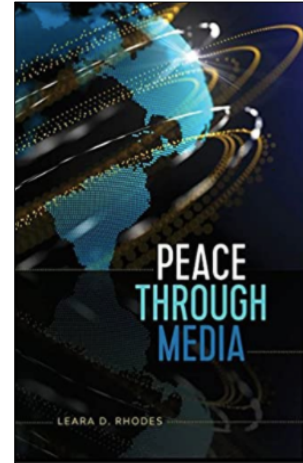


Leara D. Rhodes, **Peace Through Media**, New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2018, 201 pp., \$47.20 (paperback).

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Humanity continues to face countless forms of conflict, and as Leara Rhodes writes in **Peace Through Media**, peace remains a human need. From the United States, where increased cases of police brutality and racial injustice have led to protests in major cities, to seasonal wildfires in the United States, Brazil, and Australia, health pandemics like COVID-19 and Ebola, as well as military conflicts, wars, terrorism, and repressive regimes, there is plenty of evidence that humanity is indeed in pursuit of peace. Accompanying these turbulent times, is the ubiquity of the Internet and mobile telephony that have revolutionized how we communicate and share information. Within this context, *Peace Through Media* is a valuable addition to conversations about conflict-sensitive reporting in an era of globalization.



Peace Through Media is a resource for journalism students, journalism practitioners, and educators alike, equipping them with tools to rethink the whys and hows of peace journalism within current technological and material realities. The goal of the book is therefore to facilitate peace through teaching of peace journalism alongside basic reporting skills. The book is divided into 11 chapters that begin with anecdotes and end with discussion questions. There are two concluding chapters where the author introduces an “action plan” for teaching peace journalism and another one on future dialogue. In the Appendix of the book, the author lists “Exhibits,” with more resources for studying peace journalism. For example, Exhibit 1 names “Peace Journalism Programs Around the World.” In this list is Transcend Peace University, whose founder is Professor Johann Galtung, a leading contributor to peace studies.

From the onset, the author delves into two critical issues: the shifting definitions of peace and how journalists in the technologically advanced era are uniquely positioned to shape our perceptions of peace. She tackles the definition of peace by referencing more common articulations by Professor Johan Galtung and the United Nations (UN) that place peace within cultural contexts. Reference to the UN is key to peace journalism studies because of its contribution to the institutionalization of peace within the international system and the growth of various actors and bodies engaged in international relations, international security, and economic progress. According to Rhodes, the institutionalization of peace has influenced the study and production of peace. The book addresses the definition of peace more than once, with a concluding expression that “peace is being able to live and work in a safe world—a world where conflict happens but is negotiated and solved without violence” (p. 188). In defining peace journalism, the author turns to the “work of scholars who helped create the concept” (p. 15). In this section of the book, scholars Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick stand out as pioneers in their definition of peace journalism and the peace journalism model which they propose for journalists covering conflict.

Secondly, the author explains the “stressors” on journalists covering conflict. These stressors include fragmented media platforms, convergent media routines that require journalists to keep up with new and emergent technologies, the challenge of citizen journalists who now participate in both news production and consumption, the declining financial fortunes of news organizations that have led to downsizing, and the blurred line between objective reporting and truth-seeking as journalists rely on official sources of information. In a nutshell, the author is calling for a paradigm shift in contemporary journalistic coverage of wars and conflicts.

Rhodes situates peace journalism studies within interdisciplinarity in academic and policy approaches. The author’s main aim is to recenter journalism within peace studies in ways that capture new digital realities in news production and globalization while retaining decades-old journalistic values. Consequently, *Peace Through Media* delves into different aspects of peace journalism within the context of conflict-sensitive reporting. The author states that theoretically, normative approaches that dominate peace journalism research tend to underscore the professional and social responsibility roles of the media. The author also highlights the use of frames in coverage of conflict, leading researchers to examine structure and agency in journalism using political economic and sociological models such as the propaganda model, hierarchy of influences model, and Field’s model. She suggests other interdisciplinary efforts to theorize peace journalism research through globalization theories, theories related to international relations, social studies, economic studies, cultural studies, and religious studies. The author builds on the concept of public sphere to argue that there is need to reevaluate the meaning of public and the media’s role in communities in the age of social media, where audiences have the power to shape public consciousness. These philosophical and theoretical frameworks, however, seem insufficient in forging a cohesive perspective peace journalism research. As Rhodes says, there are many unanswered questions. “The theoretical approach to the media’s impact on peace is underdeveloped, the practical projects are vastly scattered and a systematic analysis of the practice is missing” (p. 33).

Rhodes problematizes journalistic coverage of conflict using news values such as objectivity. She argues that what matters is not the objectivity but in the completeness of the narratives. “News stories are assessed by what is absent more than what is present” (p. 41). The book then proceeds to address the (mis)representation of women, children, the disabled, the elderly, and LGBTQ communities. Other populations affected by conflict are internally displaced groups, ethnic groups, and religious groups, whose negative coverage is attributed to the dominance of elite voices. Culture-sensitive and -inclusive language is key, as well as the coverage of violence causes if peace through media is to be realized. Journalists are also warned against bias and propaganda in their use of news sources. The author turns to Galtung’s list of tactics of propaganda in conflict reporting. One of these is the “failure to explore the goals of outside interventionists, especially big powers.” This has, for instance, had an impact in the way journalists have hegemonically framed the “war on terror,” thus advancing perceived imperial interests of Western powers. At the same time, *Peace Through Media* describes how governments have used the media in times of conflict through restriction, control, and demonization as a way to suppress oppositional voices. Ultimately, the challenge for journalists is to find ways to report conflict through the lens of neutral states that have the potential to broker peace between rivals. In the concluding chapters, the author provides an “action plan” for teaching and practicing peace journalism by incorporating aspects discussed earlier in the book, with emphasis on cultural context, causes of conflict, and inclusivity in representing different voices. More importantly, the author urges sustained interest in addressing issues that trigger conflict to realize sustainable peace. Her final word is that media and

international studies scholars, media practitioners, citizen journalists, and state and nonstate actors can work together to mitigate violence and encourage peace.

In *Peace Through Media*, Leara Rhodes has demonstrated the need for journalists to retool and find new ways of covering conflict. She underscores how journalism and media studies have merged with political science in relation to conflict resolution. For decades journalism scholars have called for studying peace journalism in ways that reflect structural constraints that influence media reporting rather than focus on individual journalists (see Hanitzsch, 2007). *Peace Through Media* identifies major obstacles to media and peacebuilding as language, a consolidated media industry, the mindset of the journalist covering conflict, and the audience mistrust of the media within a globalized context. Leara Rhodes' advice to journalists to look for solutions that may help stimulate dialogue reflects the recent shift from problem-focused journalism to solutions journalism. Solutions journalism is a genre where news reporting in response to social issues accommodates the voices of communities working to mitigate the challenges they are facing (Arete, 2019; McIntyre, 2019). Transcend Peace University and its affiliate Transcend International are examples of scholarly spaces that promote solutions-oriented peace journalism.

As conflict continues to take up new forms across the globe, *Peace Through Media* should be embraced as an extension of debates surrounding peace journalism studies. In addition to theoretical approaches mentioned in this book, the critical political economy of conflict, postcolonial and decolonial approaches to conflict, and the encoding-decoding model of audience reception are helpful for deeper understandings of peace journalism in various contexts. At the micro level, peace journalism studies require a reexamination of emergent journalistic identities in the 21st century. In some instances, journalistic identities online are merged with their professional identities. Journalists are also caught up in conflict as survivors, victims, or coconspirators, and these too should be studied. Peace cannot be removed from the concept of justice. The slogan "no justice, no peace" calls for reconceptualization of peacebuilding and postconflict restoration with justice in mind. If humanity needs peace, then humanity needs justice too. As such, peace journalism models should be able to represent a culture constitutive of peace and justice as a panacea to human rights and equity. These models should trigger conversations about reparative, restorative, and retributive justice at local and international levels. In the United States, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement has spurred debates on reparations for Black Americans who have suffered socioeconomic injustices traced to a history of slavery. In restorative justice, journalistic truth-telling of repressive systems can contribute to postconflict healing. Media reporting of the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court can engage peace journalism scholars and journalists in conversations about retributive justice and peacebuilding. Lastly, peace journalism studies should include journalistic contributions to gender justice, environmental justice, and economic justice.

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