Responses to peace journalism

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Abstract
This article presents and discusses the results of an experiment, which gathered audience responses to television news coded as war journalism and peace journalism respectively, in two countries, Australia and the Philippines. From the peace journalism model, evaluative criteria were first derived as a set of headings for content analysis of existing television news as broadcast in each country. The test material was then coded to fall within the upper and lower peace journalism quintiles of the ‘idiom and range’ of local television journalism in each case. Distinctions under the headings were particularized for individual stories by critical discourse analysis, to disclose potential sources of influence transmitted into audience frames. Data about emotional responses, gathered from self-reporting questionnaires, were combined with a textual artefact, with participants completing a ‘thought-listing protocol’ as they watched. Focus groups also viewed the material and provided more in-depth narrative responses. Watching peace journalism left people less angry and fearful, and more hopeful and empathic. Peace journalism viewers were also less inclined to apportion ‘blame’ to one ‘side’, and more likely to think about cooperative solutions to the problems presented.

Keywords
Audience responses, Australia, content analysis, critical discourse analysis, framing, peace journalism, Philippines

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Introduction

‘Peace journalism made a leap from theory to practice’, Lee and Maslog wrote in 2005, ‘without the benefit of research’ (2005: 312). They went on to operationalize the peace journalism model – originally put forward by Johan Galtung (1998) – into a set of evaluative criteria for the comparative content analysis of conflict coverage in 10 Asian newspapers. The research deficit they identified has since been made good, with a large number of published studies in peace journalism taking similar approaches (see, in particular, the collection of articles in Ross and Tehranian, 2008).

Peace journalism began as a reform movement, inspired by a landmark essay in communications scholarship. The Structure of Foreign News (Galtung and Ruge, 1965) showed how news representations of conflict were largely governed by the operation of journalistic conventions for defining and reporting stories. These filtered the news by ‘tuning in’ (Lynch and Galtung, 2010: ix) to events whose characteristics – threshold, frequency and so forth – met with the conventions, but they also tuned out certain factors essential to enable audiences to consider and value opportunities for peace.


This led to deliberate attempts to encourage and spread peace journalism – the ‘practice’ Lee and Maslog refer to. These have typically taken the form of exhortatory and pedagogical initiatives aimed at promoting marginal reforms in the work of editors and reporters in mainstream media. Such efforts are animated by an assumption that implementing peace journalism will also affect relationships in, and (therefore) the dynamics of, conflict, with a general influence towards pro-social goals identified as a lessening of violence and enhancing the prospects for conflict resolution and transformation. In the conception of Pecojon, a sizeable support and advocacy network in the Philippines, ‘the peace journalist chooses what and how to report in such a way that opens spaces for alternative solutions to conflict other than violence and war in the course of more truthful and responsible reporting’ (Patindol, 2010: 197).

So they draw implicitly on theories of media effects, often derived from the personal experiences of participants in conflict zones rather than from formal scholarly approaches. Kempf (2007) retrospectively supplied an important interim step with a study in which the content of newspaper articles about conflict in the former Yugoslavia was adjusted to exhibit characteristics of ‘escalation-oriented framing’, ‘moderately de-escalation oriented framing’ and ‘more strongly de-escalation oriented framing’, thus yielding (with the original, taken in each case from a German quality newspaper) four versions that were presented to interview subjects, who then responded to a questionnaire. The results ‘speak in favour’ of peace journalism, since ‘the de-escalation oriented text versions were accepted to a greater degree and resulted in less polarized mental models of the events’ (2007: 142) depicted in the stories.
For readers and audiences of journalism to develop ‘less polarized mental models’ in response to de-escalation oriented stories would go some way towards validating the notions of media effects on which efforts to promote peace journalism have been based. While such initiatives have led some journalists consciously to adopt peace journalism, under that name, there is also a much larger category of ‘accidental peace journalism – news patterns that resemble those of peace journalism, but that are contingent byproducts of routine news imperatives in specific situations, such as the geopolitical locus of the news organisation in relation to a particular conflict’ (Lynch et al., 2011b: 11).

It is the latter that is, generally, being measured in the results of the Lee and Maslog study, and the others mentioned above. These take Galtung’s model as the basis for developing evaluative criteria that are then used to analyse the manifest content of media that have not necessarily adopted peace journalism, as such, in their editorial strategy, but of which many nevertheless display characteristics of peace journalism in their reporting.

The criteria for such studies are generally formulated with reference to the processes by which media discourse influences the construction of meanings in conflict, and these have often been conceptualized with reference to framing theory (Aslam, 2010; Kempf, 2007; Ross, 2007; Tivona, 2011). Framing, in Entman’s influential formula, links ‘problem definition’ with ‘moral evaluation, causal interpretation and/or treatment recommendation’ (1993: 52).

Journalism divides its world into stories, or narratives, closely based on the above schema, which, in Tuchman’s words, ‘organize everyday reality’ by creating ‘news frames’ (1978: 193). These then interact with audience frames. Gamson and Modigliani capture this sense of reinforcing circularity in the relationship between journalism and its publics:

Media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists … develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse. (1989: 2)

This experiment

For these reasons, and following Kempf’s 2007 study, an experimental approach was devised, to gauge the nature and extent of differential media effects that could be brought about by adjusting the framing of familiar stories from the news agenda to display characteristics of war journalism and peace journalism respectively, in two countries, Australia and the Philippines.

The peace journalism model was operationalized into a set of headings to indicate categories for differential framings, intended to be applicable to story-telling about conflict in general, irrespective of the particular subject matter. Conflict is defined broadly as ‘a relationship, between two or more parties … who have – or think they have – incompatible goals’ (Fisher et al., 2000: 4). Underneath the headings, detailed distinctions would be developed to take account of local specifics, but the categories themselves would permit comparisons of the extent of peace journalism already practised in media of the two countries, and of audience responses to different modes of problem definition,
causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation in the framings of individual stories, with concordances and discordances alike feeding into judgements about the scope and applicability of the model.

The headings were adapted from Shinar’s summarizing assessment of published work in the peace journalism field: the ‘state of the art’ (2007: 200). In a significant update of Galtung’s original dyadic schema, peace journalism, he argues, can be recognized as:

1. Exploring backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, and presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray conflict in realistic terms, transparent to the audience;
2. Giving voice to the views of all rival parties, not merely the leaders of two antagonistic ‘sides’;
3. Airing creative ideas, from any source, for conflict resolution, development, peacemaking and peacekeeping;
4. Exposing lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and revealing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties;
5. Paying attention to peace stories and post-war developments.

Framing distinctions conforming to these headings were built into research material in the form of two television ‘bulletins’ of news stories familiar to the respective audiences in each place. One was coded (according to the headings) as ‘war journalism’, the other as ‘peace journalism’. These codings were derived from a two-step process covering both content analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Content analysis – that is, analysis of manifest content, of television news as already produced and aired in the country in question – was carried out in order to ‘pitch’ the peace journalism versions to the existing idiom and range of the medium. The studies referenced above invariably show there is some peace journalism, on some counts, already taking place – albeit in most cases ‘accidental’. Programmatic efforts to promote peace journalism can be justified because, in Lynch’s words, ‘there is some … so there could be more’ (2008a: 232); an approach Hackett characterizes as ‘immanent critique’ (2011: 59), harnessing the legitimating norms of professional practice to call for self-directed reforms within reach of journalistic agency. Potential to redouble such efforts will therefore be created if it can be shown that significant changes in meaning-making take place in response to media frames that ‘push the envelope’ of existing journalism, capable of being implemented within familiar structural constraints.

Nohrstedt and Ottosen recommend that peace journalism, as a mode of analysis (as pioneered by Lee and Maslog), be supplemented by approaches from critical discourse analysis because ‘journalistic products are perceived to carry and contain meanings on several levels. These cannot be collapsed into a single “manifest content” level’ (2011: 224–225). The meanings contained within a piece of journalism are derived from its insertion by audiences into multiple contexts; contexts derived from experiences of meaning-making in response to other representations, both journalistic and otherwise.

Only when taking into account this intertextual effect can the significance of particular framings be fully appreciated. Journalistic scripts, being highly condensed assemblages of
writing and (in the television medium) recorded sound and pictures, often contain coded triggers or ‘activation tags’ for ‘memory-based information processing’ (Scheufele, 2000: 299), evoking legacy frames. Only if such triggers are present will ‘neural binding’ be likely to take place, and meaning be ‘crystallized in public discourse’, in Gamson and Modigliani’s terms.

The bulletins played to viewers in Australia contained seven stories; in the Philippines, five. For purposes of abbreviation, the process of compilation (encompassing both critical discourse analysis and content analysis) and the presentation and discussion of results, from just two in each place, are set out below. In the case of Australia, these represented:

1. A political dispute over the government’s handling of claims by asylum seekers;
2. The latest round of talks between Israel and the Palestinians, brokered by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

In the Philippines, the two stories represented:

1. Latest developments in the long-running conflict involving the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the government and the Communist New People’s Army;
2. A disastrous episode of flooding which swept several people to their deaths near Davao, the largest city on the southern island of Mindanao.

Critical discourse analysis: Australia

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a natural partner for a peace journalism approach to the study of journalism, since it views discourse as being both ‘socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned’ (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258), a view which supports the assumptions about media effects that have underpinned peace journalism practice. The analysis presented here draws on a particular strand of CDA known as the Discourse Historical Approach (Wodak, 2001), which emphasizes the need for discursive uses of historical analogies and examples to disclose their influence on the potentially accessible intertextual meanings of particular conflict episodes.

The relations between Australian journalism and public opinion, in the development of meaning in public discourse about asylum issues, can be conceptualized using Edelman’s model of political spectacle (1988). This model offers to explain how political control is exerted by triggering ‘aroused’ or ‘quiescent’ responses to mediated dramas in which ‘psychological distancing’ plays a key role. For this effect to work, the ‘other’ must be an empty signifier: a vessel into which a range of meanings – otherwise capable of being brought to bear on ambivalent socio-economic issues, to the disadvantage of the author of the drama – can therefore be safely decanted. As Edelman asserts, ‘To personify an issue by identifying it with an enemy wins support for a political stand while masking the material advantages the perception provides’ (1988: 68).

The effect of psychological distancing in this story is to promulgate an exaggerated view among Australians of the ‘threat’ posed by the arrival of people seeking asylum, and of the range of responses to this conflict that Australia – its government, chiefly, but
also the community at large – should adopt. Crucial in sustaining this view is for media to distance ‘us’ psychologically from ‘them’ by ensuring that the pair never ‘meet’ (Lynch, 2011a). They can then be represented – explicitly or, more usually, implicitly – as ‘harbingers of all things dreadful’ (Crock, 2010: 26).

Asylum seekers and refugees themselves have maintained a notably low level of visibility in news about policy responses, which is usually dominated by party politicians (Klocker and Dunn, 2003). Were they to appear more regularly to speak in their own right, then asylum seekers, as signifiers, would begin to ‘fill up’, with their own meanings, which would squeeze out the space for other meanings, dreadful and otherwise, to be loaded on to them.

In the second story to be discussed in this article, the Israel–Palestine ‘peace talks’, issues in Australian media coverage are similar to those explored in the landmark study of UK news on the conflict, *Bad News from Israel* (Philo and Berry, 2011). There is rarely any explanation of Israel’s illegal military occupation of Palestinian territory and its consequences for Palestinians, and what international law says about it. With those elements habitually omitted, the ‘Palestinian perspective’ is effectively excluded from audience awareness:

There was no apparent rationale for Palestinian actions when they attacked Israelis. The Palestinians could thus be seen as ‘starting’ the violence. The Israelis were portrayed in the news as ‘responding’ to those attacks … the audience clearly took this message from what they saw [on television news]. (Philo, 2010: 412)

No equivalent study has been published on Australian television news or on Australian audiences. However, a national survey on the Australian public’s understandings and opinions concerning the Israel–Palestine conflict found ‘the largest plurality (37%) selected “Ancient hostility between Jews and Arabs” as ‘the main cause of the conflict … which is the dominant narrative in popular culture including films and television programs but devoid of historical evidence [to support it]’ (Han and Rane, 2011: 3). This is the explanation that tends to ‘prevail by default’, Lynch and McGoldrick say (2005: 63), in the absence of any explicit contextualizing material.

**Content analysis: Australia**

The exercise in content analysis was performed on two television news bulletins, SBS *World News Australia* (SBS WNA) and Channel Nine News, over a period of two weeks in September 2010. The number of stories about conflict defined in the general terms quoted above was 188, and a ‘score’ was allotted to each story by operationalizing the peace journalism model under Shinar’s five headings, using evaluative criteria particularized in each case according to the CDA. The period from which the sample was drawn saw extensive reporting of both the stories discussed in this article: the US-sponsored Middle East ‘peace talks’, and the Australian government’s responses to asylum seekers.

A story that included material satisfying criteria under any one heading scored one point. One that included all five scored five points. So each individual story was ‘marked’
initially out of five. Following Lee et al. (2006), three negative indicators of ‘passive’ peace journalism were then added for the avoidance of emotive language, the ‘labeling’ of conflict parties as good and bad, and partisan reporting respectively. To recognize the lesser importance of these indicators compared with the main framing characteristics, each was allocated the score of 0.5, to be subtracted from the initial score where such uses of language occurred. So the maximum ‘score’ for any story was +5.0 and the minimum was −1.5.

Overall, the two programmes attained very similar ‘scores’ in content analysis, with a mean average of 1.23 for the stories on Channel Nine News \((n = 64)\) and 1.32 for SBS World News Australia \((n = 124)\). The range was from +5.0 (a story on SBS WNA about a community conflict resolution initiative in Darwin, adapted from a piece on their Living Black current affairs series), to −1.0 (multiple stories about, for instance, the war in Afghanistan, across both outlets).

**Research material: Australia**

The two versions for the research material were framed so as to fall within the upper and lower quintiles of the content analysis scores. Of all the stories examined \((n = 188)\), these boundaries fell at the ratings of 0.5 and 2.5 respectively. All the war journalism stories were coded at <0 and all the peace journalism stories were coded at >3, to represent the opposite poles of the idiom and range of Australian television news as presently broadcast. Each of the two versions was voiced by the same reporter, of approximately the same duration and produced to the same standard.

In the case of the asylum story, the war journalism version led on a leaked inter-departmental memo, handed out to media by the opposition Liberal Party, appearing to show ‘strains’ in the asylum handling system caused by an increased ‘flow’ of ‘boat people’. All the speakers were either government ministers or their opposition ‘shadows’. With no positive material under any of the five headings, and the incidence, in the reporter’s script, of several inundation metaphors (‘waves’ of asylum claims; ‘overwhelmed’, etc.) qualifying as ‘emotive language’, its overall score was −0.5.

The peace journalism version also dealt with the leaked memo, but led on reactions to it, including a call, from the third party (the Greens) for more staff to be employed to obviate the need to keep applicants in an ‘inhumane’ state of limbo as their claims entered a growing backlog. It scored under the first heading, by offering to explain why some asylum seekers resort to dangerous journeys by boat to reach sanctuary from oppressive conditions in their country of origin. It gave a voice to all parties – not merely the government and main opposition party, the typical ‘indexing’ pattern according to Bennett (1990) – but also to an opinion pollster who stated that most Australians were happy to welcome asylum seekers as new citizens, and a ‘boat person’, Ali Jafari, a Hazara originally from Afghanistan, who spoke for himself, in personal interview. As Mr Jafari was shown to have successfully settled in Australia, it also scored on the fifth criterion, showing a peace story. Its overall score was +3.0.

The Israel–Palestine story in the news at that time was the latest round of meetings involving Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, scheduled to coincide with the arrival in the region of US Secretary of
State Hillary Clinton and brokered by the White House envoy, Senator George Mitchell. The war journalism version prefaced these political developments with a brief account of a violent incident in which two Gaza ‘militants’ had been killed as an Israeli ‘reprisal’ for a rocket attack – conforming to the pattern diagnosed as typical by Philo and Berry.

Also ongoing at the time was a dispute over whether a ‘freeze’ on house-building in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, entered into by Israel at the behest of the Obama Administration, should continue beyond its impending end-point. Israeli and Palestinian spokespersons made claim and counter-claim over this issue, but crucially with no contextualizing explanation of the difference in legitimacy between them, arising from the illegality, under international law, of any building of settlements on occupied territory, let alone any more.

In the peace journalism version, by contrast, a section of the script said:

The settlements are considered illegal under international law, and the majority of world opinion wants to see Israel pull back to its recognized borders, leaving these streets and houses under Palestinian control.

Furthermore, this version included a map of the so-called ‘amazing shrinking Palestine’, showing how the territory available for Palestinians has been reduced, divided and reticulated over the years of occupation, and an interview with a Palestinian refugee living in Sydney, who likened the situation in the occupied West Bank to undertaking a journey ‘from Marrickville to Glebe’ (two adjacent Sydney suburbs) only to meet ‘fourteen army checkpoints’ along the way.

**Critical discourse analysis: The Philippines**

In the early 2000s, the Philippines government, under then-President Gloria Arroyo, imported the ‘war on terrorism’ template and applied it to a long-running insurgency by the New People’s Army (NPA) military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. By the time of the experiment described in this article, in early 2011, a different approach was tentatively underway: a new president, Benigno Aquino, had reopened a long-dormant peace process.

The ‘signature propaganda ploy for the war on terrorism’, Lynch says (2008b), is to ‘decontextualise’ political violence by non-state actors. But this was always contested in the Philippines. The country’s Human Security Act of 2007 – shortly after Aquino had declared ‘all-out war’ on the Communists – refers to ‘taking into account the root causes of terrorism without acknowledging these as justifications for terrorist and/or criminal activities’. Remedies included ‘conflict management, peace-building and equitable economic development’.

Media representations of the time proved a source of social artefact in this political conflict, Lynch (2008b) found, by applying evaluative criteria based on the peace journalism model, with its emphasis on representing events along with underlying processes as essential context and background. In peace journalism framings, this creates potential receptivity to the kind of treatment recommendations referenced in the 2007 Act, as opposed to attempts at violent suppression.
Imbricated with conflict issues involving insurgent groups have been strategic questions of environmental protection. Corporate activities in key primary industries (such as mining, commercial agriculture and power generation) have been contested across many social sectors, including, notably, the Catholic Bishops Congress of the Philippines, which in 1998 issued a landmark statement that: ‘The adverse social impacts on the affected communities … far outweigh the gains promised by large-scale mining corporations’ (Nettleton et al., 2004: 3).

The ‘roots of … conflict have been the clash of interests in land and other natural resources’, Schiavo-Campo and Judd argue, with a prerequisite for successful peace-building being the formation of ‘a healthy environmental protection strategy’ (2005: 2). And the NPA have often ‘threatened to disable operations of foreign mining firms if they damage the environment’ (Aglay and Mogato, 2005) and sometimes made good on that threat.

Sites of opposition to what local activists call ‘development aggression’ have also included power projects badged as renewable, such as ‘hydropower plants’, which in at least one instance proved ‘a source of popular local resistance’ (Schiavo-Campo and Judd, 2005: 8) because they were seen to clear space for their operation by logging, and to impinge on the ancestral lands of local indigenous, or Lumad people. There is, then, a considerable accumulated stock of legacy frames in which primary industry activities, and their environmental impacts, are associated with contestation and conflict.

Content analysis: The Philippines

The exercise in content analysis was performed on regional television news bulletins, offered by two of the Philippines’ main commercial TV channels, namely ABS-CBN and GMA. Each produces a dedicated evening news programme in Davao, the biggest city on the island of Mindanao, which is broadcast to the people of that region every weekday. The sample material was taken from two weeks’ worth of output (10 episodes of each bulletin) during the fieldwork visit to the area in February 2011.

The number of stories about conflict defined in the general terms quoted above was 269, and a ‘score’ was allotted to each story by operationalizing the peace journalism model under Shinar’s five headings, using evaluative criteria particularized in each case according to the CDA. The period from which the sample was drawn saw extensive reporting of stories about the insurgency conflict involving the Communist ‘rebels’, and the environmental costs of industrial developments.

As before, a story that included material satisfying criteria under any one heading scored one point, with a maximum ‘score’ for any story of +5.0 and the minimum, −1.5, if half a point was knocked off for instances of all three of the negative indicators of labeling and the use of partisan and demonizing language respectively.

Overall, the two programmes attained similar ‘scores’ in content analysis, with a mean average of 0.96 for the stories on ABS-CBN (n = 145) and 1.28 for GMA (n = 124). The upper limit of the range was +4.0, shared between three stories: one on GMA about a civilian peace rally in support of upcoming talks between the government and the NPA and two on ABS-CBN, about a literacy programme for indigenous people, and the release
of military prisoners held by the NPA, respectively. The lower limit of the range was −1.0, again shared between several stories on both channels, typically concerning violent incidents blamed on the NPA.

**Research material: The Philippines**

As with the Australian iteration of the experiment, the two versions for the research material were framed so as to fall within the upper and lower quintiles of the content analysis scores. The boundaries of all the stories examined \((n = 269)\) fell at the ratings of 0 and 2.5 respectively. All the war journalism stories were coded at \(<0\) and all the peace journalism stories were coded at \(>3\), to represent the opposite poles of the idiom and range of television news as presently broadcast in the Davao region. Each of the two versions was voiced by the same reporter, of approximately the same duration and produced to the same standard.

The NPA story involved two people being killed by a landmine planted by the New People’s Army who targeted a military vehicle. In this case, however, as well as military personnel, the vehicle was carrying civilians being transported to a so-called ‘peace rally’ organized by the military themselves.

The war journalism version scored an overall −1.0, with no content answering to any of Shinar’s five headings. There was no significant material by way of background and context of the conflict. The only views reflected were those of the military themselves; there were no ideas for peace (indeed news of the peace talks, scheduled to open in Norway in just a few days, was effectively suppressed), no challenges to the propaganda and no images of peace.

The story lost half a point for emotive language and another half a point for being partisan by using military parlance to describe the Communists (as ‘Rebelding NPA’). The script also referred to the people travelling in the military vehicle as returning from a ‘peace rally condemning the rebel NPA’, thus reproducing the propaganda claim that the military are attempting to bring ‘peace’ by ‘defeating’ the NPA.

In the peace journalism version, the studio presenter’s script referred instead to a bombing by the New People’s Army, removing the military term ‘rebelding’ so the story was no longer partisan from the outset. The story subtly challenged the propaganda by neutralizing the description of the rally to make it clear it was ‘organized by the military to condemn the NPA’, thus registering a positive score under Shinar’s fourth heading.

It featured a broad range of views, and mentioned – as the other had not – the peace talks, about to resume in Oslo, thus giving the item a score under the fifth heading, for highlighting a story of peace. There were pictures, shot separately for the research material, of a civilian peace rally in Davao, and an interview with one of the organizers, a Protestant Bishop, who expressed hopes for the talks to focus on underlying issues of social justice. Also speaking from the rally were two Lumad leaders in traditional costume, who testified to the impact of unrestrained development on their way of life, earning it a point for showing backgrounds and contexts.

A clip from an interview with Ka Oris, leader of the NPA in Mindanao, stating the organization’s political priorities combined with the other perspectives to earn a point for
conveying a full range of different views on the subject, bringing in the peace journalism version with a ‘score’ of +4.0 overall.

The other story chosen for this article covered a semi-regular occurrence in the tropical terrain of the Philippines—a sudden and destructive flood, this time on the outskirts of the city in Davao del Sur. Rumours had circulated that recent industrial developments in the area, including notably a downstream logging operation and a newly built hydro-electric power plant, had left the local Sibulan river prone to overflow. Three people had been killed as the swollen waters swept through a village (Barangay Darong, Santa Cruz), including a babe in arms.

The war journalism version focused heavily on distressed relatives looking for loved ones, dramatic shots of the gushing waters, floating tree trunks, abandoned vehicles and wrecked homes. Although dramatic, and related in breathless style, the story scored −0.5 for having emotive language and no material conforming to any of the peace journalism characteristics under Shinar’s headings.

The peace journalism version explored some of the background issues. The first part of the story was largely the same, then came a ‘corner-turn’ (a recognized peace journalism technique – see Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 167), with the reporter’s script saying: ‘A natural disaster – but was it a man-made one too?’ The next section of the story featured an interview clip with a local farmer, filmed for the research, who asserted that the newly built hydro-electric plant had disturbed the forest growth and water flow, adding to the destructive force of the river. A manager from the operating company, Hecor, spoke to rebut the allegations, explaining how engineers building the plant had secured the riverbanks.

Another local farmer, again interviewed for the peace journalism version, suggested other human activity such as illegal logging as a possible cause. Inevitably the story touched on the global influence of climate change in perhaps making such extreme weather events more frequent and more severe, and a research scientist from Ateneo de Davao University offered an idea for a solution by suggesting that major companies developing in the area, like the car firm Toyota, consider investing some of their future profits in sustainable, non-polluting energy. Overall this story achieved a score of +3.0 for offering backgrounds and contexts, a broad range of views, and ideas for a solution.

**Audience responses**

In the Australian study, 122 participants were divided into two groups to watch either the war (WJ) or the peace journalism (PJ) bulletin, with no participant seeing both versions, or at any stage being made aware that a second version existed.

The Differential Emotion Scale (DES; Izard, 1977) was employed to test for differences between the groups before and after viewing, similar – in form, if not content – to the method used by Unz et al. (2008). The DES is a 30-item questionnaire, consisting of 10 fundamental emotions, each assessed by three items. The 10 fundamental emotions in this scale are: interest, enjoyment, surprise, distress, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, empathy and guilt. Each of these 30 items is rated on a five-point Likert scale, yielding a score out of five.
Before watching the bulletin, participants filled in the DES to measure baseline levels on each of the 10 subscales, which revealed no statistically significant pre-existing differences between the two groups. During the bulletin, the video was paused at the end of each story for participants to fill out another DES, along with a Thought-Listing Protocol (TLP), inviting them to simply write down any notes about thoughts or feelings prompted by what they were watching (Coleman and Thorson, 2002).

After watching the asylum seekers story, members of the WJ group felt significantly more hopeless than they had been before viewing, whereas PJ viewers’ feelings of hopelessness decreased significantly. War journalism viewers showed significantly higher increases in feelings of astonishment, revulsion, contempt, distaste, anger, disdain, scorn and downheartedness than the PJ viewers, compared with their pre-test scores.

After watching the Israel–Palestine story, members of the WJ group felt significantly more hopeless than before, while PJ viewers felt less hopeless. Peace journalism viewers also felt less scared than they had before they started watching, whereas WJ viewers felt more scared. Members of the WJ group showed significantly higher increases in feelings of revulsion, contempt, anger, alarm, rage, disgust and downheartedness than PJ viewers, compared with their pre-test scores (Table 1).

In the Philippines study, 99 participants were divided into two groups to watch either the war or the peace journalism bulletin. As in Australia, no participant saw both versions, or was at any stage made aware that a different version existed.

After watching the NPA story, WJ viewers’ happiness and delight dipped significantly more, compared with their pre-test state, than in the PJ group. The PJ viewers became more hopeful whereas the WJ group lost hope. Both groups became angrier, more downhearted and frustrated, compared with baseline, but these effects were more marked in the WJ group. Empathy increased in both cases compared with baseline, but to a greater degree in the PJ group.

War journalism viewers of the floods story experienced a greater rise in empathy, compared with baseline, than their counterparts who watched the PJ version, perhaps reflecting the more analytical, less ‘heart-rending’ content of the latter. The two groups showed a similar increase in levels of anger and enrage ment – the figures are given here not as an interaction but as a curiosity, given the rest of the results, and, given the difference in content, it would be reasonable to surmise that the anger was directed towards different targets. A clue may be the greater rise in blameworthiness felt by the PJ viewers, as if the cause of the tragedy was now perceived to be rather more complicated than a simple ‘act of God’ (Table 2).

All the PJ stories in the two research bulletins – and certainly the four chosen for analysis in this article – invite the viewer to empathize with one or more of the dramatis personae in each case, thereby dissolving psychological distancing effects inscribed in legacy frames familiar from political spectacles, and potentially moving the person concerned (the ‘boat person’, for example, or the NPA member) from ‘out-group’ to ‘in-group’.

Two main sets of qualitative data were gathered: Thought-Listing Protocols (TLPs) (Coleman and Thorson, 2002), inviting participants to write down notes of any thoughts or feelings prompted by their viewing, alongside their self-reporting questionnaires; and the recordings made from a separate process of focus group discussions, involving a
smaller number of participants drawn from different socio-economic backgrounds (following Philo and Berry, 2011).

Data from the TLPs were themed according to Entman’s four functions of framing, referenced above:

- Moral evaluation;
- Problem definition;
- Causal interpretation;
- Treatment recommendation.

Viewers of the WJ version of the Australian asylum story, for example, were more angry – according to their self-reporting questionnaires – than those who watched the PJ version, while the latter were more hopeful. The WJ viewers also expressed significantly
more scorn and disdain, and the TLP data gathered under the Moral Evaluation heading make it clear these feelings were directed towards the party politicians whose voices dominated the WJ version. Anger among PJ viewers still rose significantly compared with baseline, but the TLP data indicate a much greater degree of anger towards the asylum processing system that, in the words of one respondent, ‘shames Australia’.

To take another example, in TLPs by PJ viewers of the NPA landmine story in the Philippines, responses in the Problem Definition theme identified various elements of context and background: ‘injustice’, ‘greed’, ‘land’, ‘unequal rights’, ‘labeling guerrillas as terrorists … only makes matters worse’, even – in one case – ‘the system’. These are examples of what Galtung (2000) calls a ‘structural perspective’, which has an ‘exculpatory’ effect on Treatment Recommendations. Sure enough, the same participants were more likely to suggest some variant of peace talks and/or measures to instill economic justice, rather than catching, punishing or deterring individual perpetrators. The greater hopefulness of the PJ viewers, recorded in the STAI (State-Trait Anxiety Index – a further test, conducted in parallel), was clearly connected with this process of framing. In processing data from the focus groups, responses were themed according to Shinar’s five headings: a more direct ‘check’ on whether distinctions in the peace journalism model, when built into research material, can be successfully decoded by viewers who are not explicitly primed to detect them. Sure enough, there was an overriding sense among WJ viewers of the Israel–Palestine story that significant backgrounds and contexts were missing.

Table 2. Interactions in Philippines Differential Emotion Scale results (means, with standard deviation in brackets).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Pre-test WJ</th>
<th>Pre-test PJ</th>
<th>Post-test NPA mine WJ</th>
<th>Post-test NPA mine PJ</th>
<th>Post-test Floods WJ</th>
<th>Post-test Floods PJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
<td>(1.07)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delighted</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
<td>(1.19)</td>
<td>(1.21)</td>
<td>(1.33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(1.29)</td>
<td>(1.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.64)</td>
<td>(0.98)</td>
<td>(1.37)</td>
<td>(1.12)</td>
<td>(1.20)</td>
<td>(1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enraged</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td>(1.07)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downhearted</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.33)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blameworthy</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(0.96)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.21)</td>
<td>(0.97)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.16)</td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(1.17)</td>
<td>(1.20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The additional elements in the peace journalism version – the map, the explanation of international law and the interview with the Palestinian refugee – led viewers to report less fear and more hope, and according to focus group participants these added helpful context and background.

In the Philippines, the PJ presentation of the floods story in particular prompted one participant to reflect that ‘it highlights the need for cooperation in society’, whereas a WJ viewer felt the presentation had left an obvious question unaddressed: ‘Why these floods is going on?’

Conclusion

Peace journalism is a globally distributed reform movement, which has also emerged over recent years as a field of scholarly research. This has seen the peace journalism model – expressed at first iteration as a list of ‘key questions for peace correspondents’ (Galtung, 1998) – operationalized to provide evaluative criteria for analysing the manifest content of (chiefly) mainstream media.

Implicit in such exercises – both professional and academic – has been an assumption that a dyadic model is capable of capturing significant ideational distinctions in a complex discursive practice such as journalism. This has been challenged from various perspectives, notably with a contention that ideation takes place at levels other than that of manifest content, and that operative distinctions can therefore be identified only by adding further methodological innovations through critical discourse analysis. From this stems the method devised for this research, carrying out complementary processes of CDA and content analysis to identify the appropriate pitch and subject matter to present a reform-oriented form of peace journalism suitable for each of two places. The stories set before audiences in Australia and the Philippines produced sharp interactions between content and reception in some cases, in others, less so.

However, some main conclusions stand out. The strongest is that, where members of a particular group have been the subject of psychological distancing in political spectacle, presenting their perspective in their own words is an essential element of an approach leading to greater empathy, hope and happiness among TV viewers, and less anger and fear. If accompanied by suitable explanation of contexts and backgrounds, this in turn activates audience frames in which problem definitions are more likely to be structural than focused on individual malefactors, and treatment recommendations therefore focused more on the delivery of justice, broadly defined, than on deterrence and punishment. That applied both to asylum seekers in Australia and NPA members in the Philippines.

How reproducible and generalizable the results are depends on a number of other factors operating at different levels. In the first place, Lynch’s claim – that if some peace journalism can be detected in content analysis, then it can be assumed that more is possible – may be too glib.

The peace journalism versions for the study were created by supplementing existing broadcast material with interviews and picture sequences gathered locally, in each case, and produced in roughly the same style and duration as the originals. These new elements were chosen for their accessibility within the material structures that govern the
work of television journalists, such as availability of camera crews and interviewees and travel times from the office, and compatibility with on-air formats such as package length.

Structural constraints may also take ‘non-material’ (Capra, 2004: 32) or ideological form, however, and some focus group participants in Sydney voiced awareness that the reasons why the most ideational elements of the story about Israel and the Palestinians, in particular, appear so rarely on television have nothing to do with the practical exigencies of sourcing them and getting them on screen. ‘I don’t think I ever saw a map of Palestine like that’, one said: ‘it makes it much easier to understand the conflict … the language that was used to describe them [the settlements] was what I believe to be accurate in terms of international law [but] that’s a contested language’.

Perhaps more fundamentally, a dyadic system based on peace may not be sufficiently precise, on the one hand, or sufficiently inclusive, on the other, to ‘capture’ the most important nuances of media framing – those most influential on audience frames – in representations of conflict. It is, for instance, far from clear, in some important stories on the news agenda at the time of writing, what understanding of the situation among readers and audiences is more conducive to an eventual peaceful outcome: a factor in debates over whether western troops should pull out of Afghanistan, for instance, lest that leave the repressive Taliban to take over.

These caveats notwithstanding, the evidence of this study does provide some support for some of the claims made on behalf of peace journalism, and the hopes invested in it. When audiences watch television news items created as war journalism and peace journalism respectively, their responses reflect a process of meaning-making along neural pathways linking perceived causes and effects that predicate, respectively, a lesser or greater receptiveness to cooperative, nonviolent responses to conflict. Peace journalism advocates, who are aiming to expand opportunities for society at large to value and consider such responses, are on the right track.

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References


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