing done by more than one individual. Therefore, as an organizational output, a news article might not bear the imprint of a single journalist, considering that news content is shaped by multiple levels of influences (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). But social media platforms, which are now embedded in news routines and have significantly altered news consumption, provide journalists a public space that is often just their own, where they can interact directly with their audiences outside the purview of their editors. Therefore, it is possible that journalists' tweets, more than their news outputs, will bear the imprint of their individual role orientations.

Based on the professional milieus of journalists developed by Hanitzsch (2011), which identified four social functions (or in this study's context, role orientations) of journalists— populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent, and opportunist facilitator—this study tests the following hypotheses:

> H1: A populist disseminator orientation will lead to a populist disseminator performance based on one's tweets.
>
> H2: A detached watchdog orientation will lead to a detached watchdog performance based on one's tweets.
>
> H3: A critical change agent orientation will lead to a critical change agent performance based on one's tweets.
>
> H4: An opportunist facilitator orientation will lead to an opportunist facilitator perform- ance based on one's tweets.

## Method

This study is based on an online survey of journalists in the Philippines and a subsequent content analysis of the journalists' tweets. Consistent with previous studies that compared role orientations and role performances (e.g. Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013), this study used the survey method to measure journalists' role orientations, while the content analysis was conducted to observe their role performances.

*The Philippines*

The Philippines is home to a vibrant press system that is marked by contradictions (Tandoc and Skoric 2010). It claims to be among the freest press systems in the world, with legal protections to press freedom closely patterned after that of the United

States. And yet, it has been consistently ranked as among the most dangerous countries for jour- nalists (Rosales 2006). The deadliest single attack on journalists anywhere in the world was recorded in southern Philippines, when 32 local journalists covering the convoy of a political candidate were gunned down (Rauhala 2014). While most of the journalists based in the country's political and financial capital are relatively safer from such violent attacks than their local counterparts, many of them also complain of low pay (Tandoc 2017).

The Philippines also ranks high in social media activity, with an estimated 40 million active social media users, making the Philippines among the countries with the highest Facebook penetration rates in the world (Revesencio 2015). A television event in the Philippines holds the record for the most number of tweets, drawing 41 million tweets in 1 day, displacing the previous Twitter record that was set when Germany defeated Brazil in the 2014 Fifa World Cup (Chen 2015). News organizations and even individual journalists are active on social media. But such widespread social media use has also made fake news a serious problem in the Philippines (Bradshaw and Howard 2017).

*Sampling*

The study took a two-stage sampling procedure. The first stage involved conducting a survey among journalists in the Philippines, part of the Worlds of Journalism Survey project that involves surveys of journalists in 67 countries. In the absence of a media directory that lists all news organizations and journalists in the Philippines, the study used a multi-stage sampling technique. First, two graduate students compiled a list of all news organizations in the country per region. Second, a random sample of news organizations was drawn from the list based on the distribution of news organizations based on medium and region. Third, the list and contact details of journalists from each of the randomly selected news organizations were requested. Finally, based on these contact lists, a random sample of journalists (excluding photojournalists) were invited to take the survey. Of the 672 emails sent, 349 completed the survey, amounting to a completion rate of 52 per cent.

The second stage involved collecting tweets for the content analysis. This involved searching for the Twitter accounts of the journalists who were invited to participate in the survey. Only public and active accounts were included in the study. For each account, we collected 10 randomly selected tweets published on 30 June 2016. This was the inauguration day of then newly elected President Rodrigo Duterte. The date was purposely selected because it was the day of an important news event, and we wanted to see how journalists would use their personal Twitter accounts. If an account had less than 10 tweets on that day, the account was excluded from analysis. This left the study with 76 journalists with public and active Twitter accounts and who have participated in the survey, for a total of 760 tweets analysed. Several steps were taken to ensure the confidential nature of the study. Separate teams worked on the survey and the content analysis. Only the principal investigator had access to both datasets. The actual tweets were also expunged after the coding process and only the numeric codes were added to the survey dataset, which had been anonymized.

The results of the content analysis were aggregated per journalist. The average age of the journalists in the sample was 34.62 years (SD = 8.80). Some 55 per cent were

female. In terms of organizational rank, some 72 per cent were rank-and-file (e.g. reporters), 24 per cent were junior managers (e.g. desk editor), and 4 per cent were senior managers (e.g. editor-in-chief). In terms of medium, some 32 per cent worked for newspapers, 21 per cent for television, 11 per cent for radio, 20 per cent for online outlets of traditional media organizations, and 17 per cent for online-only outlets.

*Survey*

The Worlds of Journalism Study, which involved more than 27,500 journalists, used a standardized questionnaire across the countries. The survey data used in this study come from the online survey conducted in the Philippines in May to December 2015. Included in the questionnaire are statements that measure journalistic role orientations. The journalists were asked to indicate using a 5-point scale how important they perceive each item to be in their work. Based on a previous study using the same set of statements (Hanitzsch 2011), the items were clustered into the following journalistic role orientations, mindful of the need to subsequently match them with the role performance indicators:

*Populist disseminator.* This scale is based on three items: providing entertainment and relaxation; providing the kind of news that attracts the largest audience; and providing advice, orientation, and direction for daily life. This scale is reliable, Cronbach's alpha = .68.

*Detached watchdog.* This scale is based on three items: monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders; monitoring and scrutinizing business; and providing information people need to make political decisions. This scale is also reliable, Cronbach's alpha = .83.

*Critical change agent.* This scale is based on four items: advocating for social change; influencing public opinion; setting the political agenda; and motivating people to participate in political activity. This scale is reliable, Cronbach's alpha = .70, after a fifth item was excluded (be an adversary of the government).

*Opportunist facilitator.* This scale is based on two items: supporting government policy and conveying a positive image of political leadership. This scale is reliable, Cronbach's alpha = .78, after a third item was excluded (supporting national development).

*Content analysis*

To match role orientations with role performance, the collected tweets were analysed based on a number of categories. A coding manual was drafted based on the role orientation measures and the role performance indicators proposed by Mellado (2015). Two of the researchers underwent training, and actual coding started as soon as intercoder reliability scores were found to be acceptable, based on percentage agreement. Each tweet was coded for the presence or absence of each of these indicators. Then each journalist got an average for each indicator based on 10 tweets. The indicators were then grouped into role performances that matched the role orientations measured in the survey.

*Populist disseminator.* This scale is based on three items: provides entertainment; provides advice, orientation, or direction for daily life; and includes humour. Since the coding used nominal measures, percentage agreement was calculated for intercoder reliability. These items showed high intercoder agreement, averaging 93 per cent across the three items.

*Detached watchdog.* This scale is based on two items: provides information people need to know to make political decisions and includes personal opinion (reversed). These two items also showed high intercoder agreement, averaging 89.5 per cent.

*Critical change agent.* This scale is based on four items: advocating for social change; motivating people to participate in political activity; criticizing the government; and seeking inputs from others. These four items also showed high intercoder agreement, also averaging 89.5 per cent. While monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders was an item in the detached watchdog orientation, criticizing the government has been considered as a manifestation of a critical change agent role (Hanitzsch 2011; Mellado 2015). The difference is that openly criticizing the government is an active stance, compared with keeping an eye on potentially irregular transactions in the government. Thus, while criticizing the government is also observable through content analysis (i.e. through the use of negative terms when referring to the government), monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders can only be inferred based on other elements in the output (i.e. an article's topic).

*Opportunist facilitator.* This scale is based on two items: supporting government policy and conveying a positive image of political leadership. These two items also showed high intercoder agreement, averaging 97.4 per cent.

*Results*

This study used regression analysis to test the effects of role orientations on role performances on Twitter, while controlling for the effects of demographic factors, including age, gender, salary, and the reach of one's organization (whether the organization is local, regional, national, or transnational). Since the goal of the study is not just to replicate an earlier study in the context of social media (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013) but also to move beyond investigating the gap between orientation and performance and actually explore the link between what journalists believe and what they actually do or are able to do, this current study used regression analysis to predict role performances based on role orientations.

In terms of role orientations, the survey showed that the detached watchdog orientation was the highest ranked orientation (M = 4.26, SD = 0.78) while the opportunist facilitator orientation was ranked the lowest (M = 2.37, SD = 0.89). The survey used a 5-point scale, where 5 means very important.

In terms of role performance, the detached watchdog performance was most common (M = 0.32, SD = 0.11) while the critical change agent orientation was the least common (M = .01, SD = 0.02). The presence or absence of each item was averaged across 10 tweets per journalist, so the maximum score per role orientation is 1 (i.e. all items referring to a particular role is present in all 10 tweets). Table 1 presents the descriptives.

H1 predicted that populist disseminator orientation would predict its performance on Twitter. The analysis found one role orientation to be significantly predicting the performance of populist disseminator role—but it was not the populist disseminator orientation. Instead, the strongest predictor—albeit a negative one—was the detached watchdog orientation, β=−.37, t=−2.31, p<.05. The more a journalist conceives of a detached watchdog orientation, the less that journalist engages in populist disseminator performance. Therefore, H1 is not supported (see Table 2). Salary was found to be a positive predictor, β = .30, t = 1.99, p < .05. Those who earn a lot from journalism tend to use their personal Twitter accounts more to attract audiences. These two variables predict 5 per cent of the variance in populist disseminator performance.

H2 predicted that the detached watchdog orientation would predict its performance on one's personal Twitter account. H2 is supported: Detached watchdog orientation was the strongest predictor of detached watchdog performance on Twitter, β = .42, t = 2.63, p < .05. Interestingly, the critical change agent orientation was a negative predictor, β = −.38, t = −2.29, p < .05 (see Table 2). It seems like journalists navigate the detached watchdog and the critical change agent orientations differently. Indeed, while the detached watchdog orientation can be argued to be a passive role, the critical change agent orientation sees the role of a journalist to be active. These two variables account for 4 per cent of the variance in detached watchdog performance.

**TABLE 1**
Role orientation and performance

| | Orientation[a] | Performance[b] |
|---|---|---|
| Populist disseminator | 3.23 | 0.06 |
| Detached watchdog | 4.26 | 0.32 |
| Critical change agent | 3.92 | 0.01 |
| Opportunist facilitator | 2.37 | 0.08 |

Note. [a]Out of a maximum score of 5; [b]Out of a maximum score of 1.

**TABLE 2**
Predicting role performances on Twitter

| | Populist disseminator[P] | | Detached watchdog[P] | | Critical change agent[P] | | Opportunist facilitator[P] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *β* | *t* | *β* | *t* | *β* | *t* | *β* | *t* |
| Age | −.27 | −1.82 | −.21 | −1.37 | .39 | 2.72* | −.02 | −.13 |
| Gender | .01 | .04 | −.01 | −.05 | −.06 | −.45 | −.09 | −.65 |
| Salary | .30 | 1.99[a] | −.06 | −.42 | −.34 | −2.31[a] | −.03 | −.21 |
| Organizational reach | .10 | .70 | .07 | .51 | −.02 | −.14 | −.12 | −.84 |
| Populist disseminator[O] | .01 | .07 | .03 | .22 | −.25 | −1.87[b] | −.07 | −.49 |
| Detached watchdog[O] | −.37 | −2.31[a] | .42 | 2.63[a] | −.08 | −.51 | .16 | .94 |
| Critical change agent[O] | .10 | .59 | −.38 | −2.29[a] | .30 | 1.91[b] | .06 | .35 |
| Opportunist facilitator[O] | .00 | .03 | .14 | .88 | .01 | .05 | −.02 | −.14 |
| Adjusted $r^2$ | .05 | | .04 | | .12 | | .00 | |

*Note*: [a]$p < .05$; [b]$p < .07$; [P]Role performance; [O]Role orientation.

H3 predicted that the critical change agent orientation would predict its subsequent performance on Twitter. H3 is also supported, β = .30, t = 1.91, p < .07 (see Table 2).

Interestingly, the populist disseminator orientation was a negative predictor, $\beta = -.25$, $t = -1.87$, $p < .07$. This also points to a nuanced difference between how journalists navigate the critical change agent and the populist disseminator role orientations. Age was a positive predictor, $\beta=.39$, $t=2.72$, $p<.05$, while salary was a negative predictor, $\beta=-.34$, $t= -2.31$, $p < .05$. Older journalists, and those who do not earn a lot, tend to be more critical of the power elite in their personal Twitter accounts.

Finally, H4 predicted that the opportunist facilitator orientation would predict its subsequent performance on Twitter. However, the results showed this was not the case, $\beta = -.02$, $t = -.14$, $p < .05$. H4 is not supported (see Table 2).

## Discussion

This study sought to contribute to research on journalistic roles by revisiting the questioned assumption that journalists' conception of their roles manifests in their journal- istic outputs (Donsbach 2008). This is a process of role enactment, or when journalists enact their cognitive roles, which then manifests in their practised roles (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). However, studies that have tested this assumption instead found a mismatch between role orientation and performance, possibly explained by how journalistic outputs, at least in the traditional sense, are organizational products (Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013; Mellado and Van Dalen 2014). Therefore, this study focused on role performance as observed in journalists' individual posts on Twitter, a social media platform that has been normalized and now embedded in news routines. If tweets are personal outputs, they should bear the imprint—and in this case the individual cognitive role orientation—of the journalists who posted them.

The findings of this study lend support to this claim. For at least two roles, the orientation as measured in the survey predicted its subsequent performance as observed through content analysis. Detached watchdog and critical change agent orientations predicted their subsequent performance. While populist disseminator orientation did not predict its subsequent performance, detached watchdog orientation was a significant and negative predictor, highlighting the contrast between the two roles. Similarly, critical change agent orientation also negatively predicted the performance of detached watchdog role, highlighting how the critical change agent role refers to an active role while the detached watchdog clearly refers to a more passive role. Finally, populist disseminator orientation was a negative predictor of critical change agent performance, again demonstrating the difference between the two roles.

These findings point to three important things. First, it affirms the understanding of traditional news as an organizational output that passes through a complex gatekeeping process marked by different layers of influences (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). Therefore, compared to tweets, they seldom bear the imprint of an individual journalist. This study's findings, understood along the findings of previous studies that focused on analysing news outputs, demonstrate the impact of news construction processes—of how different layers of influences and various actors co-construct the news—that an individual's role orientation cannot solely account for what ends up on the news output. Therefore, when this study focused on analysing individual tweets from journalists, it focused on individual outputs that did not go through the traditional

news construction process. This can be seen in how the tweets still manifested the individual role orientations of the respective journalists who tweeted them.

Second, the findings also point to the nature of journalists' tweets as individual outputs and of Twitter as a way for journalists to jump the gates, so to speak. This is particularly important, considering how more and more people rely on social media platforms such as Twitter for their daily news supply. In a period when trust in news organizations around the world seems to be declining, journalists engaging with their audiences on social media outside the purview of their organizations might present a more credible alternative that sees journalism as practised by individuals rather than by big organizations. The looming question is if journalists' personal social media posts manifest their individual role orientations, are their tweets more trustworthy than their news outputs?

Finally, the findings also demonstrate the value of understanding role orientations. While role orientations are not that influential in shaping organizational outputs such as news, they seem to be influential in shaping individual outputs such as journalists' tweets. This is important, considering the changing relationship between journalists and news audiences. This also reminds us of the crucial role that the individual journalist plays in news construction—be it in terms of traditional outputs or emerging news formats in new platforms. That role does not really disappear in traditional news construction processes—it possibly just interacts, merges, boosts, or lessens the impact of other factors shaping news content. Absent these other factors, roles manifest their effect on social media outputs, such as tweets. The findings also lend support to Hanitzsch and Vos' (2017) theoretical framework in studying journalistic roles, as this study tested the effect of cognitive roles on practised performance—at least in the context of Twitter.

In continuing the conversation around journalistic roles, this study's findings have to be understood in the context of several limitations. First, role orientation was measured using an online survey, and thus the data from the survey carry with them the limitations of the survey method at getting respondents to accurately and willingly recall and assess their perceptions and experiences. Second, our content analysis categories were limited to the operationalization of the role typology we chose to adapt, constrained by the items we asked in the survey. While we did our best to incorporate as many elements as we could from studies that proposed ways to measure role performance (e.g. Mellado 2015), we had to focus on our hypotheses and therefore did our best to match the survey and the content analysis items, potentially at the expense of other textual indicators of different role performances. These items measuring role performance were also originally developed for analysing traditional news outputs and while our current study shows their utility in analysing Twitter posts by journalists, it is also important to note that Twitter's affordances potentially allow non-traditional journalistic behaviour. Therefore, future studies should explore what role performances are possible, or already being enacted by journalists, on non-traditional platforms for news, such as social media. Third, while we focused on individual outputs, we only studied content on Twitter, when there are other social media platforms where journalists can jump the gates of their respective news organizations. We also focused on tweets around one newsworthy event. While this was on purpose, with the assumption that journalistic roles might be more salient when journalists encounter newsworthy events or issues, future studies can examine a

random collection of social media posts to analyse role performance. Fourth, we used regression analysis to predict role performance based on role orientation. While this was largely because of our attempt to replicate an earlier study but in the context of social media, future studies can adopt other types of analysis to investigate the link between what journalists believe and what manifests in their outputs. For example, hierarchical linear modelling allows testing a nested structure. In this case, news outputs are nested within particular journalists who wrote them, who are then nested within their respective news organizations. Finally, this study was conducted in the Philippines, and the relationship between role orientation and performance in the context of individual outputs might be different in another media context. Still, despite these limitations, we hope this study can contribute to a better understanding of journalistic roles, especially at a time when being a journalist—and the acts that come with it—is no longer confined within the gates of traditional platforms or organizations.

## Disclosure statement

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