**THE IMPACT OF MEDIA BIAS ON COVERAGE OF CATASTROPHIC EVENTS:
CASE STUDY FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES' COVERAGE OF THE
PALESTINE/ISRAEL CONFLICT**

by

Jonas Xavier Caballero

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This thesis was presented

by

Jonas Xavier Caballero

It was defended on

April 16, 2010

and approved by

Jennifer Saffron, Adjunct Faculty, English Department

Loubna El Abbadi, Faculty, Department of Linguistics

Dr. Hatem Bazian, Senior Lecturer, Near Eastern Studies Department, University of

California Berkeley

Thesis Director: Mohammed A Bamyeh, Visiting Professor, Sociology

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Jonas Xavier Caballero, BPhil

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This study investigates how the impact of media bias affects the news coverage of catastrophic events with regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict. Particularly, this study focuses on Operation Cast Lead, the 3-week Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip that resulted in the death of nearly 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis. The New York Times' manner of covering the conflict, characterized in previous research as manifesting media bias toward Israel, is examined within a context of media manipulation, misrepresentation, framing, slant, and linguistic determinism. This study provides insight into the role played by the mainstream media in distorting the facts of the Palestine/Israel conflict in order to present a picture that portrays Israel in a more favorable light.

Ninety-one articles were chosen from the New York Times' news and editorial coverage of Operation Cast Lead, from December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009, plus an additional week as to allow for corrections and further coverage. This study employs content analysis to determine how the New York Times presents its stories and how often it reports Palestinian deaths and injuries incurred during the catastrophic period versus the number of Israeli deaths and injuries covered in the texts. B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, provides data on the number of deaths and injuries during Operation Cast Lead, providing the quantitative base to which this study's results are compared. Although Palestinians died at a rate 106 times more than Israelis, the New York Times engaged in a practice of media bias that resulted in coverage of only 3% of Palestinian deaths in the headlines and first paragraphs. Upon analyzing the

articles' entireties, this study found that the New York Times covered 431% of Israeli deaths and only 17% of Palestinian deaths, a ratio of 25:1. Only 17% of Palestinian children deaths were covered in the full articles.

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PART 1

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The existence of a free press is essential to American democracy. This was recognized in the earliest days of the United States, as it was enshrined within the First Amendment to the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law…abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press…" To report as accurately as possible the facts on any issue, as many would agree, should be the primary function of the press. After all, what good is a free press if the subject matter being presented is skewed by politically-driven fallacies, setting agendas that seek to misrepresent facts and figures, effectively resulting in a distorted version of the truth? Myths developed by the news media "help inform newsmaking by providing archetypes and frameworks of interpretation" (Ismail 262). Independent media, which may not be connected to large media conglomerates, often seek to safeguard themselves against media bias. Other institutions, however, have merged over time with a number of agencies, making it harder to prevent unfettered media bias and to halt agenda setting.

The media can be a crucial element in the success or failure of social movements "through how they frame the movement's causes, stances, and ultimately their ideologies" (Ismail 253). In 2003, a media watch group based out of Los Angeles began issuing "media report cards" to various media outlets across the country regarding their coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict. The group, If Americans Knew (IAK), has covered *The New York Times*, hereon referred to as the *Times*, *The Associated Press, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle*, and others. By using quantitative data from respected human rights organizations, such as B'Tselem, IAK has conducted statistical analysis "that would be impossible in a

qualitative study" (Weir 5). Specifically, IAK examined the extent to which the media covered Israeli deaths over Palestinian deaths, and compared their findings to the actual data from the B'Tselem. In each study, IAK discovered that every media outlet studied revealed "a pervasive pattern of distortion" with regard to their coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict (Weir 6).

In their books, *Israel-Palestine On Record* and *The Record of the Paper*, Richard Falk and Howard Friel reported similar findings. In these books and the studies conducted by IAK, the researchers analyzed the *Times'* media coverage from long periods of time [IAK: Sept. 2000 – Sept. 2001 and Jan. 2004 – Dec. 31 2004; Falk/Friel: 2000 – 2006]. Although this is a relatively small segment of time compared to the overall history of the Palestine/Israel conflict, it still provided a long enough period of time to reveal and assess the patterns of bias existing in the outlets (Falk and Friel 1).

During these periods, however, there is no study that analyzes the *Times'* coverage of deaths and casualties that happen during specific incidents. On one day, for example, forty civilians may be killed in an air strike in the Gaza Strip, while there may be no deaths on the following day in the West Bank. Although the bias that has been found and analyzed in the IAK and Falk/Friel studies proves that distortions of the truth do exist over the specific date ranges, no study of media bias has been made with regard to isolated, catastrophic events. My study focuses on the impact of a catastrophic event upon the *Times'* coverage of the event, and the resulting effects on its pro-Israeli media bias. This study highlights a specific case study: Operation Cast Lead, Gaza Strip [12/27/2008 - 1/18/2009]. The investigation was designed to determine whether the *Times' media* bias continued, diminished, or increased during this period.

By combining qualitative (content analysis) with quantitative (statistical data) approaches, this study examines the *Times'* manner of covering the Palestine/Israel conflict,

characterized in previous research as manifesting media bias toward Israel. Content analysis is employed in order to analyze the catastrophic period of Operation Cast Lead. According to the U.S. Department of Defense's 'Dictionary of Military Terms,' a catastrophic event is "any natural or man-made incident, including terrorism, which results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions." This definition applies to Israel's three-week attack on the Gaza Strip by the Israeli Defense Forces, which resulted in the death of nearly 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis in 22 days (B'Tselem).

Existing theories on media bias focus on *media framing* and *agenda-setting* applied to news "that purportedly distorts or falsifies reality (distortion bias)," and to news that "favors one side rather than providing equivalent treatment to both sides in a political conflict (content bias)" (Entman 163). Focusing on "distortion bias" and "content bias" in this study's approach could yield important benefits. If, for example, certain events lead the *Times* to alter its media bias, readers can start to look at the news stories and view them through a new media-literate lens. Furthermore, groups like IAK will have additional evidence to present at meetings with the media's editorial staffs, to encourage them to maintain a more balanced approach in future news coverage. Additionally, similar studies can be applied to other mainstream news organizations like the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* in order to seek a broader evenhandedness on the coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict with a mission of halting the distortion and content bias particular to the Palestine/Israel conflict.

In recognizing the impact of catastrophic events upon news coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict, readers are left with an understanding that the notion of a free press in the United States does not make it free from agenda setting, no matter how catastrophic the circumstances. This

makes it even more necessary for readers to acquire news from independent media sources and human rights organizations during times of heightened catastrophe in the Palestine/Israel conflict.

This paper is not an analysis of Israel's bombardment campaign of the Gaza Strip, nor is it an analysis of breeches in international law, conducted either by the Israeli military or armed Palestinian factions, such as Hamas. Additionally, this paper is not an analysis of the actions that led to Israel's military campaign or attacks by armed Palestinian fighters. This paper is an analysis of the Times' coverage of the catastrophic event in question, Operation Cast Lead. It is analyzed within a context of statistical data and previous analyses of the Times' media bias with regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict.

Part I of this paper contains a personal account of my experiences in Palestine/Israel as a freelance journalist and photographer. It also includes a review of the literature that addresses the elements that make up media bias in general, setting the stage for its application to the *Times'* coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict.

Part II examines past research that has confirmed and analyzed the *Times'* biased reporting of the Palestine/Israel conflict. The paper then reveals the findings and provides an analysis of the *Times'* bias during its coverage of Operation Cast Lead, addressing discrepancies of reporting Israeli deaths and injuries over Palestinian deaths and injuries in the headlines, first paragraphs, and full articles.

2.0   ISRAEL/PALESTINE: A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT

An in depth study of the Palestine/Israel conflict led me to visit the Holy Land in 2003. During my two month visit, I met with Israeli, Palestinian, and international activists who were working toward a peaceful and just solution to the conflict. It was during this trip that I met with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a joint Palestine/Israel human rights organization that seeks to raise awareness about the conflict. One of the ways the ISM attempts to do this is by sending news reports, photographs, and video footage to international media outlets with the hope that these outside agencies will take the material and print and/or air it. It was interesting to compare the news reported in the region with the news presented back in the U.S. I volunteered with the ISM and worked as a reporter on the frontlines. After witnessing and documenting events, I would return to the ISM media office and write news reports and press releases. These would then be published on the website and faxed to a large number of local and international media outlets. Although the ISM had some successes in the media picking up its stories ("Israelis Seen Abusing Caged Palestinians," ABC News), more often than not the stories were ignored.

Upon my return to the U.S., I was struck by the lack of mainstream coverage detailing the elements of the conflict that I had witnessed. For example, I read or saw almost no reports of the nonviolent demonstrations in the West Bank against Israel's construction of the "Separation Barrier," such as the weekly demonstrations that have been held for more than four years in the Palestinian village of Bil'in. I also noticed an Israeli slant in the press through, what I considered

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to be at the time, an over-reporting on Israeli deaths over Palestinian deaths. This, it turned out, was the same motivation that inspired Alison Weir, founder of If Americans Knew, to involve herself in the battle against media bias in the Palestine/Israel conflict.

In 2006, I returned to Israel/Palestine to volunteer with the ISM for three months. The following year, I was hired by the ISM to be its media coordinator, based out of the West Bank city of Ramallah. As media relations coordinator, I served as liaison to Israeli, Palestinian, and international media outlets; I covered breaking news stories, wrote and sent press releases, and interviewed government officials and activists. In addition to fulfilling those duties, I was in charge of the human rights workers who arrived from all over the world, many of whom had never been to the Middle East. I led workshops for these new volunteers and provided them with on-the-ground experience along with crash courses in Hebrew and Arabic. The workshops focused on nonviolence and direct action principles and provided lessons on the Palestine/Israel conflict. Between workshops, I led tours to conflict zones while demonstrating how to operate video cameras and take necessary information from unfolding stories in the field. When trainings finished, I designed teams and sent them to various regions in Palestine/Israel. The following weekend, I would repeat this process upon the arrival of new volunteers. My teams succeeded in having some of our stories appear in various media outlets, including the Arab and Israeli press. Among the international media that I contacted daily was Fox News, Al Jazeera, ABC News, the Associated Press, and others.

Working with the media, essentially, became my life. The experience served as the motivation for my return to academia in 2008, when I decided to major in media and professional communications and international and area studies with a focus on the Middle East. My experiences in Palestine/Israel, and my subsequent research for this study, confirmed for me

that a pro-Israeli media bias exists in the mainstream media, and that the only way to rectify the problem is to understand the media field, inside and out—to change it from within.

For eight years, I studied the Palestine/Israel conflict. I read numerous books on the issue, many with conflicting viewpoints. I attended lectures and conferences in several U.S. cities to broaden my perspective on the assorted aspects of the conflict (history, proposed solutions, debates, etc.). A two-part series of my experience in the Middle East was aired on Arab TV of Silicon Valley (http://aaccsv.org/arab-tv) and I completed a cross-country speaking tour with an Israeli ISM activist at colleges, universities, churches, and community centers. All the while, it appeared that the mainstream media, including the *Times*, was consistent in silencing the Palestinian narrative and suppressing the facts on the ground, as confirmed by IAK and the findings of Falk and Friel.

Note: A synopsis of the Palestine/Israel conflict can be found in APPENDIX A.
Note: Photographs taken by me during my time in Palestine/Israel, as a freelance journalist and photographer can be found in APPENDIX B.

3.0   NOT SO FAIR AND BALANCED

Media Bias, Audience, Group Representation, Framing, and Agenda Setting

Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign tax aid, about $3 billion per year ("U.S. Military Aid and the Israel/Palestine Conflict"). An estimate of the total cost to Americans is $3 trillion, an amount "four times greater than the cost of the Vietnam War" (Stauffer). Given the history of U.S. involvement in the conflict, both in financial linkage and in occupying a long-time role as mediator [Camp David, Oslo Accords, etc.], continuous study and scrutiny of the role of the media is particularly important (Ismail 254). Furthermore, in acknowledging that the U.S. is "firmly committed to Israel's security and to her military superiority in the Middle East," it is pertinent that American newspaper readers receive a clear and unaltered picture of the conflict (Aruri 20).

However, post 9/11 discourse in the Western media, especially with regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict, has led to an increased bias (Zuhur 40). When the media construct reality as a "given," presenting their information simply as "the way things are," a more critical eye for seeing through this constructed reality is necessary. This is where critical discourse analysis (CDA) enters (Cameron 123). When applying CDA, systems begin to emerge from within the texts which help to propose "an interpretation of the pattern, an account of its meaning and ideological significance" (Cameron 137). If the reader of the *Times*, however, receives his or her news from that medium only, then there is no alternative frame of reference or "reality" to

which they can compare it. When discussing "discourse and the construction of reality," Cameron refers to a study done by the Glasgow Media Group (GMG) regarding BBC coverage of pay and conditions in the workplace. In its study, GMG points out a bias in word choice that equates workers' needs with "demands," giving the impression that the workers are "aggressive and menacing." The employers, on the other hand, "offer" their employees overtures and proposals, suggesting a more "reasonable, conciliatory stance" (Cameron 124). What ensues, in this case, is the construction of workers as burdensome and employers as generous.

The issue that arises is the labeling of the groups under examination (Cameron 127). Facts are often not the most important of concerns when the labeling occurs, rather, the construction of the reality that benefits either the editors or the owners. Danuta Reah's work focuses on textual analysis of newspapers. "The selection of items to put on the news pages," Reah contends, "affect the way in which the reader is presented with the world" (4). Editors may exclude certain kinds of information, sometimes with the sole purpose of concealing that information from the readers. This may be guided by editorial agendas, or by those of advertisers and political parties that are affiliated with the paper. Readers are left with "little or no control over what is or is not being presented," a consequence of having little or no access to alternative information against which they can judge the content of the newspaper in question (Reah 4-5). "Newspapers are not simply vehicles for delivering information," Reah claims, "they present the reader with aspects of the news, and present it often in a way that intends to guide the ideological stance of the reader" (50).

As previously stated, freedom of speech and freedom of the press is a core foundation in the functioning of American democracy. However, an important component of the press that may often be overlooked by its readership is ownership, which "has the power to influence the

content of the paper, its political stance and its editorial perspective." Newspaper conglomerations, and thus, the power of content control into the hands of fewer and fewer people, have "profound impacts on the freedom of the press" (Reah 8). The result is a homogenization of news content, "controlled by a single proprietor" (Ismail 255). The end result is that readers are not necessarily presented with "new information on recent events." Rather, they are the recipients of "selected information on recent events." With regard to the *Times'* coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict, the readership is presented with an editorial spin "that makes it very difficult for the reader to make an independent decision in what his/her actual viewpoint on these events actually is" (Reah 9).

The problem is not the side that the *Times* chooses to support, rather that the media bias exists at all (Reah 10). Once readers come to terms with the fact that media bias can and does exist in a free press, the next step for them is to become "critical readers, who are aware of, and can identify, gaps and swings in the information they are given" (Reah 11). A strong understanding of media bias is necessary for that critical awareness.

3.1   MEDIA BIAS

Media bias is not random, rather, "it moves in the same overall direction again and again." Among those favored include: corporations over corporate critics, U.S. dominance of the developing world over revolutionary or populist social change, and national security policy over national security critics. The dominant ideologies that drive the bias rarely engage in actions that may cause discomfort for the favored political agenda or ownership (Parenti 5). "*Ideology* is the goal of media outlets to sway public opinion, and *spin* is the attempt to produce a story that the

public considers memorable" (Hoffman and Wallach, emphasis in original 618). Some forms of bias are indirect, such as choosing what stories to omit or misreport (which is largely the case in this study.) Other forms are more direct, like *taking a non-neutral stance on an issue*. However, some editorial staffs "may be keenly aware that their political views are guiding their choice of what is newsworthy" (Christopherson et al. 92).

For example, a story broke in January of 2010 in which it became known that the son of Ethan Bronner, the *Times'* bureau chief for Palestine/Israel, joined the Israeli Defense Forces. The online news website, *Electronic Intifada* (EI), stated that this was a "serious conflict of interest," and cited the *Times'* own "Company Policy on Ethics in Journalism." The EI article recommended that readers of the *Times* turn elsewhere for news until the paper begins to "report on Israel-Palestine fully, accurately, and without Israeli spin" ("Conflict of Interest"). During Israel's Operation Cast Lead, Bronner was criticized by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a media watchdog group, for his "pro-Israeli bias reporting." The *Times* did "not consider this situation to be a problematic case. It had not even disclosed the situation to its reader" ("Role of the Media").

With instances such as the one above, accusations and support of bias in the media are "a permanent part of political life" (Vatz 60). Despite the fact that this statement was made in regards to the existence of a liberal bias in the news media, it is also applicable to media bias generally. For example, "a large percentage of the public believes that the news media are biased" (Eveland and Shah 101). Applying the techniques of media scrutiny and research on media bias to "the broader context of perceptions of social reality, one could… understand what produces misperceptions such as those concerning news content." A study conducted among college students revealed that they had very little ability to "recognize and acknowledge bias

among sources," suggesting a naivety of the general public with regard to being able to judge media bias (Buddenbaum, Rouner, and Slater 44). Broadening media bias analysis may result in a quelling of *pluralistic ignorance*—the process in which "public data from which the attitudes of others are inferred 'may have been skewed in the direction of the perceived norm'" (Eveland and Shah 105).

Although allegations of media bias are plentiful, a rather small amount of methodical research has been compiled on the subject (Christopherson, et al. 100). This may be due to the fact that media bias is not relegated to isolated units of news coverage but to the "entirety of news-collection and production processes" (Covert and Wasburn 691-2). My study, however, seeks to identify and analyze an isolated unit of news coverage: the catastrophic event of Operation Cast Lead.

3.2 AUDIENCE

In addition to engaging in biased news coverage of certain event, the media have the ability to set specific agendas for the public (Uscinski 796). Some may contend that "the public plays at least some role in shaping the media's agenda." However, in the case of the Palestine/Israel conflict, although a heightened audience interest in related news stories may exist, the readers expect to find stories with credible and factual information. Even in the case of a heightened public desire that influences an agenda-setting framework, those stories of public interest should be hyper-scrutinized, since they will even more so "affect the public's assessment of issue salience." Editors and corporate owners are driven by competition for readership and increased revenue. The result is a higher reporting of stories that meet the public's demand. The incentive for

printing the stories the public wants to hear, thus, increases earnings in both profit and readership (Uscinski 798-9). Due to this trend, media firms and editors "often put democratic ideals at odds with other interests" (Uscinski 811).

The readers, who subscribe not only to the newspaper but also to differing ideologies, "tend to look for meaning where it may initially appear to be missing" (Reah 41). Newspapers tend to sensationalize their stories and work hard to encapsulate and illustrate episodes of war and violence (Ismail 263). With regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict, a certain phraseology accompanies the groups involved. Terrorism, for example, is usually ascribed to Palestinian factions. State terrorism, on the other hand, rarely, if ever, is attributed to actions and decisions made by the Israeli government. By disregarding the illegal activities of Israel, and vilifying all opposition as terrorists, the media that "embrace Israel's perspective largely block any expression of Palestinian worldview so that it doesn't reach the American public" (Wall 29). In fact, the *Times* generally concurs with the Israeli position that it only uses force as a reaction to terrorism and "prompted by legitimate security concerns" (Falk and Friel 9).

Public perception of political violence or terrorism is "founded upon images, definitions, and explanations provided by the media" (Ismail 255). Language, whether it represents the 'good guys' or the 'bad guys,' always transpires within a specific context. As "social users of language individuals know how to respond to linguistic triggers relating to the context of the language situation, the intended message, the feedback and input from others." Newspapers, like the *Times*, function within these contexts and necessarily operate within the language framework. This allows the newspaper to "establish a group identity within the readership" (Reah 42). With written text, opposed to audio/visual media, readers must first indirectly identify the various meanings provided within the wording. This is where sensationalism emerges. Since the text

may "relate to 'something outside the readers' immediate experience... then the reader has no choice but to accept the information as translated through the text" (Reah 45).

Paraphrasing George Gerbner, founder of cultivation theory, Ismail states, "Most of the information we acquire is through media outlets; they serve as primary means of constructing our everyday reality" (256). If this is true, and if the reader "uncritically accepts the article as an item of news," then everything that flows from text to audience may be accepted by the reader at face value (Reah 45). This leads to a profound misunderstanding of the Palestine/Israel conflict for the *Times'* readership.

3.3   GROUP REPRESENTATION AND LINGUISTIC DETERMINISM

Through group representation and linguistic determinism, the media effectively set the agenda and engage in bias. One of the most transparent ways that language is exercised in order to portray fixed judgments about specific groups is through word choice (Reah 55). In a study on the "construction of Palestinian political violence in US news," Ismail shed light on the responsibility of the media in audience perception with its use of labels. Terrorism, for example, was used exclusively in describing Palestinian violence. The media are prone to label and manage events that are political and violent in nature in a variety of ways, "depending on the parties involved and the ideological stances they take" (Ismail 253). With regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict, the media engage in a "semantic war over labeling acts and actors as part of a larger ideological battle to institute certain value judgments on political violence" (Ismail 256).

On the subject of linguistic determinism, Reah references George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell "postulated a society in which the ruling powers tried to maintain almost total control over the population." The ruling powers did so with a form of linguistic determinism referred to by Orwell as *newspeak*, which "contained no way of expressing concepts and ideologies that were opposed to the state." What Reah is suggesting is that "language can be a powerful tool," one that is easy to resist if the reader knows it is being implemented, but not so easy if the "viewpoint or ideology is concealed" (Reah 54).

Whether one is referencing *newspeak* or the discourse employed by the *Times*, language has the ability to not only depict and portray specific groups a certain way, but also to advocate distinct attitudes or to "conform to an existing stereotype." It is the use of language that aids in maintaining or constructing personification of groups. Newspapers are confined to the "medium of language" through which everything in the newspaper must be conveyed. The message transmission, via the language medium, "almost of necessity encodes values into the message," gathering "its own emotional and cultural 'loading.'" The text operates within the cultural value system. What this means is that, in the case of the *Times'* media bias toward Israel in covering the Palestine/Israel conflict, people may be inhibited from critically analyzing the information transferred to them through the pages, "a fact much relied on by advertisers, politicians and all those whose function in life is to manipulate social attitudes" (Reah 54-5).

To create a structure of denotation for the reader to easily reference, naming is employed within the text. Naming *slants* the text "in a particular direction in relation to an issue" The result is a "direct effect on the ideological slant of the text" (Reah 60-1). The ideological stance is maintained by the choice of words employed by the writers/editors. Word choice carries the ideological slant through a text, establishing the audience/text relationship and forming the

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constitution of the audience (Reah 107). The effect is the reinforcement of prejudices and bias through the word choice, which corroborates a specific belief system (Reah 73). Some communication theorists have claimed that news bias is inevitable, caused by "the inherently evaluative character of language" (Covert and Wasburn 691). While I agree that judging language carefully is employed in the writing of some news stories, the frequency of the language employed by the *Times* in this study, with regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict, indubitably reveals hyper-distortions of the facts. As this study reveals, hyper-distortions are not and should not be inevitable.

3.4   FRAMING/LABELING

At times, the media "seek to predetermine our perception of a subject with a positive or negative label" (Parenti 6). The outcome is the creation of a frame of perception for the audience, one that is aligned with a belief system that is held by the media. For the purposes of this study, I look specifically to *distortion bias*—news that is intentionally distorted or falsified, and *content bias*—news that favors one side of a conflict over another (Entman 163). *Decision-making bias*, or bias that is produced by journalists covering an issue, is not addressed in this study, for it is not the actions of the journalists with which this study is concerned. Understanding these forms of bias can "advance understanding of the media's role in distributing power" and could provide direction for journalists and editors who seek to perform in a manner seen as "fair and balanced" (Entman 164).

Entman defines framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular

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interpretation." A study by Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) define media framing as "the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, *exclusion*, and elaboration" (Weaver 143, emphasis added). Framing, thus, can shape or modify interpretations of a newspaper's readership, encouraging them to "think, feel, and decide in a particular way." Through framing, the media construct their texts so as to influence certain agendas to which their readership can subscribe (Entman 164-5). It is through framing that journalists and editors draw attention to specific elements of the news that they are covering (Weaver 142). Framing seeks to "influence the interpretation of incoming information rather than making certain aspects of the issue more salient." Unlike agenda setting, framing is not based on cognitive processes, such as moral evaluations and causal reasoning (Weaver 146).

3.5 AGENDA SETTING AND SLANT

Embodied within the framing process is what is referred to as slant. According to the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, the media should never distort news content (Hoffman and Wallach 619). However, what remains clear is that "the power of a publication consists in its ability to signify issues in particular ways" (Covert and Wasburn 694). This "ability to signify issues" is what media analysts call "agenda setting"—the process by which editors or the ownership define the problems deemed worthy of public attention. Entman disagrees with the commonly quoted phrase in media studies, that: "the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about.*" It is a reciprocal situation according to Entman for, "if the

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media really are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about, they must also exert significant influence over what to think" (Entman 165, emphasis in original).

Agenda setting is a "robust phenomenon," as many evidence-based studies have shown (Brosius, et al 141). Its purpose is to influence the public's perception of what is newsworthy (Tai 482). One of the ways to exert this agenda setting influence is through *content* bias. In order to show patterns of content bias, the patterns of slant that consistently prime their audiences in order to support the favored side must be shown (Entman 166). When news is clearly slanted, the side of the slant that is favored becomes more powerful; those on the losing side of slant become weaker. Studying the effects of framing, agenda setting, and media bias can yield important benefits. For one, empirical evidence that highlights patterns of bias in the media can be collected and analyzed. Secondly, it can help to improve the media's role in a well-functioning democracy (Entman 170-1).

Slant, or *reporting bias*, is more qualitative than selection bias, or the tendency to select the stories to be presented. The effects can amount to a "direct effect," in which the media influence their readers' emotions, or a "conveyor effect," in which the media is solely the transmitter of an ongoing debate (Costa-Font and Vilelle-Vila 2095). My study shows the former effect, which is shown graphically in the results section.

Research on agenda setting's consequences experienced by the public can be traced back to Watergate. Agenda setting by television stations has been found to affect evaluations by the public on presidential candidates. It relies on "the theory of attitude accessibility by increasing the salience of issues and thus the ease with which they can be retrieved from memory when making political judgments." Unlike framing, agenda setting is based on cognitive processes (Weaver 145-6). Theoretically, editors and owners of newspapers "should have no impact on

news coverage due to the supposed separation between the editorial and news departments." However, it has been shown in numerous studies that newspapers are often driven by an editorial slant (Druckman and Parkin 1030).

4.0   HAVE IT OUR WAY

Media Bias and the *Times*, Framing the Intifada, Ethics in Journalism

4.1   MEDIA BIAS AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

Newspaper subscriptions have dropped by more than half since the early 1950s, a time in which almost every household had a newspaper subscription. Still, newspaper reporting should have the highest quality, since readers "use the newspaper to obtain a better understanding of the news disseminated by other media outlets." There is a power that exists within the pages of the newspaper that should not be taken for granted (Hoffman and Wallach 616-7).

A 2002 study by the American Society of Newspaper Editors has shown that 69% of newspaper readers believe that newspapers assert a higher standard of research while dispensing better explanations of issues that address many sides of controversies. Accuracy in newspaper reporting, readers contend, is much higher than radio and television. If this is the reality of the situation, then biased reporting and distortion by newspapers may have a strong impact on wrongfully influencing their readers (Hoffman and Wallach 617). Distortion is not only the warping of the content matter at hand, but also lies within the elements that are left unmentioned, or "suppression by omission" (Parenti 5). Suppression by omission plays a large role in this case

study analysis of the *Times*. As noted by IAK and Parenti, details of a story or even entire stories are often omitted in order to present an alternative, misrepresented version of the truth.

Media bias in the *Times* is not confined to Palestine/Israel, or the 21st Century. In the early 1900s, a Lippman and Merz study showed that the *Times'* coverage of the Russian Revolution was a "case of seeing not what was, but what men wished to see" (Hoffman and Wallach 616). Additionally, it took the *Times* four months to report on the CIA's overthrow of Indonesia President Achmed Sukarno and the dissolution of the Indonesian Community Party, which resulted in the death of over half a million people (Parenti 5).

Regarding its coverage of the war in Iraq, the *Times* has often admitted wrongdoing regarding its reporting. The *Times* "found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been," and had subsequently published corrections for misinformation and omissions. Readers, however, must have been up to date with the corrections and errors to grasp the full picture (Hoffman and Wallach 617).

4.2   FRAMING THE INTIFADA

In December 1987, the first Palestinian uprising broke out in the Gaza and the West Bank is response to Israel's military occupation. The uprising was known as the Intifada, ("shaking off" in Arabic), and was, according to author Edward Said, "one of the great anti-colonial insurrections of the modern period" (Gregory 94). The second Intifada erupted in 2000 when prime minister Ariel Sharon and Israeli security forces entered the Temple Mount, a Muslim holy site in Jerusalem (Anderson, et al, 270). Regarding the media's framing of the Palestine/Israel conflict, whereas some Israeli and Arab media depicted the Intifadas as a

"coherent phenomenon," American and other international media outlets portrayed them "more as a set of sporadic violent incidents" (Ismail 256). The news media, with the help of Israeli and American officials, have conflated any and all forms of Palestinian violence with "terrorism" (Ismail 262). Characterizing it as such, "constructing the conflict as a violent contest over land, and emphasizing the often sensational nature of the violence," illustrates the media's larger practices of misrepresentation (Ismail 263). It is the tendency of the news media to relay Palestinian violence and resistance as "linguistically synonymous," thus delegitimizing qualified resistance enshrined in international law and conventions (Ismail 264).

What results is an effective form of propaganda, "which relies upon framing rather than on falsehood." This creates a "desired impression" by manipulating the truth without veering too far from "the appearance of objectivity." As long as the media packages the framing of the issue appropriately, allowing for significant exposure in headlines, first paragraphs, and accompanying photographs, the propaganda will be effective (Parenti 7). Strategic framing focuses on the root of the problem in question and coaxes moral judgments on behalf of the audience while advocating for the favored side or policy (Entman 164).

Knowledge of framing and linguistic determination is not enough, however, to assess news media bias suitably. One must possess, according to Eveland and Shaw, an understanding of what an "unbiased" standard should be (106). In the case of the *Times'* bias in the presentation of the Palestine/Israel conflict, if no standard of "unbiased" exists for the readership, the readers may have nothing to which they can contrast the *Times'* reporting. My study seeks to provide that standard.

4.3   THE NEW YORK TIMES: ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

The *Times'* "Ethics in Journalism" policy states that the central objective of the New York Times is to "enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high-quality news, information and entertainment." The reputation of the *Times*, the document claims, is based on "content of the highest quality and integrity." It is the goal of the company "to cover the news impartially and to treat readers… and all parts of our society fairly and openly, and to be seen as doing so." Furthermore, in "keeping with its solemn responsibilities under the First Amendment," states the ethics policy, "our company strives to maintain the highest standard of journalistic ethics." The nature of the *Times'* ethics policy is to "protect the impartiality and neutrality of the company's newsrooms and the integrity of their news reports" ("New York Times Policy on Ethics in Journalism").

Regarding its audience, the *Times'* code of journalistic ethics purports that readers and viewers are treated as "fairly and openly as possible." The *Times* policy claims to tell its audiences "the complete, unvarnished truth as best we can," gathering information "for the benefit of our audience." The goals and values detailed in the New York Times Company's policy on ethics in journalism seem to cover the morals and principles the readership would expect its newspaper to envelop ("New York Times Policy on Ethics in Journalism"). However, as this study reveals, the *Times'* practices in relaying stories on the Palestine/Israel conflict fall outside the parameters of impartiality, neutrality, and integrity.

5.0   IF AMERICANS KNEW

Case Studies Addressing Media Bias and the *Times*

5.1   IF AMERICANS KNEW: A CATALYST

In the fall of 2004, Alison Weir, who later co-founded *If Americans Knew,* visited the Occupied

Palestinian Territories. During her visit, Weir was told about a video that was filmed in Balata

Refugee Camp, where a 14-year-old Palestinian boy was shot in his abdomen by Israeli forces.

When the video was sent to the Associated Press (AP), it had reportedly been erased. A group of

activists were present from the International Solidarity Movement. They had recorded the army

vehicles and the names of the AP reporters who filmed the incident. Weir interviewed the

reporters and found the hospital where the boy was being treated and confirmed the incident

(Weir 3).

The incident led Weir and her team to the building in Jerusalem where the AP was

stationed, along with other major news bureaus. Weir interviewed Steve Gutkin, then AP bureau

chief. Gutkin said that he was not permitted to speak about the Balata incident, that only the AP

Corporate Communications office could. Jack Stokes, director of media relations for Corporate

Communications, was contacted and asked about the incident. Stokes said that it was an internal

matter.

"In other words," Weir said, "AP had video footage of an Israeli soldier specifically and intentionally shooting a young Palestinian boy who was not attacking them, and they erased it" (3). The incident was extremely disturbing to Weir and served as the catalyst into further researching AP's lack of news coverage. Later, Weir discovered that an AP bureau did, in fact, exist in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The Ramallah bureau declared that anytime a story unfolded in the West Bank, the Ramallah bureau covered it, and that the story and details would be forwarded to the Jerusalem AP bureau. All stories had to be sent, according to the Ramallah team, to Jerusalem. None of its stories could be sent out through the wire themselves. Subsequently, employees in the Jerusalem bureau would write the stories (Weir 4). In response to this protocol, Weir has stated that:

> We were surprised—and concerned—to learn that the bylines and datelines of the stories were being misrepresented in this way. Given the ethnic nature of the Palestine/Israel conflict, and the fact that ethnicities live and suffer in two different (if neighboring) locations, both the location and ethnicity of journalists writing about the conflict are particularly relevant. While it is certainly appropriate to give full credit to journalists who gather information for a story, we felt that it was highly misleading that stories with a Palestinian byline and West Bank dateline were being written by Israeli and Jewish correspondents living in Israel—that one ethnic group in the conflict actually wrote news stories purported to be by reporters from the other ethnic group in the dispute" (Weir 4).

The Jerusalem bureau never published the story of the 12-year-old Palestinian boy that was killed.

Weir took notice of the conflict after the beginning of the second Intifada. "News reports," she said, "seemed to be largely written from an Israeli point of view" and that "Israeli sources were quoted first and far more frequently than Palestinian ones." Like me, Weir was "drawn by the immense disparity between the information I was reading from the foreign press and international websites, and the narrow sliver I was receiving from American media." It was

this observation that led Weir to found IAK—to "provide this information to the public, as well as to undertake a systematic study of U.S. media coverage of Israel/Palestine" (Weir 5).

5.2   **IF AMERICANS KNEW AND THE *TIMES***

The studies by IAK prove the existence of a pro-Israel media bias in the pages of the *Times* and other media outlets. A "media report card" was issued by IAK regarding the *Times'* coverage of the first year [September 2000 through September 2001] of the Palestinian uprising. IAK examined the headlines, first paragraphs, and article entireties, studying the coverage of Palestinian and Israeli deaths during that period of the conflict. IAK found that the *Times* "significantly distorted" these number of deaths, reporting Israeli deaths "at a rate 2.8 times higher than Palestinian deaths." In a 2004 follow-up study, IAK sought to investigate whether the *Times'* pattern of distortion, discovered in their previous research, "continued, diminished, or increased." What IAK found was that the rate of distortion increased by 30%.

As a subcategory, IAK studied the coverage of children's death caused by the conflict. According to their findings, the *Times' "*coverage of children's deaths was even more skewed." Again, the rate of distortion in covering children's deaths increased from 2000 to 2004, reporting Israeli children's deaths "6.8 times the rate of Palestinian deaths" in 2000 to "7.3 times greater than the deaths of Palestinian children" in 2004 ("Off the Charts"). In her study, Ismail stated that, although "child victimization in the conflict remained vivid," the blame for Palestinian children deaths was "inconsistent across the two sides" (Ismail 258).

As previously mentioned in the *Times'* code of ethics, the newspaper purports to cover a topic responsibly and accurately. To challenge this claim, the "media report cards" of IAK are

created in order to help the media outlets achieve their goal of objectivity by identifying and rectifying the problem of bias. Furthermore, IAK makes its report cards available to the public "as a way to help readers evaluate for themselves the reliability of their sources of information." In order to do this, IAK has established "clear standards for assessing accuracy in reporting," and has provided "an assessment of the media's accuracy in reporting on the Israel/Palestine conflict" ("Off the Charts").

Recognizing the controversial nature of the Palestine/Israel conflict, IAK "chose criteria that would be widely acknowledged as significant, conducive to statistical analysis, and immune to subjective interpretation." B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, provides data on the number of both cumulative deaths and children's deaths caused by the conflict. Focusing on the coverage of these deaths, according to IAK, "allows for statistical analysis that would be impossible in a qualitative study." The research design set up by IAK allowed for the discovery of "a significant disparity in the likelihood of a death receiving coverage based on the ethnicity of the person killed." The outcome of the *Times'* misreporting of the Palestine/Israel conflict is the creation of "a fictional situation in which Israeli and Palestinian deaths occur at more or less the same rate, and illustrates the dramatic gap between the reality of Palestinian fatalities and the coverage of them." What the readers are left with is an incorrect understanding of the conflict ("Off the Charts").

5.3   IF AMERICANS KNEW 2000 STUDY

During the first year of the Palestinian uprising, 165 Israelis were killed and 549 Palestinians were killed, a ratio of 3.3:1 (Palestinian deaths to Israeli deaths, see Figure 1 below).

27

Israelis and Palestinians Killed
First Year of Intifada (Sept. 29, 2000 - Sept. 28, 2001)

Figure 1. Israelis and Palestinians Killed, First Year of Intifada

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

However, during this time period, the *Times* reported Israeli deaths 197 times (119% of actual Israeli deaths in the headlines or first paragraphs and reported Palestinians deaths 233 times (42% of actual Palestinian deaths) in the headlines and first paragraphs, a ratio of 2.8:1 (Israeli deaths reported to Palestinian deaths reported, see Figure 2 below).

**Percentage of Deaths Reported
in Headline or First Paragraph**
New York Times Foreign Desk
First Year of Intifada (Sept. 29, 2000 - Sept. 28, 2001)

Figure 2. Percentage of Deaths Reported in Headlines, First Paragraphs

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

5.3.1 Coverage of Children's Deaths

During the same time period in the IAK study, B'Tselem documented the deaths of 28 Israeli children and 131 Palestinian children (4.7 times higher than Israeli children, see Figure 3 below).

Israeli and Palestinian Children Killed
First Year of Intifada (Sept. 29, 2000 - Sept. 28, 2001)

Figure 3. Israeli and Palestinian Children Killed, First Year of Intifada

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

However, Israeli children deaths were reported 35 times in the headlines and first paragraphs while the deaths of Palestinian children were reported 24 times (See Figure 4 below).

Percentage of Children's Deaths Reported in Headline or First Paragraph
New York Times Foreign Desk
First Year of Intifada (Sept. 29, 2000 - Sept. 28, 2001)
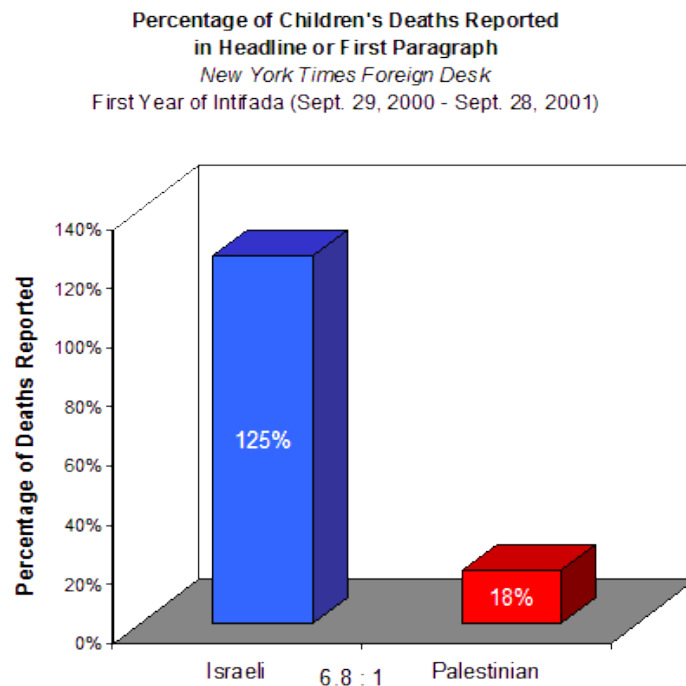
Figure 4. Percentage of Children's Deaths Reported in Headlines, First Paragraphs

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

The result of this discrepancy is a reportage of Israeli children's deaths 125% of the time (due to multiple reporting) and a reportage of Palestinian children deaths 18% of the time, even though the deaths of Palestinian children was 6.8 times higher than Israeli children.

5.4   IF AMERICANS KNEW 2004 STUDY

In its 2004 study, IAK found an increase in the discrepancy. During the 2004 study's time frame, 107 Israelis were killed and 818 Palestinians were killed, a ratio of 1:7.6 (Israeli deaths to Palestinian deaths, see Figure 5 below).
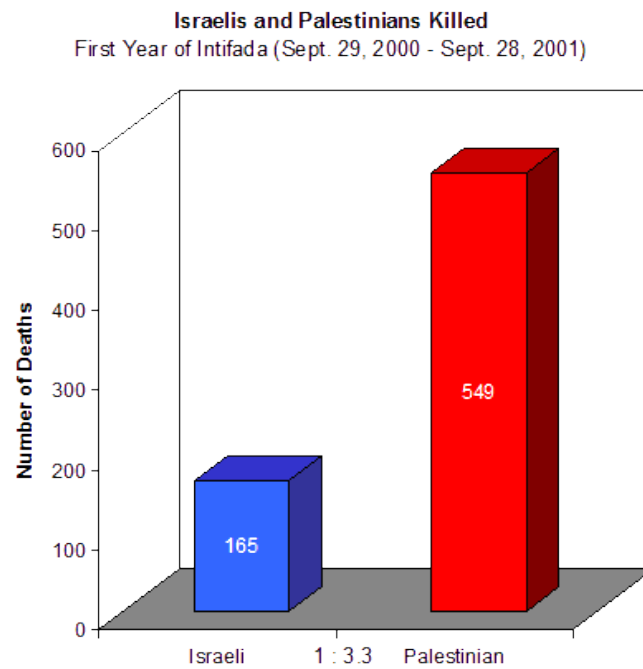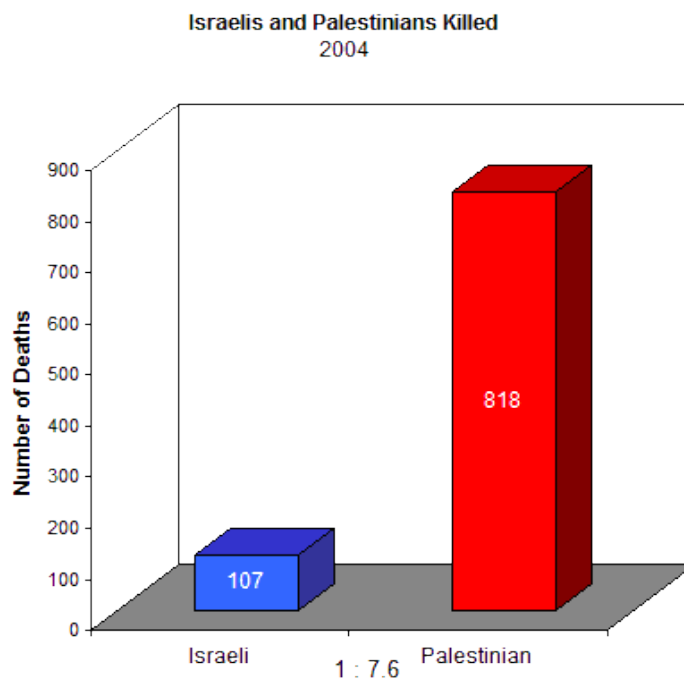

Figure 5. Israelis and Palestinians Killed, 2004

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

During this time period, the *Times* reported Israeli deaths 159 times in the headlines or first paragraphs and reported Palestinians deaths 334 times in the headlines and first paragraphs, a ratio of 3.7:1 (Israeli deaths reported to Palestinian deaths reported, see Figure 6 below).
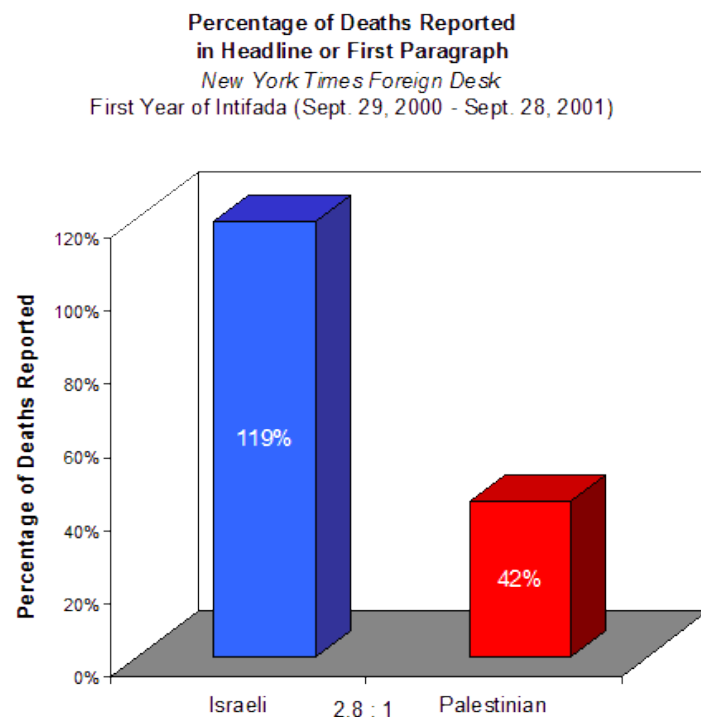

**Percentage of Deaths Reported
in Headline or First Paragraph**
New York Times Foreign Desk
2004
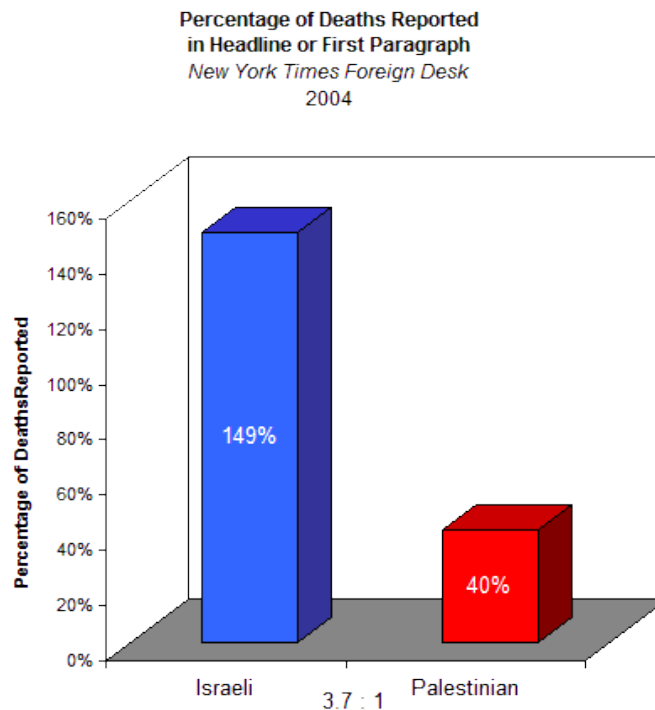
Figure 6. Percentage of Deaths Reported in Headlines, First Paragraphs

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

The result of this misreporting of the conflict in the headlines and first paragraphs was a reporting of Israeli deaths 149% of the time (due to multiple references) and a reporting of Palestinian deaths 41% of the time. Israeli deaths were reported 2.8 times more than Palestinian deaths although Palestinians died at a rate 7.6 times higher.

5.4.1 Coverage of Children's Deaths

During the same time period, B'Tselem documented the deaths of 8 Israeli children and 176 Palestinian children (22 times higher than Israeli children, see Figure 7 below).
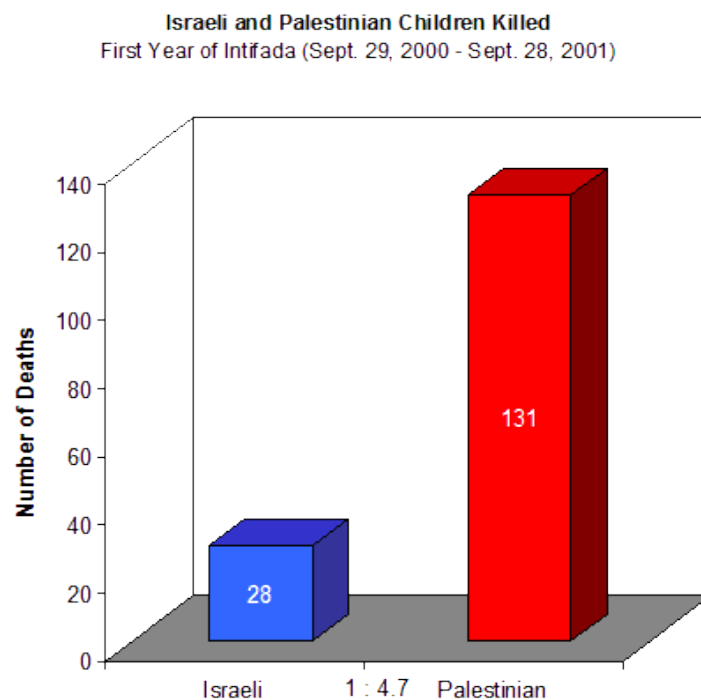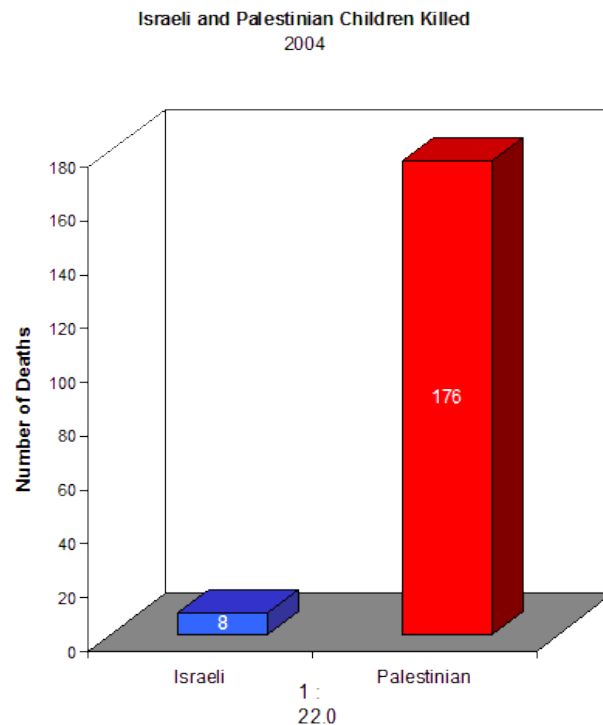

Figure 7. Israeli and Palestinian Children Killed, 2004

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

During this period of examination, the *Times* reported on Israeli children's deaths 50% of the time and on Palestinian children's deaths 7% of the time, or 7.3:1 (See Figure 8 below). The *Times* had effectively omitted 164 deaths of Palestinian children from the headlines and first paragraphs and omitted the deaths of 4 Israeli children.

Percentage of Children's Deaths Reported in Headline or First Paragraph
New York Times Foreign Desk
2004
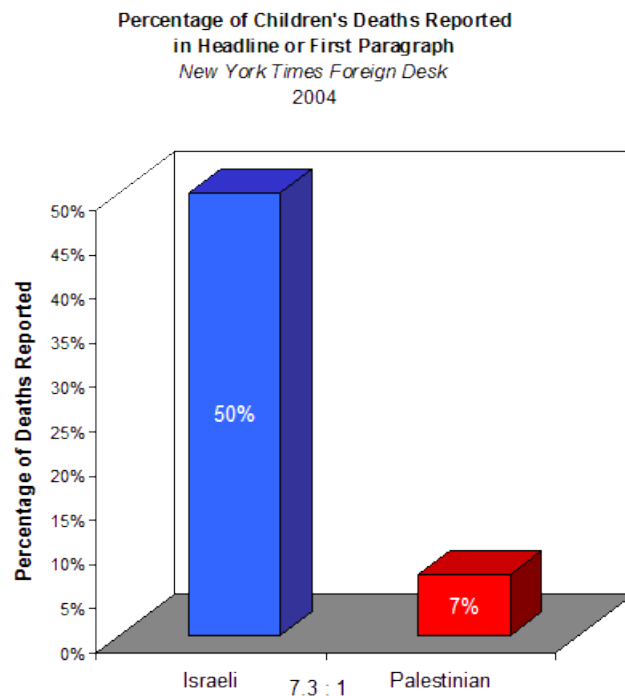
Figure 8. Percentage of Children's Deaths Reported, 2004

Source: "Off the Chart," If Americans Knew.

The result of this discrepancy is a reportage of Israeli children's deaths 125% of the time (due to multiple references) and a reportage of Palestinian children deaths 18% of the time, even though the deaths of Palestinian children was 6.8 times higher than Israeli children.

5.5   FULL ARTICLES

Upon examination of the articles' entireties, IAK discovered that the disproportionality of coverage of Israeli deaths over Palestinian persisted. In the 2004 study, the deaths of Israeli children were covered 10.3 times higher than the deaths of Palestinian children. Regarding the total number of deaths, the deaths of Israelis were covered 3.1 times more than the deaths of Palestinians. In other words, the *Times* continued to emphasize Israeli deaths over Palestinian deaths as the article persisted past the headlines and first paragraphs ("Off the Charts").

Furthermore, as IAK examined the final paragraphs, it discovered that "every death mentioned solely in the last two paragraphs of an article was Palestinian." IAK attributes this to diminishment of readership as the article persists. No Israeli deaths were mentioned in the last two paragraphs. What IAK concluded was that the *Times* gave its readership the impression that the "Israeli death rate was greater than it was, and that the Palestinian death rate was considerably smaller than its reality." The major consequence for readers is a misunderstanding of the Palestine/Israel conflict ("Off the Charts").

6.0   FALK/FRIEL STUDIES

Addressing Media Bias in the Context of International Law and Palestinian Perspective

In 2007, Professor Richard Falk (University of California, Santa Barbara) and author Howard
Friel (*Dogs of War: The Wall Street Journal Editorial Page and the Right-Wing Campaign
Against International Law*), completed a "scathing analysis" of the *New York Times*' coverage of
the Palestine/Israel conflict. In their 2000 – 2006 analysis of the *Times'* news stories and
editorials, Falk and Friel uncover patterns of distortion, omissions, and a disregard for the facts,
similar to the patterns revealed by IAK. This revelation, according to Falk and Friel:

> Enables an understanding of the detrimental effects of these (mis)representations
> on the prospects for peace between these long-suffering peoples, but more broadly
> it casts a long, dark shadow across the failure of the *Times* to hold Israel…
> accountable under international law when it embarks on controversial foreign
> policy initiatives" (1).

Falk and Friel contend that, with regard to the professional standards asserted by the
Times, the newspaper's coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict lacks credibility. They further
argue that the *Times'* reputation "exerts an unwarranted influence on public attitudes." Similar to
the IAK studies, Falk and Friel compare the way the *Times* covers specified incidents in its news
and editorial pages to the coverage of the same subject matter by human rights organizations,
such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B'Tselem, groups that are "inclined to
give Israel the benefit of the doubt" (Falk and Friel 2).

The Palestine/Israel conflict is the most misreported issue of foreign policy in the United States today (Falk and Friel 4). It is the goal of the Falk/Friel study to "provide as objectively as possible an appropriate understanding of the main issues" in the conflict. The study proves that the *Times* is not only guilty of irresponsible journalism that seeks to intentionally distort the "factual circumstances of the conflict," but also of "ignoring international law when it conflicts with US foreign policy" (Falk and Friel 4).

Although six years of the *Times'* coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict is the central focus of Falk/Friel study, they also scrutinize other issues. For example, their study identifies key issues in the conflict that the *Times* seeks to frame in favor of Israel. Territorial disputes, United Nations resolutions, Israeli settlements, Palestinian self-determination, Palestinian refugees, and sovereignty over Jerusalem, key concerns to both Israelis and Palestinians, are generally framed within an Israeli narrative, according to the study.

The *Times'* refusal to consider international law within its editorial and news pages leads to "seriously bias perceptions of the conflict." Falk and Friel further assert that, due to the *Times'* prestigious reputation in the minds of the public, that a "responsible print media… would at least expose its readers to the relevance of international law in the course of addressing controversies associated with international conflicts and foreign policy" (Falk and Friel 9). Moreover, largely significant facts are ignored or insufficiently covered through a process of selective reporting. The result is an imbalanced understanding of the Palestine/Israel conflict and the rights enshrined under international law (Falk and Friel 11). The *Times'* lopsided coverage of the conflict, according to Falk and Friel, screens a principal reality, that: "Israeli violence against Palestinians far exceeds Palestinian violence against Israelis" (24).

Unlike the IAK studies, Falk and Friel assessed the qualitative aspects of the *Times'* period of coverage from 2000 – 2006. For example, the study found that the *Times* seldom mentioned international law and conventions with regard to Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thereby disallowing a framework for its readers to evaluate the situation within those parameters (Falk and Friel 24). International law states that, in light of the Israeli occupation, Palestinians have a right to legitimate armed struggle (Falk and Friel 81). This is rarely, if ever, reported in the pages of the *Times*. The *Times'* disregard for contextualizing international law and conventions shows that the *Times* "has clearly prejudiced its coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict to the detriment of Palestinian rights and a comprehensive peace" (Falk and Friel 145).

Furthermore, regarding the presentation of Palestinian views in their own words, the *Times* "has expended little effort." The opinion pages serve as a platform where mostly the views of pro-Israeli columnists can be read. These writers include William Safire; a passionate defender of Israel, David Brooks; a ceaseless defender of the Israeli position, and Thomas Friedman; a moderate who "almost never takes the Palestinians' side." In fact, not one columnist in the *Times'* cache of regular columnists is "a consistent defender of the Palestinians" (Mearsheimer and Walt 170). Outspoken Palestinian commentators, although "readily available to reporters, editors, and opinion-page writers," are, for the most part, ignored by the *Times* (Falk and Friel 87). On rare occasions, however, readers may have the opportunity to hear a Palestinian perspective. Michael Tarazi, for example, a legal advisor for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), "caused a stir when he published an op-ed" when he warned, "that realities on the ground were forcing Palestinians to consider a one-state solution" (Abunimah 160). Favoring pro-Israeli authors and news sources at the expense of viewpoints addressing

international law allows the *Times* to maintain its pro-Israeli bias and framing of the conflict (Falk and Friel 146). In addition, the *Times* shuns international law by omitting opposing voices and reports (Falk and Friel 147) and has, thus, journalistically failed "to respect and to ensure respect" for international law, specifically, the Fourth Geneva Convention (Falk and Friel 150).

The *Times'* decision to omit the Fourth Geneva Convention within the framework of the Palestine/Israel conflict "is nothing less than a rejection by the *Times* of the rule of law as it applies to the Israel-Palestine conflict." Furthermore, this omission "favors Israel's territorial privileges over Palestinian rights and *helps to sway public opinion*" (Falk and Friel 157, emphasis added). For example, Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention makes it illegal for the occupying power to engage in collective punishment or "to transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies" ("Fourth Geneva Convention," see APPENDIX C). The *Times* regularly omits the convention with regard to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Palestinian resistance to Israel's colonization of Palestinian lands.

6.1   A SIX-YEAR MISREPRESENTATION OF DEATHS

The Falk/Friel study also found that the *Times* predominantly emphasized the deaths of Israelis over Palestinians. During their period of study, Falk and Friel found that 4,032 Palestinians were killed and 1,017 Israelis were killed. Of those Palestinians killed, 808 were children. Of those Israelis killed, 119 were Israeli. On many occasions, the *Times* "only briefly noted or ignored the reports altogether" (Falk and Friel 25-6). The study also cited reports by Amnesty International between 2001 and 2006 that corroborated reports by B'Tselem, which covered the numbers of Israelis and Palestinians killed. The *Times* refused to cover any of these reports, which

"documented extensive Israeli violence against Palestinians." However, the *Times* did publish "dozens of news stories on Palestinian suicide bombings" during the same time period (Falk and Friel 38).

Falk and Friel find it reasonable that the *Times,* as the leading newspaper in the world's most dominant democracy, would cover reports issued by the world's "most authoritative human rights organizations," especially reports that charge one of the U.S.' staunchest allies with war crimes (43). The standard of analysis employed by these human rights organizations proves to be "of little concern at the *Times*" (Falk and Friel 44). Although a standard based on facts on the ground is available from these groups, the *Times* opts for the practice of double standards, one that favors Israel and "disproportionately focused on Palestinian violence" (Falk and Friel 135).

PART II

7.0 A CATASTROPHIC DISTORTION

Research Design and Procedure

Over 400 empirical investigations have been published worldwide that seek to explain agenda setting and their effects (Tai 482). The empirical feature that I address initially is the frequency in the *Times'* coverage and the framing found in the print media from the catastrophic time period under scrutiny (Operation Cast Lead). Although there are many print media that I could have addressed in this study, similar to those analyzed by *If Americans Knew*, such as *The San Francisco Chronicle* or *The Los Angeles Times*, I chose to focus specifically on *New York Times* because it serves as the largest metropolitan newspaper in the United States. The *Times* boasts a daily circulation of 1.1 million, and 1.7 million Sunday editions. The *Times'* website, NYTimes.com, "ranks among the 10 most popular Internet news sites" in the US (Bianco, Gard, and Rossant). Although narrowing this study's focus solely to the *Times* may be seen as a methodological limitation, the *Times* is one of the leading newspapers in the U.S. that exerts an influence on a large segment of the population. This fact alone calls for heightened scrutiny of its content.

Due to the disadvantages in using computer-based systems, such as their lack of qualitative abilities, the classical method of content analysis employed in this study was rigorous and time-consuming. It entailed reading all news stories and editorials of the time period in question. Similar to Ismail's "In the Shadow of A Leader," my study utilizes a textual examination of purposefully selected news stories and editorial texts from the *Times* available through the ProQuest database. 'Full text' searches were conducted on the ProQuest database for

'Israel,' 'Palestine,' 'Israeli,' 'Palestinian,' 'Gaza,' 'Gaza Strip,' and 'Operation Cast Lead' for the period of the invasion [12/27/2008 – 1/18/2009]. I also analyzed an additional week after the end of the operation as it allowed for the incorporation of the immediate aftermath of the operation and updated numbers of casualties.

Each article was read before including it in the sample sets to ensure that it dealt with the catastrophic event itself, rather than with an extraneous issue related to the conflict, such as the visit of an American diplomat to the region. In the end, ninety-one articles were selected from the *Times'* news and editorial pages. The coding was straightforward: a tally was made for each time an article mentioned an Israeli death or Palestinian death in the headlines, first paragraphs, and in the article as a whole. Tallies were also made for each time the article referenced an Israeli or Palestinian child's death in the headline or first paragraph, and the article's entirety. The same procedure was done regarding references to Palestinian and Israeli injuries in the headline, first paragraphs, and entirety.

Similar to the methodology used by IAK, this study applies the statistical data compiled by B'Tselem of the deaths and injuries of Palestinians and Israelis during Operation Cast Lead. Although content analysis can be a subjective experience, focusing on B'Tselem's data helps to minimize the subjectivity in this study.

Additionally, tallies were made for each time the article mentioned weapons being fired from Palestinians into Israel. Key words such as 'rockets,' 'Qassam,' 'mortar shells,' and 'missiles' were included in these tallies. This aspect of the study connotes a more qualitative approach for it compares these numbers with statistical data regarding the number of deaths and injuries of Israelis and Palestinians. Comparing the number of references to rockets helps to

explain the *Times'* role in justifying the Israeli attacks, and thus, the heightened number of Palestinian deaths, as it adds a new element to the *Times'* well established bias toward Israel.

This study relies on *purposive sampling* because a specific period for examination was chosen in order to obtain as much pertinent date possible for the purpose of determining patterns of media bias through coverage of Operation Cast Lead. The categorization techniques in this study are similar to those employed by IAK (i.e. number of times Israeli and Palestinian deaths reported in headlines and first paragraphs). An historical data set was created that contained news stories about the Palestine/Israel conflict in the pages of the *Times* during the specific timeframes. The created data sets provided the foundation needed to analyze the headlines, first paragraphs, and full articles during the timeframe.

7.1 HEADLINES, FIRST PARAGRAPHS, AND FULL ARTICLES

This study analyzes information included in the *Times'* headlines and first paragraphs both in news stories and editorials. Although IAK does not include editorials in its studies, my study does. It is in the editorial that a writer addresses the audience directly, often times with overt commentary (Reah 46). A headline serves as a doorway way into the article, shaping the content and structure of what is to come. That which the writer is trying to convey is condensed into a minimum of words that seek to pull in the reader. Headlines may also be used to influence the opinion of the reader. Although most readers skip some sections of the article, the headline is one site that usually will not go unnoticed. Thus, the message of the headline (headline content) gives the overall picture of the story and relays its relative significance. "In theory, then, readers can

skim the headlines and have an outline of the news of the day, and some idea of its relative impact and importance" (Reah 13-4).

Writers employ a variety of techniques to "make their headlines memorable and striking," using words that may be emotionally loaded or that carry strong overtones (Reah 17-8) Due to their positioning on the page and their increased font, headlines have a stronger impact on the reader than, say, the last paragraph (Reah 23). According to Hoffman and Wallach, "The importance of an event can change dramatically simply by what section the story is in; where in that section; and if on the front page, how large it is and where it is placed" (619).

It is also important to look at the first paragraphs of each article with regard to media bias. The inverted pyramid style of writing in journalism calls for the most important information to be included at the beginning of the article (or the base of the inverted pyramid) while the information of lesser importance comes further down (toward the tip of the inverted pyramid) (Blake). This is due to relatively short attention spans of many of the readers. Framing an issue for the benefit of one side (Israel) requires that the information that supports that side come at the beginning, while information of importance to the other side (Palestine) comes later. This becomes clear upon viewing of this study's charts. It is also important to address the articles' entireties since much of the information of Palestinian importance is included much later in the article, in comparison to the information of Israeli importance that is found much earlier.

8.0   OPERATION CAST LEAD

A Gaza Strip Case Study

On December 27, 2008, the Israeli government ordered the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to "embark on Operation Cast Lead as part of its duty to protect its citizens following eight years of rocket fire on Israeli communities in southern Israel" (Israel Defense Forces). Nearly 1,400 Palestinians were killed and more than 5,320 were wounded, 350 of them critically. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were made homeless while at least 1,200 houses were destroyed. Rockets and mortar shells fired by Palestinians killed three Israeli civilians and one solider, while nine Israeli soldiers were killed during combat, four of which by "friendly fire." In all, 113 Israelis were wounded during this time (B'Tselem 3-4). Of those Palestinians killed: 315 were minors under age 18, 235 whom were under age 16; 115 were women; and at least 83 were men over the age of 50.

8.1   OPERATION CAST LEAD AS A CATASTROPHE

Although B'Tselem's *Guidelines for Israel's Investigation into Operation Cast Lead* charged both the IDF and Hamas with committing human rights violations, the question of proportionality remained a central focus of the report. According to B'Tselem, an "examination of the Israeli military's conduct during the operation raises concerns as to the extent to which

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Israel complied with its obligations under international humanitarian law regarding distinction, proportionality, and direct fire at civilians" (5). Furthermore, due to the fact that the Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated regions on the planet, the risk of harming civilians with artillery fire and mortar shells was particularly high (B'Tselem 7). Further necessitating the inquiry was the fact there was a *"high number of people killed and injured during the operation, and particularly given that there were cases in which many civilians were killed in a single attack"* (B'Tselem 9, emphasis added).

Operation Cast Lead serves as an important case study because, according to B'Tselem, "the extent of the harm to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead is unprecedented" (20). For example, 21 people, including 12 children under age 10, were killed in a single attack when the Israeli military bombed the four-story home of the Daiyah family (B'Tselem 9). Israeli military officers, according to the report, committed grave breaches in international law during the operation. "The Israeli public," B'Tselem claimed, "has a right to know what was done in its name in the Gaza Strip" (B'Tselem 23). I would argue, too, that Americans have an equal right to know, considering that billions of U.S. tax dollars are sent to Israel annually. However, the *Times'* misreporting of the conflict denies its readership fair and balanced access to the facts.

Upon visiting the Gaza Strip after the assault, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, head of the Palestinian Medical Relief Committee, questioned Israel's reasoning for initiating Operation Cast Lead. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Barghouti drew attention to the "big gap between what's happening in Palestine and Americans' knowledge of it" (Adas 48).

8.2   FINDINGS: COVERAGE OF TOTAL DEATHS

Figure 9 below shows the number of Israeli and Palestinian deaths during Operation Cast Lead.

Palestinians died at a rate more than 106 times higher than Israelis.

Total Deaths During Operation Cast Lead

| Total Deaths | 13 | 1385 |
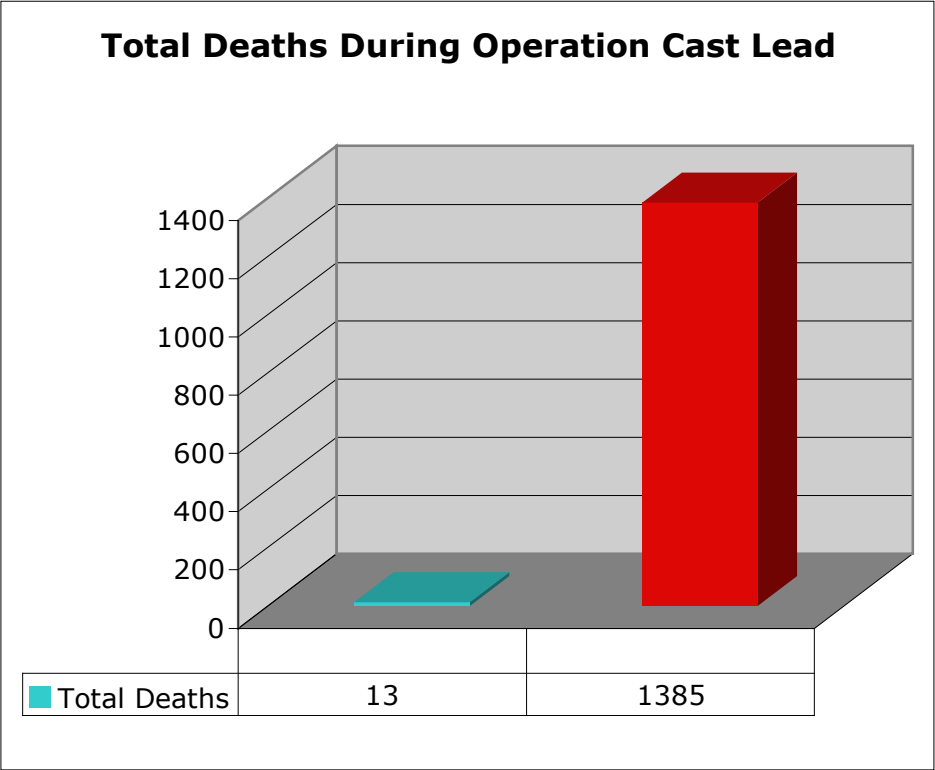
Figure 9. Total Deaths During Operation Cast Lead

Note: Number of Palestinian deaths includes civilians and combatants; and the number of Israeli deaths includes civilians and soldiers.

Figure 10 below compares the actual number of Israeli and Palestinian deaths and the actual number of Israeli children and Palestinian children deaths with the number of times Israeli and Palestinian deaths and the number of times Israeli children and Palestinian children deaths are reported in the headlines and first paragraphs. 38% of Israeli deaths are mentioned in the headlines and first paragraphs while only 3% of Palestinian deaths are mentioned in the headlines and first paragraphs. Israeli deaths were mentioned at a ratio of 12.7:1. Only 2% of Palestinian children deaths were mentioned in headlines and first paragraphs.
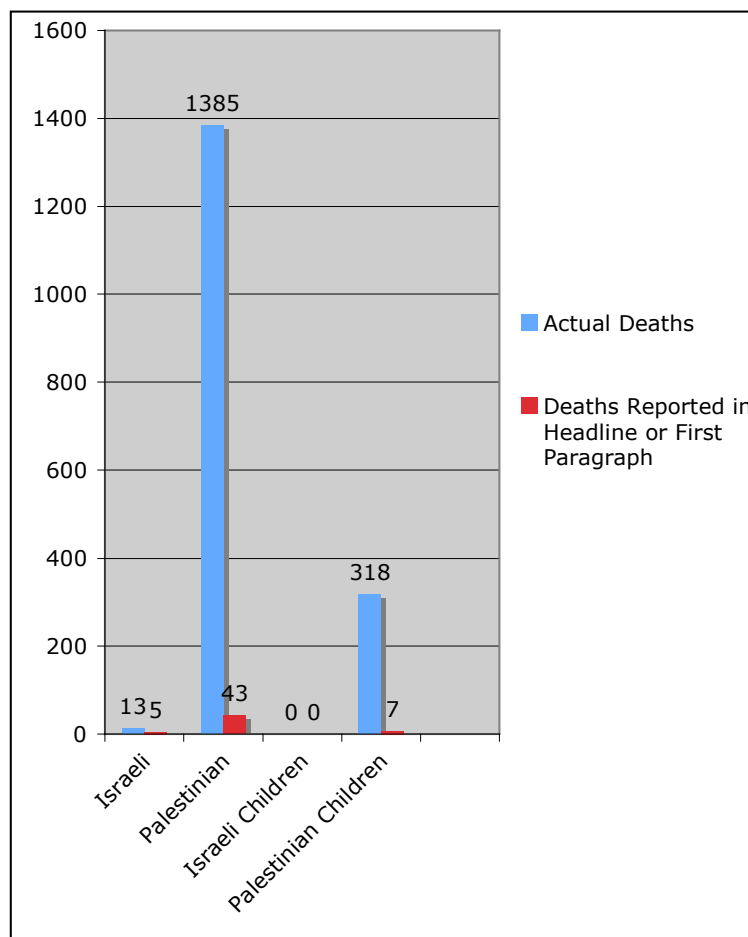
Figure 10. Actual Deaths vs. Deaths Reported in Headlines, First Paragraphs

Figure 11 below compares the actual number of Israeli and Palestinian deaths and the actual number of Israeli children and Palestinian children deaths with the number of times Israeli and Palestinian deaths and the number of times Israeli children and Palestinian children deaths are mentioned in the full articles. When taken as a whole, the articles covered 431% of Israeli deaths (due to repeated references), while only 17% of Palestinian deaths were covered, a ratio of 25.3:1. Only 17% of Palestinian children deaths were covered in the full articles.
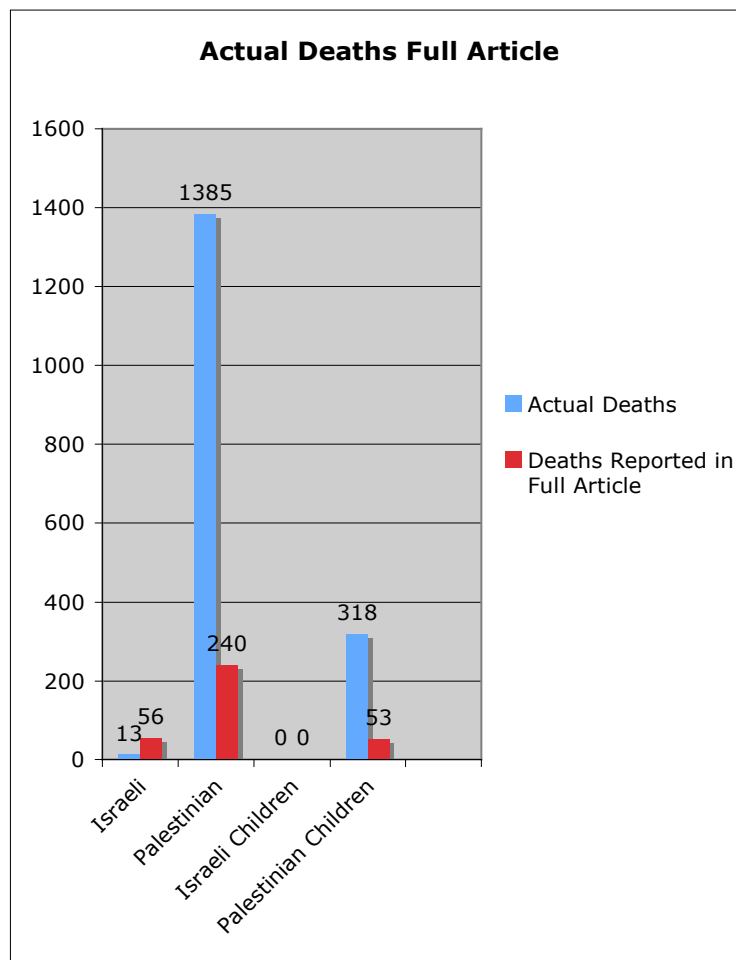
Figure 11. Actual Deaths vs. Actual Deaths Reported in Full Articles

Figure 12 is a three dimensional representation of the actual number of Israeli and Palestinian deaths compared with the number of times the *Times* mentioned Israeli and Palestinian deaths in the full articles.
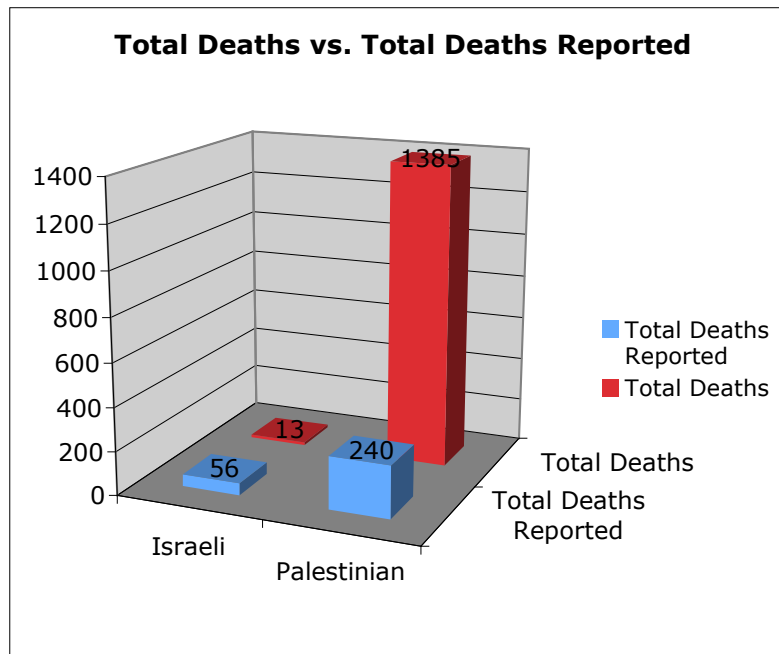
Figure 12. Total Deaths vs. Total Deaths Reported (3-D)

8.3   FINDINGS: COVERAGE OF INJURIES

Figure 13 below compares the actual number of Israeli and Palestinian injuries with the number of times Israeli and Palestinian deaths are mentioned in the headlines and first paragraphs. Palestinians were injured at a rate almost 27 times higher than Israelis. 0.5% of Israeli injuries are mentioned in the headlines and first paragraphs while 0.057% of Palestinian injuries are

mentioned in the headlines and first paragraphs. In other words, for every 1 Palestinian injury, nearly 9 Israeli injuries were reported, a ratio of 8.8:1.

Actual Injuries vs. Injuries Reported in Headlines and First Paragraphs
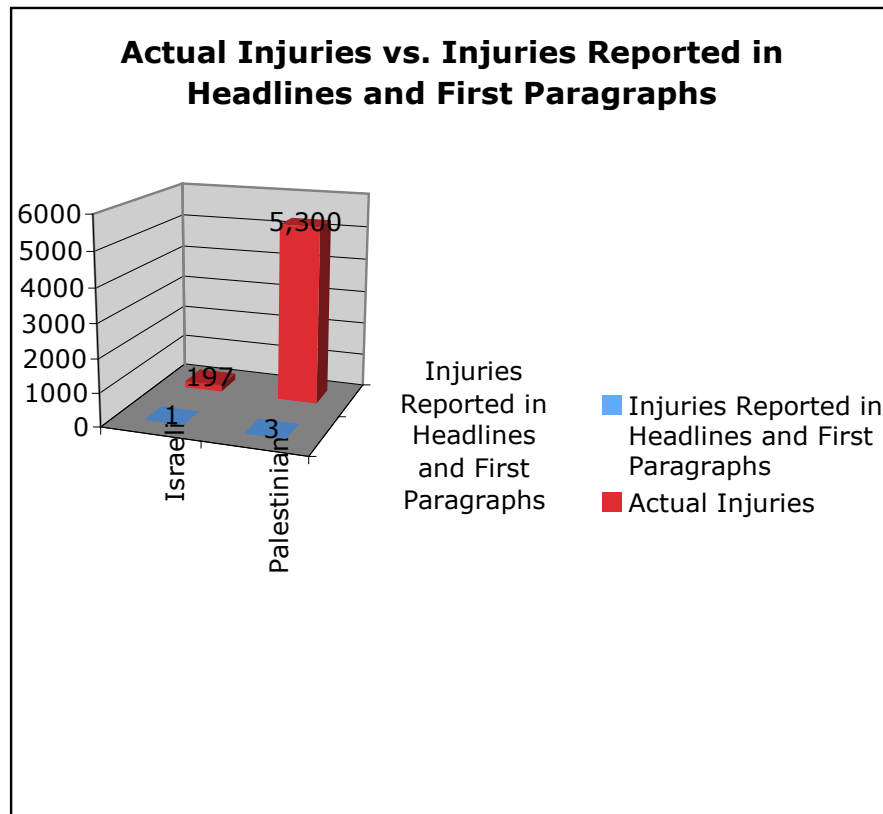
Figure 13. Actual Injuries vs. Injuries Reported in Headlines, First Paragraphs

Note: Number of Palestinian injuries includes civilians and combatants; and the number of Israeli injuries includes civilians and soldiers.

Figure 14 below compares the actual number of Israeli and Palestinian injuries with the number of times Israeli and Palestinian injuries are mentioned in the full articles. When taken as a whole, the articles covered 12.7% of Israeli deaths, while only 1.1% of Palestinian deaths were covered, a ratio of 11.6:1.

Actual Injuries vs. Injuries Reported in Full Articles

5,300

6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0

197

25

58

Israeli

Palestinian

Injuries Reported in Full Articles

Injuries Reported in Full Articles
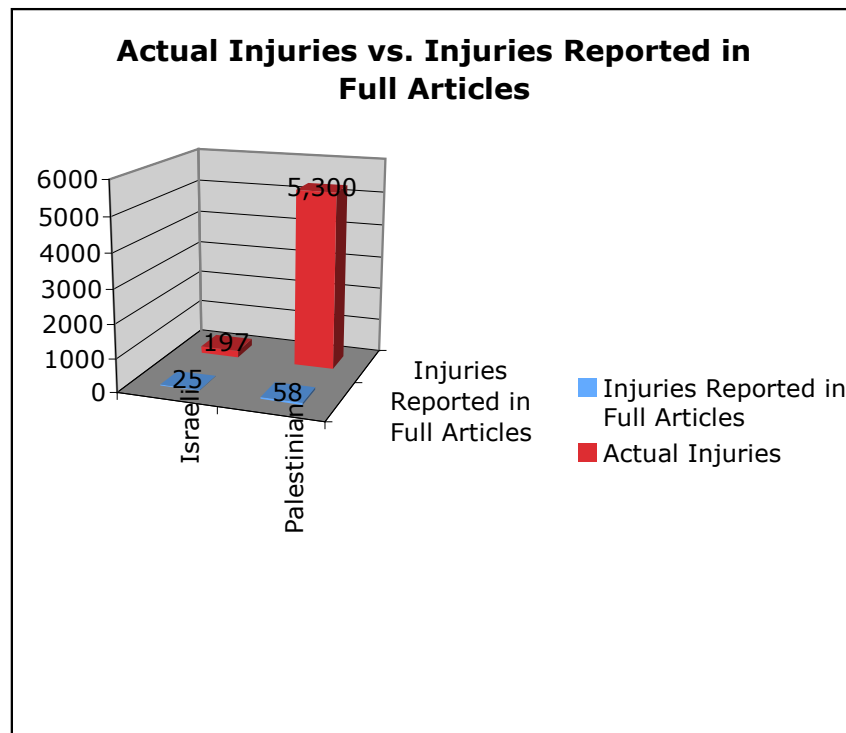
Actual Injuries

Figure 14. Actual Injuries vs. Injuries Reported in Full Articles

8.4   FINDINGS: COVERAGE OF ROCKETS FIRED

In the headlines and first paragraphs, the *Times* reported Palestinian deaths 43 times. The *Times* also mentioned Hamas or other Palestinian factions having fired rockets or other weaponry into Israel 45 times in the headlines and first paragraphs. Thus, the rockets fired from Gaza received almost an equal amount of coverage. In the entire 91 articles surveyed during the timeframe, Palestinian deaths were mentioned 240 times while Hamas firing rockets and other weaponry was mentioned 329 times, or 37% more often than references to Palestinian deaths. In this manner, the *Times* allotted more "airtime" for the rockets over the number of deaths endured by the Palestinians. Chart O below shows these results.

Palestinian Deaths Mentioned vs. Firing of Rockets Mentioned

- Headlines and First Paragraphs
- Full Articles

	Headlines and First Paragraphs	Full Articles
Palestinian Deaths	43	240
Rockets	45	329
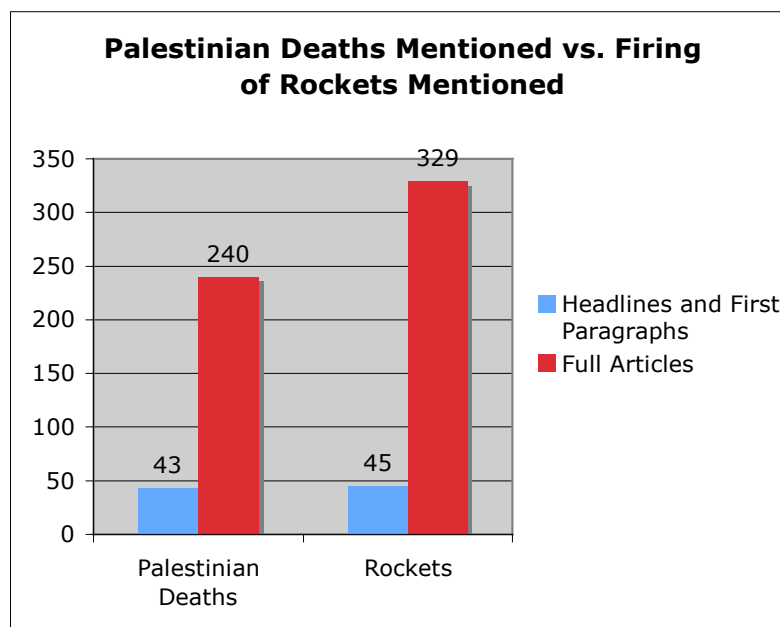
Figure 15. Coverage of Palestinians Deaths vs. Coverage of Rockets Fired

A *Times* article analyzed during the time period addressed this very issue. The article, headlined, *Standing Between Enemies*, quoted Stephen Weil, a Washington resident, who said that:

> Israel's bombings had killed hundreds more Palestinians than the number of Israelis killed by Hamas rockets. Yet photos on the newspaper's Web site "tell a different story: for every Palestinian victim, an Israeli one is shown." He urged me to do a photo count, and said that if The Times was trying to suggest that suffering on each side was roughly equal, "it is a lie" (Hoyt).

9.0   ANALAYSIS

The Impact of Catastrophic Distortion

The procedures enacted in my study ensured a design that was as objective as possible, similar to the studies done by *If Americans Knew*. IAK's yearlong analysis of the *Times'* coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict [Sept. 2000 – Sept. 2001] revealed that the newspaper covered 119% of Israeli deaths and 42% of the deaths of Palestinians in the headlines and first paragraphs. Israeli deaths were covered almost 3 times more than the deaths of Palestinians. In IAK's 2004 study, the *Times'* distortion increased, covering 149% of Israeli deaths and 41% of Palestinian deaths in the headlines and first paragraphs. The Israeli deaths were covered 3.6 times more than the deaths of Palestinians. My study of the *Times'* coverage of Operation Cast Lead, however, reveals that the *Times* covered Israeli deaths 12 times more than the deaths of Palestinians in the headlines and first paragraphs (38% of Israeli deaths were covered and only 3% of Palestinian deaths were covered). In reality, 13 Israelis were killed and over 1,385 Palestinians were killed. Furthermore, analysis of the full articles during Operation Cast Lead revealed that the *Times* reported 431% of Israeli deaths and only 17% of Palestinian deaths, a ratio of 25 to 1.

In IAK's 2000-2001 analysis of the *Times*, the group found that 125% of Israeli children's deaths were reported in the headlines and first paragraphs, while only 18% of Palestinian children's deaths were reported. In the 2004 analysis, IAK found that 50% of Israeli children's deaths were reported in the headlines and first paragraphs and 7% of Palestinian

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children's deaths were reported. Since no Israeli children were killed during Operation Cast Lead, my analysis only looks to the rate of reporting (or omission) of Palestinian children's deaths during the period of catastrophe. In the headlines and first paragraphs, 2% of Palestinian children's deaths were reported and 17% of Palestinian children's deaths were reported in the full articles.

Although IAK did not include injuries inflicted during its analyses of the *Times*, my study does. Analyzing the *Times'* coverage of these injuries in the headlines and first paragraphs revealed that the newspaper reported 0.5% of Israeli injuries and 0.057% of Palestinian injuries, a ratio of 8.1 to 1. In reality, 26 times more Palestinians were injured than Israelis (5,300 and 197, respectively). With regard to the coverage of injuries in full articles, the *Times* reported 12.7% of Israeli injuries and 1.1% of Palestinian injuries, a ratio of 11.6 to 1.

10.0   MOBILIZATION IN PITTSBURGH

Rising Up Against Distortion

Despite the fact that the *Times*' distortion grew immensely during the catastrophic event of Operation Cast Lead, otherwise disconnected community groups in Pittsburgh found themselves mobilized against the ongoing catastrophe in the Gaza Strip. The implications of this fact can lead to further examination of what were the external factors that led these groups and individuals to mobilize on the coldest days of the year? Was it the independent media that stimulated them into demonstrating? Was the increased distortion by the times (431% of Israeli deaths covered vs. 17% of Palestinian deaths covered) so blatantly obvious that these groups took it upon themselves to raise awareness about the ensuing catastrophe in the Gaza Strip? Although not the central focus of this study, this question could provide further insight into alternatives to the mainstream media and what effect they may have on the galvanization of political resistance.

In response to Operation Cast Lead, the local Pittsburgh groups, concerned about the loss of civilian life, formed the Coalition for Peace and Justice in the Middle East (CPJME). In my previous eight years both residing in Pittsburgh and studying the conflict, I had never seen so many groups and individuals, connected only by their attachment to social, environmental, or political causes, come together to demand an end to a military assault in the Palestinian territories.

Figure 16. CPJME's "March of the Dead"

Photo from World Socialist Website, "US: Pittsburgh protest against atrocities in Gaza."

On Saturday, January 17, 2009, CPJME held a "March of the Dead." A flier for the march read, "In the past two weeks at least 888 Palestinians have been killed and 3,700 injured. March with us to END THE WAR ON GAZA and to commemorate the innocent lives taken." The action was endorsed by the following organizations:

> American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Black Voices for Peace, CAIR PA, Pgh, CMU Muslim Student Association, Human Rights Coalition-Fed Up!, International Solidarity Movement, Islamic Center of Pittsburgh, Middle East Peace Forum, Muslim Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, OPTICS (Organizing Pittsburgh to Increase Community Solidarity), Pittsburgh Friends of Immigrants, Pittsburgh Palestine Solidarity Committee, Students for Justice in Palestine, Tel Rumeida Circus for Detained Palestinians, Thomas Merton Center Anti-War Committee, Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East, University of Pittsburgh Muslim Student Association and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
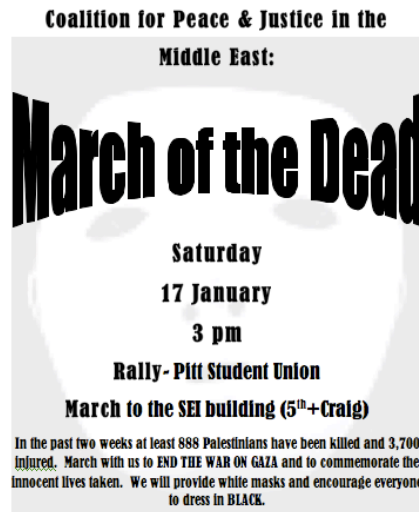
Figure 17. CPJME's "March of the Dead" flier

Photo from: [Jonas in Palestine Blog](#)

The ad hoc coalition also organized buses in cooperation with other local groups to Washington, D.C., to join a national march that was organized in part by the A.N.S.W.E.R. (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) Coalition.

In addition to the protests in and around Pittsburgh, I had coincidentally scheduled my photo exhibit, "Hope Under Siege: A Palestine Photo Exhibit," to be held at the University of Pittsburgh. The exhibit was to run from January 9-19, 2009, at the height of Operation Cast Lead. On the first floor of the University of Pittsburgh's student union, about 60 of my collected photos from my three trips to Israel/Palestine hung in the Kimbo Art Gallery. The opening reception included poetry, music, and speakers. Initially, I expected 25 people to attend the reception since it was a cold Friday night in January. In fact, I only requested 25 chairs. However, as the event started, I realized the large reception room was quickly filling up with more than 150 people.

An employee at the gallery later told me that she stopped tallying the number of guests, a standard protocol at the gallery. "There were just too many people," she said. Operation Cast Lead was only two weeks into its progression, and I believe this had something to do with the large turnout. The gallery management asked if I would like to keep the exhibit up for two more weeks due to the high demand.

Figure 18. Hope Under Siege flier

Flyer from "[Hope Under Siege]."

More of my photos from the exhibit can be found in APPENDIX B

11.0   CONCLUSION

Freedom of the press is essential to a functioning democracy. In fact, "a mature, healthy democracy needs a system that will allow members of that democracy to decide freely and in an informed manner" (Reah 10). If the free press is not free from bias, agenda setting, manipulation, and distortion, then the notion of "deciding freely and in an informed manner" is meaningless.

This research, limited chiefly by its narrow focus on the catastrophic event of Operation Cast Lead, combines content analysis with already established quantitative research of *The New York Times'* bias with regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict. This study makes a methodological contribution to the rigorous analyses enacted by *If Americans Knew*, Falk and Friel, and others. Similar studies can benefit from this study's approach in evaluating patterns of pro-Israeli media bias during periods of catastrophe. This study shows that, during periods of heightened catastrophe, the *Times* increases its distortion in coverage. This study remains open to further modification since this study has only focused on the period of media coverage during Operation Cast Lead.

Despite its limitations, this study is not without its strengths. The data collected through content analysis was compared with the quantitative data collected B'Tselem to show an immense disparity in reporting of Israeli and Palestinian deaths and injuries during the catastrophic event of Operation Cast Lead. This study sheds light on the disparity in coverage of deaths and injuries reported in headlines, first paragraphs, and full articles. Furthermore, this

study showed that the *Times'* reporting on rockets, missiles, and mortar shells fired into Israel from within the Gaza Strip was comparable to the number of times it mentioned Palestinian deaths. In fact, the *Times* reported rocket firing 137% more in full articles than the reports of Palestinian deaths.

The *New York Times*, a newspaper with one of the highest circulations in the country and one that prides itself on its ethical standards, should be the last to find itself in this deplorable position. The *Times'* practice of distorting its coverage to present Israel in a favorable light represents an abuse of freedom of the press in the United States. According to Parenti, "the news media regularly fail to provide a range of information and commentary that might help citizens in a democracy develop their own critical perceptions" (8). This statement holds true especially with regard to the *Times'* coverage of the Palestine/Israel conflict, corroborated by this and past studies. The media should "try better to educate the public about multiple sides of issues presented in news stories" (Buddenbaum, et al, 48), rather than the side whose policies tend to mirror those of the editors or owners.

The *Times'* history of media bias, agenda setting, and group (mis)representation seeks to support the Israeli narrative by omitting facts on the ground while demonizing the Palestinians. The marker of *terrorism*, which is habitually attached to Palestinians in news coverage, to the "exclusion of its Israeli counterpart," shows how "normal/deviant dichotomies are constructed by and subsequently embedded within the news." This is particularly true with regard to the *Times'* coverage of the conflict. "Terrorism," coupled by the *Times'* heightened coverage of rockets/missiles fired into Israel, works well "to undermine their (Palestinian) image and consequently their cause" (Ismail 264).

As a democracy, it is impossible to advance as a people "unless we alert ourselves to the methods of media manipulation that are ingrained in the daily production of news and commentary" (Parenti 6). If we do not sharpen our media skills, then we may find ourselves accepting the news stories at face value, forcing us to accept "the news that others want (us) to read versus the news as it truly occurs" (Hoffman and Wallach 623). Then again, as it was pointed out with the formation of the ad hoc coalition, CPJME, it is possible that what has been revealed is that, along with heightened distortion comes an increased adaptation to "read between the lines."

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APPENDIX A

A.1   SYNOPSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

From If Americans Knew

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip live in an odd and oppressive limbo. They have no nation, no citizenship, and no ultimate power over their own lives. Since 1967, when Israel conquered these areas (the final 22 percent of mandatory Palestine), Palestinians have been living under Israeli military occupation. While in some parts Israel has allowed a Palestinian "autonomous" entity to take on such municipal functions as education, health care, infrastructure and policing, Israel retains overall power.

According to international law, an occupying force is responsible for the protection of the civilian population living under its control. Israel, however, ignores this requirement, routinely committing violations of the Geneva Conventions, a set of principles instituted after World War II to ensure that civilians would "never again" suffer as they had under Nazi occupation. Israel is one of the leading violators of these conventions today.

Israeli forces regularly confiscate private land; imprison individuals without process – including children – and physically abuse them under incarceration; demolish family homes; bulldoze

orchards and crops; place entire towns under curfew; destroy shops and businesses; shoot, maim, and kill civilians – and Palestinians are without power to stop any of it.

When a child is arrested, for example – often by a group of armed soldiers in the middle of the night – parents can do nothing. Knowing that their son is most likely being beaten by soldiers on the way to the station, stripped and humiliated in prison, quite likely physically abused in multiple additional ways, and destined to be held – perhaps in isolation – for days, week, or months (all before a trial has even taken place), parents are without the ability to protect their child. Quite often, in fact, they cannot even visit him.

Finally, when the military trial under which their son is to be sentenced – often to years (sometimes decades) in prison – all they can do is hire a lawyer whose efforts, at best, will reduce the ultimate sentence by a few months. Rarely, if ever, can even the most skilled lawyer do more than afford the child a friendly face in court and be an outside witness to the injustice of the proceedings. Meanwhile, the presence of such a lawyer provides Israel cover for its "judicial system."

Perhaps most significant – and rarely understood by people in the outside world – is the fact that Palestinians live, basically, in a prison in which Israel holds the keys.

They cannot leave Gaza or the West Bank unless Israeli guards allow them to. If they have been allowed out, they cannot return to their homes and families unless Israeli guards permit it.

Frequently, in both cases, Israel refuses such permission.

Academics invited to attend conferences abroad, high school students given US State Department scholarships to study in the United States, mothers wishing to visit daughters abroad, American citizens returning to their families, humanitarians bringing wheelchairs – the list goes on almost without limit – have all been denied permission by Israel to leave or enter their own land.

The "Intifada"

Living under such hardship and humiliation, in the year 2000 the Palestinian population began an uprising against Israeli rule called the "Intifada." This term – rarely translated in the American media – is simply the Arabic word for uprising or rebellion – literally, it means "shaking off." The American Revolutionary War, for example, would be called the American intifada against Britain.

This is the second such uprising. The first began in 1986 and ended in 1993 when the peace negotiations offered hopes of justice. (Sadly, in the following years these hopes were crushed after Israel, rather than withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza, as promised, actually doubled its expansion in these areas.)

During this first uprising, which consisted largely of Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli troops (very few Palestinians had weapons), Palestinians were killed at a rate approximately 7-10 times that of Israelis.

One of the ways Israeli forces attempted to put down this rebellion was through the "break the bones" policy, implemented by Yitzhak Rabin, in which people who had been throwing stones –

often youths – were held down and their arms broken. On the first day of this policy alone, one hospital in Gaza treated 200 People for fractures.

Today's uprising – termed the "Second Intifada" – was sparked when an Israeli general, Ariel Sharon, known for his slaughter of Palestinian civilians throughout his career, visited a Jerusalem holy site, accompanied by over a thousand armed Israeli soldiers. When some Palestinian youths threw stones, Israeli soldiers responded with live gunfire, killing 5 the first day, and 10 the second.

This uprising has now continued for over five years, as Israel periodically mounts massive invasions into Palestinian communities, using tanks, helicopter gunships, and F-16 fighter jets. Palestinian fighters resisting these forces possess rifles and homemade mortars and rockets. A minute fraction strap explosives onto their own bodies and attempt to deliver their bombs in person; often they kill only themselves.

While the large majority of Palestinians oppose suicide bombings, many feel that armed resistance has become necessary – much as Americans supported war after the attack at Pearl Harbor. Nevertheless, only a small portion take an active part in the resistance, despite the fact that virtually all support its aim: to create a nation free from foreign oppression.

Most Palestinians attempt – with greater or lesser success – to go on with their lives, raise their children, attend school, go to work, celebrate festivals, organize weddings, raise their crops, provide for their families – all the things that preoccupy people around the world.

As Israel constructs a wall around them, however, prevents them at checkpoints from traveling from town to town, destroys their crops, prevents children from traveling to schools and the sick

and injured from getting to the hospitals, it is becoming increasingly difficult to live even an approximation of a normal life.

Most Palestinians feel that the Israeli government's intention is to drive them off the land, and there is a great deal of evidence that this is the goal of many Israeli leaders.

At the same time, however, there is a small but determined minority of Israelis, joined by citizens from throughout the world, who are coming to the Palestinian Territories to oppose Israeli occupation. These "internationals," as they are often called, take part in peaceful marches, attempt to help Palestinian farmers harvest their crops despite Israeli military closures, live in refugee camps in the hope that their presence will prevent Israeli invasions and shelling, and walk children to school.

They are sometimes beaten, shot, and killed.

Some Israeli soldiers are refusing to serve in the West Bank or Gaza, stating: "We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people."

Meanwhile, the semblance of Palestinian autonomy continues. Elections held in January, 2005, resulted in new Palestinian leadership that will govern under occupation and will attempt to negotiate eventual Palestinian liberation. Yet even this election demonstrated Israel's power, as various Palestinian candidates were arrested, detained, and sometimes beaten by Israeli forces. This aspect, however, like so much else, was rarely reported by the American media.

APPENDIX B

PHOTOS FROM MY TIME IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

The following photos are a few of the many I took during my three visits to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. More of my photos can be found HERE.

Figure 19. Palestinian Woman pleads with Israeli soldier

In Figure 19, a Palestinian woman pleads with an Israeli soldier. The Israeli army came to uproot her apricot trees in order to build a sewer system for the Israeli settlement on the nearby hilltop. See full story HERE.

Figure 20. Uprooted Apricot Trees

Figure 20 shows the field after the Israeli army bulldozers uprooted the apricot trees.

Figures 21-23 were taken in the West Bank village of Bil'in, a farming village that has lost 60% of its land to Israel's Separation Barrier. Israeli, Palestinian, and international nonviolent activists march to the barrier every Friday. The barrier is known to the Israelis as the "Security Fence" and to Palestinians as the "Apartheid Wall." The Israeli army routinely fires tear gas, sound grenades, and, occasionally, live bullets at these weekly nonviolent demonstrations. An article I wrote on this specific demonstration can be found HERE.

Figure 21. Nonviolent Demonstrators March to Separation Barrier

Figure 22. Palestinian Man Shot in Leg During Nonviolent Demonstration

Figure 23. Israeli Soldier Fires at Nonviolent Demonstration

Figure 24. Israeli Soldier Chokes Palestinian Nonviolent Demonstrator

FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION

Taken from the <u>International Committee of the Red Cross, "International Humanitarian Law - Treaties & Documents."</u>

Article 49: Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.

Nevertheless, the Occupying Power may undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand. Such evacuations may not involve the displacement of protected persons outside the bounds of the occupied territory except when for material reasons it is impossible to avoid such displacement. Persons thus evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased.

The Occupying Power undertaking such transfers or evacuations shall ensure, to the greatest

practicable extent, that proper accommodation is provided to receive the protected persons, that the removals are effected in satisfactory conditions of hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and that members of the same family are not separated.

The Protecting Power shall be informed of any transfers and evacuations as soon as they they have taken place.

The Occupying Power shall not detain protected persons in an area particularly exposed to the dangers of war unless the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand.

The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF DATA

Table 1. Summary of Data (Deaths)

Operation Cast Lead: Dec. 27, 2008 – Jan. 18, 2009	Israeli	Palestinian	Israeli Children	Palestinian Children
Actual Deaths	13	1,385	0	318
Deaths Reported in Headline or First Paragraphs	5	43	0	7
Percentage Reported	38%	3%	n/a	2%
Ratio: Israeli: Palestinian Deaths Reported	12.7:1			
Deaths Reported in Full Articles	56	240	0	53
Percentage Reported	431%	17%	n/a	17%
Ratio:Israeli: Palestinian Deaths Reported	25.3:1			

Table 2. Summary of Data (Injuries)

Operation Cast Lead: Dec. 27, 2008 – Jan. 18, 2009	Israeli	Palestinian
Actual Injuries	197	5,300
Injuries Reported in Headline or First Paragraphs	1	3
Percentage Reported	0.5%	0.057%
Ratio: Israeli:Palestinian Deaths Reported	8.8:1	
Injuries Reported in Full Articles	25	58
Percentage Reported	12.7%	1.1%
Ratio: Israeli Injuries: Palestinian Injuries Reported	11.6:1	

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