Eric Freedman, Robyn S. Goodman & Elanie Steyn (eds.) (2018). *Critical Perspectives on Journalists' Beliefs and Actions. Global Experiences.* London: Routledge, pp. 248, ISBN: 1-351-66436-0, 978-1-351-66436-3.

There is broad agreement by observers that journalism (at least as we traditionally understand it) is currently under enormous pressure around the world. The threats are many, ranging from authoritarian free-speech crackdowns, to the relentless undermining of its credibility as a profession, to the post-digitization upending of the traditional journalism funding model. While these pressure points are not new per se, the intensity and variety of sources from which they are originating from in the last two years in particular certainly seem unprecedented.

This manifests itself in many ways, not least the bewildering array of reasons that journalists can find themselves on the wrong side of the law. Of 262 journalists in prison around the world at present, 74% face 'anti-state' charges with the remainder in prison for what Robin Goodman describes in his introduction to 'Critical Perspectives on Journalists' Beliefs and Actions' as similarly Orwellian charges such as 'retaliation', 'false news' or 'no stated reason'.

Such a perfect storm of negative circumstances requires more from scholars than simply sitting on their hands and hoping it will pass. There is a clear need for a rigorous re-examination of how journalists experience those circumstances around the world and the successes and failures they are having in countering them. Journalism work requires a great deal of those who do it, as Goodman puts it in his introduction, but before educators or other stakeholders can continue to facilitate those demands, a more up-to-date sense of what can realistically be expected from them is necessary.

'Critical Perspectives on Journalists' Beliefs and Actions' rejects more systemic or theoretical analyses in favor of a cross-section of journalism experience case studies, qualitative investigations and surveys. Doing so gives an insight into how journalists perceive areas such as societal contributions, industry changes, cultural issues, self-censorship, and psychological and physical coping strategies.

It is a genuinely global cross-section, with 19 chapters from 17 countries representing six continents. Chapters are organized into five sections, including attitudes of journalists toward their jobs and the profession, confronting change, professional ethics and standards, cultural and minority issues and a final section with specific examples of how journalists and press freedoms come under fire.

The first section's focus on attitudes in journalism gives a sense of nuance in terms of how journalists perceive their roles, as well as how tight-knit those in the profession continue to be. It opens with an examination by Jiafei Yin of how their Communist Party education influences Chinese journalists' attitudes towards their work. Yin finds that Chinese journalists are found to be more concerned with

the impact of their reporting, than their freedom to report. Thus, discussions of press freedom "are almost inseparable from those of press responsibility" (p. 21). Penny O'Donnell considers "the relationship between decent work and sustainable 'post-industrial' journalism" (p. 33) in Australia, and finds that journalists there more attuned to occupational change than beset by occupational disarray.

In Indian TV newsrooms meanwhile, Indira S. Somani and Jane O'Boyle highlight how inexperienced and poorly-trained journalists are reacting to increased market and political pressures by leaning toward more sensationalist coverage. Niels Lindvig's ethnographic examination of a Danish newsroom finds that journalists' relationships with one another are akin to 'family bonds', which transcend competition between organizations. According to Cheryl Ann Lamber and H. Denis Wu, Taiwanese journalists have been forced to redefine their occupational role, in light of a highly competitive media market where "business interests tend to trump journalism tenets" (p. 66). In contrast to these larger scale media, community radio journalists in Bangladesh see themselves primarily as educators, and drive a form of radio that Imran Hasnat and Elainie Steyn describe as confronting and influencing cultural traditions that are not beneficial to local communities, particularly women.

Section 2 focuses on how journalists confront change, whether it is greater media plurality, economic tightening, or political changes in areas that they cover. It opens with a look at what C. S. H. N. Murthy sees as a tendency toward deference among Indian journalists, evident in how "journalists resort to a vocabulary that balances sensationalism, consumerism and objectivity" (p. 83). The chapter concludes with the observations that media plurality — commonly assumed to result in improved coverage and a strong democracy — has not necessarily resulted in either in an Indian context.

An economic downturn in rural Russia has highlighted for Wilson Lowrey and Elina Erzikova how newspapers' survival strategies can be caught between a rock and a hard place. More financial independence left them less open to Government interference, but closer alignment to economic forces left smaller papers in particular more vulnerable to harsh market conditions. Nadia Rahman finds via in-depth interviews with veteran middle eastern reporters that increased violence, political and media convergence has contributed in places like Syria to a greater reliance on eye witness feeds and citizen journalism, leading in turn to "the volume of disturbing images … which causes audience disconnect from the news" (p. 113).

A third section examines ethics and standards of journalism,i n particular how they are applied in culturally varying environments. In Kenya, Kioko Ireri finds corruption entrenched in local media and that the prevalence of it generally compromises objective reporting, negates the societal obligation of journalists to serve all citizens equally and undermines the journalist's struggle to fight against corruption at higher levels of society. Malaysian journalists, according to Sharon Wilson, attempt to be ethical in their approach to crime reporting, but are much more

affected in their approach to stories by external factors such as government regulations, organizational policy and competition. A chapter on reporting in the Mexican Northwest reminds us that fundamentally, reporters must be fully attached to their community. As the late Sergio Haro Corder puts it, they must, at their core, to be able to "put yourself in the other person's shoes" (p. 145). "It is "violence" to report without a genuine interest in what is being reported on.

The first of three chapters on Culture and Minority issues examines the role Chinese ethnic media journalists play in local news coverage in the US. Xinxin Amy Yang uncovers some interesting variance in terms of reporter's perception of the 'watchdog' role in particular, which is influenced by a lower sense of belonging toward the country in which they report relative to the community which they report for. Anthea Garman and Vanessa Malila describe how a South African newspaper editor tackled apartheid via innovative listening exercises among the poor and invisible. Doing so, they argue, encourages an "active listening" approach, which prioritizes listening attentively over speaking on behalf of the public. In making sense of journalism ethics in a Samoan context, Marie Oelgemoller uses the idea of a liquid modernity to inform an understanding of their approach. Thus journalists conceptualize their role in a conventional sense, but also in the context of a more local concept of a journalistic role within a community as being 'a talking chief', which represents "similar responsibilities to being the voice of the voiceless" (p. 179).

A final section focuses on how journalists operate when press freedom comes under fire, emphasizing the high levels of stress and worry journalists are having to deal with as they are pressurized by the state. In the first of three chapters here, Bahtiyar Kurambaev finds disturbing levels of fearfulness and stress among Kyrgyz journalists. High levels of avoidance are used by Kyrgyz journalists in response to fearfulness and stress, meaning no one criticizes or investigates higher level officials and instead journalists focus on "more neutral topics such as sport or culture that bring little or no trouble" (p. 195).

Duygu Kanver paints a bleak picture of press freedom in Turkey, which she describes as the "world's biggest prison for journalists" (p. 200). Imprisonment and related intimidation of journalists has replaced the more 'traditional' methods of assassination and torture, and court cases against social media users has led to increasing self-censorship in these areas also, he concludes. In Bulgaria, self-censorship and avoidance of controversy characterize journalists during the country's post communist media transformation. Journalists, Lada Trifonova Price concludes rather depressingly, "have come full circle since the end of communism — again being powerful instruments of the ruling elite" (p. 220).

Like the collection as a whole, Eric Freedman's conclusion chapter acknowledges the "parade of horribles" raining down on journalistic practice, while also finding cause for optimism. The attacks are unrelenting, as he points out, but innovative reporting collaborations, greater entrepreneurialism among journalists, and other types of fightbacks against government repression and trampling of press

rights demonstrate the resilience, commitment, and courage that remains. It is a welcome note to finish a fine addition to the literature, which will be of significant use to scholars interested in comparative perspectives on journalists' attitudes and perceptions of their belief systems.

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Lee Edwards (2018). *Understanding Public Relations: Theory, Culture and Society.* **London: Sage, pp. 288, ISBN: 9781473913097, 9781473913103.**

The title of this book encapsulates precisely what it is about, despite it being potentially equally misunderstood by a casual glance at the title as yet another 'how-to'-type book. This book aims to get the reader 'under the skin' of public relations, considering the wider socio-cultural aspects of the discipline and to better understand how integrated it can be on a broader political and social plane. Its messaging can also help elevate the discipline in the minds of other stakeholders and participants past a mere 'spin' or 'publicity seeking' activity, aligning it more strategically with other higher-level activities that may be interrelated to each other.

The author, Dr Lee Edwards, is an active researcher and assistant professor at the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom, and rightly notes that public relations work today is visible, boosted by technology and greater public awareness. Awareness itself does not necessarily equate to knowledge and understanding, especially correct knowledge and understanding. A lot of misapprehensions and ignorance can be extant, sometimes perpetuated by public relations actors too, and often not proactively corrected when experienced. Edwards' book can help empower and lead to change.

The principal audience for this book should be clear — researchers of public relations and communications, senior practitioners and, naturally, students of communications-related subjects. However, the book deserves more extensive circulation, being considered by those who can be impacted by public relations activities at every level. After all, the author notes that "[t]he ubiquity of public relations means that it now has an inescapable influence on us, as part of the resources we draw on both individually and collectively, when we navigate our way through life" (p. 2). In many ways, this latter group is less likely to understand this until they read this book, yet getting them to do it can be difficult — a real catch-22 situation. It is not helped by the book possibly appearing somewhat daunting, due to it being highly compressed and focussed. A light read it is not (nor does it pretend to be). It is a book that deserves your focus, and in return, your attention