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**Book review: Reporting Immigration Conflict: Opportunities for Peace Journalism**

Mariely Valentin-Llopis

London: Lexington Books, 2021. 113pp. ISBN:  9781793613493

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Media coverage of (im)migration issues has been one of the most debated and theorized issues in recent times: the picture of Alan Kurdi in 2015, drowned on a Turkish beach which symbolized the Syrian refugee crisis, the Yemen humanitarian plight which has seen millions flee their homes, and in the US, the US-Mexico barrier which was emblematic of Donald Trump's 2016 campaign platform.

It is the last that Mariely Valentin-Llopis seeks to address in her book, but to look beyond that to take a longer view of media coverage of Latino immigration to the US back as far as the 1960s and to argue that peace journalism theory, as typified by Galtung, Lynch and McGoldrick, should be used in order to advance meaningful conversations around such coverage, whether as consumers or as producers.

Chapter 1 sets out the background to Latino immigration, including a useful summary of key policy such as the Bracero programme from the 1940s which allowed Mexicans to enter the US on short-term contracts and the 1965 US Immigration and Naturalisation Act which inadvertently ended up accelerating unauthorized immigration, through reforms by the Reagan and Clinton administrations, as well as Obama's executive action of 2012 which sought to protect the so-called 'Dreamers' (foreign-born children of undocumented parents). Valentin-Llopis notes that through the years coverage of immigration has become increasingly polarized and suggests there is a triangle of violence that immigrants face – direct, structural and cultural violence.

The solution she suggests is peace journalism which promotes proactive rather than reactive journalism, covers invisible effects as well as visible, and avoids demonizing, victimizing and emotive language when covering conflict. This she says should be used in the coverage of immigration as well. In Chapter 2 she outlines the history of peace journalism while noting its critics such as Kempf who has suggested that it can even lead to conflict escalation.

Chapters 3 and 4 look at empirical work around two different immigration situations: the first being Operation Pedro Pan – where children were brought from Cuba to the US between 1960 and 1962; the second being a comparison of US and Mexican media coverage of the border conflict in 2014. In Operation Pedro Pan  14,000 unaccompanied minors arrived in the US; something that was the subject of a media blackout until broken by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in March 1962.  While acknowledging that much of the coverage, whether by the Catholic or secular press, would fall into Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (the anti-communist sentiment was strong in the way newspapers reported the programme), she says that much of the coverage promoted empathy and compassion for the children arriving in the country. This was challenged in the 1990s when as the Cuban children grew up they questioned the merits of Operation Pedro Pan.

Chapter 4 moves from the largely positive imagery of the 1960s immigrants to the way unauthorized Central American migrants, particularly minors, were portrayed in the US press (*New York Times, Los Angeles Times*) and the Mexican media (*El Universal* and *Reforma*), chosen for circulation, agenda-setting and visibility. Both the American and Mexican press focused on framing the story as a legal one (taking the children into custody and deporting them) and used elite voices rather than the migrants themselves as sources.

Advocates of peace journalism want to focus on not just visible effects of conflict (eg death) but also invisible ones (emotional trauma and damage to society). The content analysis done by Valentin-Llopis suggests that the American news media covered such invisible effects more than the Mexican equivalents and also had more proactive reporting. However in comparison the American media were far more likely to use emotive language such as 'surge' and 'influx' than the Mexican outlets.

Chapter 5 looks at what happened after Donald Trump took office in the US in 2017, and Andres Lopez Obrador, known to be sympathetic to migrants in Mexico in 2018. Following the Trump administration's use of the Flores agreement, family separation rather than unaccompanied minors became a clear news topic in 2019. And despite concerns over journalists following  government agenda-setting (for example writing about Donald Trump's tweets), Valentin-Llopis suggests that comparative analysis shows that both Mexican and American outlets adopted more peace journalism variables in their coverage in 2019 than they had done in 2014 with more reporting on areas of agreement than conflict, less demonizing and emotive language and taking a more holistic approach.

Many of the points Valentin-Llopis makes about better reporting of immigration have been embraced by those who might not overtly subscribe to peace journalism theory – fewer elite voices, more indepth reporting, careful use of language, although she lays out the challenges to do so with an ever-faster news agenda. She however queries whether journalists should remain objective, although her suggestion that the coverage of Operation Pedro Pan in which the press did not challenge federal government and collaborated with church and state would be seen as problematic by many. Her suggestion however for more research looking into reporter bias in immigration coverage seems like a useful one, as is more training for journalists into the forces shaping different countries' social dynamics.