

Is peace journalism feasible? Pointers for research and media development

Peace journalism (PJ) is a globally distributed reform movement as well as an emerging field in scholarly research. The impetus behind many civil society initiatives has been an assumption that individual reporters and editors could change the content of the news they produce about conflict, if only they were sensitised to peace perspectives, and assisted in developing critical self-awareness, through exposure to advocacy and training. This assumption begs to be examined in light of scholarly debates over structure and agency, in which the influence of individual journalists is compared with other sources, or levels of influence: from the economic circumstances of news production, through professional norms and routines, to the overarching ideological and political contexts in which journalism is written, disseminated and consumed. There are, however, fragmentary indications at least, from individual examples, that journalists who take part in PJ training can then succeed in finding or creating scope to implement it, by making use of the expanded opportunities afforded by digital media. These indications invite further exploration to ascertain the extent of scope for implementation, and thereby inform assessments of the potential for effective peace-building interventions through peace journalism as a factor in media development aid.

Keywords: peace journalism (PJ); structure and agency; media development

Introduction

Peace journalism (PJ) was launched at a residential summer school in 1997, at Taplow Court, a Victorian country house in southern England that was, by then, the UK cultural centre of a lay Buddhist organisation, the Soka

Gakkai International (Lynch 2013). The principal speaker was Johan Galtung who drew up a table to go into the delegates' packs: a single side of A4, divided into two columns, setting out the respective characteristics of war journalism and PJ. Most of those who first discussed and came to grips with their implications were journalists in the early or middle stages of their careers.

From this beginning, a globally distributed advocacy and reform movement grew (ibid), with its activities chiefly taking the form of exhortatory and pedagogical initiatives, again aimed predominantly at journalists. The subsequent emergence of PJ as a field of scholarly research has foregrounded three key questions, arising from the activities of this movement:

1. Does PJ exist? That is, can it be shown to be underway – and therefore, feasible and achievable in practice, even as a contingent by-product of 'normal' journalistic activity?
2. Where it is practised, what impact does it have? Do readers and audiences notice the difference, and if they do, does it prompt them to make different meanings in response to the representation of conflict issues?
3. Could it be effectively promulgated and spread? That is, if journalists were convinced of its desirability, could they implement it in their daily professional work?

The first of these questions has been answered by the studies in content analysis of conflict reporting by mainstream media, which make up the largest single category of published scholarship in the field (Lee and Maslog 2005; Ross and Tehranian 2008). In these, some aspects of PJ, at least, are shown to be already underway, inviting speculation over possibilities to expand it: 'there is some ... so there could be more' (Lynch 2008: 232).

In respect of the second, early PJ scholarship was criticised for modelling audiences as 'a passive mass that needs to be enlightened by virtue of right and proper reporting' (Hanitzsch 2008: 77): neglecting the role of readers, listeners and viewers in deriving 'uses and gratifications' from their selection and experience of news. The extent of influence of PJ media frames on audience frames and meaning-making has since been examined by playing different versions of familiar television news stories to viewers in four countries (Australia, the Philippines, South Africa and Mexico). Significant interactions,

in both affective and cognitive responses, were recorded (Lynch and McGoldrick 2012a and 2012b), supporting evidence from earlier studies by Schaefer (2006) and Kempf (2007).

These findings imbue the third, as yet largely unexplored question with added potential significance. If it can be shown that more PJ would, indeed, be noticed and appreciated by audiences, and that an altered discursive context for the framing of contested social issues and the interpretation of ambiguous causal scenarios might result, then the claims made by its advocates would acquire evidential backing. These claims are based, in turn, on a rationale summarised by Robert Karl Manoff: 'The media constitute a major human resource whose potential to help prevent and moderate social violence begs to be discussed, evaluated and, where appropriate, mobilised' (in Baumann 1998: np).

PJ represents 'the policy implications' (Lynch and Galtung 2010: xii) of the influential essay by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, *The structure of foreign news*, in which the authors posit: 'action is based on the actor's image of reality ... [and the] regularity, ubiquity and perseverance of the media make them first-rate competitors for the number-one position as international image-former' (1965: 64). Writing three decades later and referring to a contemporary conflict as his example, Galtung declared that, had more editors and reporters taken 'the high road' in their coverage, 'the conflict in and around Northern Ireland would have entered a more peaceful phase long ago' (in Baumann 1998: np).

If unexplored scope could be shown to exist, for more journalists to do more PJ – if not consciously adopted as such, then at least as a 'contingent by-product' (Hackett 2011) of their daily work – then potential would be revealed not only for the implementation of a reform agenda within journalism, but also for a transformation of its influence on meaning-making and responses by parties to conflict. It would represent a key under-exploited opportunity to 'focus on nonviolent outcomes, empathy with all parties and creativity [which] is more likely to bring peace' (Galtung, in Baumann 1998: np), of significant interest to intervening parties and donors providing development aid to conflict-affected societies.

Any appraisal of the scope for prompting the implementation of more PJ by informing and cultivating journalistic agency must

take account of evolving debates about the professional autonomy of journalists amid manifold structural constraints. Early media scholarship would typically attempt to identify and categorise influences on the content of news on three levels: the individual, the organisational and the institutional (Whitney et al 2004). More recently, researchers have allowed for a more complex array of domains of influence. Reese and Shoemaker (1996) suggest organising news influences into five hierarchically nested levels: the individual; media routines, and organisational imperatives – all palpable to journalists in their daily endeavours – as well as the implicit extra-media and ideological levels.

In this evolving picture, the relative degree of influence seen as stemming from the individual preferences of reporters, or even editors, over the substantive content of the journalism they write, commission and produce, has diminished. Early gate-keeping research attributed a decisive influence to individual factors (White 1950; Flegel and Chaffee 1971): a notion challenged by later accounts (such as Patterson and Donsbach 1996). Organisational factors are also believed to have a substantial impact on the production of news (Cook 1996; Gans 2003), and studies covering a number of countries have found newsroom environments – comprising procedural and professional levels of influence – to be a strong predictor of journalists' own horizons and role perceptions (Shoemaker et al 2001; Weaver and Wilhoit 1996).

The emerging scholarly consensus accords primacy to systemic and economic influences on processes of news production (Bagdikian 1983; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011). This poses a problem for PJ's normative agenda, since it has generally given rise to attempts at catalysing 'immanent critique' (Hackett 2011: 59), harnessing the legitimating norms of professional practice to spur journalists to self-directed reforms in their coverage of conflicts (Patindol 2010). Hanitzsch criticised PJ scholarship for adopting an 'overly individualistic and voluntaristic approach' (2008: 75), and Fiona Lloyd warned of the risk in PJ training initiatives of setting up 'cycles of empowerment and disempowerment' (2003: 118) as participants, fired with enthusiasm, returned to the cold realities of the office.

Research findings such as those summarised above have directed attention towards elements of the political economy of media systems as prime determinants of journalistic

agenda-setting and framing. Relegated, in relative importance, have been concepts arising from the notion of journalism as a civic tool in democracy, to be applied with a sense of social responsibility and capable, at its best, of holding power effectively to account (Curran 2011). This dyad is stated most baldly in the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky, in which the 'true societal purpose' of journalism is seen as being 'to inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state' (2002: 298).

Against this background, Hackett urges a re-conceptualisation for PJ of the balance and interplay of structure and agency. While most reporting of conflict issues, in most media most of the time, may prove notably receptive to explicit accounts from overt power centres – governments, corporations and the like – there is a risk, in applying such 'functionalist models', of 'scanting tensions and contradictions' (2007: 79) and thereby missing the importance of occasional departures from the norm. Freedman offers qualified support to the propaganda model while emphasising 'cracks and tensions' in representations of contested issues as being potentially highly ideational, by virtue of their phenomenological occurrence at key 'moments of political crisis and elite disagreement' (2009: 59). Schudson goes so far as to state: 'The media are formally disconnected from other ruling agencies, because they must attend as much to their own legitimation as to the legitimation of the capitalist system as a whole' (1995: 270). They can ill afford to appear less well-informed, or more credulous, in other words, than their audience.

The propaganda model, and Reese and Shoemaker's hierarchy-of-influences model, adduced above, are sometimes conceived as antagonistic approaches but, Hackett contends, they share the salient characteristic, typical of 'Anglo-American' scholarship, of attributing 'linear causality' to flows of influence, whereby observable secondary effects in media can be attributed to primary generative forces operating above, behind and before them. More convincing, Hackett writes, are approaches derived from French scholarship – such as that of Foucault and Bourdieu – which conceive of power as decentred, and taking effect through differentiated arrangements that permeate social structures. These, he argues, allow for media to be viewed as 'a relatively autonomous institutional sphere'; one which 'articulates with relations of power,

knowledge and production more broadly, but which also has a certain logic of its own' (2007: 85).

As if to allow for this, Hanitzsch and Tenenboim-Weinblatt strip Reese and Shoemaker's categories of their anteriority, to devise a map of influences on journalistic content consisting of 'a nexus of forces that overlap and interact with each other, together producing either conducive or unfavourable conditions for conflict coverage [displaying characteristics of peace journalism]' (2012: 7). In it, influence from the level of the individual journalist can feed through into influences from any of the other levels at any time, combining – with issues arising from the properties of the conflict being reported – to yield multiple causation and interaction effects, exceeding and supplementing those allowed for in the original model of a 'hierarchy'.

Potential for implementing PJ as a remedial strategy

There are, then, ways to model journalistic agency that may disclose unexplored scope to prompt and cultivate substantive changes – in matters of technique, such as sourcing and styles of storytelling, as well as conceptual frames concerning the role and responsibilities of journalism in conflict – by working with journalists themselves. In the process, further insights could potentially be generated into the conditions of structure – both organisational and ideological – that may prove either conducive or unfavourable to the implementation of such changes.

PJ arose as a 'remedial' strategy (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005: 224), necessary because the representational conventions mapped by Galtung and Ruge (and later confirmed, in their essentials, by Harcup and O'Neill 2001) predicate a dominant stream of 'war journalism'. The strongest 'signals' of newsworthiness are discrete pulses of great 'amplitude' (Galtung and Ruge, 1965: 65), matching the frequency of news deadlines, dividing time into paradigmatic instalments. This instils a 'bias in favour of event over process' (Lynch and Galtung 2010: 191), which potentially influences discourse about conflict, both directly and indirectly, in favour of violence. It can lead to peace initiatives being downplayed, as Wolfsfeld observes: 'A peace process takes time to unfold and develop; journalists demand immediate results. Most of a peace process is marked by dull, tedious negotiations; journalists require drama' (1997: 67).

It can also make violence appear as a fitting and appropriate response to problems. Lynch and McGoldrick (2012a) played, to different audiences in the Philippines, two versions of a television news report about the conflict with the Communist New People's Army. The package as broadcast on a local TV station focused entirely on a violent event – the explosion of a landmine – whereas a re-worked version also included material about the process leading up to it: underlying contradictions in the conflict, and their effect in syntagmatic time, on the experience of people affected by it. Data from a narrative artefact, disclosing viewer responses as they watched, were themed according to Entman's framing model (1993). Most war journalism viewers defined the NPA itself as the problem, and proved receptive to violent and/or punitive treatment recommendations, whereas peace journalism viewers perceived 'shared problems', and sought treatment recommendations in the form of inclusive peace talks, addressing grievances and justice issues.

Galtung and Ruge further diagnose an ongoing bias in favour of elites, later confirmed by a range of sources, of which Bennett's indexing model (1990) is perhaps the best-known. This, too, may instil audience receptiveness to proposals for violent responses to conflict, if only because a groundswell for peace usually begins at lower levels, with leaders reluctant to 'go out on a limb'. Concentration on official sources may therefore serve to 'conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand' (Galtung, in Baumann, 1998: np). And the widespread journalistic practice of representing conflicts as consisting of 'two parties [contesting] one goal (win)' (ibid) may support assumptions that both face ultimate victory or defeat, making it 'impossible for either to propose any change in policy which does not, clearly and unequivocally, move that party further towards victory ... Each [therefore] has a readymade incentive to step up, or escalate, its efforts to win' (Lynch 2008: 64).

In the face of these prevalent conventions, imbricated as they are with the historically constructed economic and political interests of news industries, groups of journalists have sometimes evinced a desire to adjust their professional practice to give non-violent, cooperative conflict responses more of a chance to be heard and considered. 'Whether employed by state-controlled broadcasting corporations or editing weekly or daily newspapers surviving on street-corner sales, most of the journalists involved', in a typical

study involving journalists' organisations from several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 'said that they believe they have a vital role to play in the prevention and resolution of conflict. For many, the question was not *whether* they should be fulfilling that role, but rather *how* they could do so' (Onadipe and Lord 1999: 2).

Generally, to be accepted by journalists, answers to the latter question have to be compatible with a broadly defined remit of factual reporting – that is, without re-categorising journalism as advocacy. Patindol recounts the rapid growth, in the Philippines, of Pecojon, a professional network of editors and reporters mostly employed in mainstream news organisations. In the Pecojon conception, 'the peace journalist chooses what and how to report in such a way that opens spaces for alternative solutions to conflict other than violence and war *in the course of more truthful and responsible reporting*' (2010: 197, emphasis added).

Galtung's original PJ model draws distinctions, from the dominant mode of war journalism, in four chief domains. Peace journalism is oriented, in its agenda-setting and framing functions, towards peace and conflict (meaning the issue content of conflict), whereas war journalism is oriented towards war and violence. Instead of the dominant orientations towards propaganda, towards elites and to a preoccupation, when reporting conflicts, with assessing progress towards 'victory', peace journalism substitutes an orientation towards 'truth'; 'people-orientation', and 'solution-orientation' respectively (Galtung, in Baumann 1998: np).

The proposed dyad of 'truth' and 'propaganda' has occasioned considerable debate among both scholars (Kempf 2008) and professionals (Loyn 2008). Later, Lynch and McGoldrick (2012a) adopted, as an overarching set of 'headings' for a comparative study in audience responses, a summarising overview of scholarly sources in the field by Shinar (2007: 200). When researchers discuss peace journalism, and operationalise the model to derive criteria for the analysis of manifest media content, they mean reporting which:

1. explores backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, and presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray conflict in realistic terms, transparent to the audience;

2. gives voice to the views of all rival parties, not merely the leaders of two antagonistic 'sides';
3. airs creative ideas, from any source, for conflict resolution, development, peacemaking and peacekeeping;
4. exposes lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and revealing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties;
5. pays attention to peace stories and post-war developments.

The research material used in the audience response study was coded positively under the fourth heading if it contained 'cues for readers and audiences to develop a critical awareness of built-in interpretations, and equip[ped] them to form their own, notably by offering and drawing attention to vantage points from which to inspect dominant discourses from the outside' (Lynch 2008: 151).

There is, then, a robust model for an alternative approach to the dominant mode of journalism about conflict, compatible with journalistic role perceptions of factual reporting. Some of its important conceptual limitations have been explicitly addressed and resolved. It has been tried and tested, through its use in research as the basis both for content analysis and for gauging differential audience responses. The latter suggested its ideational 'credentials' across different mediascapes, as particular discursive nuances were categorised under a set of general headings, derived ultimately from Galtung's original model. War journalism attained its dominant position because of structural factors, arising out of systemic and economic influences on processes of news production. There are, however, ways to conceptualise the balance of structure and agency, in governing the content of news, which allow for the individual journalist to exert influence that interacts with, and in some ways counteracts, influences emanating from other levels.

Pointers for PJ research

Implicitly, then, the PJ field is in need of further experimental research, to ascertain whether, how and how far professional journalists can implement a version of peace journalism adapted to address the operative distinctions in the important conflict stories of their own mediascape. These questions beg to be addressed through longitudinal studies of journalists and their journalism as they

report on issues of conflict; then encounter the principles of peace journalism, and have a chance to absorb its ideas and methods; then attempt to apply them in their ongoing work. That is to describe a labour-intensive process capable of generating substantive 'before' and 'after' comparisons, which will almost certainly therefore involve a relatively small number of cases.

Studies in content analysis, in which the PJ model has been operationalised to derive evaluative criteria, have occasionally identified 'infrequent yet rich "seams" in which resources of resistance can be mined' (Roy and Ross 2011: 209): reminiscent of what Freedman, following Lukacs, calls a 'moment', when 'critical media content [becomes more likely to be] generated' (2009: 59). These have typically been linked to particular circumstances of timing, of mediascape and of broader strategic and discursive frameworks – such as emerging ambiguities over India's strategic orientation *vis-à-vis* the US-led 'war on terrorism', in the example examined by Roy and Ross, quoted here.

That is to say, opportunities to implement PJ cannot be removed from context, including the densely woven web of relationships in which a complex discursive practice, such as daily news, is unavoidably embedded. To allow for the particularities generated by these relationships, a longitudinal study involving journalists as participants would have to include some from developing countries directly affected by issues of violent social conflict – the traditional milieu of social movement activity around PJ – and others from donor countries, typically dealing with conflict issues that are often more highly coded, and therefore appear more diffuse. Before-and-after content analysis would enable comparisons in terms of the components of PJ that are 'delivered' in practice, while supplementary subject interviews would disclose the incidence of constraints that could then be categorised using Reese and Shoemaker's levels as a set of headings.

A research design constructed along these lines would create a large number of potential variables, which – together with the necessarily small number of subjects – implies some form of comparative qualitative analysis, if reliable findings, capable of yielding diagnostic and predictive inputs to decision-making in a field such as media development aid, were to be generated. It would allow appraisals of whether, how and how far journalists who undergo

training can apply PJ, and in what respects; and fill in a picture of what constitutes, respectively, conducive and unfavourable conditions for its implementation.

By 'journalists', I mean those working for or contributing to news media geared towards 'internally defined' communication goals (De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach 1989: 319). Some PJ researchers have urged a switch of emphasis, in both scholarship and advocacy. Instead of seeking to detect or catalyse marginal reforms within the existing idiom and range of mainstream news, 'the tradition of radical journalism [openly] committed' to externally defined goals of 'progressive social change' offers a more propitious context, Keeble argues, especially given the decentering of journalism attributable to 'the internet and the blogosphere' (2010: 50-55).

However, Curran draws attention to survey evidence showing that 'television is still the dominant news source', and points out that 'leading news organisations have colonised cyberspace', to explain 'why the internet ... has [of itself] changed so little' (2012). Lynch et al point out that 'even an iconic new media phenomenon such as WikiLeaks' entered into 'formal arrangements with professional news organisations ... to attain due prominence and salience for the disclosures in its leaked diplomatic cables', thus benefiting from the 'reputational resources' bestowed by 'traditional safeguards [such as] trained observers [and] edited copy' (2011: 26). And Calcutt and Hammond address 'both journalists and their critical friends in academia', to advocate a renewed commitment to 'social truths' as the remit of journalism, thus distinguishing its professional output from the profusion of communication compiled without such filters, which should instead be regarded as being on the level of 'interpersonal relations' (2011: 8).

Hackett considers the credentials of 'alternative media' as a 'challenger paradigm', arguing that 'alternative media [allow PJ to] bypass dominant media by creating a parallel field' (2011: 36) – the word, 'parallel' implying that they never meet. This is to reckon without some of the rapid and widespread ongoing changes to the economic structure of journalism, however. The US-based editor, Tina Brown, is credited with coining the phrase, 'the gig economy', to reflect a growing trend in increasingly casualised media employment markets: workers depending, not on traditional jobs but on sets of 'free-floating

projects, consultancies, and part-time bits and pieces' (Brown 2009).

Career prospects for the students and (often) young journalists who have, over the years, been typical participants in PJ workshops, are likely to take shape under similar conditions. For the purposes of this paper, two examples are briefly considered, of journalists who have been through PJ training programmes and subsequently sought and created opportunities to communicate their newfound understanding through gigs in different branches of media, and bring it to bear on responses to conflict issues pressing on their own lives and prospects and those of their communities. Their experiences and perspectives are presented as a fund of clues, that experimental research following participants before, through and after exposure to PJ approaches as they absorb them and attempt to carry them out, would indeed be pursuing a promising line of enquiry in seeking to establish the feasibility of promulgating peace journalism.

Carol Arguillas – Philippines

Carol Arguillas was Davao bureau chief for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the country's biggest and best-regarded newspaper, which forged its reputation in the pro-democracy movement that brought down the Marcos dictatorship in the mid-1980s (Coronel 2000). She and her 15-strong team resigned *en masse*, in late 2001, to establish the Mindanao News and Information Cooperative Centre (MNICC), and its web-based journalism service, Mindanews. This, too, was a remedial strategy, conceived in response to what they saw as a dangerously distorted picture generated by sensational media coverage: 'Mention Mindanao and the word evokes memories of war, kidnapping and massacre' (Arguillas, 2010). The harmful image is attributed to influence from the organisational and ideological levels: most media are controlled, ultimately, from Manila, where the settled view of political and business elites is of Mindanao as recalcitrant and backward. However, there is, she told a Sydney conference years later, 'much more to Mindanao than this', including notably 'so many peace-building initiatives' in response to the multiple conflict issues besetting the island and its peoples.

Initially, their 'big, big dream' was to set up their own newspaper, but instead of trying to raise the necessary capital to start one, they succeeded in obtaining donor funds to

set up the Mindanews website: 'Thanks to the internet, we could share with the rest of the world our stories' (ibid) They obtained critiques of existing media coverage from a range of community sources, including voices from within the subjugated Moro (Muslim) and Lumad (Indigenous) communities, with particular reference to media roles in conflict: 'While we are reporters and disseminators of news, we are also major stake-holders in the quest for peace in Mindanao.' In response to the feedback they received, Mindanews added, to the traditional 'five "w's and h"' of the journalist's remit (telling the who, what, where, when why and how of a story), 'three 'c's – context, characters and consequences' (ibid.)

In January 2003, as the new service was becoming established, Carol attended an intensive course in conflict-resolving media, coordinated by the present author (with Annabel McGoldrick), part of the Sydney Summer School of the University of Sydney, with funding from AusAID, the Australian government's official development agency. Here, she was introduced to PJ, then in its early days as a reform movement and proposition in scholarly research, and immediately identified it as a set of analytical precepts and practical methods capable of complementing and amplifying the approach Mindanews had adopted, enabling its further development.

Referring to Shinar's five headings – drawn up later as part of a retrospective appraisal of published research in the PJ field – Mindanews' three 'c's find clear echoes. The first – adding backgrounds and contexts to supplement surface narratives of events in conflict – offers a direct read-across. Shinar's second and third headings – ensuring a full range of voices beyond the typical dyadic 'clash of leaders', and picking up peace initiatives of whatever kind, from any quarter – denote stories typically requiring 'characters' to tell them. The principle that journalists should consider the possible consequences of their reporting, and feed that consideration into their decision-making, belongs to what Lynch and McGoldrick – in the prime iterative text of the field, which was in a late stage of drafting by the 2003 summer school – call an 'ethic of responsibility' (2005: 218), enabled by employing techniques of conflict analysis to identify the 'foreseeable' ramifications of different modes of coverage.

MNICC set out to 'influence journalists of like mind and heart, but belonging to other media outlets' (Arguillas 2010), convening a

series of Mindanao Media Summits, which collaborated with the emerging Pecojon network, adduced above, to engender critical self-reflection. Mindanews also functions as a news agency, supplying copy to many mainstream news outlets and thereby typically projecting, into public debates around conflict issues, perspectives and accounts that would otherwise risk being marginalised: community voices, members of people's organisations and leaders at various levels of non-state armed groups and their respective political 'wings'. In these ways, reports of conflict created in conditions conducive to PJ can exert influence in contexts where conditions are less favourable, exemplifying a promulgation strategy advocated by Mogeckwu: 'To reach out across the divide between the parallel fields of alternative and mainstream media to work hand-in-hand with existing journalism practice' (2011: 258).

Vanessa Bassil – Lebanon

Vanessa Bassil took part in a PJ training programme organised by the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, an NGO in Lebanon, in late 2009, with trainee and practising journalists recruited from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Palestinian Territories as well as locally. She immediately began collecting 'gigs' through which to implement the lessons learned. One was a presentation that she adapted for delivery to differently themed youth conferences in locations including India, Malta and Rhodes, then subsequently on a special Ted Talks festival organised in Beirut by another trainee from the same workshop, Sara Sibai.

In it, Vanessa reflects on her growing concern over her own prospects as she completed a double degree in Journalism and Political Science at the Lebanese University, preparing for a career in a mediascape characterised by a high degree of political parallelism:

I didn't want to be part of the current atmosphere in journalism [in which] sectarian newspaper headlines exaggerate and exacerbate conflict issues to the point where reader impressions are: 'Pack up your bags, leave now: World War III has just started, right out of Lebanon' (Bassil 2012a).

She goes on to speculate on the possible deleterious influence on efforts in Lebanon to negotiate a complex set of political hazards in a society divided along multiple religious and confessional lines: 'This exaggeration puts

people on edge, causes people to hate each other, causes people not to live in peace' (ibid). She seized on PJ, she goes on to explain, as a way to fashion a greater degree of agency for herself: 'Peace journalism allows journalists to choose their stories and to know how to write about them.'

Vanessa began to place columns in both commercial and donor-funded media. A series of articles in 'one of the polarised newspapers' of her homeland focused on a residential course for a group of young Lebanese men and women from different sects and religions: 'Exploring the differences, seeking knowledge coupled with a spirit of openness and willingness to accept the other' (Bassil 2012b). The story appealed to the 'chief editor' purely on the basis that they had successfully lived together – albeit only for a short period – without major rows breaking out. It was – on Vanessa's account – adjudged newsworthy on its sheer novelty value, echoing an observation by Galtung and Ruge: 'The more a signal has been tuned in to, the more probable that a very different kind of signal will be recorded as worth listening to next time' (1965: 65).

Another article, 'The road to conflict transformation in Lebanon', epitomised the potential for peace journalism, enabled by the structural conditions in one gig, to inform and influence others. Commissioned and published by the Common Ground news service in Lebanon, it was translated and republished by as many as 29 Arabic, English, French and Urdu sources, including the *Al Arabiya* English-language website, which displayed the piece prominently on its home page. In it, she explained how young people from different sections of Lebanese society used a specially designed board game to practise resolving differences without escalation, concentrating first on contexts other than the explicitly political:

Because political conflict is so sensitive, the approach focuses on personal conflict, which youth can apply to political conflicts later. The groups chose the scenarios that play out in the board game based on their own experiences in romantic relationships, with family dynamics, and in student-teacher conflicts (Bassil 2012c).

Vanessa extended the reach and amplified the potential influence of such material through her skill in building a sizeable personal audience on social media, notably

her Facebook page. It illustrates the potential identified by Castells, that an 'age of mass self-communication' is enabling 'a historic shift of the public sphere from the institutional realm to [a] new communication space [in which] social movements can intervene more decisively' (2007: 237) via multiplying media platforms. Vanessa's presentation in Rhodes won her a useful prize – an expenses-paid internship with the Russian news agency, ITAR-TASS, with spells at their bureaux in Paris and Cairo. While posted in Egypt, Vanessa found, and reported on, young activists who were promoting dialogue at street level to build resources in Egyptian society to reject sectarianism and press for liberal democratic reforms. She was implementing, now in the setting of international media, methods and approaches she had developed, in response to her PJ training, in different settings.

Pointers for media development

Alan Davis, of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, proposes a three-stage approach to the monitoring and evaluation of media development interventions. The 'benefit transferred' describes the content of the intervention – such as a training programme – itself; the 'benefit applied' refers to the extent to which trainees are then able to carry out new methods or insights from the training, and the 'benefit beyond' indicates 'the influence ... on the world outside' the media themselves. Davis goes on to identify the potential, especially if this last benefit can be demonstrated, for 'the interests of many donors [to] start to appear' (2007: 60).

At the same time, the ongoing upheavals in the economic structures of media, referenced briefly above, have led some industry observers to conclude that the medium-term future will see journalism increasingly supported by non-commercial means: 'There will be more non-profit news organisations, driven by several kinds of donation – direct cash subsidy by philanthropies and other donor organisations ... user donations of cash ... and in-kind donations of the time and talents of a particular community' (Anderson et al 2012: 107). If all three of the PJ research questions, listed at the outset of this article, can be substantively answered, then clearly, on Davis' logic, some of this benison will become more likely to be devoted to it.

The stories of Carol Arguillas and Vanessa Bassil represent anecdotal evidence – which is all there is, for the moment – that exposure

to peace journalism ideas, precepts, methods and approaches can actually lead and enable journalists to change the content of their reporting of conflict. Both exploited opportunities made available by web-based (including social) media, to enjoy the benefit applied; and there are some pointers, at least, of crossover into mainstream media, through their own journalism and in congress with others working elsewhere in the industry. They both managed to parlay their success in the gig economy to enhance their own agency and exert greater influence over the content of their reporting – bypassing, where necessary, the influence transmitted from other levels, such as the Manila view of Mindanao or the sectarian structure of the Lebanese press.

Further study is necessary to establish a sturdy evidential basis for suppositions that unexplored scope exists to ‘provide opportunities’, through journalism, ‘for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict’ (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005: 5), and to prompt its further exploration by expanding journalistic agency – thus delivering both a ‘benefit applied’ and a ‘benefit beyond’. If such suppositions turn out to be justified, then the case for investing in peace journalism, by providing various forms of donor support, will gain appreciably in strength and urgency.

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