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Constructive conflict coverage – A social-psychological research and development program

Kurzfassung: Friedensjournalismus ist ein relativ junges Forschungsfeld der Psychologie, das sich erst im letzten Jahrzehnt des vergangenen Jahrhunderts herauskristallisiert hat. Aufbauend auf Ergebnissen der Sozialpsychologie (Gruppenprozesse, Sozialer Einfluss, Konfliktforschung, Einstellungsveränderung), der Propaganda- und Feindbildforschung sowie auf Modellen des Konfliktmanagements und der konstruktiven Transformation von Konflikten, wird untersucht, welche Einflussfaktoren den eskalationsorientierten Bias herkömmlicher Kriegsberichterstattung bedingen und wie dieser in eine de-eskalations- bzw. friedensorientierten Konfliktberichterstattung transformiert werden kann. Der vorliegende Aufsatz skizziert dieses Forschungs- und Entwicklungsprogramm in sechs Abschnitten: (1) Erkenntnisinteresse, (2) Aufgabenstellung, (3) Theoretische Grundannahmen (4) Kriegsdiskurse vs. Friedensdiskurse, (5) Ein zwei Stufen Modell, und (6) Journalistentrainings.

Abstract: Peace journalism is a relatively new research area in psychology which emerged in the last decade of the last century. Building on findings from social psychology (group processes, social influence, conflict research, attitude change), propaganda, and enemy concept research and on models of conflict management and the constructive transformation of conflicts, an investigation is made of the factors that determine the escalation oriented bias of conventional war reporting, and of how this can be transformed into de-escalation and/or peace oriented conflict reporting. This paper provides an outline of this research and development program in six sections: (1) Interest Perception, (2) Task Formulation, (3) Basic Theoretical Assumptions, (4) War Discourse vs. Peace Discourse, (5) a Two Step Model, and (6) Journalist Training.

1. Interest Perception

The media were for a long time mainly considered to be channels for the dissemination of news. Only recently has there been a change in way they are viewed. Today the media is seen as taking a more complex role for foreign policy (Naveh, 1998, 2002). They make a vital contribution to the construction of the environment in which foreign policy is carried out. This applies to both the national and the international media. The national and international discourses are closely interwoven and journalism plays a key role in this.

The view that journalists are not simply neutral reporters and that they have an effect on political events has also strongly influenced the self image of journalism and has led to the emergence of two opposing tendencies which try to change the nature of journalistic responsibility.

The first, a new school of journalism called the "journalism of attachment" (Bell, 1997) is already established. This assumes that, in view of the atrocities associated with modern warfare, journalists must not distance themselves from the events they are reporting. Journalists must side with the victims of the war and explicitly insist that something be done. The trouble with this "journalism of attachment" is that it largely foregoes conflict analysis, sees war as moral antagonism between "good" and "evil", and its own task as putting moral pressure on the international community of nations to take sides and intervene using military means. This moral imperative allows journalists to abandon their professional rules and standards of truthfulness in the name of a higher moral duty. The reporting of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is full of examples of how journalists attempt to do justice to their noble moral goals by both suppressing and fabricating news (Hume, 1997; Kempf, 2000a).

The second of the above tendencies is (still) mainly an academic project. Influenced by the Gulf War and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, peace researchers and media scientists have begun to think about how the influence of the media can be used for the prevention and constructive transformation of conflicts. (Galtung, 1998; Kempf, 1996, 1999a; Kempf & Gutiérrez, 2001; Luostarinen, 2002a; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). An attempt has been made, in the form of training courses for journalists, to communicate the findings of peace science to journalists and to use these to improve journalistic work. Starting with the Conflict and Peace courses held in 1997/98 at Taplow Court near London, where an attempt was made to do this, such further education has recently been provided by, among others, Transcend (see <http://www.transzend.org/>), the Conflict Resolution Network Canada (see <http://www.crnetwork.ca/>) and within the International Civilian Peace-keeping and Peace-building Training Program (IPT)¹ at the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR). Here the "peace journalism" project looks critically both at the role of the media as catalysts of force (Kempf, 1994; Kempf & Luostarinen, 2002; Kempf & Schmidt-Regener, 1998; Luostarinen & Kempf, 2000; Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001) and at the professional ethical norms of journalism.

2. Task Formulation

The object of this paper is to find out what psychology can achieve within the framework of such a project. At least four questions can be asked here.

1. What are the social psychological mechanisms that allow journalists – with the best of intentions – to become catalysts of force?
2. If journalists succeed in resisting these mechanisms, do they then have any chance of influencing public opinion?
3. What should such a peace journalism look like anyway?
4. How could such peace journalism be implemented?

With regard to the first question, the well-known findings of social psychology about how the cognitive representation of conflicts (cf. Deutsch, 1976; Kempf, 2000b) and the social structure of groups (cf. Sherif & Sherif, 1969, Deutsch, 1976) change during the process of conflict escalation can be cited.

However, in addition to these general social psychological mechanisms the specific conditions of the production of news must also be taken into account. These include structural factors such as the kind of medium, existing formats, spaces, (transmission) times, news selection criteria, editorial procedures and expectations, the economics of the media and their connections with politics and the military as well as the social climate, that, as a result of the historical, cultural, and geographic proximity to the conflict region and/or the participants in the conflict among other things, exercises pressure to take a position. These institutional and social factors are further intensified by the situation at the location of the conflict. Available, or lacking, infrastructure and logistics, accessibility, credibility and the ability to check sources are

¹ The ITP program is not primarily directed towards journalists, it is open to peace workers from all professions.

just as influential for reporting as the safety situation in the crisis region, the dangers the journalists themselves face when they report from the war scene, and the group dynamics among the accredited journalists on the spot (Bläsi, 2002).

With regard to the second question, according to Jaeger (2002a), on the one hand the theories of Moskovici (1979, 1980), about the influence of minorities can be cited. On the other hand, however, account must also be taken of the fact that the opportunities journalists have of reaching the public are limited because of the group processes already mentioned. Censorship and self-censorship of the media are only the tip of the iceberg. As is to be expected, the social pressure that journalists face is strongest in those societies directly involved in the conflict. But it can also be quite strong even in societies which are (yet) not involved militarily as can be seen from the hostility Peter Handke (1996) was exposed to as a result of his report "Justice for Serbia" during the Bosnian conflict. Those Greek journalists, who during the Kosovo war departed from the conventional anti-NATO and pro-Serbian discourse that was characteristic of the Greek media and Greek society, found themselves in a similar situation, although the other way round (Kondopoulou, 2002).

War and/or Violence Journalism	Peace and/or Conflict Journalism
<p><i>I. War and/or violence oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the conflict arena. 2 parties, 1 aim (victory) war, general zero sum orientation. • Restricted space and time. Reasons and solution sought on the battle field: "who threw the first stone?" • Wars made obscure. • "We-them" journalism. Propaganda, vote for <i>us</i>. • <i>They</i> are seen as the problem. Focus on who gets the upper hand in the war. • Dehumanization of the <i>others</i>, the more so, the worse the weapons. • <i>Reactive</i>: only violence is worth reporting. • Only considers the visible effects of violence (Dead, wounded and material damage) 	<p><i>I. Peace and/or conflict oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigates the formation of conflict. X parties, y aims, z objects general win-win orientation. • Open space and time. Causes and solutions are looked for everywhere, also in history and culture. • Make conflicts transparent. • All parties are interviewed. Capacity for empathy, understanding. • Conflict/war seen as the problem. Focus on creative conflict solutions. • Humanization of all sides, the more so the worse the weapons • <i>Preventive</i>: prevention of violence/war. • Focus on the invisible effects of violence (traumas and reputation, structural and cultural damage).
<p><i>II. Propaganda oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposes the untruths of the <i>others</i>. • Supports <i>our</i> cover-up attempts/lies. 	<p><i>III. Truth oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposes untruths of all sides. • Discloses all cover-up attempts
<p><i>III. Elite oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on <i>our</i> suffering; the men who make up the military elite; is their mouth piece • Names <i>their</i> wrongdoers. • Stresses that only the elite can make peace 	<p><i>IV. People oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on all suffering; suffering of women, old people, children, gives the voiceless a voice. • Names all wrongdoers. • Stresses peace tendencies in the population.
<p><i>IV. Victory oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace = victory + armistice • Conceals peace initiatives as long as it is not clear who is winning. • Treaties and institutions are important; a controlled society. • After the war is over turns to the next source of conflict; goes back when the old one breaks out again 	<p><i>IV. Solution oriented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace = freedom from violence + creativity • Points to freedom initiatives, also to prevent the expansion of the war. • Structure and culture are important: a peaceful society. • Reports about the post war phase: conflict solution, reconstruction, reconciliation.

Table 1:
 War Journalism v. Peace Journalism (according to Galtung, 1998).

The third question is normative and makes suggestions about what peace journalism ought to be. Thus Galtung (1998), for example, makes a distinction between violence oriented war journalism and/or violence journalism on the one hand and solution oriented peace journalism and/or conflict journalism on the other (cf. Table 1). Of course such suggestions cannot simply be plucked out of the air, they require a theoretical basis which in this specific case can be provided by Galtung's Transcend model of the constructive transformation of conflicts (cf. Graf & Bilek, 2000). However, in addition to the theoretical basis of the suggestions, there is also the question of whether they are realizable.

This leads directly to our fourth question and, as with the previous questions, it is not only a contribution from psychology that is required here. Thus Galtung, for example, shows that the criteria for the selection of news already form a cognitive framework that permits a picture of reality to emerge which divides the world into elite countries and periphery countries– and thus at the same time into good and evil. Terrible things occur at the periphery: catastrophes, violence, war, and the members of the elite in the rich countries bring help and peace (cf. Galtung, 1998). The implementation of a peace journalism therefore also makes a fundamental change in way the media functions. As this necessarily implies a change in the journalistic viewpoint, and with it a change in the journalists' perceptions, this question of media sociology, too, is very closely associated with social-psychological questions. Fundamental peace journalism research is necessarily transdisciplinary.

3. Basic Theoretical Assumptions

From the point of view of psychology, the controversy about war journalism vs peace journalism is concerned with firstly aggressive interaction, second with the construction of social reality, and third with the question of the role journalism and the media (can) play in this process. This is based on the idea that the actions of the conflicting parties are not determined by the objectively defined conflict situation (i.e., the actual incompatibility of their rights, intentions and actions) but rather by their subjectively defined perceptions of the conflict. People do not act because of the objective nature of things in their environment but because of the meaning these have for them (Blumer,1973).

Meanings are the result of a social negotiation process and are constituted in the social discourse – here in the discourse within and between the conflict partners. In the case of political conflict, the media take on an important mediating role and this is why warring parties always try to ensure that media reporting serves their propaganda aims. It would nevertheless be quite wrong to look at the influence of the media in the framework of a simple stimulus-response model (cf. Jaeger, 2003). The making of meaning is an interactive process in which the media is only one actor among many.

Journalists are themselves members of society and are subject not only to certain institutional pressures but also to the same social-psychological pressures as other people, particularly the distortions of the perception of conflicts which, so to speak, adjust automatically with their own involvement in the escalating conflict (cf. Table 2).

It is obvious that a distortion of the perception of the conflict is involved when we recall that every conflict affects the rights and aims of all participants and that conflicts are basically open to either being resolved cooperatively to everyone's benefit (win-win model), or resolved competitively (win-lose model) where each party tries to achieve its own rights and goals at the expense of those of the other. We can thus speak of a distortion of the perception of the conflict as soon as perception of the conflict excludes one of the two options for its solution. Therefore, according to Deutsch (1976), there are competitive distortions of perception as well as cooperative ones.

Escalation step	Cooperation	Perspective divergence	Competition	Confrontation	War
Conceptualization of the conflict	Win-win orientation	Bias towards win-lose but win-win still possible	Win-lose (possibly defused by rules of fairness)	Win-lose (increased by threat strategies)	Zero sum orientation. Force as the appropriate means of solving conflict, emphasis on military values, transfer from win-lose to lose-lose
Valuation of rights and aims	Mutual respect of the rights of all participants and emphasis on common interests	Focus on own rights and needs (including common interests), the rights of others, however, vanish from the field of vision	Focus on own rights and needs; common interests, however, vanish from the field of vision	Emphasis on own rights and needs combined with questioning the rights of the opponent and condemning his intentions.	Idealization of own rights and needs, at the same time contesting the rights of the opponent, demonization of his intentions and denial of common interests
Evaluation of actions	Consideration of the benefits of each of the parties	Focus on own benefits (also those resulting from the mutual relationship)	Focus on own benefits	Justification of own actions and condemnation of those of the opponent	Idealization of own actions and demonization of the actions of the opponent
Emotional involvement	Empathy and mutual trust	Conflict between threat and trust	Focus on own threat, that of the opponent disappears from the field of vision, mutual trust is lost	Emphasis on own strength and the danger from the opponent creates a delicate balance between threat and confidence in victory; the threat of the opponent is actively denied; mistrust exists	Balance between threat and confidence in victory continues to exist, mistrust directed also against neutral third parties who attempt to mediate in the conflict, indignation against the war turns into indignation against the opponent
Identification offer	Mutual	Self-centered	Dualistic	Antagonistic	Polarized

Table 2:
 Distortion of the Perception of Conflict during the Escalation of Conflicts (according to Kempf, 1999b).

To understand the role of these distortions of perception in the development of aggressive interactions, it is useful to introduce some conceptual rigor here. Specifically, the word "aggression" is used in at least three different senses (Kempf, 1995).

- In the first sense "aggression" is much like "attack". This is the sense in which the word aggression is mainly used in everyday speech, and also in the United Nations Charter – the aggressor is the one who attacks. As described in Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) aggressor-defender model, the others therefore become the defenders.
- In the second sense "aggression" is much like achieving your own aim against the wishes or at the cost of others. This is the sense that the word aggression is used in much of peace research and also in biology, and it corresponds with its etymological origin in the Latin "aggredior". The capacity for aggression in this sense of the word is a basic requirement without which no organism and no species could survive. It is this understanding of aggression, too, that underlies Pruitt and Rubin's conflict-spiral model and also their model of structural change.
- In the third sense "aggression" is injuring another. This is the sense the word aggression has assumed in behaviorism and still characterizes the majority of psychological aggression research (cf. e.g., Schmid, 2003). It is more or less synonymous with individual violence. This concept of aggression is not very useful for the analysis of the dynamics of conflict, however, which is why A. Mummedey (1982), for example, suggested giving up the concept of individual aggression completely and instead talk only about aggressive interactions.

The problem peace research considers is how force can be avoided without damaging the ability to achieve aims. Therefore, here too, the concept of conflict escalation does not necessarily have a negative connotation from the start and in some cases it can be necessary for conflicts to escalate a little at first before they can be dealt with by constructive transformation (cf. Müller & Schweitzer, 2000).

The escalation of conflicts without using force, however, is also a dangerous undertaking and can at any time turn into escalation with force. The reason is that conflicts become an autonomous process as soon as they are dealt with competitively (Kempf, 1993), as happens in Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) conflict-spiral model. Whatever one party does to achieve its rights and aims is done at the expense of the rights and aims of another party which must defend itself against such an attack. And whatever the latter now does to defend its aims at the expense of the former, limits the rights and aims of that party and will be seen as an attack, and so on.

The escalation of the conflict will thus be driven by a twofold divergence of perspectives.

- The first divergence of perspective favors the change from cooperation to competition in dealing with conflict. While we view our own actions in terms of intentions, we experience the actions of the other primarily through their results and we must first interpret the intentions behind these actions or find out about them by means of communication (Kempf, 2000b).
- The second divergence of perspective accelerates the escalation process by encouraging us to use more and more drastic means to achieve our own rights and aims. It results from underestimating our own behaviour's potential to do damage and injure and overestimating that of the opponent's behaviour. On the premise that you have to give as good as you get this must lead almost inevitably to an escalation of violence (Fuchs 1993).

The distortions of perception summarized in Table 2 thus take on the role of legitimating conflict behaviour and function as the catalysts of the escalation process. Focusing on own rights and needs while at the same time condemning the actions of the opponent, and so on, makes it easier to jump from simple competition to a confrontation where the parties now attempt to enforce their own aims. Justifying the confrontation by emphasizing one's own rights and needs while at the same time questioning the rights of the opponent, condemning his intentions, and so on, makes the switch from confrontation to war easier. Here the conflict is reduced to a zero sum game in which there is now only one aim – to win the conflict even by using force (Galtung 1998) – and this is justified by idealizing one's own rights and demonizing those of the opponent. If the escalation process cannot be stopped, it ends up in a total war in which the only thing that matters is not to be the loser (lose-lose model) (Glasl, 1994).

4. War Discourse versus Peace Discourse

The distortions of perception shown in Table 2 affect both the conceptualization of the conflict and the assessment of the rights, aims, and actions of the conflicting parties and the inducement for emotional involvement in the conflict. As products of the social construction of reality they can also only be deconstructed again in the social discourse. This transformation of the social discourse into a peace discourse involves more than just a change in the perception of the conflict and/or the reporting of its published perception which is brought into the social discourse. What is involved is primarily the direction taken by the questions associated with conflict. While the war discourse turns on the questions "who is the aggressor?" and "how can he be made to stop?", the key questions in the peace discourse are "what are the objects of the conflict?" and "how can they be transformed in a way that permits a satisfactory solution for all parties?". Over and above the perception of the conflict, this also has an effect on the identification offers that are presented in the

discourse, on the truth orientation of the discourse partners, and on the motivation logic which the conflict unfolds (cf. Table 3).

People are certainly well aware of this in the war propaganda and therefore attempt to influence the social discourse at all of these levels (cf. Luostarinen, 2002b). The aim of this propaganda is to maintain a delicate balance between threat and confidence in victory and thus to strengthen the readiness of the own soldiers to fight and the population's will to hold out. The enemy must appear to be so dangerous that all possible force must be used to stop him and, at the same time, be seen to be so vulnerable that the certainty of the own victory does not vanish.

As war discourse is marked by such contradictions it can only be deconstructed with extreme difficulty. As any kind of conclusions at all can be drawn from contradictory premises, there are, for one thing, logical reasons for this. And the conclusions the conflicting parties usually draw from them are justification of the war, the justice of their own aims, the delegitimation of the enemy, etc.

The internal logic of the war thus becomes circular and can only be broken up from a critical distance from outside the conflict. As dealing with social conflicts on a cooperative basis is associated with internal conflicts, however, there are also emotional and/ or motivational, which oppose this. (Kempf, 2001b). To get involved in cooperation with the conflict partner always means living with uncertainty – "Can I still trust the other or am I giving him an advantage by doing this?". And this internal conflict will be intensified by the divergence of perspectives discussed above – "Can I divulge my aim to the other or will I injure myself by doing so?".

	War discourse	Peace discourse
Key questions	Who is the aggressor? How can he be made to stop?	What is the object of the conflict? How can it be transformed?
Identification offer	Polarized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humanizes "our" political and military leaders and dehumanizes those of the other side • humanizes "our" soldiers and dehumanizes those of the other side • humanizes "our" victims and ignores or dehumanizes those of the other side • humanizes "our" civilian population for their loyalty and willingness to make sacrifices and dehumanizes that of the other side because of their nationalism • humanizes the anti war opposition of the other side and ignores or dehumanizes the own as traitors. 	Universal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoids identification with political and military leaders on each side • avoids identification with military personnel on each side • humanizes (at least respects) victims on each side • humanizes (at least respects) civilian society and avoids identification with warmongers on each side • humanizes (at least respects) peace forces on each side
Truth orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sees truth simply as raw material and harmonizes the frames of reference • tells stories about "our" heroic deeds and the atrocities of the other side • construes the context of the conflict as insoluble antagonism • founds "our" values by means of political, historical, and ethnic myths 	Is unconditionally committed to standards of truth and also exposes inconsistencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tells also stories about "our" atrocities and the suffering of the other side • explores the opportunities for a constructive transformation of the conflict • deconstructs mythological interpretations and looks for common values
Motivation logic	Presents the war as a barrier against destruction and/or as a bridge to a better future	Focuses on the price of victory, the destruction of cultural, economic and social values
Conflict reporting	Escalation oriented with respect to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conceptualization of the conflict • assessment of the rights, aims, and actions of the conflict partners • inducement of emotional involvement in the conflict 	De-escalation oriented with respect to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conceptualization of the conflict • assessment of the rights, aims and actions of the conflict partners • inducement of emotional involvement in the conflict

Table 3:
 War Discourse vs Peace Discourse (according to Kempf, 1999b).

On the other hand this internal conflict is resolved when the social conflict is interpreted as a competitive process. The widespread tendency to deal with conflicts competitively can, in this respect, also be seen as avoidance of the internal conflict associated with a cooperative solution to conflict. Since this tendency is so widespread, the internal conflict is even stronger for the conflicting parties. And the stronger the inner conflict is for them, the greater is the temptation to avoid it by attempting to win the conflict at the expense of the other.

The media could counteract the enormous dynamic that conflicts develop by focusing on the common interests of the parties to the conflict and keeping in mind the common benefits the parties could gain by maintaining a cooperative relationship. However, for journalism this would mean continuing to be trapped in that internal conflict from which the parties in the conflict have already freed themselves. The feverish search for good and evil that the media engage in once they are aware of conflicts can, in this respect, also be seen as a liberating blow which now releases journalism, too, from the burden of the internal conflict. And foregoing this secondary gain is no easier for journalists than it is for the other members of society.

5. A Two Step Model

Because polarized ideas of conflict seem so convincing and exercise such moral pressure to take sides, their effects continue to be felt long after the war itself has ended. Particularly in long lasting, uncontrollable conflicts, the distorted perceptions deepen into basic societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 1998), which include, besides delegitimation of the enemy, a positive self image, belief in the justice of own aims and own victim role, the resulting (national) safety needs, and the belief in peace as the highest aim of society.

Through this the implementation problem becomes aggravated in two different ways.

1. Because journalists are not outside society, they are themselves members of it and generally have the same basic convictions as the rest of society, they must reflect critically on these convictions and question those interpretations of reality that, as a result of these convictions, have the greatest plausibility.
2. Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance arouses doubt whether dissonant information which is incompatible with these basic convictions will be accepted or rather dismissed by the reader/listener, and the more so, the more this information departs from the dominant social reality.

Kempf (2001a) therefore suggests using a two step procedure for deconstructing war discourse (cf. Table 3), for breaking down the war determined distortion of the perception of conflict (cf. Table 2), and for transforming the violence oriented war journalism into a conflict oriented peace journalism (cf. Table 1).

The first step is called "de-escalation oriented conflict reporting" (cf. Table 4) and broadly coincides with what is usually called quality journalism. It is characterized by neutrality and critical distance from all parties to the conflict. De-escalation oriented conflict reporting goes beyond the professional norms only to the extent that the journalists' competence in conflict theory bears fruit and the conflict remains open to a peaceful settlement (win-win orientation as an option, questioning of force as an appropriate means of resolving the conflict, questioning of military values, and exploration of conflict information).

This is, of course, still a long way from peace journalism in Galting's sense, but it clearly goes beyond conventional war reporting. Thus, before the start of the ground offensive in the Gulf war, Gorbachev's peace initiative and Saddam Hussein's readiness to accept the peace plan and withdraw from Kuwait, were certainly reported by the western media, but at the same time they were subordinated to the military logic, devalued, and rejected. The headings of relevant newspaper articles were "USA troubled over ceasefire" (Aftenposten, 21-02-91), "Soviet will in the arena again" (Aftenposten, 22-02-91) or "Worst solution imaginable" (Südkurier, 23-02-91) (cf. Kempf and Reimann, 2002). And attempts to achieve a solution to the conflict without using force during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina got hardly any support from the international press. The military intervention scenario was preferred and leading representatives of the media are today still proud of having convinced the public (particularly the American public), made possible the NATO intervention in Bosnia, and thus contributed to the ending of the war (Luostarinen and Kempf, 2000).

	De-escalation oriented conflict reporting	Solution oriented conflict reporting
Conceptualization of the conflict	Exploration of the conflict formation with a win-win orientation; questioning of force as a means of resolving conflict and questioning of military values	Peace orientation (peace = freedom from violence + creativity; proactive (prevention before violence occurs); people oriented (focus on the civilian society)
Assessment of rights and aims	Respect for the rights of the opponent and undistorted representation of his aims; realistic and self critical evaluation of own rights and aims; fair reporting of peace initiatives and attempts at mediation	Focus on common rights, aims, and interests and on the benefits all sides can get from ending war/force; gives the anti war opposition a say; focus on peace initiatives, signals of readiness for peace and mediation attempts
Assessment of actions	Realistic and self critical evaluation of own actions and undistorted evaluation of opponent's actions; critical distance from the bellicose on all sides	Focuses on the sufferings of all sides, focuses on the invisible effects of war: traumas and reputation, structural and cultural damages; humanizes all sides and names all those who act unjustly; focus on reconciliation perspectives
Emotional involvement	Recognition of the threat to the opponent and reduction of own feelings of threat	Recognition of the price of war, even in the case of victory and transfer of indignation against the enemy to indignation against war
Identification offers	Neutral and distanced	Universal

Table 4:
 De-escalation oriented and solution oriented conflict reporting (after Kempf 2001a)

While de-escalation oriented conflict reporting still contains a dualistic construction of the conflict and only deconstructs the antagonism and the polarization of the parties to the conflict, part of this dualism is abandoned in solution oriented conflict reporting (cf. Table 4). Seen realistically, this second step of peace journalism can therefore only become capable of winning a majority when an armistice or a peace treaty is already in place. Nevertheless, as a consistent minority position, solution oriented conflict reporting can provide an important stimulus during the war as well and contribute to the gradual deconstruction of the war discourse. In view of the rejection of dissonant information, however, here it is always only individual aspects of a solution oriented war reporting that are selectively realizable. In the same way that conventional media reporting (even in peacetime, cf. Kempf, 1999a) is always one step ahead of the conflict escalation, peace journalism must always proceed one step ahead of the ruling social discourse in the direction of de-escalation, conflict resolution, and reconciliation.

Empirical studies of the media in El Salvador after the civil war and the peace treaty of 1992 (Nuikka, 1999), and of the reports in the German press about France after the end of the second world war (Jaeger, 2002b) show that the media can perform this function productively when peace really is on the political agenda. Thus Nuikka (1999) shows that journalism is certainly able to promote the democratization process by providing a platform for reasoned discussions which can make it possible for force as the dominant means of carrying out conflicts to be gradually given up. And Jaeger's (2002b) findings make it possible to see that the selection criteria for the choice of news reporting is in no way an irrevocable natural law that journalism must obey. In both the time immediately after the war (1946-1950) and at times of widely established German-French cooperation (1966- 1970), German press reporting about France was dominated by news about positive events. With the advance of German-French reconciliation, reports about non-elite topics increasingly found their way into the German press. This was due, among other things, to increasing contacts with French culture and life-style which helped the German readers perceive the French population as members of a cultured nation and no longer as the (former) enemy.

Studies of the reporting about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process between 1993 and 1997 (Annabrig, 2000) and about the Northern Ireland peace treaty of 1998 (Hamdorf, 2001) by the German press (Frankfurter Rundschau and Berliner

Zeitung), on the other hand, have obvious deficiencies. Thus the selection criteria for the choice of news in the Frankfurter Rundschau's reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process were not changed much and negative contexts dominated positive ones. There were more reports about Israeli society (elite country) than about Palestinian society (non-elite country) and the reporting clearly gave elite people on both sides preferential treatment. Segments of the civilian population that wanted reconciliation were almost completely ignored. Only in two points could an attempt to support the peace process be recognized. There were obvious efforts to build up trust in the Palestinian elite, which was almost exclusively represented by the person of Arafat, who was presented in positive contexts almost as frequently as in negative ones and in the obvious attempt at neutrality the Israelis (elite society) did not appear any more frequently than the Palestinians (non-elite society) in the reporting.

As a kind of side effect of this halfhearted attempt to use a distanced neutrality to accompany the peace process without really supporting it, the Palestinian society was, so to speak, split into an elite (Arafat) with whom trust was built up, and a population that remained unknown, unrecognized, and possibly threatening and prepared to use force. Over the years the Frankfurter Rundschau stuck to the expectation that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would break out with full force again at any moment.

Similar deficiencies show up in the report about the Northern Ireland Peace Treaty in the Berliner Zeitung of April 11th 1998. Although the report is fully sympathetic to the peace treaty, it is clearly dominated by escalation oriented aspects and important information that could give a positive perspective to the peace process is not discussed. The real questions about the conflict are hardly examined, the civilian population (and their eagerness for peace) is not paid any attention at all and to a large extent the hard-earned achievements of the negotiators are questioned. The headings of the articles already indicate an ambivalent attitude towards the peace process and encourage the readers to have doubts about the peace process.

Although the theme of the heading is the peace treaty as a possible solution to the conflict, any win-win orientation is dropped in the headline – printed in bold – that follows:

"The Northern Ireland wall is wobbling but it's still not falling".

After the first paragraph has praised the peace treaty as an historic event and a new opportunity for the region, comes the subheading:

"Not a handshake".

This conjures up the antagonism between the parties in the Northern Ireland conflict and sets the tenor for the rest of the article which is made clear in another subheading after paragraph six:

"Deep mistrust remains".

Summarizing the research findings quoted above makes it seem that, to support the commencing peace and reconciliation processes, the media in the conflict regions themselves were more willing to change their attitudes than the international media which, at best, stick to their sceptical wait-and-see position. The empirical research on the reporting in the media during the peace processes is, however, only just at the very beginning and it is not yet possible to make a final verdict.

6. Training of Journalists

For implementing the model of de-escalation oriented and/or solution oriented conflict reporting described above, Kempf (1999a) formulates a number of ground rules that journalists should observe. (cf. Table 5).

Observing these ground rules, however, requires more than just good will. It entails, among other things, overcoming the institutional constraints that result from the criteria for news selection, editorial procedures and expectations, the economics of the media, the connections between the media and politicians and the military, etc. It requires emancipating the journalists from the (apparent) automatism of social-psychological mechanisms (group processes, distortions of perception etc.) in which the journalists themselves are trapped, but which they can react to in one way or another as soon as they become aware of these processes. They require the journalists to have knowledge of conflict theory (understanding of conflict and conflict analysis, conflict management) and they require professional skills and journalistic working techniques that permit the journalists to write exciting news stories which get their sex appeal from the struggle to achieve a universal peace solution and not from the polarization of the conflict parties and a recurring cycle of violence and atrocities.

- Neither of the parties to the conflict have absolute standards of truth
- Conflicts are always open to being dealt with either as a competitive (win-lose) or a cooperative (win-win) process.
- A constructive course of conflict is only possible if the conflict can be transformed into a win-win process.
- War discourse has a bias in a win-lose (or even a lose-lose) direction.
- Peace processes are based on creativity – “give voice to the voiceless”.
- Peace journalism must provide an alternative motivation logic “redirect indignation against the enemy against the war itself”.
- Peace journalism must be unconditionally subordinate to universal standards of truth.

Table 5:
Ground Rules of Peace Journalism (according to Kempf, 1999a).

From a psychological point of view, overcoming the institutional constraints on the journalists requires them to have not only the courage of their convictions but also the communicative skills which are used in their interaction with the institution. Training programs for journalists which deal especially with this point have, to my knowledge, not yet been developed. For developing such programs, it could be possible to draw upon experience from organizational psychology (management training) and also upon models of interpersonal change (Bläsi, 2001) and training methods from group dynamics.

The emancipation of journalists from the automatism of social psychological mechanisms first presupposes that sound knowledge of the appropriate social psychological theories and research findings is conveyed. Although this is attempted within the framework of the IPT program at the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), the time available for it is relatively short. On the whole, it would be desirable to give the social psychological aspects – the work situation of the journalists and also the social construction of reality and the role of journalism in this process – a larger place in the education of journalists and to combine imparting theoretical knowledge with contributions from their own experience.

While imparting competence in conflict theory has a central place in the framework of the IPT program, it is given a relatively small place in the conflict and peace courses and the resulting peace journalism training of Transcend. In contrast, the training courses provided by the Conflict Resolution Network Canada concentrate 100% on this aspect of the further education of journalists. In a personal communication, Jenifer Newcombe points out that the demand for the courses of the Conflict Resolution Network Canada is fortunately increasing and that the Network does not have the same difficulty in attracting journalists for their training program reported by Jake Lynch (quoted in Zint, 2001) for the British NRO “reporting the world” which uses the Transcend model. There, the use of the term “peace journalism” seems to have had a rather off-putting effect. While war correspondents enjoy recognition, peace correspondents are seen as biased from the start and are thus discredited. Dropping the term “peace” and focusing more on factual topics like the methods of dealing with conflict are seen by Lynch as a possible way out of the dilemma. The experience of the Conflict Resolution Network of Canada appears to confirm this.

Zint (2001), also mentions the alternative that, assuming good journalism is always peace promoting, the only thing required is to encourage journalistic quality. We can agree with the aim of this alternative but its use of the word “only” leads it away from the institutional, social psychological, and conflict dynamic factors which affect the escalation bias of conventional conflict reporting. Unless they know about these factors, journalists cannot emancipate themselves from them. In addition, the appeal to journalists to learn their craft properly and to deliver quality journalism impinges on their self esteem. Doing this therefore may not exactly encourage their willingness to participate in the appropriate training.

Nonetheless, peace journalism training programs cannot manage without communicating the professional skills and the journalistic work techniques like those which are central to the IPT courses offered at the ASPR and to the peace journalism courses provided by Transcend. The experiences I have had as a lecturer at the IPT courses, at a seminar of the Heinrich Boll Foundation with journalists from Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in courses for journalism students at the University of Costa Rica show that attributing the escalation bias of conventional conflict reporting solely to their lack of professional competence grossly underestimates the constructive potential and creativity of journalists.

In practical work undertaken with the journalists, four principles proved to be worthwhile: (1) making basic knowledge of conflict theory and social psychology available, (2) trust in the journalists’ abilities and creativity, (3) learning by doing, and (4) for this using news reporting about conflicts in which the participants in the course, their society, or their country are not directly involved.

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