



A reality check: How journalists' role perceptions impact their implementation of the objectivity norm

Journalism
14(1) 22–42

© The Author(s) 2013

Reprints and permission: sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1464884912442286

jou.sagepub.com



Morten Skovsgaard

University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Erik Albæk

University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Peter Bro

University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Claes de Vreese

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Abstract

Objectivity is a cornerstone in the journalistic profession. There is a widespread acknowledgement that a one-to-one representation of reality is not possible, and thus the norm must be interpreted by journalists in their daily work. Based on a journalist survey among Danish journalists (N = 2008) we find that journalists' role perceptions have substantial explanatory power in regard to how journalists implement the objectivity norm. The objectivity norm pervades the news production process by guiding journalists when they select, gather, and present the news, and the results give a hint about how journalistic role perceptions might affect the production process through the objectivity norm and subsequently also the news content.

Corresponding author:

Morten Skovsgaard, Centre for Journalism, University of Southern Denmark, Campusvej 55, DK-5230 Odense M, Denmark

Email: skh@sam.sdu.dk

Keywords

journalism, journalists, objectivity, professionalism, public service, role perceptions

Introduction

Objectivity has been called the defining norm of modern journalism (Patterson, 1998: 28) and the key legitimating professional ethics of liberal journalism (McNair, 1998: 65). Adherence to objectivity is a highly treasured feature of journalism's professional self image (e.g. Deuze, 2005; Schudson, 1978, 2001; Tuchmann, 1972; Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005). The objectivity norm pervades news production by guiding journalists when they select, collect, and present the news. At the same time, objectivity is an ambiguous concept that needs to be implemented by journalists in their work when decisions have to be made on a daily basis and within the pressures of frequent deadlines.

Numerous scholars have tried to clarify how journalists handle and implement the objectivity norm and by what means they implement the abstract and ambiguous norm (see e.g. Chalaby, 1998; McNair, 1998; McQuail, 2005; Tuchman, 1972; Westerståhl, 1983). But the question of how different journalists might implement the norm differently has received surprisingly little scholarly attention, even though this variation can be expected to generate important variation in news content due to the pervasive role of objectivity in the news production. Though Donsbach and Klett (1993) have shown variation in the way journalists implement the objectivity norm in different countries and also across journalists of different age and political conviction, there is a lack of understanding of how the norm is interpreted and implemented in journalistic work. This article argues that objectivity is a widely shared professional norm among journalists, but when digging a bit deeper it shows that there is substantial variation in the way journalists perceive and implement the norm. The article also argues that it is important to include other professional values when explaining variation in the way journalists implement the ambiguous objectivity norm, since the journalistic ideology is a system with several different values that interact and to some degree might also contradict each other (Deuze, 2005).

The claim is that the role that journalists perceive themselves to have in society can explain a part of their perception and implementation of the objectivity norm. Some role perceptions such as the watchdog and the public mobilizer roles have been claimed to contradict the objectivity norm (e.g. Glasser, 1984; see also Ryan, 2001 for an elaboration), but this has not been backed by empirical evidence. This makes it interesting to study how journalists' role perceptions affect their perceived importance of objectivity and their implementation of the norm in order for them to create a coherent interpretation of the professional journalistic ideology. This link has not been studied before even though it has two clear benefits.

First, it will contribute to a better understanding of what causes variation in journalists' implementation of the objectivity norm, and, second, it will contribute to a better understanding of how journalists' public service notion and role perceptions impact other professional norms and in the end also the journalistic product.

Until now the role perceptions have been studied extensively, but mostly as dependent variables (see e.g. Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Weaver and Wu, 1998; Weaver et al., 2007;

Zhu et al., 1997). As Weischenberg et al. (2006: 98) write, 'However, the value of journalists' self-descriptions, self-perceptions and intentions is disputed within journalism research. In particular, their significance for journalists' daily work is not obvious.' By linking role perceptions to the implementation of objectivity the significance of journalists' role perceptions can prove more obvious and the 'so what' question in connection to the role perceptions, which Weischenberg et al. refer to, can be answered.

The concept of objectivity

Journalists provide people with accounts of the part of the world which they most often do not directly experience themselves. For these accounts to be useful to receivers they must feel that they can trust this 'second-hand' information to be reliable and valid descriptions of reality (Donsbach and Klett, 1993: 53). Or as McNair (1998: 65) puts it: 'Journalism is presented to its audience as a truthful discourse about the real world and it must command legitimacy on these terms or it is without value in the cultural marketplace.'

The objectivity norm has been *the* means employed by journalists to convince receivers that they produce reliable and valid descriptions of reality. This legitimating function has made objectivity a beacon which guides the work journalists do – when they select, collect, and present the news. This does not mean that the objectivity norm is indisputable, far from it. It has created intense debate and controversy both inside and outside journalism.

The attack on the objectivity norm is triple flanked. On one flank the raid is not so much aimed at the objectivity norm itself but at the failure of journalists to meet it's requirements. This has resulted in a massive debate about bias in the media. Some claim that media content is politically biased due to the political beliefs of individual journalists (see e.g. Patterson and Donsbach, 1996), while others argue that journalists are constrained by news organizations and that media content is instead politically biased due to the political standpoints and beliefs of the news organizations (see e.g. Altschull, 1995). Accordingly, it has been claimed that media content is biased in a liberal direction because of journalists' personal political beliefs and biased in a conservative direction because news organizations most often are right-of-centre business corporations (for an overview see D'Alessio and Allen, 2000).

The raid from the second flank is more fundamental. It follows from the challenge and rejection of the positivistic notion of the ability to describe reality as it is, which has been widespread within the philosophy of science (Donsbach and Klett, 1993: 53). Critics on this flank write off objectivity as an illusion since the news is a construction of reality rather than a description of reality, and they denounce the notion of separating facts values (e.g. Merrill, 1984). Scholars point out that the news selection results in a structural bias, which reinforces the existing order of society by favouring legitimate institutional sources and excluding outsiders and radical views (e.g. Gans, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). This perspective denounces the possibility of objectivity but to some extent also contains an underlying normative critique of the objectivity norm as insufficient.

On this point it joins forces with the critics on the third flank of attack who take an explicit normative starting point. In their opinion, the objectivity norm is undesirable

when it leads to detached and disinterested journalists who take no moral stand to improve the society they are supposed to serve (e.g. Glasser, 1984; Stoker, 1995). The public journalism movement that rose in the 1990s builds on the notion that the interpretation of the objectivity norm as one of detachment is inadequate. To sustain a public service notion, the detachment following from the objectivity norm should be replaced by engagement in improvement of public life and a commitment to engage citizens and solve societal problems (e.g. Glasser, 1999; Merritt, 1995; Voakes, 1999).

On the one hand, the objectivity norm holds its ground in the face of severe criticism. On the other hand, journalists have largely acknowledged that work, which for a large part consists of selecting and organizing information in a narrative, cannot be objective in the sense of a one-to-one representation of reality. This has resulted in a retreat from the epistemological battleground; instead objectivity has been exchanged for, for example, fairness, accuracy, balance, or transparency (e.g. Reese, 1990a: 393). It is clear that the concept of objectivity is so broad that journalists need to translate it into a daily practice.

Four dimensions of objectivity

Scholars have tried to clarify which aspects of objectivity journalists turn to in order to implement the norm. When objectivity as a journalistic norm is conceptualized by scholars it becomes clear that it functions as both a moral ideal and a pragmatic and practical tool. The moral ideal is connected to the notion of value-free journalism produced by the totally detached journalists. But objectivity can also be viewed as a practical tool or ‘a strategic ritual’ (Tuchman, 1972), with the emphasis on balancing accounts and relying on facts to tell the story. This notion is typically emphasized in the face of the critique that objectivity understood as value-free detachment is not possible to achieve for any human being to achieve. The four aspects of objectivity are accentuated here with inspiration from a study from Donsbach and Klett (1993).

No subjectivity: One aspect of objectivity often repeated is that journalists reporting the news should be detached observers of the object they report about. This means that journalists should not allow their own opinions to affect the presentation of the reported (e.g. Chalaby, 1998: 130–133; McNair, 1998: 68; McQuail, 2005: 200; Westerstähl, 1983). This idea is also reflected in the classic division of news reporting and opinion pieces in newspapers, which likewise indicates that news reporting is not affected by subjective beliefs or opinions.

Balance: Another important aspect, which is often accentuated especially in connection to claims of media bias, is the balancing of accounts. According to this idea, the journalist should not be a referee and judge one account of reality to be better than another. One way of avoiding this position is to balance the conflicting views in the journalistic account and leave the judgment to the receiver (e.g. Chalaby, 1998; McNair, 1998; McQuail, 2005; Tuchman, 1972). Balance also requires the journalist to critically challenge and question the different accounts of reality coming from the sources on equal terms (Ryan, 2001).

Hard facts: Objectivity is also connected to the notions of accuracy and factuality (e.g. Chalaby, 1998; McQuail, 2005; Westerstähl, 1983). This implies that there is an objective reality, and that it is possible to move beyond sources’ different presentations

and depictions of that reality and report the facts of that reality precisely and accurately (Donsbach and Klett, 1993; McNair, 1998; Tuchman, 1972).

Value judgments: Objectivity has been criticized for leading to detachment. This has been challenged both from the public journalism movement and from scholars emphasizing that value judgments are unavoidable when investigative journalists engage in the watchdog role (McQuail, 1992: 186–191). Others have raised similar critique and instead recommended that journalism should advocate the stance of marginalized groups in society (see Waisbord, 2009, for an overview). The critics do not necessarily denounce objectivity but claim to implement it in a different way than mainstream journalists (Charity, 1995). It means not restricting oneself ‘to mere descriptions of reality but aim at value judgments according to political, social, or moral standards’ (Donsbach and Klett, 1993: 64).

Obviously, these four categories are not mutually exclusive when implementing objectivity, and different aspects might go well together. But as Donsbach and Klett show, there is variation across countries in the emphasis journalists put on these different aspects of the objectivity norm. They struggle to find consistent patterns that explain the variation. In some of the countries age and political position explain some variance, but not in others. The most consistent finding is that journalists supporting an impartial and unbiased news media over advocacy news media show greater support for objectivity. This is hardly a surprise, but it is an indication that the place to look for explanations for variation in the perception and implementation of objectivity among journalists might be in their perceptions of their role in society. Therefore, this study focuses on how journalists’ role perceptions affect their implementation of objectivity and how important they perceive the norm to be in journalistic work. In the following section the journalistic role perceptions, which are closely linked to journalism’s function in society, are conceptualized and the link between role perceptions and objectivity is clarified.

Linking role perceptions and objectivity

Journalists derive substantial professional legitimacy from their claim to serve the public in democracy (e.g. Deuze, 2005; Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005). How best to serve the public as a whole is ambiguous and contested. The democratic function of the press depends on how democracy is perceived. Democracy is not uni-dimensional (e.g. Held, 1987) and different models or conceptions of democracy imply different answers to the question of which information journalism should provide for citizens. Put another way, different conceptions of democracy imply different normative expectations on journalism and journalists and lead to different journalistic role perceptions (Strömbäck, 2005). These role perceptions are thought to influence journalists’ professional behaviour and they are seen as indicators of different news cultures (Donsbach, 2008). Therefore they are often utilized as dependent variables when variation in journalists’ professional identities is studied. In this article the role perceptions are utilized as independent variables that explain variation in the implementation of the objectivity norm among journalists.

Janowitz (1975) made a distinction between the gatekeeper and the advocate, with the gatekeeper taking a more passive approach in his or her news selection compared with

Table 1. Journalistic role perceptions

Journalistic approach	Democracy conception	
	Representation/information	Participation/conversation
Passive	'passive mirror'	'public forum'
Active	'watchdog'	'public mobilizer'

the advocate who takes a more active approach as a supporter of certain social groups through his news selection. This resembles Johnstone et al.'s (1972–1973) distinction between the passive and the active journalist, which was based on empirical studies of American news journalists, and which has later been further developed by Weaver and Wilhoit in national large-scale surveys of American journalists (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Weaver et al., 2007), and by Donsbach and Patterson (2004; also Patterson, 1998) in an international comparison of journalist's role perceptions.

Here two distinctions are made to outline different journalistic role perceptions to create a two-by-two table containing four ideal typical journalistic role perceptions (see Table 1).

The first distinction is between two different conceptions of democracy. One emphasizes aggregation of preferences, which is often connected to citizens casting their vote in regular democratic elections in order to decide who shall represent them in the democratic decision-making process. This conception is connected to the idea of journalism as providing citizens with the necessary information to cast an informed vote. The other emphasizes a lively public debate and democratic involvement from citizens. This conception is connected to the idea of journalism as providing a public forum (for the distinction between liberal and republican perceptions of democracy see Held, 1987).

The second distinction is between a passive and an active approach to journalism and draws upon Johnstone et al. (1972–1973). The passive journalist believes that events and occurrences in the real world can be observed and reported as they are. News emerges by itself and the journalist has a non-interventional function. The active journalist, on the other hand, enters the playing field instead of standing at the sideline observing the game. The journalist acknowledges that he or she is a news constructor who takes an active approach to the news production process. This does not necessarily mean that there is no reality to report but that the journalist acknowledges that news does not just emerge by itself – rather it is the product of active intervention by the journalist. This means that he or she is shaping reality in the journalistic account rather than just reflecting it, and thus interferes in public affairs (see e.g. Johnstone et al., 1972–1973; Patterson, 1998).

This leads to four role perceptions: 'passive mirror', 'watchdog', 'public forum', and 'public mobilizer'. These four distinct role perceptions should be seen as ideal type role perceptions. One of the consistent findings in studies of journalistic role perceptions is that journalists adhere to several more or less contradictory role perceptions at the same time (e.g. Deuze, 2002b; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Weaver et al., 2007). This is not surprising, as models of democracy, on which the role perceptions are based, are also ideal types and never appear in pure form anywhere (Strömbäck, 2005: 337). In reality, democracies have features from different models just as journalists adhere to different roles.

This does not exclude the fact that journalists have different perceptions of their role in society. They can put more or less emphasis on the different roles, which creates different role perception configurations for different journalists.

In the passive mirror role the journalist merely functions as a disseminator of information. This passive role implies that it is possible, like a mirror, to just reflect reality by disseminating information as it happens. It is based on the positivist notion that journalists are able to exclude their own beliefs from their reports and record and report reality as it is rather than construct the news (e.g. Entman, 1989; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 30–33). This means that attached to the passive mirror role is a notion that, maybe not entirely but to a substantial extent, it is possible to exclude subjectivity and merely reflect reality in the journalistic accounts.

This lead to the following expectations:

H1: The passive mirror role is a) positively related to the importance of objectivity and b) positively to the ‘no subjectivity’ aspect of objectivity. It is c) negatively related to the ‘value judgments’ aspect of objectivity.

The idea of excluding all subjectivity has been repeated again and again, and is so tightly connected to the objectivity notion that it has often been the straw man that critics have put up when they target objectivity. It has led Glasser (1984) to claim that objectivity is at odds with the important journalistic role of being watchdogs vis-a-vis the powerful. The detachment following from the objectivity norm will prevent journalists from making the moral evaluations necessary for being watchdogs who take their starting point in evaluations of right or wrong.

But objectivity has also been claimed to function as a protective shield against criticism (Tuchman, 1972). When journalists in the watchdog role are critical towards the powerful and provide analysis of complex problems they almost unavoidably offend different individuals or groups in society.

In connection to this it has been argued that journalists utilize objectivity to justify their work and in that sense protect themselves against criticism that they pursue special interests. This makes the function of objectivity as a protective shield even more important for journalists adhering most to the watchdog role than for other journalists. It also increases the incentive to stress that their reports are based on mere facts rather than claims, and to create a balance between all sides also to protect oneself from criticism from people under scrutiny. In this way, objectivity will be positively related to the watchdog role, especially if understood as balance and hard facts since they serve as a defence mechanism against critique from the people or institutions who are scrutinized by the watchdog journalist. Thus, this leads to the expectations that:

H2: The watchdog role is a) positively related to the importance of objectivity and b) positively related to the ‘balance’ and c) positively related to the ‘hard facts’ aspects of objectivity.

The public forum role and the public mobilizer role are both connected to the rise of public journalism. The movement was based on a critique of a detached objectivity, which leads to unengaged journalism that does not fulfil its public service obligation. But it does not mean that all aspects of objectivity are abandoned. It is important to

distinguish between the public forum role and the public mobilizer role. The public forum role implies a more passive approach with emphasis on letting regular people voice their opinions and on trying to engage them in public debate on common problems. The public mobilizer takes a more active approach and is focused on leading the public towards distinct solutions to societal problems.

One of the founding fathers of the public journalism movement, Merritt (1995), has compared the ideal role of journalists to the role of a referee in a sports game. He is engaged in the game and brings knowledge and authority to the game, but he is not supposed to impinge on the game and his only interest should be that the game is played by the rules and he should not exhibit any interest in the actual outcome. He is a fair-minded participant who facilitates the public debate on equal terms for the involved and who provides them with the relevant factual information as a basis to debate from. This implies that objectivity is still important, and that balance and factual reporting are the emphasized aspects of objectivity rather than excluding all subjectivity or making distinct value judgments of right or wrong.

For the public forum role this leads to these expectations:

H3: The public forum role is a) positively related to the importance of objectivity and b) positively related to the 'balance' and c) positively related to the 'hard facts' aspects of objectivity.

Others reject this strictly procedural perception of the role of journalists, and thus also attack the objectivity norm more severely. Glasser (1999) argues that with no conception of the good that shall be pursued the press will be as incapable of promoting social change. Pursuing the same argument Stoker (1995) contends that one cannot separate truth from context and human subjectivity. He argues that journalists should be set free as individual moral agents who make value judgments according to their own sense of ethical responsibility. This is connected to the public mobilizer role which would free journalists to pursue and promote certain solutions to societal problems. To journalists adhering more to the public mobilizer role objectivity seems less important and the exclusion of subjectivity, especially, will be viewed both as undesirable and impossible, since good journalism makes value judgments based on the facts as they are assessed by the journalist. The expectations derived are:

H4: The public mobilizer role is a) negatively related to the importance of objectivity. It is b) positively related to the 'value judgments' and c) positively related to the 'hard facts' aspects of objectivity and d) negatively related to the 'no subjectivity' and e) negatively related to the 'balance' aspects of objectivity.

The Danish case

These four hypotheses will be tested on the Danish case. In Denmark the objectivity norm emerged with the decline of the strong party press which dominated the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Newspaper readership in the Danish population was extremely high and in the highly competitive environment a way to capture new readers was to tone down political opinion pieces, giving priority to more neutral news stories and a broader

selection of topics (Søllinge and Thomsen, 1989). The introduction of state-controlled radio news in 1926 and state-controlled television news in 1965 also supported the emergence of a highly emphasized objectivity norm. The broadcast news was to be edited according to statutes and rules of neutrality and in accordance with a public service obligation, which meant that politically neutral journalism gained popularity.

The demand for full-time journalists increased and the occupation professionalized quite early. This development was reinforced by general developments in society. Due to economic growth and increased living standards for blue-collar workers after the Second World War, the traditional class lines in society blurred. The electorate became much more volatile and the economic and ideological pillars that used to characterize the newspaper market crumbled, eroded reader loyalty towards the party newspapers and increased the demand for independent and professional journalism (Nissen, 1991; Søllinge and Thomsen, 1989).

In this professionalization process the objectivity norm gained status as highly important among journalists and news organizations alike, as did the ideal of independently and actively serving the public instead of acting as marionettes for political parties. Today, the objectivity norm and the public service norm are still highly emphasized by Danish journalists (Skovsgaard et al., forthcoming). In this sense journalists in Denmark are quite similar to journalists in other western countries, since Donsbach and Klett (1993) show that the objectivity norm in general appears to be important among journalists across countries belonging to the three different types of media systems described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). This makes Denmark a suitable case to study whether journalists' role perceptions have an impact on their implementation of objectivity. Moreover, several scholars have shown that there is variation in both role perceptions and objectivity notions in different countries (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver and Wu, 1998), which makes the study of the link between role perceptions in the Danish case interesting beyond the Danish border.

Methods

The hypotheses on the link between journalistic role perceptions and objectivity are studied by means of a survey of the Danish journalists.

The survey was conducted in close cooperation with the Danish Union of Journalists, *Dansk Journalistforbund*, during June and early July 2009. The total population of Danish journalists working in editorial journalism (excluding, for instance, journalists working in PR and unemployed journalists) was extracted from the Union's member records by choosing relevant media categories, e.g. magazines, daily newspapers, radio/TV, and the web.

The Danish Union of Journalists estimates that it organizes around 90 to 95 per cent of Danish journalists working with editorial journalism. This gave us a unique opportunity to survey the population of Danish journalists. We contacted them by email and included a link to the questionnaire, which was to be filled out on a website.

From the 5519 questionnaires circulated, 327 of the potential respondents turned out not to belong to the population and 664 questionnaires were not delivered correctly and thus never reached the intended respondents. The questionnaire was filled in by 2008

respondents, resulting in a response rate of 44.3 per cent of the total population¹ – a sound result compared to similar surveys in other countries (Weaver and Wu, 1998).

The Union had information on variables such as gender, age, place of residence, and media type. This made it possible to compare respondents and non-respondents. The analysis shows that the two groups are largely similar which reduces the risk of systematic biases.

Variables

The journalists were asked a battery of questions on their role perceptions. The battery was largely replicated from the latest survey of American journalists from Weaver et al. (2007). They were asked to indicate how important they perceive different media functions to be on a 4-point scale ranging from not important to very important. A principal component analysis was conducted and it confirmed clusters of items that constitute a watchdog role (6 items, $M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.42$, $\alpha = 0.79$) as well as a public forum role (2 items, $M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.61$, $\alpha = 0.70$). The passive mirror role ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.81$) and the public mobilizer role ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.76$) are both measured by a single item.

The importance of objectivity and the implementation of objectivity are measured by a battery of questions adopted from Donsbach and Klett (1993). However, the word 'political' was excluded from each question, since the journalists asked here are not exclusively political or daily news journalists as was the case in their study. For the perceived importance of objectivity the journalists answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 'not at all important' to 'very important'. For the categories of objectivity the journalists responded to a statement also on a 7-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

The importance of the objectivity norm, as well as the different aspects of the norm, is measured by one item, except for balance, which is measured by two items forming a scale (for an overview of the operationalization see Table 2).

To study the impact of role perceptions on the implementation of objectivity, regressions are conducted repeating the model five times with the five different dependent variables, i.e. the importance of objectivity and the four categories of objectivity. The independent variables are introduced in two blocks. First, the variables at the individual level (i.e. gender, journalistic experience, journalistic education, and political leaning) are entered along with the type of media outlet that the journalist works for. In the second block, the role perceptions are introduced to explore their impact compared to the control variables.

Results

Despite the fact that the objectivity norm is disputed it is still a highly important norm within the journalistic profession. Of the respondents, 45 per cent answered that it is 'very important' for journalists to be as objective as possible in their work. Almost three in four respondents answered in the two highest categories and the mean score among the journalists is five on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 = not at all important to 6 = very important (see Table 3).

Table 2. Operationalizations of objectivity notions

Importance of objectivity	Q: In your opinion, how important is it for a journalist to be as objective as possible?
'No subjectivity'	Q: Good journalism does not allow journalists' own beliefs to affect the presentation of a subject
'Balance'	Q1: Good journalism represents all sides in a dispute fairly Q2: Good journalism requires equally thorough questioning of all sides of a dispute ($\alpha = 0.69$)
'Hard facts'	Q: Good journalism goes beyond the statements of the disputing sides in a dispute and gets to the concrete facts in the dispute
'Value judgment'	Q: Good journalism makes clear who has the better position in a dispute

This shows a substantial general support for the norm but does not provide insight into how the journalists implement it.

When looking at the different aspects of objectivity, it seems that journalists acknowledge, to some degree, the notion that it is impossible to completely exclude one's own beliefs in journalistic work. This aspect scores 3.7 on the scale ranging from 0 to 6; at the same time journalists put more emphasis on aspects of objectivity such as balance (5.2) and hard facts (5.3). Even if they acknowledge that it is hardly possible to exclude subjective beliefs altogether it does not mean that journalists are ready to adopt a notion of objectivity in which value judgments are an important component. The mean score for this item is 1.5, which means that journalists in general do not agree that they should make clear who has the better position in a dispute (see Table 3).

Before turning to the hypotheses, it should be noted that the results for the regression analysis (see Table 4) show that role perceptions are significant contributors in explaining how journalists perceive the objectivity norm. The change in the R-square is substantial and statistically significant for all the dependent variables. In all cases except for the 'value judgment' aspect, adding the role perceptions means that the explained variance increases substantially, illustrating that the role perceptions provide stronger explanations of the perceived importance of objectivity and the implementation of the norm than the personal background variables and the organizational affiliation.

Turning to the first hypothesis, the regression analysis shows that the passive mirror role is strongly positively related to the importance of objectivity. The coefficient is close to 0.50 which means that each time the measure for the passive mirror role increases by one point the score for the importance of objectivity increases by half a point. This lends substantial support for hypothesis 1a.

As expected in hypothesis 1b, the passive mirror role is positively related to the 'no subjectivity' notion of objectivity. Each time a journalist scores one point higher on the passive mirror role he or she is also predicted to score almost 0.6 higher on the measure for 'no subjectivity'. This is a strong effect, which means that going from minimum to maximum on the scale for the passive mirror role would increase the score for 'no subjectivity' by 2.3 on the 7-point scale. Results also show a positive relation between the

Table 3. Journalists' ranking of objectivity notions

	Mean score on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 to 6* (Standard deviation in brackets)	Percentage of respondents answering in the highest category
'Importance of objectivity' In your opinion, how important is it for a journalist to be as objective as possible?	5.0 (1.3)	45
'No subjectivity' Good journalism does not allow journalists' own attitudes to affect the presentation of a subject	3.7 (1.8)	19
'Balance' (Good journalism represents all sides in a dispute fairly +Good journalism requires equally thorough questioning of all sides of a dispute)/2	5.2 (1.0)	39**
'Hard facts' Good journalism goes beyond the statements of the disputing sides in a dispute and gets to the concrete facts in the dispute	5.3 (.9)	49
'Value judgment' Good journalism makes clear who has the better side in a dispute	1.5 (1.5)	2

Notes: * For the 'importance of objectivity' question, 0 = not at all important, 6 = very important. For the rest of the statements 0 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree.

**The number reported here is the proportion of respondents answering in the highest category of both statements at the same time. If the proportion of respondents who answered in the highest category in one of the items and the second highest in the other was added the proportion would be 50 per cent.

passive mirror role and the 'balance' notion of objectivity. The result is statistically significant but the effect is somewhat lower than for 'no subjectivity' and the 'importance of objectivity'.

Conversely, the passive mirror role is, as expected in hypothesis 1c, negatively related to the value judgment aspect of objectivity. This negative relationship is statistically significant, which means that journalists adhering to the passive mirror role are more likely to refrain from value judgments. All in all, the expectations in hypothesis 1 are supported by the results.

For the second hypothesis the impact of the watchdog role on the perceived importance of objectivity is positive (as expected), and with a coefficient of 0.355 the effect is quite substantial and supports the expectation in hypothesis 2a. The watchdog role is also, as expected, positively related to the 'balance' notion of objectivity. With a coefficient of 0.432 the effect is even more substantial than in the case of the importance of objectivity, and supports hypothesis 2b. It is not surprising that the watchdog role is connected to

Table 4. Effect of role perceptions on the implementation of objectivity

	Importance		No subjectivity		Balance		Hard facts		Value judgment	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	5.166***	3.604***	4.073***	2.794***	5.195***	3.525***	5.210***	3.347***	1.187***	1.266***
Gender (female = 0, male = 1)	-.121	-.062	-.234**	-.169	-.338***	-.245***	-.089	.018	.262**	.247**
Years of journalistic experience	-.002	-.002	-.003	-.004	.004	.003	.005	.004*	.005	.007
Journalism education (less than bachelor = 0, bachelor or higher = 1)	.159*	.126	.054	.038	.003	-.038	.043	-.009	-.162	-.170*
Political leaning left [§]	-.266***	-.225***	-.270**	-.204*	-.050	-.068	.025	-.041	.095	.063
Political leaning right [§]	-.029	.026	.463**	.519***	-.015	.068	-.126	-.039	-.098	-.093
Daily newspaper ^{§§}	.083	.065	.057	.011	.233*	.195*	.014	-.021	.089	.131
Tabloid newspaper ^{§§}	-.1.203***	-.1.027***	-.881**	-.731*	-.402*	-.299*	-.413**	-.351*	1.003***	1.020***
Television ^{§§}	-.018	-.082	-.087	-.174	.092	.054	.026	.006	.060	.131
Webs ^{§§}	.029	.002	.240	.215	.224	.224	-.091	-.084	.049	.076
Freelance ^{§§}	-.275*	-.252	-.489*	-.470*	.020	.009	.010	-.026	.100	.122
Other ^{§§}	-.249	-.210	-.174	-.146	.139	.152	.037	.033	.322	.345*
Passive mirror role		.495***		.575***		.239***		.050		-.221***
Watchdog role		.355***		.198		.432***		.601***		-.024
Public forum role		-.044		.109		.136**		.121**		-.105
Public mobilizer role		-.112**		-.310***		-.071*		.035		.327***
Adj. R-square	.047	.154	.032	.107	.040	.141	.008	.106	.022	.053
R-square change model 1 to 2 ^{§§§}		.109***		.077***		.102***		.100***		.033***
N		1655		1664		1659		1662		1663

Notes: OLS regressions – unstandardized coefficients reported

*p-value <.05 **p-value <.01 ***p-value <.001

§ Reference category = centre of the left-right scale

§§ Reference category = radio

§§§ R-square change is based on the regular R-square rather than the adjusted R-square

balance, especially since the balance category entails being equally critical towards both sides in a dispute. When being critical, it makes sense that it is important to be balanced to have a plausible argument against claims of bias. The same function can be served by the 'hard facts' notion of objectivity, in which journalists go beyond the mere statements of the actors in a dispute and seek out the facts of the matter. As expected in hypothesis 2c the watchdog role is positively related to the factual aspect of the objectivity norm. The effect is remarkably strong. A one point increase in the watchdog role leads to a 0.6 increase in the score for hard facts. This means that a move from a minimum to a maximum score on the watchdog role results in an increase of the score on hard facts of 2.4 points, which is a very substantial effect. These results support hypothesis 2 and make sense in the light of the confrontational approach of the watchdog role. Finding, reporting, and afterwards pointing to the facts help journalists to defend themselves against criticism, as well as to draw conclusions in complex disputes among the actors covered.

The public forum role is not positively related to the importance of objectivity as was expected in hypothesis 3a. On the other hand, the public forum role is positively related to the 'balance' notion of objectivity as expected in hypothesis 3b. The public forum role is also positively related to the 'hard facts' notion of objectivity as expected in hypothesis 3c. Both these results are statistically significant and support hypothesis 3b and 3c respectively. These results generally support hypothesis 3, though the results for the importance of objectivity did not show the expected positive effect.

The public mobilizer role, in which the journalist more actively seeks to mobilize citizens to solve society's problems by taking a moral stand, is negatively related to the perceived importance of objectivity as it was expected. The result is statistically significant and thus lends support to hypothesis 4a.

Hypothesis 4b is also supported. The public mobilizer role is negatively and significantly related to the 'no subjectivity' notion of objectivity, in which journalists' own subjective beliefs should be excluded from journalism.

The public mobilizer role is also negatively and statistically significantly related to the 'balance' notion of objectivity as it was expected in hypothesis 4c, though the effect is not as substantial as for the 'no subjectivity' aspect.

As expected in hypotheses 4d and 4e, the public mobilizer role is positively related to both the 'hard facts' and the 'value judgment' aspects of objectivity. But while the result for 'hard facts' notion is not statistically significant and therefore inconclusive the result for the 'value judgment' aspect is statistically significant. This means that the results do not support hypothesis 4d, but do support hypothesis 4e. In general, hypothesis 4 is largely confirmed apart from the relation between the public mobilizer role and the 'hard facts' notion of objectivity, which was not statistically significant.

An overview of the statistically significant relations between the role perceptions and the importance of objectivity and its different aspects is presented in Table 5.

Discussion

Though objectivity has been the target of heavy criticism and debate it remains a cornerstone in the journalistic profession. The journalists surveyed in this study show substantial support for the objectivity norm as a part of their professional ideology. But the

Table 5. Statistically significant relations between role perceptions and objectivity

Roles	Objectivity-aspects				
	Importance of objectivity	No subjectivity	Balance	Hard facts	Value judgments
Passive mirror	+++	+++	+++		÷÷÷
Watchdog	+++		+++	+++	
Public forum			++	++	
Public mobilizer	÷÷	÷÷÷	÷		+++

Notes: + Positive relation. Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

++ Positive relation. Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

+++ Positive relation. Statistically significant at the 0.001 level

÷ Negative relation. Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

÷÷ Negative relation. Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

÷÷÷ Negative relation. Statistically significant at the 0.001 level

results also make clear that the objectivity norm is not carved in stone as one common value shared and interpreted uniformly by all journalists. It is, rather, negotiated and shaped differently for different journalists to create, for the individual journalist a coherent interpretation of the ideology (Reese, 1990b). This is also why journalistic role perceptions prove to have substantial explanatory power in regard to how important journalists perceive objectivity to be and which aspects of objectivity they think should be emphasized.

Journalists' role perceptions have often been studied as dependent variables under the assumption that they have an impact on the content that journalists produce (Weaver and Wu, 1998: 2), while others contend that the link is not obvious (Weischenberg et al., 2006: 98). Here, the role perceptions are utilized as independent variables and explain some of the variation in the objectivity norm that guides the journalistic production process when the news is selected, collected, and presented. This means that we take a small step towards understanding how role perceptions affect the journalistic production process and ultimately the content.

From the results of this study it seems that objectivity is more important with the role perceptions that emphasize a representative conception of democracy in which journalists inform citizens about society, whereas it is less important when they emphasize the inclusion of citizens in a public, democratic debate, which is the case in the public forum and the public mobilizer roles.

The clearest contrasts in the implementation of objectivity are between the passive mirror role and the public mobilizer role. The two roles are different from each other on both the passive-active dimension and on the perception of democracy; one with emphasis on information and the other with emphasis on democratic participation and conversation. In this light it makes sense that the more a journalist adheres to the passive mirror role the more important he or she finds it to exclude his or her own beliefs from the journalistic product; whereas the more emphasis a journalist puts on mobilizing people

around solutions to societal problems the less important is the aspect of excluding subjective beliefs from journalism. Not surprisingly, the reverse picture reveals itself when it comes to making value judgments by making clear which side in a dispute has the better position. Here the public mobilizer role shows a positive relation, while the passive mirror role shows a negative relation.

In terms of implementation of the objectivity norm, the watchdog role and the public forum role are positively related to the balance aspect and the hard facts aspect of objectivity. Schudson (2001) notes that objectivity is at once a moral ideal and a set of reporting and editing practices. In this light it seems that journalists adhering more to the watchdog role or the public forum role implement the objectivity norm more in terms of a tool or a reporting practice, since a proxy for objectivity is achieved through balance and factuality. Journalists adhering more to the passive mirror role and the public mobilizer role implement it more in terms of a moral ideal connected to the epistemological position of whether it is possible or not to exclude subjectivity and also whether it is desirable or not. Apparently, these journalists support or question the positivistic origins of the objectivity norm more than is the case for journalists adhering more to the watchdog role or the public forum role. It shows that even though journalists in general acknowledge that objectivity as a one-to-one representation of reality is a mission impossible (Mindich, 1998; Skovsgaard et al., forthcoming), the epistemological debate surrounding the objectivity norm is still implicitly embedded in debates on journalistic practice.

There are several interesting questions related to the use of role perceptions as explanatory variables. One is whether the fact that journalists work in quite distinct news organizations, as well as with quite distinct subgenres of journalism, has implications for their role perceptions and their interpretations and implementation of the objectivity norm. Table 4 shows that journalists who work at tabloid newspapers do in fact have significantly different interpretations and implementations of the objectivity norm than journalists working elsewhere, but they are the only ones who stand out in terms of type of news organization. We have also run analyses which show that both the organizational context and the subgenres of journalism (in terms of the subject area journalists work with) have very limited explanatory power when it comes to journalists' role perceptions and their interpretation and implementation of the objectivity norm.

Research suggests that when it comes to role perceptions, which can be seen as expressions of different journalistic cultures, the national political context exceeds the influence of the organizational level and the individual level (Van Dalen et al., 2010; Zhu et al., 1997). Thus, it seems that role perceptions are related to a national journalistic culture, and journalists' role perceptions do vary considerably across countries (Deuze, 2002a; Patterson, 1998; Weaver and Wu, 1998).

With role perceptions as independent variables this means that the perceived importance and the implementation of the objectivity norm will also vary across countries, which could also explain some of the variation in news content across countries. This is exactly why we believe that the findings in the Danish case are interesting beyond the Danish border.

A second question is related to the role perceptions themselves. These have been conceptualized in numerous ways in the literature (see e.g. Janowitz, 1975; Johnstone et al., 1972–1973; Patterson, 1998; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). Bearing in mind that journalists work

under the cross-pressure of providing a public service and selling a commercial product in a market, it could make sense to include a third dimension in the conceptualization of the role perceptions used in this article, namely ranging from an educational to an commercial function (Donsbach, 2008). This might yield interesting results in terms of how the increasing commercialization of the news might affect the interpretation and implementation of the objectivity norm. It could be hypothesized that adherence to a commercial ideal will lead journalists to assign less importance to objectivity, as well as less emphasis on providing (critically) balanced and factual journalistic accounts, while an educational ideal could be hypothesized to increase the emphasis on value judgments, since education could be related to telling people how to perceive certain issues or incidents.

A third question that could be addressed by further research is the possibility of reversed causality and endogeneity. This study is based on cross-sectional data, which do not allow us to empirically study the temporal order of cause and effect (see Gerring, 2005, for an overview of criteria for causation). It seems more plausible that journalists' role perceptions precede their perception of objectivity, since objectivity is a way to implement and carry out the preferred role in society. In other words, it seems more plausible that a journalist adhering to the watchdog role develops a distinct perception of objectivity, which can be utilized as a defence mechanism against inevitable critique, than the reverse case in which the perception of objectivity should lead him to adhere to the watchdog role. However, the argument can be made that objectivity is so pervasive in both the professional ideology of journalists and in their daily practice that it alters or constitutes journalists' role perceptions. This would mean that the temporal order is reversed in comparison to what we argue. Panel data and time series analysis, which are not available for this study, are needed to study this question empirically.

A fourth question is whether role perceptions and objectivity interpretation and implementation should be measured at the individual level. As Vos (2009) points out, it is possible that journalists – just as a chameleon changes colour – are able to walk in and out of different role perceptions which should be analysed at the organizational or institutional level rather than the individual level. This would also mean that journalists draw on their organization's established ways of organizing news stories when producing journalism. Cottle (2003) points out that in some cases the truthfulness of an account would be based on subjectivist epistemology with appeals to feelings and sentiments rather than an objective epistemology that bases the truthfulness on expert rationalities and statistical corroboration. This would allow the same journalist to implement the objectivity norm in different ways at different times when dealing with different types of stories, which in turn would question the actual explanatory power of role perceptions in favour of more complex news cultures or news ecologies embedded at the organizational or institutional level.

Based on the few studies dealing with how different journalists vary in their perception of the most pervasive norm in modern journalism, this study attempts to provide a step forward. It shows that the objectivity norm is open for interpretation, but it also emphasizes the need for more firmly situated and empirically grounded studies on how objectivity is related to role perception in different journalistic cultures and under different circumstances when it comes to the production, publication, and perception of news.

Appendix A

Independent variables

Role perceptions: Respondents were asked: ‘Here is a list of things that the media do or try to do today. How important do you think each of the following things should be in journalistic work?’

The *watchdog role* consists of the items: investigate claims and statements from the government; be the devil’s advocate vis-a-vis public officials; provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems; be the devil’s advocate vis-a-vis business; be a representative of the public and ask questions on its behalf; discuss policy proposals while they are still being developed ($\alpha = 0.79$, $M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.42$).

The *public forum role* consists of the items: motivate ordinary people to engage in the public debate on important societal issues; give ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs ($\alpha = 0.70$, $M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.61$).

The *passive mirror role* is measured by the item: mirror the public opinion neutrally ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.81$).

The *public mobilizer role* is measured by the item: lead people towards solutions to society’s problems ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.76$).

Type of media outlet: From a long list of different media organizations the journalists were asked to indicate which type fits best with the media organization they work in. The variable was reduced to the categories: dailies (30.0%), tabloids (3.4%), radio (6.9%), television (13.5%), web (4.7%), freelance (22.9%), and other (18.8%). Subsequently these were coded into dummies.

Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male (53.9%).

Journalistic experience: Measured in years ($M=16.74$, $SD= 101.18$).

Journalism education: 0 = no journalism education or below bachelor level, 1 = journalism education at the bachelor level or more (70.3%)

Political leaning: Respondents were asked: ‘In politics you often talk about left and right political leaning. Where would you place yourself on a scale ranging from 0 (furthest to the left) to 10 (furthest to the right) and 5 being the middle category?’

The results were recoded into three dummies: political leaning left (0–3), political leaning centre (4–6), and political leaning right (7–10). Left (40.7%), Centre (48.5%), Right (10.8%).

Note

- 1 Response rate 2 in accordance with the standard definitions from the American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2009. Some respondents only filled in parts of the questionnaire, which explains why, in the following analysis, the N in most cases is lower than 2008.

References

- Altschull JH (1995) *Agents of Power: The Media and Public Policy*. London: Longman.
- American Association for Public Opinion Research (2009) *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*, 6th edn. Deerfield, IL: AAPOR.
- Chalaby J (1998) *The Invention of Journalism*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.
- Charity A (1995) *Doing Public Journalism*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Cottle S (2003) Media organisation and production: Mapping the field. In: Cottle S (ed.) *Media Organisation and Production*. London: Sage, 3–24.
- D'Alessio D and Allen M (2000) Media bias in presidential elections: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication* 50(4): 133–156.
- Deuze M (2002a) National news cultures: A comparison of Dutch, German, British, Australian, and US journalists. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 79(1): 134–149.
- Deuze M (2002b) *Journalists in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Deuze M (2005) What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology reconsidered. *Journalism* 6(4): 442–464.
- Donsbach W (2008) Journalists' role perception. In: Donsbach W (ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. London: Blackwell. Available at: <http://www.communicationencyclopedia.com/public/>
- Donsbach W and Klett B (1993) Subjective objectivity – how journalists in four countries define a key term of their profession. *International Communication Gazette* 51(1): 53–83.
- 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*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 251–270.
- Entman R (1989) *Democracy without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gans H (1980) *Deciding What's News*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gerring J (2005) Causation – A unified framework for the social sciences. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17(2): 163–198.
- Glasser TL (1984) Objectivity precludes responsibility. *The Quill* 72(2): 13–16.
- Glasser TL (1999) The idea of public journalism. In: Glasser TL (ed.) *The Idea of Public Journalism*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Hallin D and Mancini P (2004) *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanitzsch T, Hanusch F, Mellado C et al. (2011) Mapping journalism cultures across nations. *Journalism* 12(3): 273–293.
- Held D (1987) *Models of Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Janowitz M (1975) Professional models in journalism: The gatekeeper and the advocate. *Journalism Quarterly* 52(4): 218–226, 262.
- Johnstone JWC, Slawski EJ and Bowman WW (1972–1973) The professional values of American newsmen. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(4): 522–540.
- McNair B (1998) *The Sociology of Journalism*. London: Arnold.
- McQuail D (1992) *Media Performance. Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London: Sage.
- McQuail D (2005) *Mass Communication Theory*, 5th edn. London: Sage.
- Merrill JC (1984) Journalistic objectivity is not possible. In: Merrill JC and Dennis EE (eds) *Basic Issues in Mass Communication: A Debate*. New York: Macmillan, 104–110.
- Merritt D (1995) *Public Journalism and Public Life: Why Telling the News Is not Enough*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Mindich DTZ (1998) *Just the Facts: How 'Objectivity' Came to Define American Journalism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Nissen HS (1991) *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie bind 14: Landet blev by 1950–1970* [Gyldendal and Politikens History of Denmark 14: The Countryside Turned into City 1950–1970]. København: Politikens Forlag.
- Patterson TE (1998) The political roles of the journalist. In: Graber D, McQuail D and Norris P (eds) *The Politics of News; The News of Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 23–39.

- Patterson TE and Donsbach W (1996) News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors. *Political Communication* 13: 455–468.
- Reese S (1990a) The news paradigm and the ideology of objectivity: A socialist at the *Wall Street Journal*. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7(4): 390–409.
- Reese S (1990b) Understanding the global journalist: A hierarchy-of-influences approach. *Journalism Studies* 2(2): 173–187.
- Ryan M (2001) Journalistic ethics, objectivity, existential journalism, standpoint epistemology, and public journalism. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 16(1): 3–22.
- Schudson M (1978) *Discovering the News*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schudson M (2001) The objectivity norm in American journalism. *Journalism* 2(2): 149–171.
- Shoemaker PJ and Reese S (1996) *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Skovsgaard M, Albæk E, Bro P and De Vreese C (forthcoming) Media professionals or organizational marionettes? Professional values and constraints of Danish journalists. In: Weaver D and Willnat L (eds) *The Global Journalist*. Routledge.
- Søllinge JD and Thomsen N (1989) *De danske aviser 1634–1989* [Danish newspapers 1634–1989]. København: Dagspressens Fond/Odense Universitetsforlag.
- Stoker K (1995) Existential objectivity: Freeing journalists to be ethical. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 10(1): 5–22.
- Strömbäck J (2005) In search of a standard: Four models of democracy and their normative implications for journalism. *Journalism Studies* 6(3): 331–345.
- Tuchman G (1972) Objectivity as strategic ritual: An examination of newsmen's notions of objectivity. *American Journal of Sociology* 77(4): 660–679.
- Tuchman G (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Tumber H and Prentoulis M (2005) Journalism and the making of a profession. In: De Burgh H (ed.) *Making Journalists*. London: Routledge, 58–74.
- Van Dalen A, De Vreese C and Albæk E (2010) Studying journalistic role conceptions and content cross-nationally. How wide is the gap between theory and practice? Paper presented at the 3rd European Communication Conference in Hamburg, 12–15 October.
- Voakes PS (1999) Civic duties: Newspaper journalists' views on public journalism. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 76(4): 756–774.
- Vos TP (2009) Journalistic role conceptions: A bridge between the reporter and the press. Paper presented at the conference of the International Communication Association.
- Waisbord S (2009) Advocacy journalism in a global context. In: Wahl-Jørgensen K and Hanitzsch T (eds) *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. London: Routledge, 371–385.
- Weaver D and Wilhoit CG (1996) *The American Journalist in the 1990s. US News People at the End of an Era*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Weaver D and Wu W (eds) (1998) *The Global Journalist. News People around the World*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Weaver D, Beam R, Brownlee B, Voakes P and Wilhoit CG (2007) *The American Journalist in the 21st Century: US News People at the Dawn of a New Millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Weischenberg S, Scholl A and Malik M (2006) *Die Souffleure der Mediengesellschaft: Report über die Journalisten in Deutschland*. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Westerstahl J (1983) Objective news reporting. General premises. *Communication Research* 10(3): 403–424.
- Zhu JH, Weaver D, Lo VH, Chen C and Wu W (1997) Individual, organizational, and societal influences on media role perceptions: A comparative study of journalists in China, Hong Kong, and the United States. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74(1): 84–96.

Biographical notes

Morten Skovsgaard is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Journalism, University of Southern Denmark. He worked as a newspaper journalist before his research career. He writes primarily about journalism, communication, politics, and democracy.

Erik Albæk is Professor in the Centre for Journalism at the University of Southern Denmark. Professor Albæk has been visiting professor at MIT, Harvard University, Vilnius University (Lithuania), Potsdam University (Germany) and the University of Amsterdam. He has been chairman of the Danish Social Science Research Council and the Nordic Political Science Association. He has published articles in journals such as *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journalism*, *Political Communication*, *Journal of Communication* and *Party Politics*. Professor Albæk received his PhD in political science from the University of Aarhus in 1988.

Peter Bro is Associate Professor at the Centre for Journalism, Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark. He worked as press secretary in the Danish Parliament and as communication advisor in a PR-consultancy firm before he started his research career. He writes primarily about journalism, communication, politics and democracy, and his work has appeared in journals such as *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism* and *Journalism Practice*.

Claes de Vreese is Professor of Political Communication at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam. He has been a visiting professor at Harvard University and Zurich University. He has published widely on political journalism, elections and campaigns, public opinion, electoral behaviour and news framing effects.