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The Meaning of Leaning: The Impact of Journalists' Political Leaning on Active Role Perception and Satisfaction With Audiences and Editorial Policy

Sebastian Scherr[1] and Philip Baugut[1]

Abstract

Based on the subset of a representative survey of journalists with an active role perception in Germany, this article shows that more liberal journalists within the subset have (a) a more active role conception than more conservative journalists, (b) they perceive stronger discrepancies between their active role and its fulfillment, and (c) they are, thus, less satisfied with audiences and editorial policy. The indirect effect of the political leaning of this subset of journalists on their satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy underlines the significance of intrinsic factors for subdimensions of job satisfaction in journalism.

Keywords

political leaning of journalists, journalistic role fulfillment, job satisfaction, serial multiple mediation

The political leanings of journalists are object to academic and practical discussions about news bias and the democratic functions of the media (Groseclose, 2011; Kepplinger, 2011; Levite, 1996; McChesney, 2003; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996). Although journalism is not per se a political job, there is ample evidence that journalists see themselves as important for a wide array of societal functions: Among others,

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these are being a watchdog, a detached observer, or a socially committed advocate for the disadvantaged in society (Weaver & Willnat, 2012a). Therefore, it seems necessary to consider the individual characteristics and attitudes of those who collectively produce media content. Moreover, political leanings can influence journalists' professional thinking and acting (Kepplinger, 2011, p. 129).

However, research on the political leanings of journalists suffers shortcomings that obscure their relevance. First, the political leaning is often only explored to characterize the journalistic population as a whole without discussing the consequences, for example, their impact on media coverage. This is especially true for the large national surveys that provide a rich data basis for further analysis (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007; Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006). Aforementioned data suggest that journalists across countries have a moderate tendency toward the left, while they view the media they are working for at a moderate right position (van Dalen, 2012; van Dalen & van Aelst, 2012).[1] Second, in case of asking and finding evidence for the impact of political leanings on journalists' news decisions, studies (Kepplinger, Brosius, & Staab, 1991; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996) tend to underestimate the multitude and complexity of several further factors shaping news content (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This can cause polarized debates about news bias in which those who neglect the influence of media owners and organizational constraints on journalistic work take journalists' political leanings as a reason to accuse the media of being too left-leaning or too liberal (Levite, 1996).

Third, in case of relativizing the influence of the political leaning on media coverage by factors like "organizational rules, publishers' guidelines and professional values" (Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2012, p. 210), studies tend to neglect the impact of the political leaning on variables beyond media coverage. Surprisingly, when job satisfaction of journalists is investigated, organizational structures, goals, priorities, or conditions are regarded as important predictors as well as individual characteristics (Brownlee & Beam, 2012, p. 354), while the connection to the political leaning of journalists has not been investigated so far (Weaver et al., 2007, p. 114).

Given these shortcomings, clarifying the relevance of journalists' political leaning requires (a) considering factors that link political leanings of journalists and media coverage, and (b) asking for the influence of political leanings on factors beyond media coverage that affect how journalists perceive their work. With regard to (a), we expect that the role perceptions[2] of journalists are an important factor that depends on political leaning and that indirectly affects media coverage. With regard to (b), we expect especially satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy to be an important variable that depends on how journalists perceive themselves being able to achieve their goals, that is, to fulfill their role.

Role Perceptions as a Link Between Political Leaning and Media Coverage

We consider role perceptions to be important, as they represent the "generalized expectations which journalists believe exist in society and among different stakeholders, which they see as normatively acceptable, and which influence their behavior on

the job." This means role perceptions of journalists may have an impact on "the way they interact with sources and make decisions about news selection and presentation" (Donsbach, 2008, p. 2605). Although journalists' role perceptions are just one of many other factors that influence media coverage, there is ample evidence for their relevance. For example, studies suggest that journalists who prefer an active, that is, participant, interpretative and adversarial role, produce corresponding media coverage (Culbertson, 1983; Starck & Soloski, 1977; Tandoc, Hellmueller, & Vos, 2013). A cross-national study, in which both the role perceptions of political journalists and political news coverage in Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain were investigated, illustrates that role perceptions mirror the way journalists report the news (van Dalen, 2012). For example, British journalists do not only stand out as most entertainment-oriented in their roles, but also in the content they produce (van Dalen, Vreese, & Albaek, 2012). Current research is cross-nationally investigating journalistic role performance to find out how much role perceptions compared to other factors matter for the news produced by journalists (see http://www.journalisticperformance.org/).

The large body of literature concerning journalistic role models can be reduced to similar typologies and dimensions that either emphasize normative expectations or deal with functional contributions to the political system. Most scholars ask whether journalists rather want to be critical of politics or mere disseminators of information (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991). This question refers to dimensions such as "active vs. passive" or "adversarial vs. deferential" (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1976; van Dalen, 2012). Moreover, role models differ in how far journalists want to take sides, that is, they express the political line of the media they work for. This refers to the distinction between "impartial-neutral" versus "partisan" journalism (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; van Dalen, 2012). While these typologies are traditionally used, more recent concepts ask whether journalists rather want to address the public as citizens or consumers (Donsbach, 2008; Hanitzsch, 2007). Hanitzsch condensed this body of literature into three dimensions, namely, (a) interventionism, (b) power distance, and (c) market orientation (Hanitzsch, 2007, pp. 372-375). Interventionism refers to the extent to which journalists promote certain values. Power distance refers to the extent to which journalists challenge the powers. Market orientation refers to the extent to which market logic affects journalistic goals.

While power distance is important for comparative research where political systems vary between countries and while market orientation is first and foremost connected to processes of content production, interventionism is most fruitful for exploring active ("political") journalistic role perceptions. Thereby, role perception such as acting on "behalf of socially disadvantaged" or being "mouthpiece of political party and other groups whose interests are at stake" can be regarded as crucial indicators of this dimension.

The typical journalist, especially in the Western world, can be best characterized as detached, non-involved, and oriented toward a watchdog philosophy (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; van Dalen, 2012; Weaver & Willnat, 2012a). Journalists predominantly refuse interventionism, that is, they do not feel determined to influence the political agenda

and public opinion or to advocate social change (Hanitzsch et al., 2012, p. 481). German journalists have been characterized as missionaries by some scholars (Köcher, 1986); however, more recent and representative findings show that a passive role perception dominates within the profession (Weischenberg et al., 2006). Generally, American literature on journalistic roles seems to be applicable to the German, as the Worlds of Journalism study has shown that the German and the American journalism culture are very similar in terms of institutional roles. Both strongly exhibit "non-involvement, detachment, monitoring the government, as well as providing political and interesting information to motivate the people to participate in civic activity" (Hanitzsch et al., 2011, p. 281).

The theoretical and empirical variety of role perceptions raises the question of what affects the role journalists want to play in society (Weaver & Willnat, 2012b). For example, studies that regard role perceptions as dependent variable have focused on how they are shaped by individual characteristics of journalists like gender (Cassidy, 2008), personality, and other psychological variables (Henningham, 1997) or by career values such as salary or job autonomy (Dillon, 1990). In contrast, the influence of political leaning on role perceptions has received little attention so far. One exception is research on the American Journalist that suggests that the more liberal the journalist, the more likely he or she is to embrace values that refer to an interpretative, adversarial and populist mobilization function (Weaver et al., 2007, p. 149). However, this finding is not explained or discussed in more detail. One may assume that left-leaning, respectively liberal, journalists are likely to have a more active role perception as a distinct motivation to change society and to stand up for the disadvantaged—which is also typical for left-leaning political actors, the provocatively so-called "linke Weltverbesserer" ("leftist do-gooders"; Lukes, 2003; Schoenbach, Stuerzebecher, & Schneider, 1994, p. 141). However, in a survey among German journalists, Schoenbach et al. did not find a correlation between journalists' political leanings and their motivation to work as a journalist (Schoenbach et al., 1994). Contrary to that, Hopmann, Elmelund-Praestekaer, and Levinsen (2010) show for Danish journalism students that the more left-leaning they are, the more politically motivated they are (in contrast to those students claiming to be right-wing). However, the most extremely left-wing students choose journalism for other (i.e., professional) reasons as their profession as compared to making politics.

These contradictious findings mostly stem from studies that relate political leanings of journalists to their motivation to work as a journalist, not to role perceptions. Nevertheless, role perceptions can be even more relevant than motivations for becoming a journalist: While the former reflect for example organizational working constraints—and thus more the reality of journalism practice—the latter are rather context-independent ideals. That is why it seems to be helpful to regard the concept of role perception as the way how journalists want to interpret their role, while being confronted with societal and organizational expectations. Role perceptions refer to the interplay of individual motivations or attitudes on the one hand, and external expectations on the other (Vos, 2005). In other words, roles are the result of a journalist's negotiations with normative expectations (Tandoc et al., 2013). That is why roles are characterized by a stable and enduring form.

The Link Between Journalistic Role Perceptions and Subdimensions of Job Satisfaction

In this section, we want to provide the more general notion of why role perceptions are crucial for job satisfaction in general, although, later, we will present subset-analyses that especially focus on journalists with active role perceptions and their satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy. Nevertheless, for the sake of completeness, we want to unfold the wider theoretical framework here. The extent to which a journalist feels able to fulfill the conceived role may differ and affect the level of job satisfaction and the intention to leave the profession (Sun-nam & Hyun-wook, 2008). Hence, job satisfaction has often been in focus of journalism research (Ryan, 2009; Weaver & Willnat, 2012a). There is ample empirical evidence that "the risk of burnout, absenteeism, cynicism, exhaustion and stress among journalists" (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2012, p. 235) has risen in the last years (Reinardy, 2007). The level of job satisfaction seems to vary considerably from study to study or from country to country (Weaver & Willnat, 2012a). But, different concepts of job satisfaction impede the comparison of existing findings and call for a theoretically based clarification.

Beam (2006) has emphasized the subjectivity of the concept by regarding job satisfaction as "an attitudinal variable describing how people feel about their job" (p. 170). Elements and determinants of job satisfaction may be personal antecedents on the one hand and working environment factors on the other hand (Beam, 2006; Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2012). Concerning personal antecedents, individual characteristics and attitudes seem to affect job satisfaction (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2012; Weaver et al., 2007, p. 114). Concerning working environment factors, research has shown that at least two distinct dimensions must be differentiated (Beam, 2006; Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2012; Gruenberg, 1980; Price & Wulff, 2005): Sources of satisfaction can be of intrinsic or extrinsic nature. Relevant job extrinsic factors are, for example, pay and job security (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2012, p. 238). Relevant job-intrinsic factors are, for example, levels of individual freedom and perceived autonomy (Weaver et al., 2007, p. 114; Weaver & Willnat, 2012a). Moreover, the role perception of a journalist and discrepancies between role perception and role fulfillment seem to be important job-intrinsic factors. Findings suggest that journalists with a more active role perception are less likely to find their job satisfying (Akhavan-Majid, 1998). Surprisingly, a journalist's perception of discrepancy between his or her role and its fulfillment has been neglected so far, although intrinsic factors (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) seem to have a major impact on job satisfaction (Reinardy, 2009). Therefore, we regard the perception of discrepancies as crucial for explaining the link between role and (at least) subdimensions of job satisfaction. Negative effects of perceived discrepancies (PD) between role perception and role fulfillment on job satisfaction can be explained by a cognitive dissonance that generally results from a discrepancy between belief and behavior (Festinger, 1957).

Discrepancies between role perception and role fulfillment may depend not only on a particular role perception, but also on conditions that impede the fulfillment of a role. Journalists can perceive political, economic, organizational, professional, and procedural influences, and influences from reference groups (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011).

However, the perception of these influences does not necessarily reflect real influences. From a constructivist point of view, perception is not completely determined by external stimuli. Perceptual sets can be defined as "a perceptual bias or predisposition or readiness to perceive particular features of a stimulus" (Allport, 1955). The selective perception finally leads to the tendency of individuals to perceive what they expect. The political leaning may be such a predisposition affecting the way journalists perceive influences on their work. Especially, economic influences restricting the journalists' autonomy may be perceived more intensively by left-leaning than by right-leaning journalists. From a left point of view, business and the intrusion of economic imperatives in society are traditionally assessed more critically (Lukes, 2003). Correspondingly, more left-leaning journalists are likely to be more sensitive to these economic constraints than right-leaning journalists. Thus, journalists, who are more oriented toward the political left, may perceive more strongly that some working conditions impede the fulfillment of an active role. For example, journalists who perceive commercial pressure in terms of a high editorial workload and pressure of time may feel not able to have enough resources for supporting the disadvantaged in society. This refers to the fundamental question in how far economic imperatives are inconsistent with political commitment in journalism. Economic imperatives in journalism become manifest in audience orientation, as journalists have to meet the needs of media consumers. Therefore, journalists' satisfaction with audience reactions appears as an important element of job satisfaction, especially in times of media commercialization, which is assumed to be perceived more intensively and critically by leftish journalists. Moreover, audience reactions seem to be extremely relevant for journalists with an active role perception. While audience reactions can be considered as an extramedia factor influencing the work and role fulfillment of journalists, internal factors, such as organizational influences, have to be considered as well. Closely related to the political leaning of journalists is the editorial policy in terms of a distinct political or ideological line. Dissatisfaction with the editorial policy of a media company may be a result of discrepancies between the political leaning of journalists and the political leaning of their employer. Thus, satisfaction with audience reactions and editorial policy can be considered as two important elements of job satisfaction that are intertwined as they are theoretically related to the political leaning and role fulfillment of journalists.

Hypotheses

Summarizing the aforementioned considerations, we assume that the political leaning of journalists indirectly affects satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy, as the political tendencies might influence the role perceptions and further also the perception of discrepancies between role perception and role fulfillment. Therefore, we hypothesize that the more the political leanings of journalists are located to the left, the more they have an active role perception (**H1**).

Parts of an active role perception like a distinct motivation to change society and to stand up for the disadvantaged in society have been associated with leftish political

leaning (Lukes, 2003). Journalists taking a stand for eliminating inequalities and for stimulating political participation are often not limited to the role of detached observers or mere disseminators of information that have to reach the widest audience (Rosen, 1999). This means, left-leaning journalists want to address the audience as citizens, not as consumers. That is why we assume that a left political leaning is related positively with those parts of an active role perception that refer to the involvement of citizens in the public sphere. From a left political point of view, economic imperatives that intrude into the work of those who produce public goods are assessed critically (Lukes, 2003). Thus, left-trending journalists may perceive the commercialization of news production as a danger to an active political role of journalism. As left-leaning journalists tend to be more sensitive to economic constraints, they perceive discrepancies between role perception and role fulfillment more strongly. Hence, we hypothesize that the more the political leanings of journalists are located to the left, the more they perceive discrepancies between active role perception and role fulfillment (**H2**).

Because intrinsic factors such as goal achievement are crucial for job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959), the perception of discrepancies between role perception and role fulfillment may reduce job satisfaction. If left-leaning journalists indeed show more active role perceptions and perceive discrepancies more strongly, they would be more likely to be dissatisfied with their job—especially with those aspects that are strongly related to an active role perception. We hypothesize perceptions of discrepancies between active role perception and role fulfillment being related negatively with a subset of job satisfaction that is related to an active role perception (**H3**).

The hypotheses can be concentrated to a mediation model that describes the indirect effect of political leaning of journalists with an active role perception on their satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy mediated by PD between role perceptions and role fulfillment. Thus, we formulate as fourth hypothesis that the more the political leanings of journalists are located to the left, the more they perceive discrepancies between active role perception and role fulfillment, which in turn is negatively related with aspects of job satisfaction that are related to an active role perception (**H4**).

Method

Sample and Procedure

To test the hypotheses of this study, we reanalyzed data from a German journalist cross-sectional survey which is representative for all journalists in the country in 2005 (n = 1,536). The study represents the most recent sample survey of its kind for German journalists. Details on the multistep procedure for drawing a representative sample of all journalists have been published in more detail elsewhere (Malik, 2011). The population of journalists includes all media companies (TV, newspaper, online news, magazines, radio, news agencies) with different circulation and publication frequency as well as journalists who were both working as staff or freelancer. The reported response rate of the study was 73% due to flexible scheduling of interviews and high efforts to

get in touch with journalists. In the final representative sample, 37% of the journalists were female. The mean age was 40.5 years ($SD = 9.2$), 25% worked as freelancers (vs. 75% working as staff) for a media company, and 22% worked for a public broadcasting company (vs. 78% working for a commercial media company).

Measures and Covariates

The original survey data we used in the secondary data analysis presented here include questions about journalists' political leanings, perceptions of their journalistic role, role fulfillment, and job satisfaction. Additional measures that have been included as covariates in our analyses were demographic variables such as age and net income as well as job position and information on the company the surveyed journalists worked for.

Political leaning of journalists. Self-reporting of political leaning on a left–right continuum is widely used and has shown to be a suitable measure (Chang & Lee, 1992; Hopmann et al., 2010). Therefore, journalists were asked to indicate their political leaning on a continuous scale ranging from 1 (*left-wing political orientation*) to 100 (*right-wing political orientation*). This was the independent measure in our model. The mean value (*SD* in brackets) for political orientation was 37.5 (15.8), indicating a positively skewed distribution (to the political left).

Job satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy. Job satisfaction is a multidimensional construct based upon 13 causal indicators of job satisfaction comparable to those used by Price and Wulff (2005, p. 221). So far, there is no evidence of a confirmed factor structure. Thus, we first applied a principal component analysis (PCA) in which items were retained if their component loading (CL) was .40 or higher on one factor (PCA with Promax rotation; variance explained = 53.0%; Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin [KMO] = .707; Bartlett's test $p < .001$). PCA showed a four-component structure of job satisfaction (relations to co-workers, career prospects, autonomy at work, and audience reactions and editorial policy) of which only the component "audience reactions and editorial policy" was of further interest. Hence, this dimension is not only statistically derived, but also theoretically based as we outlined above. Therefore, we transformed the two items that were phrased "To what degree are you satisfied with audience resonance or audience reactions?" ($M = 3.5$; $SD = 1.0$) and "To what degree are you satisfied with the political and ideological policy of your media company?" ($M = 3.8$; $SD = 0.9$) to an index of job satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy according to Streiner (2003) ($M = 7.2$; $SD = 1.5$; $\alpha = .21$).[3] Both items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*I am not satisfied at all*) to 5 (*I am completely satisfied*).

PD in journalistic role fulfillment as mediators. We predicted that discrepancies in journalistic role fulfillment on political and audience related dimensions function as mediators for the effect of political leaning on (at least subdimensions of) job satisfaction as indicated by different international studies (Ki & Hon, 2007, p. 422; Lin, 2010; Mwesige, 2004; Weaver & Willnat, 2012a). Discrepancies in journalistic role fulfillment were

regarded as the difference between a journalist's self-concept at work and the perceived achievement of this concept. While important dimensions of the journalistic self-concept define a journalistic role, the perceived degree of achievement of a given dimension determines PD. Thus, important aspects of the journalistic role that were not achieved indicate higher degrees of PD in journalistic role fulfillment than unimportant dimensions that could be put into practice. To explore the journalistic self-concept, we applied a PCA to those items referring to journalistic self-concept (Varimax rotation; variance explained = 53.1%; KMO = .775; Bartlett's test $p < .001$) that revealed a four-factor solution of the journalistic self-concept (politically active, provider of service information, quick and wide coverage, explain reality). For the purpose of this study, only the first factor was relevant for further analysis. For theoretical reasons, we focused only on those items of this factor that were explicitly related to other people as these items can be regarded as indicators of the most active journalistic role conception (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 373). The respective items were phrased "My job is about supporting the cause of disadvantaged parties" ($M = 2.9$; $SD = 1.1$) and "My job is about giving disadvantaged people a voice" ($M = 3.0$; $SD = 1.2$) and were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). Only those journalists who indicated high or highest personal relevance of these two items were asked about their self-reported achievement ("I achieved in my job supporting the cause of disadvantaged parties"; "I achieved in my job giving disadvantaged people a voice"), resulting in a total sample of $n = 439$ to 517 for all analyses that include PD. Two subtractive indices of importance and achievement were constructed that illustrate PD in active journalistic role fulfillment: PDA indicates perceived discrepancies in "advocacy" ($M = 3.0$; $SD = 0.8$) and PDV indicates perceived discrepancies in "giving a voice" ($M = 2.7$; $SD = 0.7$). These variables ranged on a scale from 1 (*low perceived discrepancy*) to 6 (*high perceived discrepancy*) and were included as mediators in our model.

Controls and covariates. As indicated by Ryan (2009), job satisfaction is likely to depend on a wider range of factors. Among these factors is the employment situation as either a freelancer or as an employee of the media company. For instance, Ryan stresses the autonomy of freelancers that contributes to a journalist's job satisfaction. Furthermore, job satisfaction can be regarded as depending on pay, age, and the form of organization journalists are working for (Beam, 2006). Therefore, we included these variables as covariates in a serial multiple mediation model to control job satisfaction for these influences. By doing so, we are able to show more clearly the influences of political leanings on job satisfaction, mediated by PD in journalistic role fulfillment.

Results

Overview of Data Analysis

The analysis estimated the direct effect of political leaning of journalists with an active role perception on satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy and the indirect effects of political leaning on those aspects of job satisfaction mediated by two PD in fulfilling a politically active journalistic role (the two mediator variables PDA and PDV

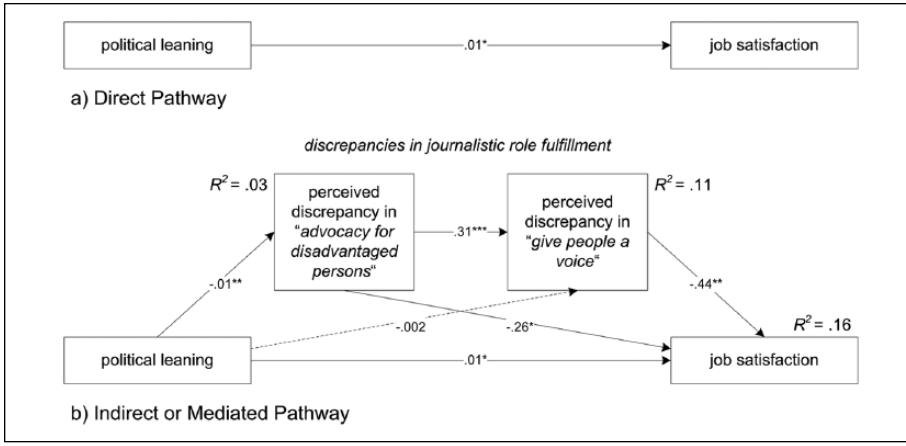

Figure 1. Influence of journalists' political leaning on aspects of job satisfaction mediated by discrepancies in journalistic role fulfillment.

Note. Analysis is based on a subset of journalists with an active role perception (n = 218), and job satisfaction refers to a subset of indicators that is related to an active role perception. Political leaning of journalists scaled from 1 (*left*) to 100 (*right*); role discrepancies scaled from 1 (*no discrepancy*) to 6 (*large discrepancy*); job satisfaction (with "audience reactions" and "editorial policy") scaled from 1 (*not at all satisfied*) to 10 (*totally satisfied*).

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

indicate PD in "advocacy" and "giving people a voice"). The serial multiple mediator model is depicted in Figure 1 (see below). It also specified effects of the two mediating variables on aspects of job satisfaction that are related to an active role perception. Each of these direct effects was estimated along with the three mediated effects of political leaning on subsets of job satisfaction that are related to an active role perception through either one of the two or both mediators at the same time. This procedure is referred to as a serial multiple mediator model analysis (Hayes, 2013). In the course of an ordinary-least-squares path analysis, the coefficients in the model are estimated to determine the direct and indirect effects of the political leaning of journalists with an active role perception on subsets of their job satisfaction. To obtain bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for specific and total indirect effects and to remediate the lack of normality of the cross-product of coefficients, we used a nonparametric bootstrapping (n = 5,000) method, as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). This approach was used because of the low power associated with the Sobel test (MacKinnon, Warsi, & Dwyer, 1995).

In Figure 1, the path from political leanings to satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy represents the respective effect-controlling for the serial mediated effects. Prior to analyzing the mediation model, the direct effect of political leaning on satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy was estimated without controlling for any mediation effects; the difference in the estimate for this controlled and uncontrolled path indicates the strength of the mediation. Moreover, a number of covariates, such as

age, pay, organizational form of the media company, and employment situation, were included in each regression model. These variables did not alter the observed significance patterns.

Preliminary Analyses

This study shows a mediation analysis of political leaning on subsets of job satisfaction that are related to an active role perception of journalists. To do so, we analyze a subset of journalists with an active role perception that stems from a representative survey of German journalists. As a first step, we present descriptive findings concerning the political leaning of German journalists. The journalists in the sample showed overall more left-leaning political attitudes (M = 37.5; SD = 15.8; n = 1,500). As a second step, we present how journalists with different political leanings answered on the central measures of PD. To do so, we used equal percentiles as cut points of recoding. According to that logic, participants were distinguished by a split into three equal percentiles: (a) a more left-leaning group, (b) a more right-leaning group, and (c) an in-between group. For the PDA and PDV, we present the top-three boxes of the answers. Descriptive statistics show that 24.0% (n = 50) of the left-leaning group had a larger PDA while this holds true for 13.8% (n = 15) of the right-leaning group of journalists. This finding also holds true for the PDV: 13.4% (n = 27) of the more left-leaning group perceived a discrepancy in terms of giving people a voice compared with 11.9% (n = 17) of the more right-leaning group. The in-between group agreed to 23.7% (n = 23) on the PDA and to 13.2% (n = 20) on the PDV.

The political leanings of journalists were correlated with different role perceptions. We hypothesized (**H1**) that more left-leaning journalists show more active role perceptions in terms of political activism. According to Hanitzsch (2007, p. 373), politically active journalists especially show a high willingness to support disadvantaged people and to give people a voice. A correlation analysis of these items related to journalistic role perceptions shows that journalists' political leaning is weakly associated with an active journalistic role perception in that sense (see Table 1).

More left-leaning journalists tend to show professional attitudes representing a slightly more active role perception such as being an advocate for disadvantaged people (r = −.09, p < .01). In contrast to that, their journalistic role perception did not include to a large extent the dimension of "giving people a voice" as suggested by Hanitzsch (r = .03, p > .05). Most of the correlations in Table 1 are in line with existing research on this field (see Weaver et al., 2007, p. 148, with regard to the direction and effect size of the correlations), showing that political leaning is an important predictor of professional values among journalists and that the strength of associations between different journalistic role perceptions varies. Thus, we partly confirm **H1**.

H2 builds upon the claim that a politically more left-inclined tendency is associated with higher PD in the fulfillment of active journalistic role perceptions. In fact, a correlation analysis of all items, that refer to journalistic role perception and political leaning, of the surveyed journalists points to higher PD in the job being associated with a more left-leaning political orientation. The respective correlations (Pearson's

Table 1. Correlations Between Political Leaning of Journalists, Journalistic Role Perceptions, Discrepancies in Role Fulfillment, and Job Satisfaction.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Political leaning	—																		
2. Explain complex issues	.03	—																	
3. Present own perspectives	−.09**	−.01	—																
4. Describe reality as it is	.05*	.26**	−.00	—															
5. Inform neutral and precisely	.05*	.26**	−.18**	.34**	—														
6. Advocate for disadvantaged people	−.09**	.12**	.08**	.18**	.10**	—													
7. Control politics and economy	.01	.20**	.10**	.19**	.11**	.36**	—												
8. Criticize nuisances	.00	.25**	.17**	.29**	.18**	.49**	.45**	—											
9. Convey positive ideals	−.08**	.02	.20**	.04	−.01	.31**	.13**	.23**	—										
10. Give advice to the audience	.04*	.09**	.05*	.06**	.07**	.15**	.08**	.12**	.22**	—									
11. Offer. recreation and entertainment	−.04	−.14**	.19**	−.06*	−.10**	−.04	−.11**	−.07**	.18**	.20**	—								
12. Showing new trends	.03	.10**	.15**	−.02	−.05*	−.13**	−.09**	−.01	.13**	.27**	.24**	—							
13. Transfer information immediately	.08**	.16**	−.01	.18**	.32**	.07**	.13**	.19**	−.05*	.03	−.00	−.01	—						

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
14.	News for large public	.12**	.07**	−.11**	.16**	.25**	.17**	.15**	.15**	.03	.08**	.07**	−.10**	.44**	—					
15.	Set political agendas	.02	.18**	.14**	.13**	.04*	.41**	.48**	.42**	.15**	.00	−.14**	−.09**	.16**	.17**	—				
16.	Giving people a voice	.03	.16**	.14**	.19**	.14**	.46**	.32**	.40**	.23**	.16**	.03	−.03	.22**	.24**	.40**	—			
17.	PDA	−.12**	.07	−.02	.03	.03	.42**	−.05	.10*	.01	.03	−.06	.04	.01	−.03	−.04	.03	—		
18.	PDV	−.09*	.06	−.03	.02	.07	.11**	.05	.06	.01	−.03	.00	.08*	.01	−.00	−.04	.44**	.40**	—	
19.	Job satisfaction	.08**	.10**	.03	.12**	.05*	.06*	.03	.05*	.07**	.08**	.06**	.01	.04	.09**	.08**	.07**	−.18**	−.17**	—
M		37.5	4.1	2.6	4.0	4.4	2.9	2.5	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.1	3.4	4.0	3.6	2.4	3.0	3.0	2.7	7.2
SD		15.8	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.8	0.7	1.5

Note. Intercorrelations for German journalists (n = 439-1,536; the number of responses may vary due to item non-response or survey structure) are presented below the diagonal. Means and standard deviations are presented in the horizontal rows. For all scales, higher scores are indicative of a more right political leaning or a more extreme responding in the direction of the construct assessed. PDA = perceived discrepancies in advocacy; PDV = perceived discrepancies in giving a voice.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

r; p for a one-tailed test of significance) of political leaning with PDA were small, but point in the hypothesized direction ($r = -.12$, $p < .01$, $n = 423$). The same is true for the correlation between political leaning and PDV ($r = -.09$, $p < .05$, $n = 498$). Therefore, we confirm our **H2**.

H3 states that higher degrees of PD in journalistic role fulfillment engender lower levels of satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy. The correlations between PDA and satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$, $n = 435$) as well as between PDV and satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$, $n = 517$) pointed in the hypothesized direction. Nevertheless, we want to note that correlations were small but consistently indicated effects in the hypothesized direction. Thus, we confirm **H3**.

These preliminary results justify the estimation of a serial multiple mediator model.

Serial Multiple Mediation Analysis for PD in Job Fulfillment

In **H4**, we hypothesized that PD between role and role fulfillment with regard to being the advocate for disadvantaged persons and giving people a voice mediates the influence of political leaning of journalists with an active role perception on aspects of job satisfaction that are related to an active role perception. All paths for the full process model are depicted in Figure 1.

The total effect of political leaning on satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy was significant ($\beta = .0162$, $t = 2.54$, $p = .012$) and so was the total direct effect when the effect of the mediators was excluded ($\beta = .0121$, $t = 2.03$, $p = .044$). The total indirect effect, that is, the sum of the specific indirect effects, was significant with a point estimate of .0041 and a 95% CI between .0005 and .0095. The specific indirect effect of political leanings on aspects of job satisfaction through PDA only was significant ($\beta = .0022$; CI = [.0002, .0062]); we made an opposite finding for the specific indirect effect through PDV only ($\beta = .0007$; CI = [−.00017, .0040]), which has not reached significance. Nevertheless, the specific indirect effect of the political leaning of the journalists through both PDA and PDV as serial mediators was significant, thus supporting **H4**, with a point estimate of .0012 and a 95% CI between .0004 and .0028. Hence, journalists who perceived larger discrepancies in being an advocate for disadvantaged persons, grounded in a left-leaning orientation, had increased discrepancy perceptions referring to giving people a voice, which in turn engenders less satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy among this group of journalists, while satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy was controlled for age, pay, organizational form of the media company, and employment situation.

Discussion

Previous research has not revealed the relevance of journalists' political leanings. That is true for the link between political leaning and journalistic roles as well as the link between political leaning and aspects of job satisfaction. The results of the present secondary data analysis of a subset of a representative sample of German journalists

indicate a complementary mediation of political tendencies on satisfaction with audiences and editorial policy mediated through PD in journalistic job fulfillment. On the one hand, results support the hypothesized mediators and show consistency of the theoretical framework that has been outlined, but on the other hand, research suggests that other mediators may exist and should be further explored by studies in the future (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010, p. 201).

Recent findings have demonstrated a relation between a more left-leaning political attitude and a political motivation for becoming a journalist (Hopmann et al., 2010). But, so far these assumptions have only been tested with journalism interns. This means, correspondent findings are based on young journalists who have not yet necessarily experienced situations in which personal orientations and attitudes clash with political or economic imperatives of the company they work for. Results were controlled for age, income, job position (staff/freelancer), and company interests (public value/commercial). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study focusing on the influence of the political leanings of journalists with an active role perception on subsets of their job satisfaction. The study shows that in times of high economic pressure on editorial work, left-leaning journalists tend to be more dissatisfied with their job than right-leaning, respectively conservative journalists.

The indirect impact of political leaning on aspects of journalistic job satisfaction challenges existing theoretical explanations: As suggested, constructivists would argue that perceived role discrepancies also stem from individual predispositions such as an actor's political leaning. Therefore, future research should carefully reveal in which way the political leaning leads to selective perceptions of journalistic working. On one hand, that means our argument that left-leaning journalists are more sensitive to economic constraints on journalistic work should be followed and empirically proven. On the other hand, attention should be drawn to other variables that are vital to rule out the theoretical and empirical framework presented here.

The seemingly weak effects of political tendencies on discrepancies between role and role fulfillment as well as on aspects of job satisfaction have to be interpreted in the light of the following facts: First, the large-scale representative survey including journalists working in a variety of editorial departments of different media companies can hardly provide strong effects as the meaning of political leaning may differ from editorial background to editorial background. Second, journalists can perceive multiple roles, that is, constituents of an active role conception may be combined with constituents of a passive or more entertainment-oriented role conception (Weaver et al., 2007; Weaver & Willnat, 2012a).

Limitations

However, there are limits to how far we can take the idea of influences of political leanings of journalists on aspects of their job satisfaction. Initially, we highlighted that journalism is not a political job per se. Moreover, in comparative contexts, other patterns of influence between individual political leaning and job satisfaction may arise. For instance, in the United States, journalism is taught as a neutral job at journalism

schools (Deuze, 2005), which is somewhat different in China for example (Josephi, 2010). Moreover, journalistic job satisfaction can shift as political leanings shift over time (Noelle-Neumann, 1998).

Methodologically, secondary data analyses always suffer from the questions that have been asked and those that are missed. This is an inevitable problem inherent to secondary data analysis and surely limits the conclusions that can be drawn (Dale, Wathan, & Higgins, 2008, p. 532). First and foremost, this is the reason why we cannot test other facets of job satisfaction as suggested in the literature (Pollard, 1995, p. 684), such as achievement and self-fulfillment. Moreover, Zhao et al. (2010, p. 201) suggest that in our case of a complementary mediation, it is likely that other mediators exist that could not be included in this secondary analysis and should be pursued in future studies.

Furthermore, the structure of the original questionnaire implied that a PD could only be calculated for those who partly or fully agree with an active journalistic role conception. Hence, we cannot present information about discrepancies of role fulfillment of those who do not hold an active journalistic role conception. Nevertheless, future studies could investigate perceived role discrepancies for journalists with more passive role perceptions.

In addition, structural equation modeling (SEM) is a common alternative for integrating serial mediators into complex statistical models. Nevertheless, Hayes offers good reasons why regression-based approaches are evenly suited or under certain conditions even more appropriate than SEM for analyzing serial mediation models (Hayes, 2013, pp. 160-161). Hence, we applied a regression-based approach.

In addition, as Ryan (2009, p. 658) discusses, the valence and reliability of self-reported measurements of job satisfaction in journalism studies can be regarded critically. Alternatively, narrative questions could be asked for obtaining valuable insights into job satisfaction.

Moreover, we argued that the political leanings of journalists are quite distinct and stable, which may be called into question, especially during times of an increasing number of independent voters. However, we measured the political leaning on a left–right scale instead of asking for party preferences that seem to be less stable. And, one may ask in how far the results of a survey among German journalists can be transferred to other countries? We assume that our findings are for at least four reasons relevant for other journalism cultures. First, we measured the political leanings on a left–right scale that is universally accepted and which refers to basic political values that exist across nations. Nevertheless, research has shown that measuring political leaning on a left–right continuum can vary across countries (Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007), which can in turn be traced back to personal values that underlie political orientations and that can differ between countries (Piurko, Schwartz, & Davidov, 2011). Hence, the results of this study are not representative for all journalistic cultures—comparative studies are necessary to bridge this research gap. Second, economic pressure on editorial work and tensions between political and economic goals are characteristic of free media systems. Third, we refer to phenomena of perception that are psychological rather than dependent on a national context. Moreover, we assume that our findings are especially relevant for North American journalism cultures. This fact is based on Hanitzsch et al.

(2011) who explored journalism cultures across 18 nations and concluded that the German culture is most similar to U.S. culture in terms of the institutional roles and ethical ideologies of journalists. Finally, as the original study dates back to 2005, one could call the actuality of the presented results into question. We acknowledge this concern pointing to the fact that the media industry has doubtlessly changed dramatically over these years. At the same time, the link between political leaning of journalists and (aspects of) their job satisfaction is likely to stand the test of time. First, intrinsic factors remain crucial for job satisfaction. Chan, Pan, and Lee (2004), for example, show that for the drastically changing media system in China especially, intrinsic job satisfaction weighs more than extrinsic attributes in overall ratings of job satisfaction—especially in times of change. Hence, changes of the media system are less likely to influence the results of this study, especially compared to studies that focus on extrinsic factors of journalistic job satisfaction. Second, we primarily interpret our results as a perception phenomenon, assuming that the political leaning has an impact on how strongly journalists perceive economic constraints that impede role fulfillment. Although the level of commercialization has increased during recent years, from the psychological perspective in this study, perceptual differences of journalistic job fulfillment are likely to remain stable depending on the political leaning.

Conclusion

In this article, we found an indirect effect of journalists' political leanings on aspects of their job satisfaction as it relates to audiences and editorial policy which seems to be an important variable in times of commercial pressure and increasing workload on journalists. Our study points out that perceived role fulfillment deserves more attention in future studies as an important intrinsic factor for job satisfaction (Beam, 2006). Moreover, we argue for considering political leanings as an important personal antecedent for job satisfaction because political attitudes can be regarded as a perceptual set affecting how journalists perceive their working conditions (Beam, 2006).

This link between political tendencies and aspects of job satisfaction has been neglected so far, as studies have focused on the direct impact of political leanings on media content. Due to a variety of factors shaping media content, we interpret the suggested impact of political leanings on role perceptions carefully in terms of media coverage. However, as there is evidence for a link between roles and media content, our findings hold the potential to induce further debates about journalists' personal beliefs and news bias. Those who fear the majority of left-leaning journalists may feel affirmed by the suggested positive relation between a more left-wing political leaning and an active role perception that can be regarded as having greater significance in journalism practice. However, our study shows that an active journalistic role is hard to achieve. Future studies could, for instance, combine quantitative and qualitative research designs that contribute to a fuller (not necessarily a more objective or valid) picture of the relevance of political leaning for media coverage (Fielding & Fielding, 2008, pp. 560-561).

In conclusion, our results raise a plethora of questions that should be investigated and answered by future studies. These are questions about what implications can be drawn

from the study for all those studying journalism—especially those who find themselves on the opposite political spectrum than the majority? Are some students discouraged from studying journalism on grounds of their political opinions? In journalism education, what role do political convictions of university instructors play, who are in general of a more left-leaning politically (see Gross, 2013)?

Although this article is not meant to stimulate emotional ideological debates, we want to point out that the relevance of political leanings of journalists has to be explored more intensively—especially from a psychological point of view that investigates how the political leanings of journalists affect their perception of working conditions. It is necessary to consider the individual (political) attitudes that affect the perception of these influences and thereby the perception of discrepancies between roles and their fulfillment.

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Notes

1. Instead of "left" and "right," sometimes the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are used, especially in the United States. We can regard these terminologies that refer to similar values as interchangeable.
2. The terms "role perception" and "role conception" are often used interchangeably. We prefer "role perception" in that context, as we want to stress the psychological aspect that pervades our explanation.
3. Streiner points to the fact that high correlations between items are only a necessary condition for psychometrically developed scales and differentiate them from (e.g., sum) index variables. In the present study, job satisfaction has been introduced as a sum index variable (satisfaction with editorial policy and satisfaction with audience reactions). Moreover, both components of job satisfaction proved to be consistent (see principal component analysis in text), causal indicators of the subset of job satisfaction under investigation that refers to an active role perception. Plus, we conducted supplementary mediation models in which the individual indicators of job satisfaction were used separately. Each of these models explains about the same amount of observed variance. At the same time, results show that satisfaction with editorial policy contributes more to the overall mediation model than satisfaction with audience reactions.

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