

Jesse Benn

From passive to active: The spectrum of peace journalism

Kurzfassung: Eine der größten Hürden, denen sich der Friedensjournalismus gegenüber sieht, ist die Vagheit seiner Definition. Der vorliegende Aufsatz schlägt daher ein Verständnis des Friedensjournalismus vor, das sich in einem Spektrum zwischen passivem und aktivem Friedensjournalismus bewegt. Auf Grundlage einer Durchsicht der bisherigen Literatur integriert der Aufsatz die geläufigen Theorien in ein übergreifendes Konzept und plädiert für dessen Übernahme und Weiterentwicklung. Abschließend werden potentielle Vorteile, Nachteile und Kritik des unterbreiteten Vorschlages diskutiert.

Abstract: One of the biggest hurdles facing the field of peace journalism (PJ) is its vague definition. This paper proposes defining PJ as it operates on a spectrum, from passive to active. Through a review of extant PJ literature, this paper synthesizes current theory into an overarching, explicit concept, and calls for it to be further adopted and expanded. To conclude it considers potential advantages, drawbacks, and critiques of its proposal.

1. Introduction

The definition of Peace Journalism (PJ) has been a point of discussion since the field's conception by Johan Galtung in the 1970s (Lee, Maslog, & Kim, 2006). The fact that over 40 years later the field still struggles to articulate what makes it distinct from everyday good reporting (Eakin & Fahmy, 2013), is among its biggest obstacles. This paper represents an effort to assist in overcoming this hurdle. To do so it begins with an introductory discussion going over how different scholars and critics have defined PJ, highlighting the need for and importance of this paper's contribution to the literature. Next it argues through a literature review that for PJ to move forward scholars must agree on how the theory and practice is defined. The answer presented is surprisingly simple—and aligns with a general feature found across journalistic practice—PJ operates across a fluid spectrum, from its more passive to active manifestations. The existence of such a spectrum is already implicit in PJ literature, and this paper synthesizes current theory into an overarching, explicit concept and calls for it to be further adopted and expanded.

The likely candidate for the most oft-quoted definition of PJ, put forth by Lynch and McGoldrick, says PJ is when journalists “make choices—of what stories to report and about how to report them—that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict” (Hackett, 2012: p. 95). Then there are the more moderate conceptions of what PJ is, like Kempf's, which argues against journalists playing an *active* role in the complex ‘cat's cradle’ that is conflict (Kempf, 2007: 4). And there are the less enthused, who call PJ, at best, little more than “old wine in new bottles”—good journalism, repackaged—and at its worst a form of public relations (Hanitzsch, 2007: 2). Finally, there are the categorically opposed, like BBC reporter David Loyn, who calls PJ, “nothing less than a ‘revolution’ in journalism practice,” and argues that “the opposite of peace journalism is good journalism” (Loyn, 2007: 2). While these notions seem contradictory or irreconcilable at a glance, they simply represent the spectrum of PJ. On the active end, PJ may require a revolution in journalism practice, which from Loyn's privileged perspective at the BBC is clearly negative and unnecessary. On the passive end, good journalism in conflict reporting, even by Loyn's conception, requires employing aspects of PJ. Acknowledging and embracing this spectrum, rather than arguing PJ is either or, would be a simplistic but productive step forward.

In the face of disparate opinions regarding what PJ is and should be, and without accepting their implausible compatibility, there are the scholars who are justifiably unclear as to what PJ is who are calling for clearer indicators to distinguish PJ framing from objective, factual reporting (Eakin & Fahmy, 2013: 14). The problem with such a call is that often, PJ simply *is* objective factual reporting, and it should always include the factual end of that equation. A closer look at PJ literature reveals that there is already an implicit consensus—and the failure to make it explicit has resulted in more tension among researchers than cooperation and forestalled progress. That previously implicit consensus is that PJ operates across a spectrum, which can largely be demarcated by reflecting on two dominant points-of-view in PJ literature.

At one end there are advocates for an interventionist-style of reporting that takes a very active role in its effort to correct the systematic biases in conflict coverage that are the result of prevalent news values (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001; Galtung & Ruge, 1965), like Lynch, McGoldrick, and Hackett (Kempf, 2007: 7). This style of reporting is most-commonly found within the tradition of advocacy reporting, currently most often represented in what is considered alternative media, and aligns with what this paper proposes should henceforth be referred to as *active PJ*. On the other hand are traditionalists, like Loyn, who believe in the tenets of professional journalism, and represent the journalistic tradition of what is considered good, objective, factual, reporting—this represents what

this paper suggests is the *passive* end of the PJ spectrum. Because the intention here is not to weigh in in any definitive manner on the loaded, and necessarily ongoing debate over what 'good' journalism is, this paper only asks the reader to consider it in its normative form—this means it is objective, neutral, and searches for truth in a reflexive way, acknowledging and attempting to correct the inherent issues associated with each of these ideals. The intention here is to reconcile differing viewpoints in PJ, with the goal of forwarding its theory and practice. While a similar spectrum exists in war/violence journalism—ranging from bad (active) to typical (passive)—this paper focuses on the spectrum of peace/conflict reporting, while only briefly noting that war/violence journalism operates on a spectrum as well, essentially from bad to worse.

2. Assumptions, limitations, scope, and methodology

This paper begins with the assumption that more peace in the world is a good thing, and that PJ has some potential, however limited, to contribute to this (Lynch, 2008: xvi, 17, 61, 136, 138), despite the structural (Hackett, 2006), cultural (Shinar, 2000) (Barnhurst, 2011), sociological (RuB-Mohl, 2008) (Schudson, 1989), and political economic (McChesney, 2003), barriers it faces. Further, it takes for granted PJ's premise that current conflict reporting reflects a systematic bias that highlights and sensationalizes war and violence, and that PJ offers a number of valid methods for reporters to work against this systematic bias, (Hackett, 2006; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Shinar, 2009; Stoiciu & Shinar 1992). This paper is limited in its scope, however. The aim is not to weigh in on the validity of different researchers, practitioners, advocates, and critics arguments about this systematic bias, and/or how to overcome it, nor does it intend to offer any closed-ended definitions or ideas about what PJ is or should be, as this seems limiting and counter productive to PJ's success. Counter intuitively, rather than narrowing it down, a better understanding of the definition of PJ comes from a more open and fluid conception of what it can be; the spectrum approach offered here allows for such fluidity. And finally, the intention is not to pass judgment on the potential for PJ to become a standard aspect of conflict reporting. Rather, the objective is to offer a reconceptualization that accepts the diversity of, and integrates the current, often mutually-exclusive, limiting, combative, and unclear definitions of what PJ is, or should be; as indicated by the ongoing debate and confusion among its scholars, practitioners, and advocates.

The methodology used includes a review of classic and contemporary PJ theory (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Shaw, et al., 2011; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2000; Lynch, 2008; Keeble, et al., 2010; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001) PJ case studies (Ben-Yehuda, 2005; Eakin & Fahmy, 2013; Neumann & Fahmy, 2012; Shinar, 2000; Shinar, 2009; Stoiciu & Shinar, 1992; Wolfsfeld, 1997); critiques (Hanitzsch, 2007; Loyn, 2007); and more (Wickenden & Atton, 2006; Bennett, 1996; Poell & Borra, 2012; Entman, 2003; RuB-Mohl & Fengler, 2008; McChesney, 2003). There are necessary limits on such a literature review. Academics, like journalists, cannot escape the reality of deadlines, and as a result the literature review this paper is based on could hardly be considered exhaustive. What follows is largely a thought-experiment, which first builds on its preliminary argument through additional discussion of the aforementioned literature review, intended to further explicate the need for such a reconceptualization of PJ theory. And it ends exploring the potential benefits and drawbacks of reconceptualizing and reconciling PJ theory to explicitly label its spectrum of support, from passive to active.

Before launching into its main argument, a brief history of notable and salient contributions to PJ is in order—this is not meant to encompass the entire history of PJ literature, nor is it presented strictly chronologically, the ambition is to explain some of the relevant contributions to PJ theory in this specific context. Further, it is necessarily limited to PJ literature. Though there is a breadth of literature that could be included from outside this specific realm regarding the appropriate levels of engagement and role perceptions of journalists, doing so goes beyond the scope here. When limited by time and space, some rabbit holes are inevitably left unexplored. It is worth pointing out that the spectrum, from active to passive, is a feature found and studied across journalism. Observers vs. advocates, participants vs. neutral disseminators of information, those with a view from somewhere vs. those with a view from nowhere... and so on, all represent such a spectrum. As such, it is not that PJ's spectrum is unique; it is that its spectrum is pronounced and seldom acknowledged, and that this combination has slowed the adoption of PJ among researchers and practitioners.

3. Passive to active: Making the spectrum explicit

In 1965 Mari Ruge and Johan Galtung's groundbreaking essay *The Structure of Foreign News* established the problematic way news values and journalistic conventions largely govern how conflict is represented in the news (Lynch, 2008: 19; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2012: 1042). Out of Galtung and Ruge's essay, PJ was born. Conceptualized by Galtung, McGoldrick, Lynch, and others, largely following the 1991 Gulf War (Shaw, et al., 2011 & Hanitzsch, 2004), PJ is meant to provide reporters a toolkit to correct the systematic bias demonstrated by Galtung and Ruge in conflict reporting. Further, PJ attempts to offer a framework for peace theorists and scholars to research and analyze the 'policy implications' of the 1965 study on conflict reporting (McGoldrick & Lynch, 2012: 1042).

As PJ theory has evolved, several key additions have been made in need of mention. First is Galtung's conceptualization of the different elements of peace/conflict oriented reporting, which include: 1) A *peace/conflict*

oriented approach, which provides historical and cultural context behind conflict formation from all (not both) sides, humanizes all sides, and offers a win-win orientation in coverage, among other factors (Shinar, 2009: 453). 2) A *truth-oriented* approach, which, among other features, is meant to deconstruct propaganda and offer audiences the best chance at, in Stuart Hall's terms, oppositional and negotiated readings (Lynch, 2008: 153). 3) A *people-oriented* approach, which includes, among other factors, a focus on people peacemakers, and giving voice to the voiceless; and 4) A *solution-oriented* approach, which is distinguished by defining the road to peace as, non-violence + creativity = peace (Shinar, 2009: 453).

These elements of peace/conflict journalism listed above are almost always presented directly opposite of their antithesis, Galtung's elements of war/violence reporting, which include: 1) A *war/violence-oriented* approach that tends to offer a zero-sum orientation, 'us-them' journalism, and a dehumanization of 'them', among other dynamics. 2) A *propaganda-oriented* approach that attempts to expose 'their' untruths and help cover up 'our' lies, among other features. 3) An *elite-oriented* approach that focuses on elite peacemakers and other factors biasing elites; and 4) A *victory-oriented* approach, typified by its defining the road to peace as, victory + ceasefire = peace (Shinar, 2009). It would be useful to consider these elements on a spectrum as well, from actively bad journalism—particularly represented by the war/violence and propaganda-oriented approaches—to the more typical, passive war/violence coverage—particularly represented by the elite and victory-oriented approaches which are common in conflict coverage.

All of the aforementioned elements have been further operationalized (Shinar, 2007) and consistently used to some extent in research both for content analysis, and to better expound what PJ is, (see Fransius, 2013: 6-14; Shaw, et al., 2011: 71, 109, 169-170; Lynch, 2008: 19-20; Shinar, 2009: 453, and Table 1, for more). Agneta Soderberg Jacobson's study on Swedish news providers' conflict reporting found an overwhelming bias toward male subjects (85 percent), images (75 percent), and sources (89 percent) (Jacobson, 2010: 107). This led to an addition to the table: gender awareness and gender blindness (see Table 1). Normatively, gender awareness should be present in all good reporting, and though it may require an active approach to accomplish, both passive and active PJ should seek to include this awareness in reporting. It should not be acceptable in 2015 for journalists—in and out of conflict reporting—to rely so heavily on male sources, and to offer such skewed coverage of male subjects and imagery. Thus, Jacobson's category is singled out both because it is an addition to the original four elements of peace/conflict journalism, and because its absence from common use in current literature emphasizes the need for its emphasis in an effort to make the category a member of the status quo. As a brief aside, it seems a similar category regarding racial/ethnic awareness/blindness would be another useful addition to the currently accepted elements of war/peace journalism.

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism
I. <i>Peace/conflict-oriented</i>	I. <i>War/Violence-oriented</i>
II. <i>Truth-oriented</i>	II. <i>Propaganda-oriented</i>
III. <i>People-oriented</i>	III. <i>Elite-oriented</i>
IV. <i>Solution-oriented</i> Peace = nonviolence + creativity	IV. <i>Victory-oriented</i> Peace = victory + ceasefire
V. <i>Gender awareness</i>	V. <i>Gender blindness</i>

Table 1, adapted from Keeble, Tulloch, and Zollmann (2010, p. 114).

As Galtung's classic four elements pertain to the spectrum of PJ, they can generally be correlated with its more active or passive form. For instance, a truth-oriented approach should be most associated with fundamental, good journalism and passive PJ, as it suggests conflict reporting requires reflexivity, and a refusal to echo government propaganda without offering context, encouraging oppositional and negotiated readings. This truth-oriented approach would continue to apply to active PJ, bringing up an important point: The spectrum of PJ generally builds on itself from passive to active, like a pyramid (Figure 1), and in general active PJ will incorporate the base elements of passive PJ, before going a step further. Building off the two base levels, gender awareness and a truth-oriented approach, a peace/conflict-oriented approach could be identified as slightly more active, while people-oriented, and solution-oriented approaches are the most active, and likely to operate mainly in alternative media. These are, admittedly, limited, broad-stroke generalizations discussing where different elements might fit on the spectrum of PJ. It is important to keep in mind that none of these elements is fixed; passive PJ could easily incorporate a people-oriented and solution-oriented approach to coverage.

Simply put, in the overarching, normative concept suggested here, passive PJ is when reporting avoids the use of war/violence journalism, and incorporates some of PJ's toolkit to provide truly competent conflict coverage, but does not generally go further into the realm of intentionally inverting the hierarchy of sources, offering creative

solutions, and actively playing the role of journalist/peacekeeper. This type of reporting is likely to be welcomed in more traditional elite media and Public Service Broadcasting (PSB), like the BBC, where Loyn works. To be clear, this does not mean passive PJ cannot or should not seek to balance the normal hierarchy of sources, or offer creative solutions as they come up in coverage; these activities are just less likely to be sought out in this type of PJ and hence less prevalent.

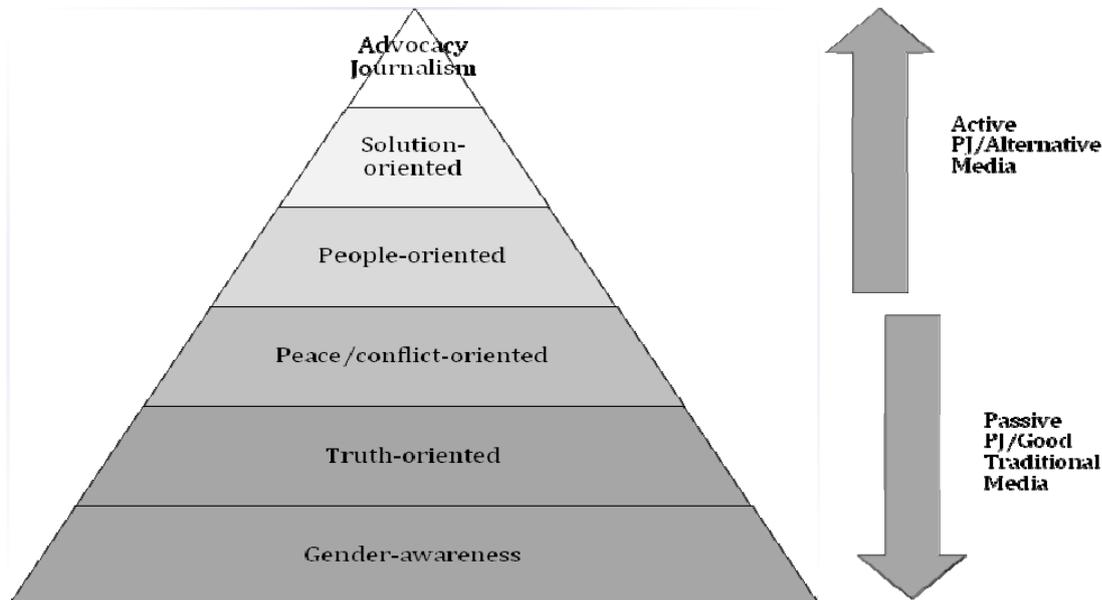


Figure 1, adapted from Keeble, Tulloch, and Zollmann (2010, p. 114).

This interpretation of PJ is necessary, as journalists like Loyn are unlikely to see themselves as active peacekeepers whose jobs require offering creative solutions to conflict, but are likely to agree that providing historic context of conflicts, and deconstructing government propaganda, are both compulsory features of quality conflict reporting. Whether Loyn wants to call it by name, that is PJ. This demonstrates the overlap between “good” journalism, and passive PJ. Instead of letting this overlap confuse the definition of PJ, the spectrum approach embraces it. Understanding PJ in this way thus overcomes one of the field’s major obstacles—rather than distinguishing PJ from good journalism, however, it simply accepts that, at times, the two are the same.

Active PJ, by comparison, is when journalists and media organizations choose to go further, incorporating themselves into peacemaking processes, offering creative solutions, inverting normal sourcing routines, and taking other proactive steps to bring about peace through reporting. Using the pyramid in Figure 1 to visualize this process is helpful to understanding the spectrum in at least three ways: 1) It illustrates how active PJ builds on passive PJ. 2) It represents the likely overall levels of practice of PJ in conflict coverage, with passive PJ operating more commonly than active PJ (Maslog & Lee, 2005; Lee, et al., 2006). And 3) It shows the likely levels of support from journalists (Loyn, 2007) and PJ researchers (Kempf, 2007), with the more mainstream, traditionalists occupying the larger space at the bottom of the pyramid, generally aligned with passive PJ.

Some researchers have already operationalized evaluative criteria based on active and passive indicators of PJ in their research (Maslog & Lee, 2005; Lee, et al., 2006). In this case, passive PJ criteria are considered, “passive’ or ‘non-interventionist’—not likely to denote a conscious effort to counter war propaganda and create opportunities to consider and to value non-violent alternative responses to conflict” (Lynch, 2008: 143). While active PJ is considered “the iteration and exploration of backgrounds and contexts; the provision of cues to form negotiated and/or oppositional readings of war propaganda, and the coverage of suggestions and initiatives for peace from whatever quarter” (Lynch, 2008: 143; Keeble, et al., 2010). The suggestion of this paper is not necessarily to reimagine these evaluative criteria, rather, the spectrum of PJ advocated here would incorporate the use of such indicators and encourage their refinement and further use, while expanding the terms active and passive to include a broader conceptualization across PJ.

While some advocates for PJ seem ready to give up its more passive attributes in favor of its more active ones (Shaw, et al., 2011), this would be a mistake. For instance, if what Lynch calls “accidental peace journalism” (McGoldrick & Lynch, 2012: 1043) is occurring, and if, as he says, “there is some, so there could be more” (Lynch, 2008: 232), then work remains on all ends of PJ’s spectrum, from the passive, or accidental PJ, to the full-fledged advocacy that represents the top of the spectrum of active PJ (see Figure 1). By more clearly understanding and articulating what elements of PJ are most likely to “accidentally” make their way into

coverage, PJ advocates can make suggestions to mainstream news outlets that are likely to improve the odds of such happy accidents. Further, for active PJ to be a convincing, potent force, it must be rooted in passive PJ, and it must be applied at the appropriate time. This is highlighted by Mogeckwu's (2011) consolidation of different scholars' concepts of the progression of conflict, Kempf's two-step process to conflict coverage, and Bläsi's (2009) analysis regarding how and when to implement different types of PJ during these different phases of conflict. Each of which align with the spectrum approach.

Though often used interchangeably in reporting with violence (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2000), conflict and violence are different (Fransius, 2013). Put relatively simply, conflict can be defined as "a process through which two or more actors try to pursue incompatible aims or goals while trying to stop the other(s) from pursuing their goals" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2000: 6). Mogeckwu (2011) goes further analyzing the nature of the term as it relates to PJ in his chapter of "Expanding Peace Journalism: Comparative and Critical Approaches," and fleshes out a few key points worthy of mention.

First, Mogeckwu notes the importance that "no limiting definition [of conflict] should be allowed;" this avoids a predetermination of analyzing conflict and allows for the open-ended complexity of the concept (Mogeckwu, 2011: 241). This aligns with the suggestion here that PJ should not be limited in its definition, as it must operate alongside the open-ended complexity of conflict. Next, Mogeckwu determines that conflict is "rooted in people's beliefs about goals as opposed to facts" (Mogeckwu, 2011: 241), demonstrating the need for conflict reporting to offer a truth-oriented approach that helps deconstruct beliefs rooted in myth and propaganda and to build goals based on the facts as they manifest for all sides. Finally, he ties together several scholars' explanations of conflict progression into two categories: 'latent' and 'manifest' conflict (Mogeckwu, 2011: 241-243).

The purpose and the importance in distinguishing latent from manifest conflict to PJ, Mogeckwu finds, is that conflict has a natural progression, with parties gradually moving from a place of potential negotiation and understanding during the earlier latent stage, to a far-less manageable point during the manifest stage, when the conflict "assumes mythical dimensions" and parties become entrenched and unwilling to negotiate (Mogeckwu, 2011: 242). For PJ to have the best chance at successfully fulfilling its normative goal to bring about peace it should focus on latent conflict, where it is most likely to have an impact; this is where active PJ has its biggest role to play.

If conflict is different from violence, as described above, then to make this fully clear the term 'violence' requires further definition to completely distinguish the two and to discuss how these distinctions function in relation to active and passive PJ. Galtung identifies two basic forms of violence, 'direct' or 'personal' and 'structural'; noting an important distinction between the two as is relevant to PJ. While the more familiar direct or personal violence involves physical contact—punching, shooting, bombing, and such—making its effects obvious and immediate, the effects of structural violence are less visible or direct (Lynch, 2008: 51; Keeble, et al., 2010: 124), and thus more elusive for media professionals to clearly understand and articulate, and consequently for its consumers to make sense of. Again, this is where active PJ is apt to be its most effective. Violence in all its forms is inherently destructive. Conflict, on the other hand, can be constructive (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2000: 6), and does not need to lead to violence (Fransius, 2013), it is these distinctions that are of importance to discussions in PJ.

Another important contribution to PJ theory, as it relates to this paper's proposed spectrum, is Kempf's two-step process. Kempf argues, put simply, that PJ should operate in a two-step process depending on whether the ongoing conflict is latent or manifest. Kempf's two-step process, by-and-large, aligns with this paper's concept of passive and active PJ. The first step, *de-escalation oriented conflict coverage*, is meant to take place during the hot phase of conflict, or manifest conflict. This style of coverage is characterized by objective, distanced and respectful reporting, which takes a critical distance from war supporters, and increases public awareness of the high price violent means to ending conflicts demands (Kempf, 2007). These traits correspond with passive PJ. During this stage Kempf says reporters should not propose solutions (Kempf, 2007).

Proposing solutions takes place during the second, aptly named step, *solution oriented conflict coverage*. As the name and logical sequence implies, this step parallels active PJ, and is demarcated by its focus on reconciliation between conflicting parties in a search toward cooperative ways to solve or transcend their differences, and its active search for peaceful alternatives (Kempf, 2007). Kempf argues that this phase of conflict reporting should only happen during the latent phase of conflict, "when the hot phase of the conflict is over and every voice calling for moderation is not automatically perceived as hostile" (Kempf, 2007: 7). Kempf's choice of wording is telling, as it indicates he sees PJ's active role taking place after violence breaks out—referring to the hot phase of conflict in the past tense. Given Galtung's notion of the invisible nature of structural violence, and the natural progression of conflict expounded on by Mogeckwu, Kempf's solution oriented conflict coverage, and active PJ, are likely to also be of use *before* violence breaks out.

It may be that Kempf is simply being realistic, however, in assessing the likeliness of active PJ taking place during the nonviolent stage of conflict that precedes a violent one. Burkhard Bläsi (2009) looked in more depth at implementing PJ during different stages of conflict—specifically nonviolent conflict, violent conflict, and in the aftermath of violent conflict—and finds that solution oriented PJ faces the fewest challenges during the latter

stage. At the same time, Bläsi finds the first stage to be more auspicious to this style of PJ than the second. This progression aligns with the spectrum approach advocated for here. Viewing Bläsi's findings through the spectrum, journalists should focus on a mix of active and passive PJ prior to violent conflict, passive PJ during violent conflict, and active PJ following violent conflict.

As the brief discussion above has already shown, there is significant tension between PJ's different levels of supporters, its varying definitions among scholars, and this subsequently leads to confusion for PJ scholars and would-be practitioners (Eakin & Fahmy, 2013). But overshadowing these micro-disputes is one fundamental macro-agreement—more quality journalism is needed in conflict reporting. It is how to achieve this aim that varies. For Loyn the answer lies in sharpening, not altering, the tools of a reporter, like objectivity and a search for truth (Loyn, 2007). For Lynch, perhaps PJ's most prominent advocate, practitioner, and scholar, the answer lies in a much broader change in journalism, both its culture and organizational structure, and ideally a more proactive role for journalists as peacemakers. But the desire for improved conflict reporting is mutual. By using a spectrum approach to understanding PJ, these different points-of-view are largely reconciled and can be seen as complementary in their quest to achieve a shared goal of improving conflict reporting.

4. A branch needs roots: Settling an unsettling debate

Most recently, the debate in PJ has moved toward what has been described as a 'root-and-branch critique', viewing mainstream journalism as 'indissociable' from the war journalism that PJ scholars problematize. Those promoting this approach ask if PJ would, per Lynch and McGoldrick's definition, 'create [more] opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent conflict', if it was to *switch* its advocacy and training to focus on alternative, rather than mainstream media (Shaw, et al., 2011: 9, emphasis added). The spectrum approach does not require making such a switch, it only requires acknowledging the existence of this choice.

For instance, in a mainstream news organization, where traditional professional norms and the structural constraints on journalism—on individual (RuB-Mohl & Fengler, 2008; McManus, 1997) and organizational levels, (Bennett, 1996; McChesney, 2003)—are more prevalent than alternative media, advocates of PJ could tailor their approach by suggesting techniques associated with passive PJ that align with traditional good journalism. Whereas in alternative media, advocates could propose more active forms of PJ, like inverting the hierarchy of sourcing that typically favors elites and offering creative solutions to conflict. It is to this discussion, how alternative media and active PJ complement one another, that this paper turns now.

5. Active peace journalism and alternative media

Although some scholars have argued that alternative media will free PJ 'from the mainstream journalism strait-jacket to be able to bring about change' (Mogekwu, in Shaw, et al., 2011: 250), alternative media face challenges that are both unique to the medium (Wickenden & Atton, 2006; Poell & Borra, 2012), and nearly ubiquitous to reporting. Because the active end of the PJ spectrum is likely to largely operate in the realm of alternative media, considering what alternative media is, why active PJ fits here, and what the benefits are to more clearly aligning active PJ with alternative media, is useful. After that, benefits of acknowledging the spectrum of PJ, while keeping its passive aspects, will be discussed in light of the impacts to both active and passive PJ.

The first question that needs to be answered is why active PJ fits with the emerging practice of alternative media. Tony Harcup conceptualizes alternative media as playing a role nurturing, reflecting, and demonstrating active citizenship (Harcup, 2011). If PJ, when it departs from traditional journalism and enters the realm of advocacy must be local and community based, as Mogekwu suggests (Shaw, et al., 2011: 252), then it certainly offers the potential for increasing the population of Mouffe's ideal active citizens: "A radical, democratic citizen must be an active citizen, somebody who *acts* as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking" (Harcup, 2011: 17 emphasis in original).

Next, if alternative media are concerned with the process as well as the product (Harcup, 2011: 18), then the hands-on methods of active PJ should be at home in this medium. Because current journalistic processes create systematic biases, as PJ scholars have been demonstrating in conflict reporting since 1965 (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), then it seems alternative media would often apply a proactive corrective process. Again, this aligns with the active end of the PJ spectrum, demonstrating that alternative media is an appropriate arena for active PJ to operate. This is not meant to suggest active PJ cannot occur outside of alternative media, just that this is a auspicious area for its proponents to focus and expect to be embraced. At the same time, alternative media might go too far in the direction of a people-oriented approach, leaving out important context and views from policy makers and other elites. Before drawing any conclusions about the effectiveness of active PJ in alternative media, more study is needed, but the potential seems promising.

Finally, as the active end of PJ's spectrum is most represented by the people and solution-oriented elements of Galtung's classic concept of the four elements of PJ, these line up well with alternative media practices (see Figure 1). In the case of a solution-oriented approach, alternative media can "be understood as 'a crucible in

which people could become aware of a range of alternative strategies for understanding and changing the world as they found it" (Harcup, 2011: 18). Dissatisfied with both mainstream practices of news production and coverage, as well as the epistemology of news, alternative media often challenges these structures (Shaw, et al., 2011). And in the case of a people-oriented approach, alternative media also offer promise to offer a voice to the active citizens who often engage in these public or counter public spheres and challenge existing power structures (Harcup, 2011, p. 18). Further, Wickenden & Atton (2006) found a 'counter-elite' hierarchy of sourcing—or put differently a people-oriented approach—in their case study subject, *SchNEWS*. This type of sourcing offers its own challenges and drawbacks, like a failure to represent the views of citizens who were not part of the politicized, grassroots activism aligned with the political ideology of *SchNEWS*, and thus such outlets should be approached with caution as a potential mediums for active PJ, but they show some promise and challenge mainstream media's overreliance on elite sources.

Highlighting the many challenges faced by alternative media organizations like *SchNEWS*, it is necessary to mention the organization is no longer in existence. The outlet officially threw in the towel on September 24, 2014 due to, "a lack of the people and interest required to keep it going" (SchNEWS, 2014).

The main challenge facing alternative media and PJ, particularly active PJ, is that, despite the disintegrating myth of objectivity (Bennett, 1996; Keeble, et al., 2010: 199), and an increasing awareness of structures common in news media that highlight sensational, war/violence-oriented reporting, advocacy reporting remains largely at the margins of popular media production, consumption, and acceptance (Lee, et al., 2006). By accepting and acknowledging that PJ lies on a spectrum, this challenge is largely negated, as some practitioners, advocates, and researchers can choose to engage with active PJ or not, without needing to abandon PJ altogether.

In her chapter of *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*, Jean Lee C. Patindol comes close to advocating for considering PJ on a spectrum, but she misses the mark and instead highlights the problem with making value judgments regarding what qualifies as PJ. Patindol, rather than acknowledging the spectrum, argues for a 'journeying' of progression in awareness from traditional journalism, to conflict-sensitive journalism, and eventually to outright PJ (Patindol, 2010: 201). Or in the terms used here, from war/violence reporting, to more passive PJ, to more active PJ. It is easy to see how such a denigrating description of traditional journalism could offend hard working, genuinely competent, but traditional journalists. Rather than lump traditional journalism in with war/violence reporting, as Patindol does, a more sensitive and articulate language should be applied: labeling war/violence reporting explicitly as 'typical' or 'bad' reporting. This makes it clear that traditional good journalism, though it is largely the exception rather than the norm in mainstream media, has a place operating alongside PJ, and can be incorporated into conflict reporting in traditional media outlets, most often in its passive form.

For those like Loyn, who cannot overcome their attachment to standard journalistic values, it seems little will convince them to practice the alternative, advocacy style of journalism referred to here as active PJ, or what Patindol calls "outright PJ." This is perfectly okay, and that acceptance is largely where the approach proposed here differs from Patindol's. Journalists like Loyn should look to sharpen their tools of reporting by schooling themselves in the practices of passive PJ; which, unlike active PJ, is little more than a toolkit for good traditional reporting as it manifests in unique ways to conflict reporting. By advocating for an open, fluid, multifaceted, and inclusive spectrum of PJ, rather than Patindol's value-laden conception of a progression through levels of PJ, journalists clinging to standards of objectivity and traditional reporting could benefit from at least some of PJ's passive practices, instead of throwing out the baby of passive PJ, with the bathwater of active PJ. Or put another way, with an open spectrum, rather than an intentional push toward advocacy, the approach offered here is less likely to scare off traditional journalists and media outlets that are averse to advocacy journalism.

6. Final thoughts

Before concluding, some final thoughts to summarize this paper's concept of active and passive peace journalism are essential. Passive PJ is reflexive and aware of the limitations news values, reporting methods, individual motivations of journalists, structural restraints, and many other aspects involved in the broad field of journalism and media, inherent in conflict coverage. Far more than lying dormant, as the name passive might seem to imply, passive PJ takes proactive measures to correct these systematic biases to offer truly competent conflict coverage. Simply put, for journalism to be any good in conflict reporting it must incorporate these basic aspects of PJ; all else lies on the spectrum of war/violence reporting. Further, passive PJ integrates and synthesizes extant theory, like the classic elements of peace/conflict journalism as originally put forth by Galtung, and adapted by others, Mogeckwu's concept of conflict, Galtung's two basic types of violence, Kempf's two-step process, as well as current evaluative criteria as originally used by Lee, Maslog, and Kim, and made more explicit by Lynch, and more.

Of equal importance, the concept of passive PJ presented here helps answer the call made by current PJ researchers for a distinction between what is unique to PJ, and what is simply traditional good journalism, by acknowledging that traditional good journalism taking place in conflict reporting *is* passive PJ, as a failure to incorporate the passive aspects of the PJ toolkit inevitably results in incompetent reporting. Finally, passive PJ

should start at the base level of an avoidance of war/violence journalism and build from there, but generally stop short of full-on advocacy, or interventionist reporting. This falls in the realm of active PJ, which deserves a synopsis of its own.

Active PJ builds on the foundation of passive PJ, incorporating the aforementioned characteristics, and represents the advocacy end of the spectrum, or the top of the pyramid in Figure 1. This type of reporting will most often take place within alternative media outlets, something there are advantages and drawbacks to, briefly discussed here. A more thorough analysis that furthers the spectrum approach proposed here is necessary, and a more specific study examining active PJ in alternative media might expand on sourcing routines as (Wickenden & Atton, 2006) did with *SchNEWS*, and (Poell & Borra, 2012) did for Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr, to see how these routines manifest in unique ways in conflict coverage. Where active PJ distinguishes itself from passive PJ—noting again that there is always room for interactivity and movement on this fluid spectrum—is in its further step that views journalism/ists as having an active role to play in peacemaking processes, including intentionally inverting the standard, almost exclusively male, elite-oriented hierarchy of sourcing, as well as going out of the way to offer creative solutions in an effort to help transcend, prevent, and end conflicts.

The tension within PJ literature would largely be reconciled if acknowledging this spectrum became the status-quo, as the conversation would no longer be about which style of reporting qualifies as PJ, and could shift to making recommendations tailored to individual reporters, editors, scholars, media organizations, phases of conflict, and other variables based on what is appropriate for each situation, journalist's individual beliefs, and/or media organization's standards and practices. Practicing PJ would no longer require convincing critics and traditional journalists like Loyn to 'journey' through Patindol's spectrum—a spectrum that starts from a point of insulting what Loyn holds dear (traditional journalism)—nor would it require one to dismiss the more active interpretation of PJ advocated for by Lynch and others. Though not discussed outside of a brief mention, war/violence journalism also falls on a spectrum, from bad to typical, and rather than classify it pejoratively as traditional journalism, as Patindol's does, PJ terminology should apply the terms bad and typical to define war/violence journalism. This creates a more welcoming field, and would encourage PJ's adoption in scholarly research and journalistic practice. Hopefully, this will help to move PJ forward, as the theory and field seems unfortunately stagnant given its ubiquitously noble ideal of furthering peace in the world.

References

- Barnhurst, K.G. (2011). The new "media affect" and the crisis of representation for political communication. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16(4), 573-593.
- Bennett, W.L. (1996). An introduction to journalism norms and representation of politics. *Political Communication*, 13, 373-384.
- Ben-Yehuda, N. (2005). Terror, Media, and Moral Boundaries. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 46, 33-53.
- Bläsi, B. (2009). Implementing peace journalism: The role of conflict stages. *conflict & communication online*, 8(2), 1-9.
- Eakin, B. & Fahmy, S. (2013). High drama on the high seas: peace versus war journalism framing of an Israeli/Palestinian related incident. *International Communication Gazette*, 1-21.
- Entman, R.M. (2003). Cascading activation: Contesting the White House's frame after 9/11. *Political Communication*, 20(4), 415-432.
- Fransius, M.P. (2013). Peace journalism case study: US media coverage of the Iraq War. *Journalism*, 0(0), 1-17.
- Galtung, J. & Ruge, M. (1965). The structure of foreign news: the presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research*, 64-90.
- Hackett, R.A. (2006). Is peace journalism possible? Three frameworks for assessing structure and agency in news media. *conflict & communication online*, 5(2), 1-13.
- Hackett, R.A. (2012). Reporting conflict: New directions in peace journalism. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 66(1), 94-96.
- Hanitzsch, T. (2004). Journalists as peacekeeping force? Peace journalism and mass communication theory. *Journalism Studies*, 5(4), 483-495.
- Hanitzsch, T. (2007). Situating peace journalism in journalism studies: a critical appraisal. *conflict & communication online*, 6(2), 1-9.
- Harcup, T. (2011). Alternative journalism as active citizenship. *Journalism*, 12(1), 15-31.
- Harcup, T. & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261-280.
- Jacobson, A.S. (n.d.). When peace journalism and feminist theory join forces: A Swedish case study. In: Keeble, R., Tulloch, J. & Zollmann, F. (Eds.). (2010). *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 105-119.

- Keeble, R., Tulloch, J. & Zollmann, F. (Eds.). (2010). *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Kempf, W. (2007). Peace journalism: a tightrope walk between advocacy journalism and constructive conflict coverage. *conflict & communication online*, 6(2), 1-9.
- Lee, S.T., Kim, H.S. & Maslog, C. (2006). Asian conflicts and the Iraq war: A comparative framing analysis. *International Communication Gazette*, 68(5-6), 499-518.
- Loyn, D. (2007). Good journalism or peace journalism. *conflict & communication online*, 6(2), 1-10.
- Lynch, J. & McGoldrick, A. (2000). *Peace journalism: what is it? How to do it?* Transcend. Reporting the World.
- Lynch, J. (2007). Peace journalism and its discontents. *conflict & communication online*, 6(2), 1-13.
- Lynch, J. (2008). *Debates in Peace Journalism*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Maslog, C. & Lee, S.T. (2005, 06). War or peace journalism? Asian newspaper coverage of conflicts. *Journal of Communication*, 311-329.
- McChesney, R.W. (2003). The problem of journalism: A political economic contribution to an explanation of the crisis in contemporary US journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 4(3), 299-329.
- McGoldrick, A. & Lynch, J. (2012). Responses to peace journalism. *Journalism*, 14(8), 1041-1058.
- McManus, J. (1997). Who's responsible for journalism? *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 12(1), 5-17.
- Mogekwu, M. (n.d.). Conflict reporting and peace journalism: in search of a new model: lessons from the Nigerian Niger-Delta crisis. In: Shaw, I.S., Hackett, R., & Lynch, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Expanding Peace Journalism: Comparative and Critical Approaches*. Sydney: Sydney University Press. 239-260.
- Neumann, R. & Fahmy, S. (2012). Shooting war or peace photographs? An examination of newswires' coverage of the conflict in Gaza (2008-2009). *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56(2), 1-26.
- Patindol, J.L.C. (n.d.). *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. In: Keeble, R., Tulloch, J. & Zollmann, F. (Eds.). (2010). *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 193-205.
- Poell, T. & Borra, E. (2012). Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr as platforms of alternative journalism: the social media account of the 2010 Toronto G20 protests. *Journalism*, 695-713.
- RuB-Mohl & Fengler, S. (2008). Journalists and the information-attention markets: Towards an economic theory of journalism. *Journalism*, 9(6), 667-690.
- SchNEWS. (2014). And Finally... the last word from SchNEWS. 861. (consulted June, 2015): <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.schnews.org.uk/stories/AND-FINALLY/>
- Schudson, M. (1989). The sociology of news production. *Media Culture Society*, 11, 263-282.
- Shaw, I.S., Hackett, R., & Lynch, J. (Ed.). (2011). *Expanding Peace Journalism: Comparative and Critical Approaches*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Shinar, D. (2000). Media diplomacy and 'peace talk': The Middle East and Northern Ireland. *International Communication Gazette*, 62(2), 83-97.
- Shinar, D. (2007). Epilogue: Peace journalism - The state of the art. *conflict & communication online*, 6(1), 1-7.
- Shinar, D. (2009). Can peace journalism make progress?: The coverage of the 2006 Lebanon War in Canadian and Israeli media. *International Communication Gazette*, 71(6), 451-471.
- Stoiciu, G. & Shinar, D. (1992). Media representations of socio-political conflict: The Romanian revolution and the Gulf war. *International Communication Gazette*, 50, 243-257.
- Wickenden, E. & Atton, C. (2006). Sourcing routines and representation in Alternative Journalism: a case study approach. *Journalism Studies*, 6(3), 347-359.
- Wolfsfeld, G. (1997). Promoting peace through the news media: Some initial lessons from the Oslo Peace Process. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 4, 52-70.

On the author: Jesse Benn is an independent media studies scholar who holds a Master of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication from the University of Colorado. He is currently taking a year off before beginning a Ph.D program. His research is mainly focused on anti-intellectualism in institutions producing or disseminating knowledge, or claiming to do intellectual work, e.g. media, think tanks, and universities. Outside academia he focuses on anti-racism, freelance writing, and other social justice work.

Adress: eMail: jesseobenn@gmail.com