

# iscte

INSTITUTO  
UNIVERSITÁRIO  
DE LISBOA

---

A Critical Social Psychology analysis of the representations used by main USA newspapers on the 2023 Gaza genocide of Palestinians.

Robert Jeancarlo Gomez Bravo

Master in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

Supervisor:

PhD Susana Alexandra Alfama Blanda Batel, Assistant Researcher,  
ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

October, 2025



CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS  
E HUMANAS

---

Department of Psychology

A critical social psychology analysis of the representations used by main USA newspapers on the 2023 Gaza genocide of Palestinians

Robert Jeancarlo Gomez Bravo

Master of Psychology of Intercultural Relations

Supervisor:

PhD Susana Alexandra Alfama Blanda Batel, Assistant Researcher,  
ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

October, 2025

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not exist without Palestinians, whose resilience and dignity in the face of unimaginable violence continue to challenge the limits of what we are told is thinkable in this day, and age. My immense gratitude goes out to Palestinians everywhere; those resisting, those surviving, those mourning, and those refusing to be erased from history or conscience. I acknowledge and give my appreciation to all those who speak out for justice for the Palestinian people, regardless of the cost to their positions, their reputations, or their sense of belonging in institutions that would prefer their silence.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Susana Batel, who supervised this work with unwavering intellectual rigor and moral courage. Her fearless support for pursuing this topic, her profound knowledge of social representations, and her trust in the political and scholarly necessity of this project made this writing possible.

I extend my gratitude to Estudantes Pela Palestina - Iscte for their tireless work in raising awareness and advancing Palestinian studies in Portugal, Lisbon, and Iscte - IUL. Their organizing, their presence, and their refusal to normalize genocide remind us that scholarship and solidarity are inseparable.

Finally, I want to thank my partner, Gabriela Lorena Colarossi Sandoval, for her love, patience, and unwavering belief in me throughout this long and demanding journey. Her support has been both an anchor, and inspiration.

## Resumo

Esta tese examina como os principais jornais dos EUA construíram representações sociais do genocídio de Palestinos, particularmente a etapa iniciado em 2023 em Gaza e contínuo até hoje. Baseado na Psicologia Social Crítica, na Teoria das Representações Sociais e na teoria do enquadramento, o estudo trata as notícias como trabalho de significado através do qual novos eventos são ancorados em categorias familiares e objetivados em discursos recorrentes. Sessenta artigos da Associated Press, do New York Times e do New York Post amostrados em torno de quatro momentos salientes abrangendo outubro de 2023 a janeiro de 2025 foram analisados usando análise discursiva temática.

A análise operacionalizou três modalidades comunicativas (difusão, propagação, propaganda) para classificar como os artigos funcionavam retoricamente. Três conclusões interligadas surgiram. O enquadramento e a atribuição estabeleceram associações interpretativas automáticas por meio da ancoragem temporal em 7 de outubro, construções passivas que obscureciam a agência israelita e assimetrias lexicais que apresentavam a ação israelita como necessidade reativa, ao mesmo tempo que deslegitimavam as reivindicações palestinas. A colonialidade e a violência estrutural foram objetivadas por meio de linguagem tecnocrática que naturalizava o bloqueio e a ocupação israelitas. Apelos afetivos personalizavam o sofrimento israelita, enquanto agregavam as baixas palestinas em estatísticas qualificadas, estreitando a resposta empática em relação aos palestinos. O New York Post concentrou-se na propaganda através de retórica desumanizante. A Associated Press exemplificou a difusão neutra ao reproduzir enquadramentos oficiais. O New York Times utilizou sobretudo a propagação, normalizando a lógica da necessidade de segurança.

O estudo demonstra como a mídia norte-americana domestica as atrocidades cometidas por Israel em narrativas defensivas de guerra, apoiando práticas jornalísticas que estabilizam horizontes interpretativos que tornam a violência em massa invisível ou justificável. A tese contribui para a compreensão do papel da mídia na despolitização do genocídio de palestinos e para o desenvolvimento de abordagens críticas à violência colonial e ao genocídio dentro da Psicologia Social, desafiando as suas teorias tradicionais de 'conflito intergrupar.'

*Palavras-chave:* Genocídio de palestinianos; Teoria das Representações Sociais; Teoria do Enquadramento; análise dos media; jornais dos EUA

PsycINFO codes:

**2750** Mass Media Communications

**2960** Political Processes & Political Issues

**3020** Group & Interpersonal Processes

# Abstract

This thesis examines how leading U.S. newspapers constructed social representations of the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza. Grounded in Critical Social Psychology, Social Representations Theory, and framing theory, the study treats news as meaning work through which unsettling events are anchored to familiar categories and objectified into recurring patterns. Sixty articles from the Associated Press, New York Times, and New York Post were analyzed using thematic discursive analysis, sampled around four salient moments spanning October 2023 to January 2025.

The analysis operationalized three communicative modalities (diffusion, propagation, propaganda) to classify how articles functioned rhetorically. Three interconnected findings emerged. Framing and attribution established automatic interpretive associations through temporal anchoring to October 7th, passive constructions obscuring Israeli agency, and lexical asymmetries casting Israeli action as reactive necessity while delegitimizing Palestinian claims. Coloniality and structural violence were objectified through technocratic language naturalizing blockade and occupation. Affective appeals personalized Israeli suffering while aggregating Palestinian casualties into qualified statistics, narrowing empathic response towards Palestinians. The New York Post concentrated on propaganda through dehumanizing rhetoric. The Associated Press exemplified neutral diffusion while reproducing official frames. The New York Times used propagation, normalizing security necessity logics.

The study demonstrates how U.S. media domesticates atrocity into defensive war scripts through anchoring and objectification, supporting critical media literacy development by

revealing how routine journalistic practices stabilize interpretive horizons that render mass violence invisible or justifiable. The thesis contributes to understanding media's role in depoliticizing genocide and developing critical approaches to colonial violence and genocide within Social Psychology, challenging mainstream 'intergroup conflict' theories.

*Keywords:* Genocide of palestinians; Social Representations Theory; Framing theory; Media analysis; USA newspapers

PsycINFO codes:

**2750** Mass Media Communications

**2960** Political Processes & Political Issues

**3020** Group & Interpersonal Processes

# Index

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Resumo .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 The classical social psychology of intergroup conflict: Strengths and weaknesses</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1.2 Critical social psychology: discourse, power, and social representations .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.3 Social representations of genocide and colonial violence, framing theory and the</b> <b>role of the media .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: Methods.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.1 Reflexivity and Epistemological Position .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: Analysis .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>3.1 Framing and Attribution: Anchoring Genocide to Israeli Self-Defense .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.1.1 Temporal Anchoring and October 7th.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.1.2 Passive Constructions and Obscured Agency of Israel.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3.1.3 Lexical Asymmetry and Delegitimization only of Hamas.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.2 Coloniality and Structural Erasure: Objectifying Israeli Occupation as</b> <b>Background .....</b>	<b>38</b>

3.2.1 Naturalizing Colonial Infrastructure .....	38
3.2.2 Quantifying Death, Qualifying Truth .....	41
<b>3.3 Affective Appeals and Moral Hierarchies: Calibrating Empathy Asymmetrically</b>	<b>44</b>
3.3.1 Emotional Anchoring to October 7th .....	45
3.3.2 Hostages and Differential Moral Inclusion .....	46
3.3.3 Humanitarian Depoliticization of Palestinian Suffering .....	48
<b>3.4 Diffusion, Propaganda, and How Propagation Scaffolds Both .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>3.5 Comparative Analysis by Outlet .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: Discussion and Conclusions .....</b>	<b>61</b>
4.1 Main Findings and Theoretical Interpretation.....	61
4.2 Integration with Prior Literature .....	63
4.3 Methodological and Theoretical Contributions.....	67
4.4 Limitations .....	68
4.5 Implications .....	69
References .....	73
Appendix A. Corpus of News Articles Analyzed .....	83
Appendix B. Extract-to-Source Map.....	84



# Introduction

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Hamas-led fighters carried out coordinated attacks in southern Israel that killed roughly 1,100-1,200 people and abducted about 240-251 individuals (Al Jazeera, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2024). On that day, Israel declared a ‘war on Hamas’ and launched extensive air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip while tightening the long-standing apartheid of Palestinians territories (B’Tselem, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2024). During these attacks, Israeli forces employed various tactics that caused mass civilian casualties, including strikes on humanitarian queues and the use of armed drones. Human-Rights monitors and media reports have documented incidents of Israeli drones targeting civilians in line for essential supplies. For instance, on January 11, 2024, an Israeli quadcopter drone opened fire on Palestinians waiting for UN food aid, killing at least 50 people (Euro-Med Monitor, 2024) In another instance, an Israeli drone strike killed 21 civilians, including seven children, as they queued for water in a so-called “safe zone” in southern Gaza (Al Jazeera, 2025). By mid-January 2025, at least 46,707 Palestinians had been killed, including around 18,000 children, and more than 110,000 injured; an estimated 85,000 tons of explosives had been used, and nearly 1.9 million people (≈80-90% of Gaza’s population) were internally displaced (Al Jazeera, 2025; UN OCHA, 2025). In January 2024, South Africa brought a case at the International Court of Justice alleging violations of the Genocide Convention; the Court indicated provisional measures later that month (ICJ, 2024). In December 2024, Amnesty International assessed, based on patterns of conduct and officials’ statements, that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians (Amnesty International, 2024), given that, as per the 1848 UN’s Convention, Israel’s actions intend to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, religious, group. The genocide thus

unfolded not only on the ground but also in global communication spaces, where news media shape public understandings of violence, responsibility, and remedy (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001).

These recent events follow a long history of colonization of Palestinian territory since 1948, when the 'State of Israel' was established in most of historic Palestine (Veracini, 2013). The 1948 Nakba<sup>1</sup> ('catastrophe'), defined by Zionist<sup>2</sup> forces as the 'Arab-Israeli War', saw the expulsion of roughly 750,000 Palestinians from their homes through ethnic cleansing operations by Zionist militias and the nascent 'Israeli state' (Al Jazeera, 2022). Two decades later, the 1967 Israeli attacks resulted in Israel's military occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories, namely East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (Al Jazeera, 2022). In the ensuing decades, Israel entrenched its colonization project and control through military rule and Jewish settlements on occupied land, now housing some 750,000 Israeli settlers, despite their illegality under international law (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023) This ongoing slow violence (Nixon, 2011), colonization and dispossession constitute one of the clearest and most direct examples of necropolitics today (Mbembe, 2006; Daher-Nashif, 2021). What has been propagandistically termed the 'Israel-Palestine conflict' should be understood, under a critical perspective, as the Israeli colonial siege and genocide of Palestinians (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015). In this thesis, it is called the genocide of Palestinians, given the clear academic, journalistic, legal and testimonial evidence that a genocide has been happening, even before

---

<sup>1</sup> The Nakba (Arabic: "catastrophe") denotes the 1948 mass displacement, dispossession and ethnic cleansing of approximately 750,000 Palestinians as a result of the Zionist movement aiming to establish, through violence, a Jewish state in Palestine (Al Jazeera, 2022; Pappé, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Zionism refers to an ethnocultural, nationalist and colonialist movement that assumes Jewish victimhood during the Holocaust as the requisite need for a Jewish state, believes in Jewish exceptionalism (namely over Palestinians), and aims to colonize the land of Palestine as corresponding roughly to the land of Israel in Judaism (Magid, 2024).

October 2023, considering “the genocidal structure that had been created in Palestine over the previous century” (Shaw, 2025, p.1), with the mass killings happening in Gaza as the latest facet of that ongoing genocide.

As such, and following Chomsky and Pappé (2015), this thesis rejects terminology such as 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' or 'Arab-Israeli war' that implies symmetry between colonizer and colonized. Such framings obscure structural power asymmetries, ongoing colonization, apartheid, and genocide (Yiftachel, 2023; Falk & Tilley, 2017). The only instances where 'mainstream social psychology' or 'intergroup conflict' frameworks or concepts are used and discussed, is for critiquing those approaches, not to endorse them.

Within this context, one of the main mediums through which people around the world have been informed about the Israeli’s colonization of Palestine and the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza has been the media, both traditional (TV, newspapers) and social media, with the livestreamed character of the mass killings in Gaza over the last years (Miladi & Miladi, 2025) in the face of the lack of intervention of Western States around the world to stop it, being highlighted as one of the most perverse events of this century’s spectacle societies (Debord, 2012) and digitized visual economies (Steur & Oomen, 2025). As such, understanding the media’s role in the genocide of Palestinians is both socially urgent and scientifically significant. This genocide raises pressing moral and political questions about international response, yet public perceptions of the genocide, and of Israel’s responsibility for it, are largely mediated by how news organizations frame the events. Israel's killings and violent strategies have been extensively documented by newspaper and TV journalists from international news outlets and livestreamed on social media by Palestinians and others facing starvation and death in Gaza (Miladi & Miladi, 2025). Despite this widespread documentation, numerous citizens,

communities, countries, institutions, and organizations still refuse to acknowledge that genocide is occurring and continue to support the Israeli state's actions. In turn, the way the media represents the genocide, can shape how publics also represent it and, through that, lead to people's socio-psychological engagement with it, for instance, by organizing protests, student camps, or boycotting companies that support Israel (Della Porta et al., 2025). This study addresses the socio-psychological dynamics behind those media representations. Theoretically, it sits at the intersection of social psychology and communication studies, examining how collective beliefs and biases are constructed and disseminated through mass media.

Prior research has highlighted that media narratives can powerfully shape public understanding of conflicts by emphasizing certain frames and silencing others (Knüpfer & Entman, 2018). However, there is a relative paucity of scholarly work bridging classic social-psychological theories of group behavior and, particularly, regarding intergroup conflict, with a critical approach to it and to its analysis.

For that purpose, this project integrates critical social psychology, Social Representations Theory (SRT), and framing theory as theoretical and methodological approaches to study how U.S. mainstream outlets represent the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza, and how the way those representations are communicated might impact public opinion. Critical social and political psychology (Tileagă, 2007) and SRT (Moscovici, 1984) underpin the importance of analyzing discourse and communication, and the socio-historical and political contexts of their production, for understanding socio-psychological processes and social change (Batel & Castro, 2018; Nicholson & Howarth, 2018). Similarly, framing theory conceptualizes how mass-mediated political communication constructs public spheres within Western democracies (Knüpfer & Entman, 2018). Guided by the theoretical framework and the societal

and academic background outlined above, the present thesis proceeds by posing two core research questions that orient its structure:

1. What are the dominant social representations of the 2023 stage of the ongoing Gaza genocide across mainstream online newspapers in the United States? (The New York Times, the Associated Press, and the New York Post)

2. How do these representations shape understanding and reactions to the genocide in as it is happening now in Gaza?

These questions together delineate both the descriptive and the interpretive tasks of the project: to map what is circulating as meanings about the current Gaza-stage of the genocide in influential U.S. outlets, and to clarify how such representations may calibrate public meaning-making and response, namely by examining the format in which they are being communicated.

To address these questions, the research focuses on the online coverage provided by three influential U.S. news outlets: *The New York Times* (representing a mainstream, liberal perspective), the *Associated Press* (centrist perspective), and the *New York Post* (a conservative outlet). These were selected to capture a spectrum of U.S. media discourse from October 2023 through January 2025. By examining how each of these sources reported key events, such as the initial October 7th attacks, and how they were reported, the Rafah border crossing, Netanyahu's speech to the U.S. Congress, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ceasefire negotiations, the thesis analyzes both the content (what is being said/shown) and the modalities of communication (how it is being said) (Batel & Castro, 2018) across differing editorial stances. The next sections present the literature review that lays the foundation for this inquiry, beginning with theories of intergroup conflict, then turning to critical perspectives, and finally focusing on research about social representations of conflict, framing theory and the media's role in shaping public opinion.



# CHAPTER 1: Literature Review

## 1.1 The classical social psychology of intergroup conflict: Strengths and weaknesses

What social psychology has termed 'intergroup conflicts', such as the Israeli colonial occupation and genocide of Palestinians, are socio-psychological as well as political processes, as they cannot be understood only as a struggle over territory, institutions, and power. They are driven and sustained by socio-political and historical processes that regulate how societies think, feel, remember, and judge during protracted hostilities. In turn, perceptions of cause, blame, and appropriate remedy have been pointed out by Social Psychology as systematically shaped by group-aligned, cognitive-affective processes: fear and anger amplify hostile attributions, reduce empathic concern for outgroup civilians, and relax moral restraints on harm, while dehumanizing representations further license exclusion and support for coercive measures (Böhm, Rusch, & Baron, 2018; Canetti et al., 2019; Bar-Tal, 2014; Cohen et al., 2015; Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016). Recent reviews synthesize how cognitions, affects, and behaviors become group-regulated in conflict contexts. Biases in attribution, moral judgment, and norm enforcement intensify as identities harden (Böhm, Rusch, & Baron, 2018).

Dehumanization has been pointed out as a pivotal mechanism that connects identity threat to harm. This process works by denying an outgroup full humanness, either by withholding uniquely human traits, such as rationality and civility, or by denying human nature traits, such as warmth and emotionality (Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016). Dehumanization has been empirically linked to prejudice, support for punitive counter-terror policy, and tolerance of discriminatory treatment (Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016; Bruneau, Kteily, & Laustsen, 2017) In

the context of Israeli colonization of Palestine, Social Psychology studies have documented blatant and subtle dehumanization enacted by Jewish Israelis toward Palestinians, and defensive responses by Palestinians to ongoing occupation, showing associations with support for aggressive policies and reduced openness to compromise (Maoz & McCauley, 2008). However, these studies typically fail to account for the profound power asymmetry between occupier and occupied (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018)."

Classic mainstream social psychology has often approached Israel's colonization and domination of Palestinians through the language of 'conflict', with it dismissing that history of colonization and power asymmetries that shape those relations, and just arguing that opposing publics assign primary responsibility to the other side, and frame their own violence as defensive or compelled. "Opposing publics" in this case refers to the large audiences on each side of the divide, such as Jewish-Israeli, and Palestinian publics, along with aligned diasporas and sympathetic communities who consume congenial media and take part in shaping the 'conflict's' meaning. These studies argue that across these constituencies, attributional asymmetries tend to echo group narratives, and that consistent exposure to political violence is linked to greater support for retaliation, partly because it heightens feelings of threat and anger, and strengthens 'enemy' images (Canetti, Elad-Strenger, Lavi, Guy, & Bar-Tal, 2019).

As such, mainstream social psychology research on the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and on similar situations of colonial violence does not give an accurate account of the history and structural power asymmetries inherent to settler colonialism and genocide. This makes it possible, and common, to assume that group processes operate similarly for both groups. For instance, more colonial violence, occupation and dispossessions, have in fact been perpetrated by Israel towards Palestinians, than the other way around (Allen, 2008). This is also clear in the

asymmetries in military and technological power between the two entities, with Israel's technogenocide apparatus (Malm, 2024) evidenced during the ongoing genocide, but also during the infrastructural and political apartheid that has been enacted at least since 1948 (Falk & Tilley, 2017). This longer historical arc is also foregrounded in early Palestinian scholarship on Zionist colonial practice. Sayegh (1965) describes Zionist colonists seeking to "dislodge the indigenous Arabs of Palestine", situating contemporary Israeli violence within a durable settler-colonial project rather than a symmetrical struggle between equivalent parties. This framing strengthens the rationale for treating history and structural power as central to any social-psychological account of the genocide of Palestinians.

In other words, mainstream social psychology and its classic theories on intergroup conflict often ignore or downplay the role of history, ideology, and structural power relations, in shaping so-called intergroup conflicts (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018), like the genocide of Palestinians by the current Israeli state and allies, which follows a long history of colonization, and apartheid of Palestinian territory and people (Yiftachel, 2023).

The hegemonic presence of the settler on the land is again mirrored as a hegemony embedded within the primary placement of the settler in scholarly literature (Barakat, 2017).

On the contrary, critical work argues that socio-psychological processes like dehumanization are political, drawing on longer colonial and civilizational hierarchies (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994) reproduced throughout capitalism, from plantation capitalism to financial capitalism (Seidel, Dana & Tartir, 2021). Empirically, Israeli educational and media materials have been shown to code Palestinians as deficient, threatening, or external to the moral community (Peled-Elhanan, 2012; Eldin, 2019; Suleiman & Ben-David, 2017), while Israeli cartographic and spatial rhetorics normalize control and siege (Wallach, 2011). In practice this

means that maps and spatial language do not merely depict space but help constitute it as common sense: design choices such as how borders are drawn and colored, the naming of places, and recurring labels like “buffer zone,” “closed military area,” “security fence,” and “humanitarian corridor” work to present Israeli authority and exceptional measures as neutral features of the landscape. Through such visual and lexical routines, control becomes a matter of infrastructure, and siege appears as access management, which encourages audiences to treat coercion as routine spatial order, rather than as a political choice (Wallach, 2011; see also Allen, 2008).

Considering these historic, economic, and political processes in the making of colonial relations, between the Israeli state and Palestinians, is crucial for understanding social representations discourse and communication about the ongoing genocide. In other words, it clarifies why certain “othering” repertoires are so readily available and resonant. This makes it important then to turn to and discuss approaches within Social and Political Psychology that have paid attention to those processes in examining and understanding psychosocial phenomena, processes and impacts.

In fact, while the broader mainstream social psychology of intergroup conflict illuminates polarization, norm conformity, and responsiveness to threat, its primary focus is on group-level motivation and categorization, rather than on the historically structured asymmetries and discursive institutions that organize meaning and action (Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016; Staerklé et al., 2011; Tileagă, 2007). Through this, all this classic research in Social Psychology already departs from the bias of assuming that people ‘naturally’ feel like they belong to groups, instead of being socialized into being seen as belonging to certain ‘groups’, created and reinforced by political and economic processes like those constituting nation-states, binary

gender relations and patriarchal societies, etc.. In the case of the genocide of Palestinians, this lens can under-specify how occupation, blockade, and state power co-produce identities, emotions, and moral hierarchies, and it tends to treat media chiefly as cues, rather than as institutions that manufacture and circulate common-sense knowledge (Bruneau & Kteily, 2017; Nicholson & Howarth, 2018; Tileagă, 2007). These gaps motivate the pivot to critical social psychology and Social Representations Theory, which center discourse, ideology, and communicative practices in the production of social reality (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018; Psaltis, 2016; Staerklé et al., 2011; Tileagă, 2007). With these limits in view, the next section adopts a critical, social psychological perspective that foregrounds power, history, and discourse in making identities and moral horizons thinkable in the first place.

## **1.2 Critical social psychology: discourse, power, and social representations**

In this body of work, critical social psychology (Parker, 2007) provides the framework for understanding how discourse and power configure what becomes thinkable and sayable in news (Fairclough, 1993). Social Representations Theory then specifies the mechanisms through which those meanings are anchored and objectified within common sense (Marková, 2003; Moscovici, 1984), and how they are communicated and to which effects (Batel & Castro, 2018).

Critical social psychology situates cognition in history, power, and language (Billig, 1991; Tileagă, 2007). Communication choices like “retaliation,” “militants,” “human shields,” “surgical strikes” reflect and do ideological work by legitimizing some violence and delegitimizing other suffering (Richardson, 2007). Decolonizing research practices shed light on how truths presented as universal or neutral are actually designed to protect colonizing ideologies, preserve domination, and maintain unequal power relations (Atallah et al. 2018). This

approach asks not only *what* people believe, but *how* institutions and media produce those beliefs as common sense (Batel & Castro, 2018). One of the main theoretical approaches that has contributed to this perspective within social psychology has been Social Representations Theory (SRT, Howarth, 2006).

Social representations have been defined as “networks of concepts and images tied together to establish communication,” whose core function is to familiarize the unfamiliar through everyday sense-making (Wallace & Batel, 2024). SRT has aimed to understand how people make the unfamiliar familiar, through the psychosocial processes of anchoring and objectification. Anchoring refers to people attaching new events or objects to previous, familiar images and meanings, such as representing COVID-19 as the new black plague (Apostolidis, Santos, & Kalampalikis, 2020). Objectification, in turn, refers to creating new images or symbols that help to make sense of the new event or object, but as anchored in the specific contexts where it has been represented, and associated ideological context and goals. For instance, the construction and dissemination of the image of COVID-19 as a “small flu” by Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, who, as a far-right populist leader, overtly supported and pushed for a politics that not only did not care about Brazilian citizens dying, but promoted it through this type of representation and its mediatization (Apostolidis et al., 2020). In the context of Israeli colonization of Palestine, historical referents such as the Holocaust and the Nakba serve as symbolic anchors that structure present moral hierarchies (Nicholson, 2016; Bar-Tal, 2014), though these anchors operate asymmetrically due to Western colonial power structures that center Israeli narratives while marginalizing Palestinian experiences (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015).

Social Representations Theory’s self-other-object dialogical nexus as the basis for meaning-making (Batel & Castro, 2018), is also crucial for analyzing how portrayals of

Palestinians and Israelis co-constitute identities, issues, practices, and permissible remedies across education, media, and politics. Concretely, this nexus treats meaning as produced in a triadic relation in which a ‘self’ positions itself toward an ‘other’ through shared objects of discourse and visualization, for example land, security, borders, victims, or terrorism. How actors are named and pictured, which objects are foregrounded, and how relations among them are drawn, jointly stabilize and negotiate who “we” are, who “they” are, and what courses of action seem thinkable or legitimate. Thus, a map labeled as a ‘security barrier’ rather than an ‘apartheid wall’, or a headline that frames air-strikes as retaliation rather than collective punishment, does not only describe events but organizes self-other roles through the object at stake, shaping identities, and narrowing or expanding the range of acceptable remedies (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018). These historically resonant anchors then organize attention and emotion in concrete situations of colonial violence. Iconic photographs of rubble, grieving families, or hospital strikes objectify abstractions like “collective punishment” or “terror,” shaping memory and emotion (Höijer, 2011). Maps and spatial narratives enact claims to land/security; their rhetoric is constitutive of the colonial domination and apartheid (Wallach, 2011).

A key mechanism here is the way mapping and bureaucratic language make political control appear normal. Maps and spatial terms do not merely describe space, but help produce a common sense, in which Israeli authority seems like natural order, and Palestinian restriction seems like routine administration. Design choices in maps, the naming of places, and recurrent labels such as buffer zone, security fence, closed military area, and humanitarian corridor objectify territorial claims and practices. They translate checkpoints, closures, and corridors into the visual and technical idiom of spatial management, which invites readers to treat coercion as

infrastructure rather than as a political choice that constrains life and movement (Wallach, 2011; Allen, 2008). This illustrates why the analysis cannot remain at the level of intergroup attitudes but must track the institutional production of categories and spaces.

Recent work also shows how trauma, terror, and state violence operate as symbolic resources in public communication. These are not only events that happen, but are also mobilized rhetorically to justify ongoing harm, and to mute or disqualify counter-narratives. Appeals to collective trauma or imminent terror recalibrate whose fear counts most, while official claims about necessary force can shield present actions from moral scrutiny, sustaining hardened positions and narrowing the space for alternative accounts (Tomicic & Berardi, 2018; Blackwell, 2025). These affective dynamics further entrench narrative closures that structure what counts as a plausible account of events.

SRT, together with other approaches of critical social psychology, links how groups are portrayed, and relate to the larger structures that organize power and meaning. In the Gaza context, this means that representational asymmetries such as Palestinians being cast as civilizational “others” and Israelis as Western, modern, and rational are not only the result of individual bias, but are shaped by long-standing Orientalist ways of seeing, and by settler colonial relations that structure institutions, law, and everyday discourse (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Kemp, 2020). These traditions of thought and practice supply ready-made categories and narratives that audiences recognize, which helps explain why certain depictions feel intuitive and credible while others are marginalized or dismissed (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). Attending to these selective amplifications clarifies how discourse legitimizes some realities and sidelines others in ways that exceed individual cognition.

Crucially, SRT treats social representations as dynamic and contested rather than fixed beliefs. They are produced, reproduced, argued over, and sometimes transformed in public arenas such as news, schools, and politics. Studies of talk and memory in long-running conflicts show that shared understandings can shift when new events, arguments, or memories become salient, even as they often remain anchored in familiar historical narratives and objectified through recurring images and keywords (Stahel & Cohrs, 2015; Psaltis, 2016). This dynamic view clarifies how dominant portrayals can be stabilized by routine storytelling and institutional power, but also how they can be challenged and reconfigured by counter-voices and alternative frames (Stahel & Cohrs, 2015; Psaltis, 2016). This dynamic, contested, view aligns with the thesis' aim to trace how competing representations circulate across media outlets.

Because these common-sense meanings are mediated by news work, we now examine how social representations are formed and circulated in and through media.

### **1.3 Social representations of genocide and colonial violence, framing theory and the role of the media**

One of the main contributions of SRT to social psychology has been its focus on analyzing discourse and communication and how social change is created and resisted through that (Batel & Castro, 2018), and one of the main means for that as proposed by SRT are the media: newspapers, TV, social media. The media present new events and objects constantly to the public sphere, but in that process also represent issues in certain ways, both in terms of content and format (Batel & Castro, 2018). Moscovici (1961/72) first proposed the distinction between three communicative modalities that different French newspapers used in the 1950s and 1960s to represent what psychoanalysis was to the public; these were diffusion, propagation, and propaganda (see also Buschini & Guillou, 2022).

**Diffusion** refers to wide circulation oriented to informing a broad public without presupposing adherence or demanding commitment. The tone is neutral or descriptive, the audience is undifferentiated, and the aim is to make a topic intelligible in everyday language rather than to recruit followers or attack opponents. This modality helps move ideas from the reified universe of ‘expertise’ into the consensual universe of public understanding through familiarization. Typical examples include wire reports or general-interest features that explain what something is, what it does, and why it matters, while avoiding calls to take sides (Moscovici, 1961/1972; Buschini & Guillou, 2022).

**Propagation** designates communication addressed to a more bounded community that already shares a set of references or values, and that needs to be maintained and organized around them. It presupposes a 'we', speaks in a communal voice, and works to consolidate and extend a line that the group recognizes as its own. The function is not simply to inform, but to cultivate commitment, deepen identification, and regulate what count as legitimate interpretations within the community. Editorials in a party newspaper or movement newsletters are classic instances, where arguments and exemplars sustain the group's narrative and invite members to align their judgments accordingly (Moscovici, 1961/1972; Buschini & Guillou, 2022).

**Propaganda** is outward-facing persuasion, aimed at converting or neutralizing those outside the community, including opponents and the undecided. It simplifies positions, accentuates contrasts, and mobilizes us-them binaries, in order to elicit adherence and action. In this modality, messages are strategic and exhortative, slogans and emblematic images carry the argument, and ambiguity is reduced so that the audience can quickly locate where it stands and what it should do. Contemporary syntheses show how media ecologies adapt this explicitly

persuasive register to new platforms (Moscovici, 1961/1972; Buschini & Guillou, 2022; Batel & Castro, 2018).

Taken together, these modalities show how the same object can be made public in different ways. Diffusion familiarizes and spreads, propagation consolidates and organizes a community around a line, and propaganda reaches outward to reshape wider opinion. Contemporary SRT work returns to this triad to analyze how media translate expert/scientific ideas, stabilize group narratives, and mobilize publics in contested arenas (Castro & Gomes, 2005; Buschini & Guillou, 2022).

SRT has also been used in combination with framing theory to analyze polarized issues in the press, such as violence, and drug trafficking, in the Mexican press (Reyes-Sosa et al., 2019), and legacies of natural resource extraction in the fracking industry in the USA (Budgen, Evensen & Stedman, 2017).

We will now turn to framing theory and how it can be useful to combine with SRT to analyze U.S. media representations of the Palestinian genocide. Because representations travel through recurring journalistic forms, framing theory helps specify the textual selections through which representational fields are enacted in news.

Framing, in classic communication theory, describes how news selects some aspects of reality and makes them salient. This guides audiences toward a particular way of seeing the problem, its causes, who is right or wrong, and what should be done. Entman formulates this as selecting elements of a perceived reality and highlighting them in ways that promote a problem definition, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation, and a treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). In practice, this means that headlines, leads, quoted sources, and visuals narrow the set of interpretations that feel reasonable by emphasizing some considerations and omitting others,

which is why framing studies illuminate how texts influence judgments of responsibility and remedy (Entman, 1993). Whereas SRT theorizes how shared meanings are socially produced and stabilized, framing focuses on the choices visible in the article, what is selected, emphasized, and connected, and their implications for problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and remedy (Entman, 1993; Moscovici, 1988).

To study these choices systematically, comparative content research works with a small set of "generic frames" that recur across topics and outlets. Semetko and Valkenburg identify five especially common and reliably measurable frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Their cross-media analyses show patterned variation in how these frames appear and how they steer causal inference and moral appraisal across audiences and formats (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This operationalization links textual features to anticipated inferences about causality and remedy across audiences.

Applied to media coverage of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, multiple studies document a consistent tilt in Western coverage. Israeli actions are frequently framed in familiar logics of security, retaliation, and self-defense logics that make force feel necessary, while Palestinian responses are more likely to be framed as aggression, incitement, or "terrorism", which narrows perceived legitimacy and the range of acceptable remedies (Kim, Carvalho, & Davis, 2010; Roy, 2012). This asymmetry in attribution and evaluation also has consequences for perceived responsibility and for selective empathy (Kaposi, 2018; Roy, 2012). In the news, these tendencies are supported by familiar frames: responsibility frames cue who "started it," and conflict frames dramatize confrontation and stakes, guiding how readers infer causes and make moral evaluations (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Moreover, studies show over-

reliance on official sources (state/IDF/U.S.A.) and quote placement practices that privilege institutional authority (Richardson, 2007; Roy, 2012; Wolfsfeld, 2004), especially in headlines and early paragraphs, together with the avoidance of terms like "genocide", and the downgrade of humanitarian voices. This contributes to a tilted discursive field that encourages diffusion and propagation of certain representations and contributes to the normalization of exclusion for Palestinians (Alnwihe & Al-Abbas, 2023), who often lack access to, and representation in, Western press fields that have maintained the coloniality of power and knowledge. This has implications for responsibility attribution, moral judgment, and remedy advocacy across audiences (Suleiman & Ben-David, 2017).

A critical discourse study of official remarks during the May 2021 11-day Israeli assault on Gaza, known in media as the ‘Gaza war’, identified patterned themes such as existential threat, legality, moral justification, victimization, resistance, and national glorification, arranged along a consistent, positive-self and negative-other structure (Alnwihe & Al-Abbas, 2023). These official framings provided ready-made scripts that journalists later quoted directly, paraphrased, or reinforced through quantitative evidence such as casualty counts and damage assessments. This example is also an illustration of how propaganda can become embedded within diffusion, thereby naturalizing particular interpretations of events while marginalizing alternative accounts (Richardson, 2007; Wolfsfeld, 2004). The modularity of frames and communicative modalities means that a single news article can simultaneously inform general audiences (diffusion), reinforce in-group solidarity (propagation), and amplify state messaging (propaganda), depending on which voices are quoted, which facts are emphasized, and how causes and responsibilities are attributed (Entman, 1993; Moscovici, 1961/1972). Understanding these overlapping functions is essential for analyzing how U.S. outlets represent the genocide of

Palestinians, as it reveals not only what is reported but how journalistic practices authorize certain actors and narratives while constraining others.

In sum, this thesis foregrounds critical social psychology, SRT, and framing theory to interrogate how meanings are produced, circulated, and normalized in mainstream news. At stake is not only which frames are selected but also whose voices and data are authorized to define reality. The methodology used to pursue this goal is presented next.

## CHAPTER 2: Methods

This study uses a qualitative media analysis, grounded in Social Representations Theory and framing theory to examine how leading U.S.A. newspaper outlets represent the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza in frames that shape public understanding. To connect representational patterns to their linguistic and communicative realization, I employed thematic discursive analysis (Peel & Newman, 2023). SRT is central because it helps understand how unfamiliar events and crises are domesticated into familiar repertoires that circulate as common sense, which makes it particularly apt for tracing the communicative modalities of diffusion, propagation, and propaganda, in fast-moving news cycles (Moscovici, 1984; Buschini & Guillou, 2022).

Framing theory complements this approach by providing a systematic lens to identify how media texts select and emphasize particular aspects of the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza, while downplaying or omitting others. Following Entman's (1993) formulation, I examined how articles construct problem definitions, assign causal attributions, deliver moral evaluations, and suggest treatment recommendations. In practice, this meant analyzing how temporal anchoring, grammatical structures, and lexical choices work together to structure causality, distribute agency, and calibrate emotional proximity to suffering. I also drew on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) typology of generic frames, particularly their concepts of attribution of responsibility, conflict framing, and human-interest framing, to trace how different outlets guide audiences toward specific interpretations of violence, responsibility, and potential remedies.

The final corpus comprised sixty articles from three U.S.A. newspapers. U.S.A. outlets were chosen because the United States of America exerts disproportionate policy influence on

the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza (Bachman & Ruiz, 2025), so U.S.A. media frames plausibly shape public opinion and elite preferences not only in the United States of America but globally. The three selected outlets function as agenda-setting nodes across the media ecosystem: the Associated Press as a wire service whose copy is republished widely (Harder et al., 2017), the New York Times as a reference broadsheet that sets interpretive baselines (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002), and the New York Post as a mass-reach tabloid with emotionally mobilizing rhetoric (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). Of the 60 articles analyzed, 20 are from the New York Times, 20 from the Associated Press, and 20 from the New York Post. Their stylistic diversity and traditional political orientations allow the study to explore how communicative modalities travel across genres while remaining within a single national sphere.

The all-English corpus ensures analytic transparency between researcher and supervisor and facilitates quote fidelity. These methodological choices yield ideological breadth: right tabloid, centrist wire, liberal broadsheet, while holding constant language and national context in U.S. English.

Sampling was purposeful and event-anchored, covering four salient moments that generated sustained cross-outlet coverage: the Hamas attacks on October 7th, 2023; the Rafah crossing episode of May 7th, 2024; Netanyahu's address to the U.S. Congress on July 24th, 2024; and the second cease-fire and hostage negotiations of January 2025. This selection strategy based on key events followed previous media analyses (e.g., Miladi & Miladi, 2025). Final selected articles were imported into MAXQDA Ver. 24.11.0 and examined with a dual deductive and inductive approach, within a thematic discursive analysis framework (Peel & Newman, 2023). In the initial coding, I captured framing functions, social representations contents, and the three communicative modalities. I treated diffusion, propagation, and propaganda as analytic cues for

how meanings travel in the corpus rather than as fixed outlet types, recognizing that these modalities can co-exist within the same outlet or even within a single article (Batel & Castro, 2018; Buschini & Guillou, 2022).

Diffusion is operationalized as broad, ostensibly neutral transmission that aims to inform undifferentiated publics without presupposing commitment. In practice, I coded as diffusion those passages that translate events into accessible terms, balance competing claims, and foreground what happened, where, and when, as in wire reports and general-interest explainers. Propagation is operationalized as inward-facing communication that addresses a bounded community and works to reconcile new or troubling information, with shared values and identity. I coded as propagation those passages that presume a communal we, speak in a stabilizing voice, and normalize a preferred line, for example editorials, movement newsletters, or official communiqués that provide moral vocabulary and exemplars for members. Propaganda is operationalized as outward persuasion oriented to opponents and the undecided. I coded as propaganda those passages that simplify positions, accentuate contrasts, and mobilize adherence through sharp us-them contrasts, slogans, and exhortation (Moscovici, 1961/1972; Buschini & Guillou, 2022; Batel & Castro, 2018).

These coding cues serve two purposes. First, they provide a transparent set of lenses for identifying authority relations and intended audience effects inside the corpus. Second, they link those lenses to SRT processes of anchoring and objectification in media reporting about the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza. Diffusion marks moments where outlets familiarize novel or fast-moving events for general publics, without overt alignment, propagation marks moments where texts stabilize shared narratives for an in-group, and prescribe appropriate responses, and propaganda marks moments where adversarial scripts and exhortation are used to mobilize wider

opinion (Moscovici, 1961/1972; Batel & Castro, 2018; Buschini & Guillou, 2022; Alnwihe & Al-Abbas, 2023).

Based on these analytical resources I identified three main themes, and eight sub-themes, that represent the main patterns of meaning as interpreted in the data, and that align with the literature. Finally, cross-outlet comparisons assessed which themes were transversal across all newspapers and which were outlet-specific variations.

## **2.1 Reflexivity and Epistemological Position**

Qualitative research requires explicit reflexivity about the researcher's positionality, assumptions, and interpretive process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a social psychology master's student conducting qualitative analysis of media discourse on recent stage of the genocide in Gaza, I approached this project with several orientations shaping interpretation. First, as someone from Puerto Rico, a colonial territory of the United States, the Palestinian struggle has always resonated deeply with my own lived experience of colonialism. Growing up in a context where politics and material conditions are controlled by an external colonial power gave me an intimate understanding of what it means to be positioned as a second-class citizen within an empire that desires your land but rejects your language, culture, and collective identity.

This personal familiarity with colonial domination and cultural erasure shaped my sensitivity to similar patterns in media representations of Palestine, particularly regarding how sovereignty, agency, and resistance are framed. Following the events of October 7th, 2023, I felt compelled to raise my voice and advocate for institutional action for Palestinian liberation, at Iscte-IUL. I initiated a petition calling on the university Dean to take a public stance against the genocide, which led to my collaboration with Estudantes pela Palestina – Iscte-IUL. Together,

we integrated this petition into the group's broader mission and organized a series of actions and activities within the university in support of Palestinian liberation. I view this thesis as an extension of that activist commitment, situating my research within what Zembylas (2025) calls an action-based positionality that prioritizes solidarity and political engagement rather than detached observation.

Secondly, my theoretical and methodological commitment to Social Representations Theory, framing theory and thematic discursive analysis predisposed me to identify anchoring, objectification, and ideological grammar rather than other analytic possibilities. Lastly, my political awareness of Palestinian dispossession and U.S. complicity in Israeli violence shaped which patterns I found troubling and noteworthy. The analysis was co-constructed through dialogue between self, text, theoretical framework and discussions with the supervisor, rather than discovered as objective truth. Different researchers working with the same corpus might emphasize different patterns or interpret similar patterns through alternative theoretical lenses. A researcher approaching from media production studies might focus more on institutional constraints journalists face. A researcher emphasizing audience reception might explore how different reading communities interpret the same texts divergently. My analysis represents one theoretically informed interpretation among possible alternatives.

However, this reflexivity does not undermine the analysis' validity or significance. The patterns identified are systematically documented through paradigmatic extracts, theoretically explained through established frameworks, and consistent with prior scholarship on media representations of Israeli violence against Palestinians. The analysis provides rigorous, transparent, theoretically grounded interpretation, demonstrating how U.S.A. mainstream coverage constructs particular social representations while marginalizing alternatives. The

sampling strategy captured variation across outlets, temporal periods, and coverage types. The coding process documented both dominant patterns and counter-examples. The analysis acknowledges moments where coverage challenges hegemonic frames, even while demonstrating their exceptionality. The theoretical framework guided identification of patterns rather than predetermined findings. As such, the analysis has followed principles of methodological integrity of critical qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2021).

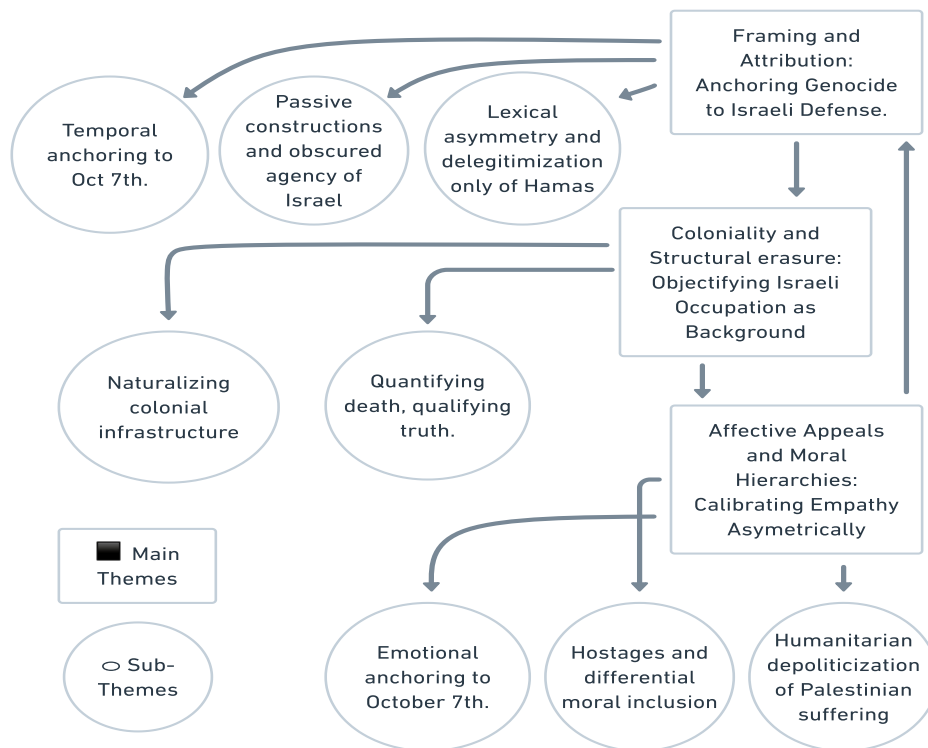
## CHAPTER 3: Analysis

The analysis examines how U.S. mainstream coverage constructs social representations of the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza, focusing on how unfamiliar violence is anchored to familiar categories and objectified through concrete linguistic choices (Moscovici, 1984; Nicholson & Howarth, 2018). When reproducing headlines, I retain original wording for accuracy; my analytic terminology uses ‘genocide of Palestinians’ and ‘Israeli assault/siege’ rather than ‘war/conflict’.

Three interconnected themes emerge: Framing and Attribution analyzes how causality is constructed; Coloniality and Structural Erasure examines what remains systematically absent; and Affective Appeals and Moral Hierarchies explores asymmetric emotional calibration.

Figure 1:

*Thematic Map*



### 3.1 Framing and Attribution: Anchoring Genocide to Israeli Self-Defense

This theme is built around how coverage anchors Israeli military operations to familiar categories (Moscovici, 1984) of defensive necessity while positioning Hamas as the initiating aggressor. Anchoring involves making sense of unfamiliar phenomena by attaching them to existing cultural representations (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018) in this case, anchoring genocide to "war on terror" and "self-defense" frameworks that make overwhelming violence appear justified. Entman (1993) defines framing as selecting aspects of reality to promote particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and remedies. The analysis reveals three mechanisms: temporal structuring that positions October 7th as originating cause, grammatical choices that obscure Israeli agency, and lexical asymmetries that delegitimize Palestinian actors. We will now look at each one of these subthemes in turn.

#### 3.1.1 Temporal Anchoring and October 7th

This subtheme brings together a patterned coverage that consistently begins narratives on October 7, 2023, positioning Hamas actions as the causal origin. This temporal choice exemplifies what Bar-Tal (2014) identifies as "sense of victimization" within the 'ethos of conflict', or the belief that one's group has suffered unjust harm justifying retaliatory violence unbound by normal constraints.

n1:

*Publicly, Israeli commanders are claiming steady gains, but offering few details, about their military response to the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, which left 1,400 soldiers and civilians dead, including women, children and older people and which included*

*torture and abuse.* (As Gaza War Enters New Phase, Israel Faces Pressure Over Civilian Deaths, The New York Times, November 3, 2023)

The phrase "military response to the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7" establishes explicit causality through what Entman (1993) calls the attribution of responsibility frame. Hamas appears as the grammatical subject who acts first, Israel as object responding to that action. This syntactic structure performs ideological work by distributing agency asymmetrically: Hamas initiates, Israel reacts (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1998). The detailed specification of Israeli casualties ("women, children and older people") and the clause "which included torture and abuse" intensify Hamas' barbarism. By anchoring Israeli operations to October 7th trauma, coverage constructs what Bar-Tal (2014) identifies as "siege mentality": the perception that the entire world is against us, justifying extreme defensive measures. What remains systematically absent is contextualization within decades of occupation, seventeen years of Gaza blockade, or repeated Israeli military assaults (2008-2009, 2012, 2014, 2021) that preceded October 7th.

Below is another example:

n2:

*Israel increased airstrikes on the Gaza Strip and sealed it off from food, fuel and other supplies Monday in retaliation for a bloody incursion by Hamas militants, as the war's death toll rose to nearly 1,600 on both sides.* (Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas, Associated Press, October 9, 2023)

The phrase "in retaliation for" makes causal logic fully explicit, exemplifying Entman's (1993) framing function of defining problems and assigning causality. The representation constructs what Stahel and Cohrs (2015) identify as the hegemonic representation that frames Israeli genocide of Palestinians as 'conflict'. Israeli actions are anchored to security and defense logics, and Palestinian actions are anchored to terrorism, as the narrative of a 'bloody incursion by Hamas militants', further emphasizes. The phrase "sealed it off from food, fuel and other supplies" acknowledges that Israel is imposing collective punishment, yet this acknowledgment appears within sentence structure that positions siege as justified retaliation.

This pattern reflects what Psaltis (2016) identifies in divided societies. Conflicting narratives about who started the violence become anchored to group identity, with each side viewing their own actions as defensive responses to other's initiation. However, the profound asymmetry in military power, territorial control, and media access means that Israeli temporal framing achieves hegemonic status in U.S.A. coverage, while Palestinian counter-narratives remain marginalized (Stahel & Cohrs, 2015; Eldin, 2019).

n3:

*"This is our 9/11," he added. "We are committed to change the equation, to shatter the old paradigm. These animals will pay a heavy price, and they will learn that these atrocities cannot be committed again against our civilians."* (Israeli ambassador Gilad Erdan calls Hamas attack on Israel 'truly unprecedented': This is our 9/11, New York Post, October 8, 2023)

The explicit framing of October 7th as "our 9/11" performs powerful temporal anchoring by establishing an immediate equivalence between the Hamas attack and the September 11, 2001, attacks that reshaped American foreign policy for decades. This comparison does more than provide a reference point, as it imports an entire interpretive framework that naturalizes military escalation, justifies exceptional measures, and positions critics as morally suspect. The phrases "change the equation" and "shatter the old paradigm" suggest that October 7th represents a temporal rupture requiring radically new approaches, erasing decades of occupation and siege as contextually relevant.

By invoking 9/11, the quote taps into American collective memory of national trauma, inviting readers to transfer their emotional responses from one event to another and naturalizing Israel's military response as equivalent to the U.S.A.'s War on Terror. This temporal anchoring exemplifies what Moscovici (1984) describes as the process by which unfamiliar events are made comprehensible through familiar referents, establishing October 7th as the only relevant starting point for understanding what media frame as 'conflict' but is in fact ongoing genocide. The temporal focus on October 7th as origin point extends beyond explicit comparisons, to structure how violence itself is grammatically represented.

### **3.1.2 Passive Constructions and Obscured Agency of Israel**

The second identified pattern concerns grammatical structures that minimize Israeli responsibility for Palestinian suffering through what Fairclough (2003) and van Dijk (1998) identify as ideological syntax, this is, grammatical choices that systematically advantage certain social groups by obscuring their agency in harmful outcomes.

n4:

*Israeli airstrikes this week on a densely populated neighborhood in northern Gaza that have killed scores of civilians are fueling fears that the war could spread to a second front; the much larger occupied West Bank, where Palestinians have been enraged by the bombardment, which has killed thousands. (As Gaza War Enters New Phase, Israel Faces Pressure Over Civilian Deaths, The New York Times, November 3, 2023)*

While the sentence names "Israeli airstrikes" as grammatical subject, the passive perfect tense "have killed scores of civilians" creates representational distance between actor and outcome. The structure makes killing appear as a state that has come into being rather than as a continuous series of targeting decisions (Fairclough, 2003). The clause "which has killed thousands" demonstrates even greater grammatical obscuring: the relative pronoun "which" makes "the bombardment" the subject, not Israeli forces, making bombardment appear as autonomous force causing death.

This pattern reflects what Tileagă (2007) identifies as depersonalization through grammar. Linguistic strategies that remove human agency from harmful acts, making violence appear as an unfortunate outcome, rather than as deliberate policy. In contrast, Hamas' actions consistently receive active voice treatment with clear agent specification (" Hamas militants attacked," " Hamas fighters stormed"), creating asymmetric attribution that positions Hamas' violence as chosen action while Israeli violence appears as circumstantial consequence (van Dijk, 1998). Another example is shown below:

n5:

*Israel's campaign on Gaza has leveled entire neighborhoods, killing over 1,400 people, more than 60% of them women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. More than 340,000 have been displaced; 15% of Gaza's population. (Israel-Hamas war: Morgue at Gaza's biggest hospital overflowing, Associated Press, October 13, 2023)*

The phrase "more than 340,000 have been displaced" uses passive voice without agent specification. Palestinians "have been displaced", but by whom? The grammar allows readers to infer Israeli causation without requiring an explicit statement, reducing the moral and political weight of the claim. This exemplifies what Opatow (1990) calls "moral exclusion," which operates by placing groups outside the psychological boundary within which moral values and fairness concerns apply. Moral exclusion functions not only through explicit categorization that labels certain groups as undeserving of protection, but also through more subtle linguistic mechanisms that background agency and thereby obscure responsibility. When the agent of displacement remains grammatically unmarked, readers can acknowledge the suffering while simultaneously avoiding direct confrontation with who caused it and why. This grammatical strategy allows coverage to report displacement as an unfortunate outcome rather than as a deliberate policy choice by identifiable actors. By grammatically backgrounding Israeli agency in Palestinian displacement, coverage enacts moral exclusion at the level of syntax itself. The passive construction removes Israeli forces from the subject position, transforming an act of forced removal into a condition that simply exists. This syntactic choice does ideological work

by creating what van Dijk (1998) identifies as plausible deniability, where responsibility is acknowledged implicitly but never stated clearly enough to demand accountability or moral judgment. In this way, the boundary of the moral community is maintained through grammar as much as through explicit discourse, making exclusion feel like a neutral descriptive choice rather than an ethical decision about whose agency matters and whose suffering requires explanation.

n6:

*Palestinian officials reported 232 people were killed in the attacks, and another 1,697 were wounded. (Israel launches major airstrikes in Gaza, Netanyahu vows Hamas will pay a price it has never known, New York Post, October 7, 2023)*

The passive constructions "were killed" and "were wounded" grammatically erase Israeli agency despite the article's explicit context about Israeli airstrikes being launched in response to Hamas attacks. The grammatical structure allows readers to acknowledge Palestinian deaths without confronting who killed them or why. This linguistic pattern exemplifies van Dijk's (1998) ideological syntax. The passivization transforms deliberate military action into a condition that simply exists, obscuring the causal chain between policy decisions and civilian casualties. In contrast, when the article describes Hamas actions earlier, it uses active constructions with clear agents. This asymmetric grammar creates what Fowler (1991) calls "syntactic bias," where different actors are systematically represented through different grammatical structures that carry different moral implications. This grammatical backgrounding of Israeli agency operates alongside lexical choices that further construct moral asymmetry.

### 3.1.3 Lexical Asymmetry and Delegitimization only of Hamas

The third pattern concerns systematic lexical asymmetry reflecting what Bar-Tal (2010) theorizes as "delegitimization", categorizing outgroups into extreme, norm-violating statuses that license denial of rights and protections, as illustrated in the example below

n7:

*It was not clear whether the escalation in Israeli operations signaled a coming invasion, which Israeli officials have hinted at since the deadly Oct. 7 incursion into Israel led by Hamas, the armed militant group that controls Gaza. (Israeli Forces Raid Gaza as Pressure Builds for Cease-Fire, The New York Times, October 27, 2023)*

The phrase "armed militant group" categorizes Hamas as a non-state actor operating outside legitimate frameworks, exemplifying Bar-Tal's (2010) delegitimization process. This categorical label positions Hamas actions as inherently illegitimate regardless of context or potential justification under international law recognizing occupied peoples' right to resist occupation. In contrast, parallel references to "Israeli operations" and "Israeli officials" grant Israel linguistic markers of statehood and legitimate authority. This asymmetry reflects what Stähler and Cohrs (2015) discuss in their study of Swiss citizens' social representations of what they term 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict.' In their study, hegemonic representations anchor Israeli colonial violence to state legitimacy and security necessity, while anchoring Palestinian resistance to terrorism discourse that places it outside boundaries of political rationality. As such, the lexical choices also perform moral exclusion through explicit categorization practices

(Tileagă 2007). While Opatow's (1990) concept of moral exclusion describes the general psychological process of placing groups outside the moral community, Tileagă (2007) extends this by showing how specific linguistic categories and labels actively construct and maintain that exclusion. The use of group labels like 'militants,' 'terrorists,' or even 'evacuees' rather than 'refugees' authorizes differential treatment by defining who counts as fully human and deserving of moral consideration. These categorical distinctions do not merely reflect pre-existing moral boundaries but actively produce them through discourse, denying outgroup members full moral standing by linguistically constituting them as lesser or threatening (Tileagă, 2007). Another example is given below.

n8:

*We have only started striking Hamas, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a nationally televised address. What we will do to our enemies in the coming days will reverberate with them for generations. As the Israeli military brought additional forces near the border, a major question was whether it will launch a ground assault into the tiny Mediterranean coastal territory. (Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas, Associated Press, October 9, 2023)*

This Netanyahu quote openly threatens transgenerational punishment yet appears without critical journalistic interrogation. The phrase "will reverberate with them for generations" explicitly announces intent to inflict collective punishment extending across time, language consistent with what Seidel et al. (2021) identify as genocidal intent. The coverage presents this as a straightforward quotation rather than as evidence, potentially documenting crimes against

humanity, exemplifying what Richardson (2007) identifies as journalistic laundering of state violence, accepting official euphemisms without translation into their actual meaning.

Together, these three patterns: temporal anchoring to October 7th, grammatical obscuring of Israeli agency, and lexical delegitimization of Palestinian actors construct what Nicholson and Howarth (2018) identify as the self-other-object nexus in social representations. Israel appears as defensive "self" responding to threatening "other" ( Hamas/Palestinians) over contested "object" (security/territory), with this triadic structure naturalizing Israeli violence while marginalizing Palestinian political claims (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018; Stahel & Cohrs, 2015).

n9:

*“Many anti-Israel protesters, many choose to stand with evil, they stand with Hamas, they stand with rapists and murderers,” Netanyahu declared during his almost hour-long speech to Senate and House lawmakers. (Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu tells Congress Hamas 'barbarism' must lose, New York Post, July 24, 2024)*

This extract exemplifies lexical asymmetry through the categorical labeling of Hamas exclusively through terms of absolute evil: "rapists and murderers." The language constructs a binary moral universe in which Hamas represents pure evil while Israeli military actions remain unexamined. The phrase "stand with evil" performs what van Dijk (1998) calls ideological polarization, creating in this case a discursive structure in which any questioning of Israeli policy becomes morally equivalent to supporting rape and murder. This lexical pattern demonstrates what Tileagă (2007) identifies as moral exclusion through categorization, using group labels that authorize differential treatment and deny outgroup members full moral standing. In contrast,

Israeli soldiers are never described through their actions but through their roles, constructing a categorical distinction between legitimate state violence and illegitimate resistance. The asymmetric lexicon creates what Said (1978) theorized as Orientalist binaries, where one side embodies civilization and the other barbarism, erasing the political context of occupation and resistance. This lexical construction of moral categories extends to how humanitarian crisis itself is represented and who receives blame for Palestinian suffering.

## **3.2 Coloniality and Structural Erasure: Objectifying Israeli Occupation as Background**

This theme brings together what remains systematically absent or naturalized in coverage, focusing on how structural violence is either erased or objectified as unchangeable reality (Moscovici, 1984). Objectification transforms abstract concepts into concrete, naturalized phenomena that appear self-evident (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018). The analysis reveals two mechanisms: the naturalization of blockade and occupation as permanent conditions, and the quantification of Palestinian death accompanied by epistemic doubt (Opotow, 1990).

### **3.2.1 Naturalizing Colonial Infrastructure**

When Israeli blockade and occupation appear in coverage, they do so as background facts rather than as ongoing crimes. This pattern reflects what Yiftachel (2023) identifies as the normalization of "creeping apartheid" or the gradual naturalization of colonial control until it appears as permanent geography rather than as reversible political arrangement.

n10:

*Residents and aid workers describe grim conditions and severe shortages of food, clean water and access to medical supplies. (Nearly 79,000 Have Fled Rafah Since Monday, UN Says, The New York Times, May 9, 2024)*

The phrasing "grim conditions and severe shortages" positions scarcity as an environmental state Palestinians inhabit rather than as an outcome of specific political decisions, exemplifying Moscovici's (1984) objectification: the transformation of abstract political relations (Israeli closure policy) into concrete, naturalized objects (shortages as fixed conditions). This linguistic choice obscures that these shortages, which have been politically and infrastructurally constructed through walls, checkpoints, barbed wire, drones and other monitoring and control devices throughout the last decades, constitute illegal collective punishment under Fourth Geneva Convention Article 33, transforming ongoing political violence into what appears as unfortunate geography (Kemp, 2020; Yiftachel, 2023). The extract completely omits causality by presenting shortages as conditions that people "describe" rather than as deprivations actively imposed through siege. The focus immediately shifts to material needs ("food, clean water and access to medical supplies"), channeling attention toward humanitarian suffering rather than toward Israeli responsibility or international legal violations. This is again illustrated by the next extract.

n11:

*Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant ordered a complete siege on Gaza, saying authorities would cut electricity and block the entry of food and fuel. (Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas, Associated Press, October 9, 2023)*

This passage explicitly reports Israeli policy of "complete siege" with clear agent specification (Gallant) and deliberate deprivations (electricity, food, fuel). However, the statement appears without immediate legal contextualization. Coverage reports the siege but does not evaluate it, acknowledging Israeli policy while failing to note that deliberately starving civilian populations constitutes potential genocide under Article II of the Genocide Convention. This represents what Bennett (1990) identifies as elite-driven news management: journalists reproduce official statements without critical interrogation, laundering state violence through apparent objectivity.

n12:

*The sheer volume of human remains has pushed the system to its limit in the long-blockaded territory. Gaza's hospitals are poorly supplied in normal times but now Israel has stopped the water flow from its national water company and blocked electricity, food and fuel from entering the coastal enclave. (Israel-Hamas war: Morgue at Gaza's biggest hospital overflowing, Associated Press, October 13, 2023)*

The phrase "long-blockaded territory" treats blockade as a permanent characteristic through adjectival modification, similar to describing Gaza as "coastal" or "densely populated."

This linguistic objectification naturalizes seventeen years of illegal collective punishment as Gaza's essential nature rather than as Israeli policy that could end immediately (Yiftachel, 2023). The temporal framing "poorly supplied in normal times" further naturalizes Gaza's baseline deprivation, obscuring that "normal" for Gaza means living under conditions international law deems illegal (Kemp, 2020; see also Allen, 2008). This pattern reflects what Stahel and Cohrs (2015) identify in their analysis of hegemonic representations on the Israeli occupation: structural dimensions of Israeli colonial violence (occupation, blockade, settlement expansion) recede into naturalized background while episodic violence (October 7th attacks, Israeli airstrikes) occupies foreground, creating representational architecture that makes colonial domination invisible while making Palestinian resistance appear as unprovoked aggression.

### **3.2.2 Quantifying Death, Qualifying Truth**

Palestinian casualties appear primarily as ascending numbers (680, 7,000, 39,000) attributed to "the Gaza Health Ministry" or " Hamas authorities," almost always accompanied by qualifiers casting doubt on accuracy. Israeli casualty figures receive straightforward attribution without equivalent skepticism. This asymmetric sourcing enacts what Opatow (1990) theorizes as epistemic dimensions of moral exclusion: placing groups outside the boundary of credibility, making their testimony require special verification while in-group claims carry presumption of truth. This is also exemplified by the extract below.

n13:

*The Gaza Health Ministry — which is controlled by Hamas — reported at least 3,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 12,500 injured since the war began.*

( Hamas kills 40 babies and children -- beheading some of them -- at Israeli kibbutz report, New York Post, October 11, 2023)

The qualifier "which is controlled by Hamas," set apart by dashes for visual emphasis, directly undermines the Gaza Health Ministry's credibility by fusing its institutional documentation function with Hamas' political governance. This linguistic move makes it nearly impossible for readers to separate the health ministry's bureaucratic record-keeping from Hamas political control, inviting skepticism despite the ministry's technical accuracy confirmed by UN agencies (Eldin, 2019). The epistemic exclusion operates through what van Dijk (1998) identifies as evidentiality markers, defined as linguistic devices that cast doubt without explicit denial, allowing coverage to report Palestinian deaths while undermining their evidentiary status.

In contrast, coverage does not describe Israeli casualty figures as coming from "Netanyahu-controlled Israeli military" despite clear governmental control of military institutions providing casualty data. This asymmetric sourcing enacts what Psaltis (2016) identifies as differential scope of justice, the psychological boundary determining whose claims deserve belief, whose suffering warrants concern, and whose deaths demand accountability. The pattern reflects how subtle grammatical and sourcing choices position Palestinian reality as perpetually doubtful while Israeli claims appear as self-evident fact. This asymmetry becomes even clearer when examining how Israeli government sources are treated in parallel contexts.

n14:

*The government says that the Oct. 7 attack killed more than 1,400 people and seized more than 200 captives who are being held in Gaza. (Israeli Forces Raid Gaza as Pressure Builds for Cease-Fire, Associated Press News, October 27, 2023)*

The phrase "The government says" presents Israeli casualty figures with simple attribution that carries implicit authority, contrasting sharply with how Palestinian death tolls are qualified with phrases like " Hamas-controlled" or "which is controlled by Hamas." This asymmetric treatment demonstrates epistemic exclusion through differential evidentiality marking. While both Israeli and Palestinian sources are technically attributed, the Israeli government receives neutral sourcing language that does not question its credibility or institutional legitimacy. There is no equivalent phrase like "Netanyahu's government says" or "the government, which is led by right-wing politicians, claims" that would parallel the delegitimizing qualifiers applied to Palestinian health ministry figures. This creates what Psaltis (2016) identifies as a hierarchy of credibility in which Israeli institutional sources are granted presumptive reliability while Palestinian institutions require constant authentication. The neutrality of "the government says" performs epistemic work by naturalizing Israeli claims as straightforward factual reporting, while Palestinian testimony requires perpetual verification. Epistemic exclusion manifests not only through explicit qualification but also through complete erasure of Palestinian sourcing, as the following extract demonstrates.

n15:

*The Israeli military* said more than 900 people already have been killed in Israel. In Gaza, more than 680 people have been killed, according to authorities there—Israel says hundreds of Hamas fighters are among them. (Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas, Associated Press, October 9, 2023)

Israeli deaths receive attribution to "the Israeli military" without qualification. Palestinian deaths are attributed to "authorities there", vague sourcing diminishing credibility. The dash followed by "Israel says hundreds of Hamas fighters are among them" introduces counter-claim undermining the toll, suggesting significant portion might be combatants rather than civilians. This framing invites moral ambiguity without providing evidence for Israeli claims or noting difficulty of distinguishing combatants from civilians in densely populated areas. This pattern reflects Opatow's (1990) differential "scope of justice". Together, the naturalization of colonial infrastructure and the qualification of Palestinian testimony construct what Yiftachel (2023) identifies as the representational architecture of settler-colonial domination: structural violence disappears into naturalized background, while Palestinian resistance appears as inexplicable aggression, and Palestinian suffering becomes quantified abstraction whose reality remains perpetually in doubt.

### **3.3 Affective Appeals and Moral Hierarchies: Calibrating Empathy**

#### **Asymmetrically**

This theme reflects emotional dimensions of coverage, analyzing how articles organize feeling and calibrate empathy asymmetrically, something that often pervades the examined news

articles. Social representations possess irreducible affective components shaping not only epistemes but also moral orientations and political commitments (Staerklé et al., 2011; Höijer, 2011). The analysis reveals how coverage constructs what Bar-Tal (2014) identifies as central elements of ‘conflict ethos’: in-group victimization, existential threat, and delegitimization of adversaries, all mobilized through affective rather than purely cognitive appeals.

### 3.3.1 Emotional Anchoring to October 7th

October 7th functions as primary emotional anchor throughout coverage, with detailed visceral descriptions of Israeli suffering creating empathic identification that then justifies massive Palestinian casualties. This pattern exemplifies what Höijer (2011) identifies as emotional anchoring in social representations: connecting new information to existing emotional schemas that organize moral judgments and political responses. This is illustrated below:

n16:

*But this time, the senior Israeli military official said, the enormity of the Oct. 7 attacks has made Israeli commanders less risk-averse about how to engage the enemy.*

(As Gaza War Enters New Phase, Israel Faces Pressure Over Civilian Deaths, The New York Times, November 3, 2023)

The phrase "the enormity of the Oct. 7 attacks" positions Hamas' actions as exceptional evil justifying Israeli departure from normal rules of engagement. Commanders being "less risk-averse" (more willing to accept civilian casualties) appears not as moral failure but as understandable response to unprecedented provocation. This exemplifies Bar-Tal's (2014) concept of how "siege mentality" and "sense of victimization" within ‘conflict ethos’ authorize

violence that would otherwise violate group moral standards, with media playing crucial role in constructing affective justifications for this suspension of restraint.

### 3.3.2 Hostages and Differential Moral Inclusion

The hostage crisis receives sustained attention across outlets positioning Israeli captives' fate as central moral consideration justifying continued military operations. This pattern sustains again what Opatow (1990) theorizes as differential "scope of justice": Israeli hostages fall within psychological boundary where moral values apply, while thousands of Palestinian prisoners remain outside that boundary, barely visible in coverage. This is further illustrated in the below extract.

n17:

*Still, the operation has yet to achieve one of its key goals: piling enough pressure on Hamas to force it to negotiate the release of more than 200 people abducted during the attacks, or to enable Israel to rescue them in a special military operation. (As Gaza War Enters New Phase, Israel Faces Pressure Over Civilian Deaths, The New York Times, November 3, 2023)*

Hostage rescue appears as "key goal," positioning their fate as a central strategic and moral consideration. The phrase "more than 200 people abducted" emphasizes hostages' humanity and captivity's illegitimacy, while coverage rarely mentions thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli detention, many without charge under administrative detention. This representational asymmetry reflects what Staerklé et al. (2011) identify as affective hierarchies within social representations, this is, structures determining whose suffering generates empathic

concern and political mobilization versus whose suffering remains background noise. Another example is presented below.

n18:

*Mr. Blinken, who met Mr. Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on Friday, repeated President Biden's call for pauses in the campaign. The secretary of state said it would facilitate the delivery of aid to civilians and could help the 240 people held by Hamas to be freed and removed from Gaza. (As Gaza War Enters New Phase, Israel Faces Pressure Over Civilian Deaths, The New York Times, November 3, 2023)*

Proposed "pauses in the campaign" serve aid delivery and hostage recovery a juxtaposition, constructing Israeli hostages and Palestinian civilians as equivalent moral categories. Yet the equivalence obscures profound asymmetry of 240 hostages versus 2.3 million Palestinians under siege and bombardment. The framing reflects what Opatow (1990) identifies as moral exclusion's power to make vastly disproportionate concerns appear balanced, with 240 Israeli lives seemingly justifying operations killing tens of thousands of Palestinians.

n19:

*The IDF will continue pursuing Hamas everywhere in Gaza until all the hostages that they're holding in captivity are back home, the Israeli army said in a social media post, in reference to the more than 100 Israelis still held in the Palestinian enclave.*

(Israel instructs Palestinians to evacuate parts of Rafah as ground offensive looms, New York Post, May 6, 2024)

This extract centers hostages as the primary moral imperative justifying continued military operations, while the article mentions "more than 1.4 million Palestinians" displaced to Rafah only as demographic context, rather than as subjects of moral concern requiring protection. The phrase "back home" humanizes Israeli hostages through domestic imagery of return and belonging, while Palestinians are described through the clinical language of "evacuation" and "humanitarian areas", this demonstrates Psalti's (2016) differential scope of justice. The extract positions hostage recovery as an absolute moral obligation that justifies unlimited military action, while Palestinian civilian deaths are presented as unfortunate but necessary costs. This moral asymmetry reflects what Psaltis (2016) identifies as the selective application of empathy and protection based on group membership, constructing a hierarchy of human value in which some lives demand infinite protection while others can be indefinitely endangered. This differential moral inclusion operates not only through which subjects receive emotional attention but also through how humanitarian suffering itself is depoliticized.

### **3.3.3 Humanitarian Depoliticization of Palestinian Suffering**

When Palestinian suffering receives extended attention, it appears through depoliticized humanitarian frames acknowledging pain while obscuring perpetration and foreclosing political remedies. This pattern reflects what Fassin (2011) and Ticktin (2011) identify as humanitarian reason's ideological function: transforming political violence into technical problems requiring aid rather than structural change and perpetrator accountability. This is exemplified in the abstract below.

n20:

*Yet it deepened the crisis for civilians in Gaza. The death toll from airstrikes has risen to more than 9,000, according to the Gazan health ministry. Hospitals in the strip are running out of fuel and basic supplies, and some doctors say they have had to perform surgery without anesthesia. (As Gaza War Enters New Phase, Israel Faces Pressure Over Civilian Deaths, The New York Times, November 3, 2023)*

The phrase "crisis for civilians" channels suffering into humanitarian register. Focus on "running out of" supplies transforms political choices (Israeli blockade preventing resupply) into technical problems (scarcity requiring aid delivery). This exemplifies what Ticktin (2011) theorizes as reduction of political subjects to "bare life" requiring minimal biological care: Palestinians appear as bodies needing supplies rather than as people with rights to self-determination, protection from genocide, and legal recourse. This is further illustrated below.

n21:

*The main United Nations agency that helps Palestinians in Gaza said Tuesday that the catastrophic hunger faced by people especially in northern Gaza will get much worse if aid shipments through the Rafah border crossing were interrupted. (Israel's Closures of 2 Gaza Border Crossings Prompt Alarm Over Humanitarian Aid, The New York Times, May 7, 2024)*

The phrase "catastrophic hunger" acknowledges extreme suffering yet focus remains on aid shipments on humanitarian logistics rather than on Israeli policy of deliberately restricting food as potential genocide under Rome Statute Article II. The conditional framing ("will get much worse if") positions concern as prospective rather than recognizing that deliberately starving populations violates international law regardless of whether aid eventually arrives (Seidel et al., 2021). This humanitarian depoliticization allows coverage to appear concerned about Palestinian welfare while foreclosing questions about Israeli criminality and U.S. complicity through continued military aid. The patterns across affective coverage construct what Staerklé et al. (2011) identify as asymmetric emotional economies within social representations. Israeli emotional experiences of grief, fear, and trauma occupy representational foreground and organize moral judgments, while Palestinian emotional experiences remain peripheral, channeled into humanitarian frames that invite sympathy without demanding accountability. This affective architecture shapes not only what audiences believe is true but also what they feel is just and what political responses appear necessary (Höijer, 2011).

n22:

*"If there are Palestinians in Gaza not getting enough food, it's not because Israel is blocking them, it's because Hamas is stealing them," he ripped his accusers. (Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu tells Congress Hamas 'barbarism' must lose, New York Post, July 24, 2024)*

This extract demonstrates humanitarian depoliticization through blame reversal, attributing Palestinian food insecurity exclusively to Hamas theft while erasing Israel's documented blockade and restrictions on aid entry. Despite the sentence being said by Netanyahu, the newspaper does not critically deconstruct it (or even omit it) in any way, despite the violence it involves towards Palestinians. The phrasing "not getting enough food" uses passive construction to describe starvation as a condition Palestinians experience rather than as a policy outcome of Israeli siege. By positioning Hamas as the sole cause of food shortages, the statement performs what Psaltis (2016) identifies as exonerating accounting, a discursive strategy that acknowledges humanitarian crisis while redirecting responsibility away from Israeli policy. The extract appears in coverage without journalistic interrogation of documented evidence from UN agencies and humanitarian organizations showing Israeli restrictions as the primary barrier to aid distribution. This represents what Kemp (2020) analyzes as the depoliticization of siege, transforming deliberate policy choices into Hamas' governance failures. The blame reversal allows readers to acknowledge Palestinian hunger without confronting Israeli responsibility, exemplifying how humanitarian discourse can obscure rather than illuminate political causality. This pattern of attributing Palestinian suffering to Hamas governance extends to how aid delivery itself is framed.

The three themes just discussed reveal interconnected representational patterns constructing what Stahel and Cohrs (2015) identify as hegemonic social representation of 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict': Israeli violence anchored to self-defense despite profound power asymmetry, structural domination naturalized as unchangeable background, Palestinian resistance delegitimized as terrorism, and Palestinian suffering depoliticized through humanitarian frames. This social representation enables genocide while rendering it invisible or

justifiable to U.S.A. publics whose government supplies weapons, diplomatic cover, and financial support making genocide possible (Robinson, 2021; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

### **3.4 Diffusion, Propaganda, and How Propagation Scaffolds Both**

As mentioned before, this thesis also aimed to analyze the communicative modalities used by the examined newspapers to communicate the social representations identified above. The analysis reveals that all three modalities operate within this corpus, though with distinct concentration patterns across outlets. Rather than functioning as discrete outlet characteristics, these modalities represent functional registers that coexist within single articles and across the broader media ecosystem. Understanding their distribution, interaction, and how they scaffold one another demonstrates the layered construction of consent around mass violence.

Diffusion appears most consistently in Associated Press coverage, which prioritizes procedural fact transmission through event sequencing (what happened, when, where), attribution cues that identify information sources without editorial comment, and logistical specificity regarding aid trucks, crossing closures, and casualty counts. This format exemplifies what Buschini and Guillou (2022) describe as consensual universe communication, translating complex political events into accessible factual registers that presume no prior alignment from readers. However, even ostensibly neutral diffusion performs ideological work through source selection and grammatical framing. AP coverage systematically privileges official Israeli and U.S. government perspectives in opening paragraphs, relegating Palestinian institutional voices and humanitarian organizations to later sections or qualifying their claims with evidentiality markers. This hierarchical sourcing creates what Herman and Chomsky (1988) identify as structural bias, where professional journalistic routines produce systematic ideological effects

without requiring conscious propagandistic intent. The diffusion register thus functions as a vehicle through which hegemonic representations circulate under the appearance of objective information transmission, reaching audiences across the media ecosystem through syndication and republication.

However, AP demonstrates how diffusion and propagation interact. Neutral wire formats still propagate hegemonic frames through reactive sequencing, source hierarchies, and legal language avoidance. Modalities thus describe communicative functions rather than outlet identities, with the same coverage diffusing facts while propagating particular interpretations through structural choices.

In this corpus, overt propaganda is densest in the New York Post. Dehumanizing labels appear in high salience positions, for example "These animals will pay a heavy price," coupled with sacred calendar anchoring such as "This is our 9/11" and references to "Simchat Torah." Such headlines and opening paragraphs present simplified causality and exhortative moral language that ask readers to feel before they weigh alternatives (New York Post, 2023, Israel launches major airstrikes in Gaza, Netanyahu vows Hamas 'will pay a price it has never known'). The pattern is reinforced by vows such as "will pay a price it has never known," which project punitive certainty rather than policy choice.

The above aligns with Sproule's (1987) identification of propaganda's core characteristics: the systematic use of fear appeals, enemy construction, and simplified causal narratives that foreclose deliberation. The New York Post's consistent deployment of animalistic metaphors ("these animals") exemplifies what Bar-Tal (2014) identifies as delegitimization. The use of Netanyahu's vow as a headline quote rather than as attributed claim requiring interrogation demonstrates what Bennett (1990) identifies as "elite driven indexing." The phrase "will pay a

price it has never known" explicitly announces intent to inflict unprecedented harm, language that legal scholars identify as potential evidence of genocidal intent under Article II of the Genocide Convention, yet coverage treats it as legitimate state discourse rather than as statement demanding legal scrutiny.

Propagation is more pervasive in *The New York Times* and the Associated Press. Both rely on reactive sequencing that places Israeli policy "after" an initiating attack and "then" follows with closures or incursions. Both lean on metric theatre that highlights open gates, truck counts, or calorie targets while distributing accountability across procedures. Legal labels such as genocide, apartheid, or collective punishment are rare in headlines and early paragraphs. The Times often offsets official claims with United Nations or non-governmental assessments, and the AP maintains verification caveats, yet the overarching grammar of necessity remains. From a social psychological perspective, this is what Social Representations Theory foresees when new and alarming events are domesticated into familiar scripts (Moscovici, 1984). This propagation operates through what Buschini and Guillou (2022) identify as "themata," recurring binary oppositions (security/threat, order/chaos, civilization/barbarism) that organize social representations without requiring explicit statement. The reactive sequencing grammar ("after... then...") performs ideological work by naturalizing Israeli violence as automatic consequence rather than discretionary policy choice, exemplifying what Fairclough (2003) identifies as "nominalization" and "passivization," grammatical transformations that obscure human agency and political responsibility, as discussed in previous subsections.

The metric theatre surrounding humanitarian access (truck counts, calorie minimums, fuel quotas) represents technocratic depoliticization of settler colonial violence (Iqtait, 2025). By objectifying siege conditions as logistics problems requiring technical solutions, coverage

transforms illegal collective punishment under Fourth Geneva Convention Article 33 into apparent humanitarian complexity requiring expert management rather than immediate cessation and perpetrator accountability. This exemplifies Moscovici's (1984) concept of objectification; abstract political relations (Israeli siege policy deliberately starving Gaza) become concrete quantifiable objects (truck deficits, calorie gaps) that appear as technical challenges rather than as crimes.

The three modalities function as a communicative division of labor within the media ecosystem. Diffusion establishes baseline factual claims and event chronologies that subsequent coverage can reference as established reality. Propagation builds upon these factual foundations to naturalize particular interpretive frameworks within specific audience communities, making hegemonic representations feel like common sense rather than contested political positions. Propaganda mobilizes emotional commitments and adversarial binaries that diffusion and propagation have prepared audiences to accept as legitimate. This layered interaction explains why coverage can simultaneously appear factual, balanced, and inflammatory, depending on which modality dominates particular passages. The integration demonstrates that communicative modalities are not discrete outlet characteristics but rather functional registers that coexist within single articles and across the broader media field, collectively constructing what Gramsci (1971) theorized as hegemony through consent rather than coercion.

The systematic avoidance of legal terminology and concepts related with the violence that is being perpetrated by Israel (like "genocide," "apartheid," "collective punishment," "war crimes") in headlines and opening paragraphs despite reporting conduct meeting legal definitions represents what Herman and Chomsky (1988) identify as "flak," the constraining effect of anticipated criticism on journalistic choices. Eldin (2019) documents how U.S. media

systematically avoid legal frames when covering Israeli violence despite readily applying them to adversary states, demonstrating what Robinson (2021) theorizes as differential application of humanitarian concern based on geopolitical alignment, rather than severity of violations. In turn, the offset structure, where official Israeli claims occupy opening paragraphs while UN or NGO critiques appear lower in article architecture, enacts what van Dijk (1998) identifies as hierarchical sourcing that privileges state perspectives. Even when critical voices appear, their structural placement and qualification through evidentiality markers ("activists claim," "critics say," "some argue") undermines their epistemic authority relative to unqualified official statements. This asymmetry is not only about who is quoted more often, but also about how whole forms of knowledge are structurally thinned out or erased. Barakat (2017) argues that "the absence of the Palestinian voice is reminiscent of the elimination of the Palestinian body", linking epistemic marginalization to settler colonial elimination as a broader logic.

This propagation through source hierarchy and grammatical qualification operates below the threshold of conscious persuasion, making hegemonic interpretations feel like common sense rather than as contested political claims (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018; Stahel & Cohrs, 2015).

### **3.5 Comparative Analysis by Outlet**

Across the three outlets, distinct representational patterns and dominant communicative modalities emerge. The New York Post relies most on propaganda through agitation and spectacle and shows the highest concentration of moral closure and dehumanizing language. Vows of punishment and sacred calendar references are prominent. The ambassador quotation, "These animals will pay a heavy price," is exemplary. The outlet consistently privileges security-first explanations, places officials' statements at the top and the bottom of stories and frequently

uses a war-on-terror register. The combination of emotional appeals, sharp 'us' and 'them' rhetoric, and simplified causality is characteristic of propaganda.

The New York Post's representational strategy aligns with what Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identify as the "conflict frame" in its most polarized form, emphasizing binary oppositions between groups while minimizing complexity or structural context. The tabloid's placement of official Israeli statements in both opening and closing positions performs what Entman (1993) identifies as "bookending"; structural emphasis that makes particular interpretations appear as both a factual starting point and logical conclusion. This circular reinforcement creates what Sproule (1987) identifies as propagandistic closure, where audiences encounter the same interpretation repeatedly across article architecture, generating a false sense of consensus through repetition rather than through evidence.

The Associated Press prioritizes diffusion as its primary format, employing wire service conventions that balance Israeli official statements with United Nations and non-governmental data, track access constraints, and highlight humanitarian thresholds with operational specificity. Quotes such as "The World Food Program will run out of food... fuel will also be depleted soon, forcing hospitals to shut down" model neutral transmission while making harm legible through timelines and systems. However, as discussed in the previous section, this diffusion format simultaneously carries propagation effects through structural choices: reactive sequencing, hierarchical sourcing that privileges official perspectives, and systematic avoidance of legal terminology. The wire service format reflects what Hallin (1986) identifies as "sphere of legitimate controversy", the range of debate that journalists consider acceptable for "balanced" coverage. While AP includes more diverse sourcing than the New York Post, the balance itself enacts ideological boundaries: Israeli official perspectives versus UN humanitarian concerns,

never Israeli perspectives versus Palestinian political analysis or international legal frameworks. This bounded pluralism creates appearance of objectivity while systematically excluding perspectives challenging the legitimacy of Israeli state violence or U.S. policy support.

The New York Times primarily employs propagation, often integrating human-interest reporting with bureaucratic and diplomatic process. It combines personalized Israeli scenes with bureaucratic descriptors of Palestinian harm. It includes episodic counter-examples that personify Palestinian fear, yet these are exceptions. The New York Times names checkpoints and closures yet keeps causality linked to security incidents. The Rafah and Kerem Shalom coverage shows this balance, where strong United Nations language, "choked off" and "putting the humanitarian operation in its grave," appears alongside a reactive chain that begins with a Hamas attack. The New York Times thus acknowledges crisis while maintaining restraint in legal characterization, which is consistent with a propagation mode that normalizes policy within an imagined community of readers.

The New York Times's integration of human-interest narratives with bureaucratic process reflects what Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identify as the "human interest frame", personalizing events to generate emotional engagement. However, the asymmetric application of this frame enacts Opatow's (1990) theory of differential "scope of justice." Israeli subjects receive narrative treatment that recognizes their full humanity while Palestinians more often appear as anonymous casualties or statistics, exemplifying what Haslam (2006) identifies as "mechanistic dehumanization", a denial of human uniqueness, individuality, and emotional depth. The Times's "restraint in legal characterization" despite reporting conduct meeting legal definitions represents what Eldin (2019) documents as systematic avoidance of legal frames in U.S. coverage of Israeli violence. This restraint is not neutral but ideological, preventing

audiences from accessing frameworks that would authorize demands for accountability, sanctions, or policy change.

The structural choice to place UN criticism alongside reactive chains beginning with Hamas attacks exemplifies what Psaltis (2016) identifies in divided societies: the misrepresentation of asymmetric colonial domination as symmetric 'cycle of violence' or 'conflict.' Even when one party's vastly greater military power, territorial control, and international support are documented within the same article, the grammatical and structural choices maintain false equivalence that obscures the fundamental power differential.

The differential modality concentration across outlets reflects distinct target audiences and institutional positioning. The Post's propaganda serves readers seeking moral clarity and emotional catharsis around perceived threats. The Associated Press' diffusion-with-propagation serves diverse outlets needing reproducible content that appears neutral while maintaining ideological coherence. The Times's propagation addresses educated audiences who value nuance and process detail but whose interpretive horizons remain bounded by presumptions of Israeli legitimacy and U.S. policy rationality.

Despite modality differences, all three outlets anchor Israeli violence to security/defense necessity, objectify occupation through technical/humanitarian registers, and position Palestinian resistance outside boundaries of legitimate political action. This convergence exemplifies what Herman and Chomsky (1988) theorized as "manufacturing consent". Not through crude censorship but through shared professional norms, source dependence, and ideological filtering that produces systematic patterns without requiring coordination or conspiracy.



## **CHAPTER 4: Discussion and Conclusions**

This thesis examined how leading U.S.A. newspapers constructed social representations of the recent Genocide in Gaza, asking what these narratives make thinkable about blame, protection, and remedy, and how those representations are communicatively disseminated. The study treated news coverage as meaning work through which unsettling events are anchored to familiar categories and objectified into quotes, numbers, and routines that circulate as common sense (Moscovici, 1984; Nicholson & Howarth, 2018). The analysis of sixty articles from the Associated Press, New York Times, and New York Post sampled around four highly salient moments in the recent genocide in Gaza, reveals systematic representational patterns that construct genocide as defensive necessity for Israel, obscure structural violence, and organize empathy asymmetrically. The following discussion interprets findings through theoretical frameworks, situates them within existing literature, reflects on the research process, acknowledges limitations, and explores implications for scholarship and society.

### **4.1 Main Findings and Theoretical Interpretation**

The analysis identified three interconnected themes constructing hegemonic social representations of the recent genocide in Gaza. Framing and Attribution demonstrated how coverage anchors Israeli military operations to self-defense narratives through temporal structures positioning October 7th as causal origin, grammatical choices obscuring Israeli agency through passive voice and nominalization, and lexical asymmetries delegitimizing Palestinian actors while naturalizing Israeli state authority (Entman, 1993; Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1998). Coloniality and Structural Erasure revealed how occupation and blockade are objectified as permanent geographic facts rather than as reversible political choices, while Palestinian

casualty documentation receives epistemic doubt (Yiftachel, 2023). Affective Appeals and Moral Hierarchies exposed asymmetric emotional calibration positioning Israeli suffering as demanding sustained empathic engagement while channeling Palestinian suffering into depoliticized humanitarian frames (Höijer, 2011; Staerklé et al., 2011).

These patterns exemplify core processes within Social Representations Theory and framing theory. Anchoring operates throughout coverage as genocide is anchored to familiar war-on-terror and self-defense frameworks that make overwhelming violence appear justified (Moscovici, 1984; Nicholson & Howarth, 2018). Objectification, operates through several key translations in coverage: colonial domination becomes represented as checkpoints and permit regimes, mass starvation becomes truck deficits and calorie gaps, and political violence becomes humanitarian logistics requiring technical solutions rather than accountability (Buschini & Guillou, 2022). Hammami (2019) argues that this constant state of uncertainty is the very logic of Israeli sovereign violence, foregrounding how checkpoint regimes function as an embodied technology of control rather than a neutral security backdrop. Through these objectifications, abstract political structures are made tangible and seemingly natural, while simultaneously obscuring the power relations that produce them. The self-other-object nexus clarifies representational positioning: Israel appears as defended self from whose perspective events are narrated, Palestinians/Hamas appear as threatening other requiring explanation or condemnation, and territory/security appear as contested objects justifying violence (Nicholson & Howarth, 2018).

The findings also gave an account of how the three communicative modalities (Buschini & Guillou, 2022) showed up across the different outlets and to what potential impacts. Propaganda appears most densely in New York Post coverage through dehumanizing labels,

sacred temporal anchors, and simplified causality mobilizing emotional arousal before deliberation. Propagation operates pervasively across New York Times and Associated Press through subtle persuasion stabilizing preferred interpretations via reactive sequencing, source hierarchy, and legal language avoidance. Diffusion appears in Associated Press's wire format emphasizing procedural fact transmission, yet even ostensibly neutral diffusion reproduces hegemonic frames through source selection and grammatical choices. The modalities often mix within single articles, demonstrating how different communicative registers collaborate in constructing and naturalizing hegemonic representations. Bar-Tal's (2014) concept of 'ethos of conflict' illuminates the affective architecture undergirding representational patterns. Coverage systematically constructs and reinforces beliefs about Israeli in-group victimization through emotional anchoring to October 7th, siege mentality through threat language emphasizing imminent danger, delegitimization of adversaries through animalization and criminalization, and security beliefs positioning military force as sole effective response. These 'conflict ethos' elements work synergistically: victimization narratives justify siege mentality, which authorizes delegitimization, which legitimizes security beliefs, which circle back to reinforce victimization as permanent condition requiring eternal vigilance (Bar-Tal, 2014; Cohrs et al., 2015).

## **4.2 Integration with Prior Literature**

The findings converge with and extend existing scholarship on media representations of Israeli violence against Palestinians. Roy's (2012) identification of "culturally unconscious" media routines that privilege Israeli perspectives finds strong support: coverage reproduces Israeli temporal framing, accepts Israeli sourcing hierarchies, and naturalizes Israeli security concerns, while treating Palestinian political claims as requiring special justification. The

patterns Roy documented in 2012 persist and intensify in the coverage of the recent stage of the genocide in Gaza, suggesting deeply institutionalized professional norms resistant to change despite mounting documentation of atrocities. Eldin's (2019) analysis of asymmetric credibility in U.S. media coverage receives powerful confirmation: Palestinian casualty documentation systematically receives skepticism markers while Israeli military claims appear without qualification.

The findings extend Stahel and Cohrs' (2015) analysis of hegemonic versus counter-hegemonic social representations of what they frame as 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict', though we identify this more accurately as Israeli colonial genocide of Palestinians. While their Swiss sample showed some emergence of counter-hegemonic representations acknowledging Palestinian suffering and structural injustice, while U.S.A. mainstream coverage demonstrates near-total hegemonic dominance. Israeli violence anchors to security necessity, occupation objectifies through technocratic language, Palestinian resistance appears outside legitimate political action, and suffering channels into humanitarian frames foreclosing political remedies. The convergence across outlets despite stylistic differences suggests hegemonic representation achieving taken-for-granted common sense status (Stahel & Cohrs, 2015).

During the period of this research (October 2023 to January 2025), significant scholarly work examining media representations of this recent stage of the genocide in Gaza was published, including multiple studies analyzing newspaper framing in the United States. These studies employed diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, including critical discourse analysis (De Morais, 2024; Markkula, 2025; Ciler, 2024) and human rights frameworks (De Morais, 2024), which differ from the specific disciplinary integration of Critical Social Psychology, Social Representations Theory, and communicative modalities adopted in this thesis.

Nevertheless, and importantly, several of the results here presented are similar to those studies' results in key areas. De Morais (2024) documented pro-Israel bias in The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal through asymmetric source citation patterns and differential treatment of Israeli versus Palestinian perspectives, paralleling this thesis's findings on source hierarchy and epistemic exclusion. Similarly, Markkula (2025) identified lexical asymmetries in New York Post coverage that cast Israeli actions as defensive while delegitimizing Palestinian claims, corroborating this study's analysis of lexical framing and attribution structures.

Ciler (2024) demonstrated how Al Jazeera and The New York Times employed distinct word connotations and aggregation strategies when reporting casualties, which aligns with this thesis' documentation of differential evidentiality marking and quantification practices. These convergent findings across multiple analytical approaches strengthen confidence in the patterns identified here while highlighting how the theoretical lens of Social Representations Theory and communicative modalities offers distinct insights into the psychosocial mechanisms through which genocide becomes representable as defensive necessity.

The analysis nuances Entman's (1993) framing theory by demonstrating how frames operate not only through explicit problem definitions but through grammatical structures distributing agency, temporal sequences organizing causality, and lexical choices naturalizing particular actors and delegitimizing others. The integration of thematic discursive analysis (Peel & Newman, 2023) with framing analysis reveals how ideology operates at the level of syntax itself, not only in conscious editorial choices but in routine grammatical patterns that journalists may not recognize as political, as Critical Discourse Analysis has often demonstrated (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1998). Finally, the findings support the limitations of Social Identity Theory's predictions for the dynamics of 'intergroup conflicts.' While SIT traditionally predicts

in-group favoritism and out-group derogation under threat (Tajfel & Turner, 1974), the preferential treatment of Israeli perspectives cannot be explained solely through socialized in-group bias because Israelis and Palestinians are not equivalent in their relationship (Allen, 2008), and particularly in relation to U.S.A. audiences. The representational asymmetries reflect deliberate political alignment and shared identity construction positioning Israel as Western, democratic, civilized versus Palestinians as Middle Eastern, Muslim, threatening (Said, 1978). In this vein it is interesting to discuss how media representations actively construct rather than passively reflect group boundaries and hierarchies. The analysis' moral certainty and unanimity cues, pressure on dissent via patriotism and hostage-first duty, illusions of control supported by capability and quantity metrics, and rationalizations of civilian risk through human shields claims and cease-fire conditionality (Bar-Tal, 2010; Bruneau et al., 2017).

First, rationalization and moral certainty appear through reactive necessity narratives and self-descriptions of unique Israeli morality that justify escalation despite persistent reporting of civilian harm and chokepoints. Counter-evidence such as UN language describing Israel as having "choked off" aid arteries and put "the humanitarian operation in its grave" is present but rarely reframes the underlying security script. Second, stereotyping and delegitimization operate through dehumanizing labels and human shields claims portraying Palestinians or Hamas as uniquely perfidious. Some protest framings cast dissent as irresponsible or externally manipulated, coding opposition as risk to in-group safety or as disloyalty. That coding narrows discursive space for anti-siege or accountability arguments even when humanitarian collapse is documented in the same articles. This reduces perceived legitimacy of alternative policy options, consistent with research on delegitimization and moral disengagement (Bar-Tal, 1989; Bandura, 1999). Third, mind guarding through vocabulary and sourcing manifests as systematic avoidance

of legal terms and end-quote dominance of officials that narrow what is sayable at high salience. Colonial and apartheid frames are implied through logistics but rarely named in headlines. The result is a discursive sense of consensual inevitability, operating at the level of a media ecosystem rather than a single decision room.

### **4.3 Methodological and Theoretical Contributions**

This thesis contributes methodologically by demonstrating how Social Representations Theory and framing theory can be integrated productively through thematic discursive analysis. While SRT provides the overarching framework for understanding collective meaning-making, framing theory offers tools for analyzing how problem definitions, causal attributions, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations are constructed through textual selections that emphasize certain aspects of reality while omitting others (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Thematic analysis ensures systematic pattern identification across large corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Peel & Newman, 2023). Thematic discursive analysis allowed identifying patterns of meaning in the data but also analyzing their discursive construction, specifically following some tools of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 1998). The integration allows for analysis operating at multiple levels simultaneously: macro-level social representations, meso-level framing strategies, and micro-level grammatical choices. The analysis also advances understanding of communicative modalities by documenting how propaganda, propagation, and diffusion operate within a single media ecosystem (Buschini & Guillou, 2022). Previous applications of the triadic model often treated modalities as discrete, but the findings demonstrate their interaction: propagation scaffolds propaganda by normalizing assumptions propaganda relies upon, while diffusion carries propagandistic content in ostensibly

neutral formats. The modalities function as communicative division of labor serving hegemonic representation.

Theoretically, the thesis contributes to scholarship on settler-colonial violence and its representation by documenting how genocide is made invisible or justifiable through representational strategies obscuring structural context, distributing agency asymmetrically, and organizing empathy hierarchically (Kemp, 2020; Yiftachel, 2023). Groups are excluded from the scope of justice through mechanisms operating below conscious awareness, making exclusion feel like common sense rather than like ethical failure. Finally, and more importantly, this study contributes to showing the relevance of a critical social psychology approach to colonial violence, genocide, and related group processes, challenging mainstream psychology's 'intergroup conflict' frameworks that obscure power asymmetries and structural domination.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

Several limitations of this work can also be identified. First, the sample is limited to three U.S. outlets and sixty articles across four temporal moments. While this allows in-depth analysis, it cannot capture full range of U.S. media coverage or track representational evolution across entire genocide period. Alternative outlets, particularly independent media, might construct different social representations. The sampling privileged highly salient moments that may not represent typical coverage patterns.

Second, the analysis focuses exclusively on textual content without examining visual elements, multimedia components, or online reader comments. Gondwe and Walcott (2024) demonstrate how visual framings construct particular understandings of conflict, and the

exclusion of images limits this analysis to verbal representations. The multimodal nature of contemporary journalism means textual analysis captures only partial representation.

Third, the study examines production without investigating reception (audience interpretation). Social representations circulate through communication but are ultimately socio-psychological phenomena co-constructing shared understandings. The analysis can document what representations coverage makes available but cannot determine how audiences actually interpret, resist, or transform those representations. Reception studies might reveal greater audience resistance than textual dominance suggests.

Fourth, this analysis treats media texts as constructing rather than reflecting reality, yet material conditions (occupation, blockade, bombardment) exist independently of representation. The focus on how genocide is represented should not obscure that genocide is occurring. The representational analysis complements but does not replace material analysis documenting violence itself.

## **4.5 Implications**

The findings carry implications at academic, societal, and practical levels. Academically the thesis demonstrates Social Representations Theory's value as an articulatory epistemology (Batel & Castro, 2018), able to bridge and work with diverse theoretical frameworks and analytical tools, namely for analyzing media discourse, particularly its capacity to explain how unfamiliar violence is domesticated into familiar categories making it thinkable, discussable, and actionable in particular ways (Moscovici, 1984; Buschini & Guillou, 2022). Future research should continue developing integrative frameworks combining representational, discursive, and framing approaches.

The analysis also suggests productive directions for conflict representations research. Studies might examine how social representations of other contemporary instances of colonial violence, genocide, and imperial aggression (Ukraine, Sudan, Congo) are constructed through anchoring and objectification, whether similar patterns of asymmetric credibility and emotional calibration emerge, and how geopolitical alignments shape representational strategies. Comparative analysis across conflicts could reveal systematic patterns in how Western media represent allies versus adversaries, state violence versus non-state violence, and settler-colonial contexts.

Critical, reflexive social psychology oriented toward social relevance has transformative potential in media contexts. It can denaturalize what appears as common sense and make visible the constructed nature of hegemonic understanding. This denaturalization creates possibilities for alternative representations and ultimately for political action interrupting violence. However, scholarly analysis alone cannot transform deep-rooted power relations or dismantle representational systems serving those relations. Academic critique must connect with broader movements for media justice, Palestinian liberation, and transformation of U.S.A. foreign policy. Recent Palestinian feminist writing also frames the ethical stakes of institutional speech and silence in contexts of mass violence. Shoman et al. (2025) state: “Silence is complicity, and complicity kills”. In the context of media representation, this sharpens the implication that challenging hegemonic frames is not only an interpretive exercise. It is entangled with the conditions that enable or constrain public recognition, moral urgency, and demands for accountability. The hope of this thesis is that rigorous analysis of how genocide becomes representable and justifiable contributes, however modestly, to collective projects making genocide unthinkable and impossible.

Societally and ethically, the findings inform critical media literacy by revealing mechanisms through which coverage constructs particular understandings while marginalizing alternatives. Audiences aware of anchoring processes, grammatical agency distribution, source hierarchies, and affective calibration may develop more critical engagement with news texts, recognizing them as constructed representations rather than as transparent windows on reality. Educational initiatives might incorporate analysis of representational strategies into curricula fostering critical thinking about media.

The analysis also carries implications for journalists and editors committed to ethical reporting. Professional norms presented as neutral objectivity actually reproduce hegemonic representations naturalizing violence and obscuring structural injustice (Roy, 2012; Robinson, 2021). Awareness of how grammatical choices distribute agency, how temporal framing shapes causality, and how source selection privileges particular perspectives might encourage more reflexive journalistic practice. However, individual journalist awareness likely proves insufficient given institutional constraints, resource dependencies, and anticipated criticism shaping coverage. Structural changes in media ownership, funding models, and professional norms would be required for transformative shifts in representation.

Practically, the findings suggest several directions for future research. First, multimodal analysis incorporating visual content, video footage, and interactive elements would provide more complete understanding of how representations circulate across platforms and formats. Second, audience reception studies could investigate how different interpretive communities read mainstream coverage, whether counter-hegemonic readings emerge, and what factors enable resistance to dominant frames. Third, comparative outlet analysis expanding beyond three sources could map representational diversity across U.S. media ecosystem, identifying whether

alternative representations exist in independent or international outlets. Fourth, longitudinal analysis tracking coverage across multiple years could reveal whether representational patterns evolve, harden, or fragment over time.

Free Palestine.

## References

- Al Jazeera. (2025, May 15). 'One long Nakba': Palestinians mark 77 years since mass displacement. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/15/palestinians-mark-77-years-since-the-nakba>
- Allen, L. (2008). Getting by the occupation: How violence became normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada. *Cultural Anthropology*, 23(3), 453-487.
- Alnwihe, A., & Al-Abbas, M. (2023). The representation of Gaza war (2021) in the official remarks of Hamas and Israel: A critical discourse study. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13(4), 780–792.
- Althaus, S. L., & Tewksbury, D. (2002). Agenda setting and the "new" news: Patterns of issue importance among readers of the paper and online versions of the *New York Times*. *Communication Research*, 29(2), 180–207.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650202029002004>
- Amnesty International. (2024, December 5). *Israel/OPT: Israeli authorities must stop starving civilians in Gaza*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/israel-opt-israeli-authorities-must-stop-starving-civilians-in-gaza/>
- Apostolidis, T., Santos, F., & Kalampalikis, N. (2020). Society against COVID-19: Challenges for the socio-genetic point of view of social representations. *Papers on Social Representations*, 29(2), 3.1–3.14.
- Atallah, D. G., Shapiro, E. R., Al-Azraq, N., Qaisi, Y., & Suyemoto, K. L. (2018). Decolonizing qualitative research through transformative community engagement: Critical investigation of resilience with Palestinian refugees in the West Bank. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 15(2-3), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2017.1416805>
- Bachman, J. S., & Ruiz, E. B. (2025). From East Timor to Gaza: How the United States Contributes to and Distances Itself from the Atrocities of Others (and How Genocide Studies Lets the United States Get Away with It). *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1-15.
- Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3(3), 193–209.

- Barakat, R. (2018). Writing/righting Palestine studies: Settler colonialism, indigenous sovereignty and resisting the ghosts of history. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 8(3), 349–363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048>
- Bar-Tal, D. (1989). Delegitimization: The extreme case of stereotyping and prejudice. In D. Bar-Tal, C. F. Graumann, A. W. Kruglanski, & W. Stroebe (Eds.), *Stereotyping and prejudice: Changing conceptions* (pp. 169–182). Springer.
- Bar-Tal, D. (2010). *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution: A social psychological perspective*. Psychology Press.
- Bar-Tal, D. (2014). Collective memory as social representations. In C. Howarth & A. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of social representations* (pp. 42–56). Cambridge University Press.
- Batel, S., & Castro, P. (2018). Reopening the dialogue between the theory of social representations and discursive psychology for examining the construction and transformation of meaning in discourse and communication. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 57(4), 732–753. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12259>
- Bennett, W. L. (1990). Toward a theory of press–state relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication*, 40(2), 103–125.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Billig, M. (1991). *Ideology and opinions: Studies in rhetorical psychology*. Sage.
- Blackwell, L. (2025). Trauma, terror, and colonialism from Europe to the Middle East: A commentary on Ezquerro and Cañete. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 106(1), 102–108.
- Böhm, R., Rusch, H., & Baron, J. (2018). The psychology of intergroup conflict: A review of theories and measures. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 188, 1045–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2018.02.020>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bruneau, E., Kteily, N., & Laustsen, L. (2017). The unique effects of blatant dehumanization on attitudes and behavior toward Muslim refugees during the European “refugee crisis.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 69, 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.12.013>

- B'Tselem. (2024, December 11). *Settlers driving out Wadi al-Qalt community with state support*. [https://www.btselem.org/settler\\_violence/202409\\_lechathila\\_farm\\_military\\_assists\\_settlers\\_take\\_over\\_wadi\\_al\\_qalt\\_community\\_land](https://www.btselem.org/settler_violence/202409_lechathila_farm_military_assists_settlers_take_over_wadi_al_qalt_community_land)
- Bugden, D., Evensen, D., & Stedman, R. (2017). A drill by any other name: Social representations, framing, and legacies of natural resource extraction in the fracking industry. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 29, 62–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2017.05.011>
- Buschini, F., & Guillou, D. (2022). Diffusion, propagation, propaganda: And then came effusion. *A new mode of communication for social representations. Papers on Social Representations*, 31, 11.1–11.21.
- Canetti, D., Elad-Strenger, J., Lavi, I., Guy, D., & Bar-Tal, D. (2019). Exposure to political violence and support for vicious cycles of conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63(1), 68–100.
- Castro, P., & Gomes, I. (2005). Genetically modified organisms in the Portuguese press: Thematization and anchoring. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 35(1), 1-17.
- Chomsky, N., & Pappé, I. (2015). *On Palestine*. Haymarket Books.
- Ciler, M. (2024). *Critical discourse analysis of Al Jazeera's and the New York Times' online news articles: 'Israel declares state of war'* [Undergraduate thesis, University of Rijeka]. Repository of the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:186:870110>
- Cohrs, J. C., Uluğ, Ö. M., Stahel, L., & Kışlıoğlu, R. (2015). Ethos of conflict and beyond: Differentiating social representations of conflict. In E. Halperin & K. Sharvit (Eds.), *The social psychology of intractable conflicts* (pp. 35–56). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17861-5\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17861-5_3)
- Cohen, C., Halperin, E., Porat, R., & Bar-Tal, D. (2015). The differential effects of dehumanization types on support for aggressive policies in intractable conflict. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 60, 11–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2015.04.003>
- Daher-Nashif, S. (2021). Colonial management of death: To be or not to be dead in Palestine. *Current Sociology*, 69(7), 945-962.
- Debord, G. (2012). *Society of the Spectacle*. Bread and Circuses Publishing.

- Della Porta, D., Mendoza Sandoval, L., Portos, M., & Stagni, F. (2025). 'Free Palestine!': Protesting Israel's war on Gaza in Italy and Spain. *South European Society and Politics*, 30(2), 227–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2025.2523042>
- De Morais, S. (2024). *War of words: How media shapes perceptions of Gaza 2023, 2024* [Master's thesis, Columbia University]. Columbia University Academic Commons.
- Eldin, S. S. (2019). Discursive construction of Palestinians in Israeli newspapers' headlines. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 12(2), 191–210. [https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr\\_00006\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr_00006_1)
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor. (2024, July 24). *Gaza: Video analysis shows Israeli drones killing starving civilians waiting for aid in Gaza City*. <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6426/Gaza%3A-Video-analysis-shows-Israeli-drones-killing-starving-civilians-waiting-for-aid-in-Gaza-City>
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.
- Falk, Richard and Tilley, Virginia Q. "Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid." *Palestine and the Israeli Occupation 1, No. 1* (Spring 2017): 1-65.
- Fassin, D. (2011). *Humanitarian reason: A moral history of the present*. University of California Press.
- Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. H. (1965). The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2(1), 64–90.
- Gondwe, G., & Walcott, C. (2024). Victims or villains? How editorial cartoons depict the 2023 Israel–Palestine war. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2023-0061>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Eds. & Trans.). International Publishers.

- Hallin, D. C. (1986). *The uncensored war: The media and Vietnam*. University of California Press.
- Hammami, R. (2019). Destabilizing mastery and the machine: Palestinian agency and gendered embodiment at Israeli military checkpoints. *Current Anthropology*, 60(S19), S87-S97. <https://doi.org/10.1086/699906>
- Harder, R. A., Sevenans, J., & Van Aelst, P. (2017). Intermedia agenda setting in the social media age: How traditional players dominate the news agenda in election times. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 22(3), 275–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161217704969>
- Haslam, N., & Stratemeyer, M. (2016). Recent research on dehumanization. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 11, 25–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.03.009>
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon.
- Höijer, B. (2011). Social representations theory: A new theory for media research. *Nordicom Review*, 32(2), 3–16.
- Howarth, C. (2006). A social representation is not a quiet thing: Exploring the critical potential of social representations theory. *British journal of social psychology*, 45(1), 65-86
- Human Rights Watch. (2024, July 17). *October 7 crimes against humanity, war crimes by Hamas-led groups*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/17/october-7-crimes-against-humanity-war-crimes-hamas-led-groups>
- International Court of Justice. (2024, January 26). *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel): Order on provisional measures*. <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192/orders>
- Iqtait, A. (2025). From conditionality to weaponisation: The transformation of aid in Palestine post-October 2023. *Third World Quarterly*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2025.2532005>
- Kaposi, D. (2019). Hope and dread in representing Palestine–Israel: A case study of editorials in the British broadsheets. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 25(4), 281–291. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000413>

- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 26(3), 369–386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500200169>
- Kemp, A. (2020). Settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel: Critiquing the critique. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 10(3), 399–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2019.1639710>
- Kim, S.-H., Carvalho, J. P., & Davis, A. G. (2010). Talking about terrorism: National and international newspaper framing of the 2005 London bombings. *International Communication Gazette*, 72(4–5), 361–378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048510362711>
- Knüpfer, C. B., & Entman, R. M. (2018). Framing conflicts in digital and transnational media environments. *Media, war & conflict*, 11(4), 476-488.
- Levitt, H. M., Morrill, Z., Collins, K. M., & Rizo, J. L. (2021). The methodological integrity of critical qualitative research: Principles to support design and research review. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(3), 357.
- Malm, A. (2024). *The Destruction of Palestine Is the Destruction of the Earth*. Verso Books. <https://www.versobooks.com/products/3400-the-destruction-of-palestine-is-the-destruction-of-the-earth>
- Maoz, I., & McCauley, C. (2008). Threat, dehumanization, and support for retaliatory aggressive policies in intractable conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52(1), 93–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002707308597>
- Marková, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and social representations*. Cambridge University Press.
- Markkula, E. (2025). *A critical discourse analysis of the representation of Israel and Palestine in American media* [Bachelor's thesis, University of Turku].
- Mbembe, A. (2006). Necropolitics. *Raisons politiques*, 21(1), 29-60.
- Miladi, N., & Miladi, A. (2025). Livestreamed genocide: Framing analysis of Palestinians in the BBC and i24 News coverage of the war on Palestine (2023–24). *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*. Advance online publication. [https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms\\_00174\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms_00174_1)
- Moscovici, S. (1984). The phenomenon of social representations. In R. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social representations* (pp. 3–69). Cambridge University Press.

- Nicholson, C. (2016). The role of historical representations in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In C. Howarth & E. Andreouli (Eds.), *The social psychology of everyday politics* (pp. 93–109). Routledge.
- Nicholson, C., & Howarth, C. (2018). The normative and dynamic intergroup approach to social representations. In G. Sammut, E. Andreouli, G. Gaskell, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of social representations* (pp. 159–176). Cambridge University Press.
- Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press.
- Oeberst, A., & Imhoff, R. (2019). Collectively biased representations of the past: Ingroup bias in Wikipedia articles about intergroup conflicts. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 58(2), 400–424. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12284>
- Opatow, S. (1990). Moral exclusion and injustice: An introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1990.tb00268.x>
- Pappé, I. (2006). *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld Publications.
- Parker, I. (2007). Critical psychology: What it is and what it is not. *Social and personality psychology compass*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Peel, E., & Newman, B. (2023). “Sticks and stones?” Researching transphobic violence and harm using public media data. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 31(1), 25–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-022-09530-7>
- Peled-Elhanan, N. (2012). *Palestine in Israeli school books: Ideology and propaganda in education*. I. B. Tauris.
- Psaltis, C. (2016). Representations of the past and collective memory in divided Cyprus: A discursive psychological approach. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(2), 139–144. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000141>
- Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. H., Jr., & Grant, A. E. (Eds.). (2001). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410605689>
- Reyes-Sosa, H., Larrañaga Egilegor, M., Dos Santos, T., Perez-Marin, L., & Alvarez-Montero, F. (2020). Press ideology as an epistemological connector between framing theory and social representations theory: An analysis of violence and drug trafficking in the Mexican

- press. *Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Science*, 54, 179–195.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-019-09498-z>
- Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Robinson, P. (2021). Democracies and war propaganda in the 21st century. Organisation for Propaganda Studies. (Original book chapter accepted by Edward Elgar; author's version published online.)
- Roy, L. A. (2012). Culturally unconscious: Intercultural implications of *The New York Times*' representation of the Israel/Palestine conflict. *Review of Communication*, 12(1), 15–31.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2011.638346>
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Sayegh, F. (2012). Zionist colonialism in Palestine (1965). *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2(1), 206–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648833>
- Seidel, T., Dana, T., & Tartir, A. (2021). Palestinian political economy: Enduring struggle against settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and neoliberalism. In A. Tartir, T. Dana, & T. Seidel (Eds.), *Political economy of Palestine* (pp. 1–27). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68643-7\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68643-7_1)
- Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2000). Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news. *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 93–109.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02843.x>
- Shaw, M. (2025). The Genocide that Changed the World. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1-15.
- Shoman, H., Ajour, A., Ababneh, S., Jabiri, A., Pratt, N., Repo, J., & Aldossari, M. (2025). Feminist silences in the face of Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people: A call for decolonial praxis against complicity. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 32, 1668–1675.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13258>
- Sproule, J. M. (1987). Propaganda studies in American social science: The rise and fall of the critical paradigm. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73(1), 60–78.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638709383794>
- Stahel, L., & Cohrs, J. C. (2015). Socially shared representations of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict among Swiss citizens. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 21(4), 556–562. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000154>

- Staerklé, C., Clémence, A., & Spini, D. (2011). Social representations: A normative and dynamic intergroup approach. *Political Psychology*, 32(5), 759–768.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00839.x>
- Steur, D., & Oomen, J. (2025). “What our ruling class has decided will be normal”: On how a digitized visual economy constructs, enables, and contests the Gaza genocide. *Dialogues on Digital Society*, 29768640251378206.
- Suleiman, R., & Ben-David, S. (2017). Entertainment and stereotype representation of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel in reality shows on Israeli television. *Israel Studies Review*, 32(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3167/isr.2017.320102>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1974). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.
- Tickin, M. (2011). How biology travels: A humanitarian trip. *Body & Society*, 17(2–3), 129–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X11400764>.
- Tileagă, C. (2007). Ideologies of moral exclusion: A critical discursive reframing of depersonalization, delegitimization and dehumanization. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(4), 717–737. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466607X186894>
- Tomicic, A., & Berardi, A. (2018). Constructing the enemy through symbolic resources: A socio-psychological analysis of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 52, 219–237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-017-9404-2>
- United Nations Human Rights Council. (2023). *Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/52/76)*.  
<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-council-hears-that-700000-israeli-settlers-are-living-illegally-in-the-occupied-west-bank-meeting-summary-excerpts/>
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2025, October 2). *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip—Humanitarian Situation Update #327*.  
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-humanitarian-situation-update-327>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. SAGE.
- Veracini, L. (2013). The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Israel, and the Occupation. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 42(2), 26–42. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2013.42.2.26>

- Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2020). An emotional turn in journalism studies? *Digital Journalism*, 8(2), 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1697626>
- Wallach, Y. (2011). Trapped in mirror-images: The rhetoric of maps in Israel/Palestine. *Political Geography*, 30(7), 358–369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.07.005>
- Wolfsfeld, G. (2004). *Media and the path to peace*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yiftachel, O. (2023). Deepening apartheid: The political geography of colonizing Israel/Palestine. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 4, 981867. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.981867>
- Zembylas, M. (2025). Rethinking positionality statements in research: From looking back to building solidarity. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2025.2475762>

## Appendix A. Corpus of News Articles Analyzed

- Adwan, I., & Federman, J. (2023, October 9). *Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas, which vows to execute hostages*. Associated Press.  
<https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-gaza-hamas-which-vows-to-execute-hostages-267fee64d7413f6f6a8b2e423a228872>
- Debre, I., Kullab, S., & Jahjouh, M. (2023, October 12). *The morgue at Gaza's biggest hospital is overflowing as Israeli attacks intensify*. Associated Press.  
<https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-health-hospitals-gaza-84698431640536c4b9a1ef6c7de662dd>
- Hamas kills 40 babies and children — beheading some of them — at Israeli kibbutz: report*. (2023, October 10). New York Post.
- Israeli ambassador Gilad Erdan calls Hamas attack on Israel “truly unprecedented”: This is our 9/11*. (2023, October 8). New York Post.
- Israeli forces raid Gaza as pressure builds for cease-fire*. (2023, October 27). *The New York Times*.
- Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu tells Congress Hamas “barbarism” must lose*. (2024, July 24). *New York Post*.
- Landler, M., & Bergman, R. (2023, November 3). *As Gaza war enters new phase, Israel faces pressure over civilian deaths*. *The New York Times*.
- Propper, D. (2024, May 6). *Israel instructs Palestinians to evacuate parts of Rafah as ground offensive looms*. *New York Post*.
- Vincent, I. (2023, October 7). *Israel launches major airstrikes in Gaza, Netanyahu vows Hamas "will pay a price it has never known"*. *New York Post*.  
<https://nypost.com/2023/10/07/news/israel-launches-major-airstrikes-netanyahu-vows-hamas-will-pay-a-price-it-has-never-known/>
- Vinograd, C. (2024, May 7). *Israel's closures of 2 Gaza border crossings prompt alarm over humanitarian aid*. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/07/world/middleeast/rafah-gaza-border-aid.html>

## Appendix B. Extract-to-Source Map

Mapping of extract numbers (n1–n122) to corpus sources

n1 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, “As Gaza war enters new phase, Israel faces pressure over civilian deaths.”

n2 → Associated Press (Adwan & Federman), October 9, 2023, “Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas, which vows to execute hostages.”

n3 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, same as n1.

n4 → Associated Press (Debre, Kullab, & Jahjouh), October 12, 2023, “The morgue at Gaza’s biggest hospital is overflowing as Israeli attacks intensify.”

n5 → The New York Times, October 27, 2023, “Israeli forces raid Gaza as pressure builds for cease-fire.”

n6 → Associated Press (Adwan & Federman), October 9, 2023, same as n2.

n7 → The New York Times, October 27, 2023, same as n5.

n8 → Associated Press (Adwan & Federman), October 9, 2023, same as n2.

n9 → Associated Press (Debre, Kullab, & Jahjouh), October 12, 2023, same as n4.

n10 → The New York Times, October 27, 2023, same as n5.

n11 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, same as n1.

n12 → Associated Press (Adwan & Federman), October 9, 2023, same as n2.

n13 → New York Post, October 10, 2023, “ Hamas kills 40 babies and children — beheading some of them — at Israeli kibbutz: report.” (appears in analysis text).

n14 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, same as n1.

n15 → Associated Press (Adwan & Federman), October 9, 2023, “Israel strikes and seals off Gaza after incursion by Hamas...” (appears in analysis text).

n16 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, same as n1.

n17 → The New York Times (Vinograd), May 7, 2024, “Israel’s closures of 2 Gaza border crossings prompt alarm over humanitarian aid.”

n18 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, same as n1.

n19 → New York Post (Propper), May 6, 2024, “Israel instructs Palestinians to evacuate parts of Rafah as ground offensive looms.”

n20 → The New York Times (Landler & Bergman), November 3, 2023, same as n1.

n21 → The New York Times (Vinograd), May 7, 2024, same as n17.

n22 → New York Post, July 24, 2024, “Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu tells Congress Hamas ‘barbarism’ must lose.”