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**Palestine Media Watch and the U.S. News Media:
Strategies for Change and Resistance**

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Dedication

To G-Ma. We miss you.

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**Palestine Media Watch and the U.S. News Media:
Strategies for Change and Resistance**

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Toward the start of the Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000, activists formed a media watchdog group called Palestine Media Watch (PMW) to challenge U.S. news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tired of coverage that blamed the conflict on Palestinian terrorism, PMW monitored news coverage, met with newswriters, and bombarded news organizations with complaints in an attempt to root the conflict's cause in Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. I study PMW's efforts to produce change in coverage, and examine its campaigns' effects.

Most critical research examines the news system's production of "propaganda" and news models suggest that media monitoring is one mechanism through which an entire "ideological air" is supported. "Guardian watchdogs," like the Israel lobby, guard the ideological boundaries around news content that are erected by others. This study considers PMW's efforts in terms articulated by the dialogic and dialectical models, which gives agency to dissident movements and requires study of the strategic interactions between media and movements to understand framing struggles. These

models suggest that “dissident watchdogs,” like PMW, can affect news coverage. What is not clear is the extent to which dissident watchdogs can affect news content when they can make appeals that resonate with professional journalism but that do not resonate with the country’s ideological air.

I examine PMW’s strategies to produce content changes between 2000 and 2004, detail the group’s interactions with newswriters, and document the outcomes of those interactions to understand the struggle to affect media framing. The watchdog, when it systematically monitored coverage and individually critiqued news staff, produced substantive changes in content and practice but these were limited in number. When the watchdog bombarded news organizations with complaints it was able to produce several superficial changes, but these changes resulted in no meaningful impact on the news frame. These findings indicate that the dominant narrative is incorporative enough to accommodate “journalistically useful” points without resulting in a fundamental or substantive change in the frames that inform newswork. Thus, the emergence of dissident media monitors to “neutralize” guardian monitors is only one step toward affecting the entire “ideological air” that informs newswork of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other issues.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Palestine Media Watch and U.S. News Media

Introduction

On 27 December 2008, Israel initiated Operation Cast Lead by launching air strikes against Palestinians in Gaza. By the time Israel's assault ended on 18 January 2009 approximately 1400 Palestinians had been killed, most of whom were civilians. The *New York Times* characterized Cast Lead as an Israeli response to Palestinian rocket attacks. The first story opened by stating, "The Israeli Air Force on Saturday launched a massive attack on Hamas targets throughout Gaza in retaliation for the recent heavy rocket fire from the area" (El-Khodary & Kershner, 2008). The *Times* stated, "the Bush administration issued blistering criticism of Hamas, saying the group had provoked Israel's airstrikes on Gaza by firing rockets into southern Israel" (Pear, 2008). Journalists reported, "Waves of Israeli airstrikes destroyed Hamas security facilities in Gaza on Saturday in a crushing response to the group's rocket fire, killing more than 225 – the highest one day toll in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in decades" (El-Khodary & Bronner, 2008).

Following Cast Lead, the *New York Times's* Ethan Bronner described the difficulty of reporting the conflict in a column titled "The Bullets in My In-Box." Bronner reported that he had received complaints from both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine readers. "Since the war started on Dec. 27," Bronner wrote, "I have received hundreds of messages about my coverage. They are generally not offering congratulations on a job well done" (Bronner, 2009). Each side promoted a particular narrative; for the pro-Israel

side the conflict was about Jewish survival while the other side claimed that the conflict was about European colonization of Palestinian land. Whenever reporting deviated from their respective narratives, they cried foul. Pro-Israel writers called the *Times* anti-Semitic, and one pro-Palestine writer wrote, “Thanks to you and other scum like yourself Israel can now kill hundreds and you can report the whole thing like it was some random train wreck” (Bronner, 2009).

During the Israeli airstrikes Ahmed Bouzid, a computer scientist who had founded the Philadelphia-based Palestine Media Watch, a pro-Palestine media watchdog organization, began posting on the organization’s www.facebook.com page and on Palestine Media Watch’s blog (pmwatchletters.blogspot.com) essays he had written about U.S. news media coverage of the conflict, an action call in an attempt to mobilize activists to lobby the news media to correct for what he called failures in coverage, and talking points to enable activists to “help you answer the Israeli propaganda machine’s talking points” (www.facebook.com post, 2008, December 31).

These events indicate that pro-Palestine media watchdogs have become active and have targeted the news media in enough numbers that journalists have begun to write about them. That this was not the first time pro-Palestine activists and watchdogs had attempted to lobby the news media for coverage more in line with their narrative suggests that these groups have recognized the importance of media activism and have sustained that activism, at least when violence has spiked. Indeed, the Arab-American Anti Discrimination Committee (ADC) was founded in 1980 and possesses a Media

Monitoring Team that focuses on responding to stereotypical portrayals of Arabs in the media.

But Pro-Palestine media watchdogs organized most intensely following the beginning of the Al Aqsa *Intifada* near the end of September 2000 in an attempt to change the framework from within which the U.S. news media reported the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestine Media Watch was formed in 2000 to critique U.S. news media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and suggest news ways of covering it. If Americans Knew was formed in 2001 to contest news coverage of the conflict and educate journalists about flaws in coverage. More recently, *WRITE!* was established in an attempt to influence U.S. news media coverage of the conflict by encouraging activists to write letters and opinion columns. Palestine Media Project was formed to monitor the U.S. news media's coverage of the conflict and lobby newswriters.

Palestine Media Watch (PMW) was perhaps the most active of the pro-Palestine media watchdog organizations. PMW was most active between 2000 and 2004 – between the start of the Al Aqsa *Intifada* and through the first year of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. The group issued several reports on U.S. news media coverage of the conflict; massively mobilized its members to lobby newswriters in an attempt to influence news coverage; claimed over 42 chapters in the U.S., initiated several PMW chapters across the globe, and, at its peak, claimed tens of thousands of members; and allied with and inspired other pro-Palestine media watchdogs, including If Americans Knew and *WRITE!* PMW's grassroots membership targeted several news organizations across the country, including the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street*

Journal, Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Post, Charlotte Observer, Atlanta Journal Constitution, CNN, and several smaller news outlets.

Study Purpose

This study analyzes PMW's media monitoring and lobbying strategies in order to document its level of influence on several of the news organizations it targeted, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Post, Charlotte Observer, Atlanta Journal Constitution, and CNN*. PMW monitored these news outlets between 2000 and 2004, and attempted to convince them that they produced a narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that was unfair in that it represented Israeli violence as a defensive response to initial Palestinian violence despite the international consensus that Israel's occupation is illegal. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, this has long been the dominant narrative of the conflict, and I refer to this narrative as the ideological paradigm – undergirded by the strategic and special relationships that exist between the U.S. and Israel -- that informs coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict throughout this dissertation. For PMW, U.S. news organizations reversed the real order of events by subscribing to this paradigm, so its activists argued that news media could more accurately represent the conflict by describing Palestinian violence as resistance to Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories.

In this dissertation, I draw on media-movement literature to examine PMW's efforts to influence representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as constructed by these news organizations between 2000 and 2004. The activist group attempted, at least

initially, to influence the ideological paradigm that informed coverage of the conflict by influencing and trying to define the proper professional paradigm from which newswriters should accomplish their work. They noted journalistic deviations from “the facts” and balance as a professional tenet to convince news organizations that their work was ideologically unfair because how they practiced their profession was unfair.

I study the media monitor’s interactions with those newswriters the group lobbied, and identify journalists’ resistance to making revisions based on PMW’s critique as well as the concessions that those news organizations made to the monitoring group. PMW documented its strategies to influence these news organizations, its successes, and its failures in its archives, which include the monitoring reports it produced, discussions on its listservs, and the books and pamphlets it produced. Along with these archives, I interviewed key leaders in PMW’s movement as well as the newswriters PMW most actively lobbied in order to understand the interactions that took place between PMW and the news organizations it monitored and lobbied and the effects on content and practices that resulted from those interactions.¹ Finally, I examined news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the papers monitored by PMW as well as news and trade journal coverage of PMW to document the range of changes news organizations made in the wake of PMW campaigns. The goal is to understand the relative power of what I am calling dissident media monitors in the newsmaking process, but to understand the relevance of this study at the conceptual level I need to briefly describe the significance of the case.

¹ IRB Approval Protocol # 2008-12-0037

The Significance of the Case: PMW as a Dissident Watchdog

PMW is unlike the more traditional social movements that past researchers of media-movement interactions have studied. Whereas traditional social movements create public events that fit the requirements of a news event that attracts media attention as a means to gain publicity for their cause, PMW is a media watchdog, and unlike traditional social movements, watchdogs operate privately. That is, watchdogs do not seek to create public events for the news media to cover but they analyze coverage over a period of time (or claim to) and directly express their dissatisfaction with coverage of issues important to them by meeting face-to-face with newswriters or mobilizing activists to bombard a news organization with complaints over the phone or email or in a letter-writing campaign. Traditional movements take journalistic practices and what is considered newsworthy as a given, and seek to make themselves newsworthy according to the requirements of the profession. Watchdogs, by contrast, monitor news coverage of issues important to them and lobby a news organization to revise its coverage by arguing that coverage was flawed because the organization violated the procedures of professionalism, trying to define those professional procedures for journalists, or that coverage was flawed because the professional practices themselves are flawed. Whereas traditional movements seek to control the representation of themselves or their issue by creating events that news media cover, media watchdogs produce flak – or negative feedback about news content or journalistic practices. Media monitors seek to control the representation of an issue by arguing privately and publicly with newswriters that coverage is flawed in some way.

When there is a single issue over which two competing sets of media monitoring groups seek to influence coverage, I propose that we call those watchdogs whose interests and interpretations are more aligned with political and ideological power “guardian” groups and those whose interests and interpretations are less aligned with power “dissident” groups. The extent to which flak-producers are guardians of a dominant order or dissidents who seek to undo a dominant order is somewhat relative and contingent upon overlapping interests and interpretations that exist between media monitors, power, and news media, as well as the strategic choices made by flak-producers.

As I will argue below pro-Israel flak-producers, or media monitors, are guardians of both a positive U.S.-Israel relationship and, because the U.S.-Israel relationship is justified for more general strategic reasons with respect to the Middle East and Eurasia, U.S. foreign policy. To the extent that their media monitoring and lobbying strategies accept journalistic practices as a given and to the extent that they seek to define those practices for journalists, pro-Israel groups are also guardians of professional journalistic practice. Yet, beyond guarding the ideological boundaries that inform newswork – that is, the ideologies of U.S. power that newsworkers accept – these groups may also seek to push, though not necessarily successfully, news media to commit themselves more wholeheartedly to the premises of U.S. power. Guardians seek to curb the occasional tendency by news organizations to approach or breach ideological boundaries by imposing costs on news organizations when those boundaries are approached or breached; they are guardians of those boundaries – as opposed to erectors of those boundaries – because news organizations routinely rely on information from sources who

provide information and interpretations about policy issues that are consistent with their interests.

As guardians, they do not need to seek dramatic changes in coverage to have influence but may seek to push the boundaries so that they are more consistent with their interests and interpretations by “working the refs” in an attempt to decrease the frequency with which newswriters occasionally tend toward those boundaries, whether real or perceived, and to maximize the distance between those boundaries and journalistic work. A guardian’s immediate and concentrated activities following particular episodes of news coverage are themselves indicators about where those boundaries lie.

By contrast, dissidents’ interests and interpretations about an issue important to them do not mesh well with the perceived interests of dominant factions in elite policy circles; their frameworks for understanding policy, in this case U.S. foreign policy, and the social world are not in line with dominant U.S. foreign policy practices or the dominant culture; they cannot necessarily rely on policymakers with similar interpretations and values to attract and maintain news media attention; and they themselves do not possess routine access to the press. News organizations, that is, do not organize their reporters around a beat whose officials routinely provide information and interpretations about a policy issue that a dissident would consider in service to its interests or reflect the world in a way that resonates with its interpretation of it. Yet dissidents may also make strategic choices so that they become “less dissident” with respect to their issue, and they do so by finding ways in which their interests and interpretations about the world align with the powerful in an attempt to ally themselves

with the powerful. That is, dissidents may seek to “guard” the practices of power itself, and may dissent from that power only with respect to a singular issue. PMW, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, generally accepted the legitimacy of U.S. foreign policy but dissented from the specific manifestation of that policy as it related to Israel and the Palestinian territories; in some instances, PMW sought to define Israel as a problem for the U.S.’s ability to carry out its foreign policy objectives. Moreover, dissidents may also “guard” professional journalism but seek to define it in a way that advances their interests with respect to a singular issue.

The examination of dissident media monitoring and flak-production is important because, as I will show, theoretical models focus on how the news produces “propaganda” that serves elite interests and examine the role that guardians play reinforcing that propaganda as opposed to the contestation of it by dissident watchdogs. Because significant attention has been paid to propaganda at the expense of examining collective and active resistance to that propaganda, we do not know about the extent to which dissident media flak-producers can influence news representations of issues important to them. To help remedy this gap in the literature, I examine how an exemplary dissident media watchdog strategized to affect news coverage of an issue important to it, and I study its interactions with newswriters whose responses to the watchdog’s activists represent strategic choices meant to defend the content that they produce. I ask how the strategic interactions between activists and newswriters create new conditions or relations between media and movements that require or suggest

alternative strategic choices by activists to change news media representations and newswriters to defend the content they produce.

Because I anticipate that journalists will resist making revisions to their content and professional practices following media monitoring campaigns but also make concessions to watchdogs when the criticisms they produce are resonant because they appeal to journalism's sense of public duty and professional obligations, this study will also have much to say about the nature of and struggle to define the "social contract" that exists between the public and press. Activists can make criticisms that resonate with newswriters' sense of professional duties and obligations to the public but that do not resonate with the ideologies of U.S. power that newswriters accept as they accomplish their work, so I examine how newswriters negotiate the tension that dissidents can create between journalists' sense of public or professional duty and their ideological commitments to the frameworks that inform their coverage.

This dissertation will help identify types of criticisms whose implied revisions are too threatening for news organizations to legitimate, but it will also identify what types of criticisms resonate enough with journalists that newswriters will suggest and make revisions to coverage of an issue. Understanding how strategic interactions between dissident media watchdogs and newswriters enable and limit what media watchdogs can accomplish will tell us not only about the potentials of and limits to dissident media monitoring to shape media representation and news practices but also about how newswriters seek to reconcile the inevitable tensions that arise between their sense of commitment to the public and actual practice.

PMW is an ideal case from which to make inferences about the potential of and limits to the role that dissident media monitors play in the newsmaking process because it challenged coverage of a sensitive issue that has implications for U.S. foreign policy and because it developed criticisms that resonated with the news organizations it targeted. The group remained active for years, adjusted its strategies in the wake of journalistic resistance to its campaigns, subjected news organizations to sustained media monitoring and lobbying campaigns; and, as I will now show, it was a thoughtful group that was familiar with debates surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and knowledgeable about the internal workings of the press.

For the most part inactive since 2005, PMW is a media monitoring group officially formed shortly after the start of the Palestinian Al Aqsa *Intifada* in 2000 to combat mainstream news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that its members claim unfairly favored the official Israeli narrative of the conflict. Tired of coverage that defined the root cause of the conflict as Palestinian terrorism, PMW organized in an effort to convince news organizations to change their ideological paradigm for how they covered the conflict. PMW's activists wanted U.S. news media to blame the conflict on Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, which is illegal under international law.

The watchdog was formed after Dr. Ahmed Bouzid, a computer scientist living in the Philadelphia area, published a letter in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that complained about the paper's coverage. Soon, other concerned Philadelphia-area residents contacted Bouzid, and he encouraged them to write to the paper as well. These residents and Bouzid then met with *Inquirer* staff, and through word of mouth the group's efforts

spread to activists in other cities, so that by October 2000 activists were monitoring and lobbying several papers, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Boston Globe* (Mango, 2003). Soon, PMW activists were monitoring and lobbying news organizations outside the major East and West coast cities and were targeting news media in Detroit, Atlanta, Texas, and Florida, just to name a few cities and states. At its peak PMW claimed “an active network of more than 10,000 people,” organized 42 chapters across the U.S., and was able to inspire and coordinate local media monitoring groups in over a dozen countries across the globe.

The watchdog created listservs for its general activist base, regional listservs (e.g., the Northwest, Florida), listservs for particular classes of people (e.g., college students), and listservs for those focused on a particular news outlet (e.g., CNN). The watchdog employed the Internet to connect its activists and encouraged local activists to bring their issues to the national and transnational activist network via the Internet, and in fact, “for the first year of work, the group’s leaders never met in person” (Mango, 2003).

PMW was for the most part a decentralized and democratic group. According to Mango (2003), who wrote a profile of the group in *In the Fray* magazine, this type of organizational structure proved beneficial to the group: “The media is a fast-moving industry, and quick response time is essential to success. Waiting for a centralized group to react to a specific incident would have incapacitated the organization. Each city had to be trusted to respond to its own initiative.” As I will show later, PMW’s local groups were able to bring global attention to their complaints about local media issues, forcing changes in local news practices.

Bouزيد, who acted as the group's president, provided media monitoring templates and lists of experts to be interviewed to new local groups that helped systematize PMW's media monitoring and lobbying campaigns. In each new city, Bouزيد recruited Media Watch Heads who acted as local leaders for local activists and who received instructions for monitoring news media from Bouزيد and instructions for making meetings with news staff as productive as possible. In turn, the Watch Heads would inform the activist network about "offenses" made by local media with regard to coverage of the conflict, which prompted the larger activist network to contact local news organizations with their criticisms. The group also initiated a "Media Gadfly" campaign in which PMW activists would, once a week, bombard a news organization with complaints following an example of poor coverage, and a "Column writing campaign" to encourage PMWers to submit potential op-ed columns to papers across the country.

PMW also recruited an impressive advisory board that by April 2001 included Hanhan Ashrawi, a Palestinian activist and scholar; Norman Finkelstein, an American political scientist and critic; Tanya Reinhart, an Israeli scholar and critic of the Israeli occupation; Mustapha Barghouti, a Palestinian activist and legislator; and Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, both critics of U.S. foreign policy and the U.S. news media who co-authored one of the most important books on the U.S. news media in *Manufacturing Consent*. Bouزيد himself possesses a Ph.D., and many of PMW's leaders are very well educated. All leaders are well versed on the debates surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and one is even an expert on U.S.-Saudi relations.

To a limited degree, PMW attempted to transform its critique of news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a general media reform issue. The group joined forces with the National Arab American Journalists Association (NAAJA) in 2002, and Bouzid became the president of NAAJA's Philadelphia chapter. He told his group,

PMWATCH knows full well that criticism alone will not bring about a greater presence for the Palestinian narrative in the mainstream media, and so we are pushing constructively building that presence with writers and journalists who promote Palestinian rights. It is a shame indeed that not one pro-Palestinian Arab/Muslim is a full time, regular columnist on a national scale. That needs to change, and this is a modest effort towards that goal.²

The watchdog also allied with Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), and Bouzid became at least peripherally involved with the media reform movement as indicated by the fact that he spoke at the National Conference on Media Reform in November 2003 about Palestinian issues. Instead of accusing news organizations of "bias," Bouzid encouraged activists to speak of "shabby journalism" and ways for news organizations to improve that journalism. "Speak of the facts and the desire for better coverage," Bouzid told his activists. "The tone of your requests should be that all you are trying to do is help them be a better paper to their own readers."

Besides sending its complaints and monitoring reports to the specific news organizations it targeted, PMW also sent its reports to professional journalism organizations, including the Committee of Concerned Journalists and the Association of Opinion Page Editors. For example, when Tony Auth, a political cartoonist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, was announced the 2003 winner of the Thomas Nast Prize in

² Unless otherwise cited in text, quotes and paraphrases in this dissertation come from PMW's archives, including its website, monitoring reports of news coverage, and listservs.

2002, Bouzid encouraged his fellow activists to contact the prize committee and express their opposition to him based on PMW's monitoring reports that concluded that Auth had consistently and negatively caricatured Islam. Bouzid also encouraged members to try to publish in professional magazines, including the *American Journalism Review*, *Editor & Publisher*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Online Journalism Review*, and FAIR's *Extra!*

Although PMW attempted to turn its issue into a general media reform issue, its critique of journalism's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian coverage was not that professional tenets of journalism were fundamentally flawed but that news organizations had violated their commitment to professionalism when covering the conflict. That is, activists sought not the complete revision of journalism's craft but instead accepted the terms of professionalism and struggled over what those terms meant in practice. PMW activists, for example, were instructed to argue that news organization reports deviated from the facts about the conflict by failing to report about the occupation and the consensus in the international community that the occupation is illegal. Activists also argued that journalists failed in their task to balance competing worldviews by adopting the official Israeli narrative of the conflict as their own, so they pressured news organizations to include more of the Palestinian narrative.

PMW's strategy, then, was a pragmatic strategy in that the media monitoring group accepted professional tenets as a given. As Barker-Plummer (1995) has documented, traditional social movements have found pragmatic media strategies more useful for introducing their frames into news content than more radical strategies that

seek to fundamentally reshape instead of exploit journalistic practice. Judging from this observation, then, PMW's activists may have maximized their chances for success.

Nor was the watchdog "dissident" with respect to general U.S. foreign policy. Again, PMW sought a pragmatic strategy by seeking to align itself with U.S. policy, increasing the chances of success. Bouzid urged his activists to find ways to create messages that tapped into "American values." He claimed that activists could tap into an American sense of morality, and displayed a deep faith in the public's ability to care about the Palestinians. Americans, for example, "think that the rule of law and basic human rights should be respected" (2002, p. 17) and therefore argued that activists should mention that Israel had violated both. He also claimed, "Americans are deeply vested in the idea of democracy and self-determination" (2002, p. 18). Activists should have tried, therefore, to point out that the Sharon and Bush administrations had undermined America's commitment to democracy by seeking to oust Yaser Arafat as the head of the Palestinian Authority. Writing before the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, Bouzid argued that Americans do not like it when one country occupies another peoples' land. Thus, activists should stress Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, but they should do so in a way that highlights its effect on U.S. interests; they should frame Israel and its occupation as a strategic liability for the U.S. and as a state that disregards U.S. interests. He pointed to the Jonathan Pollard spy case, Ariel Sharon's refusal to follow Bush's instructions following the 9/11 terrorist attacks when Bush instructed him to tamp down Israel's incursions into the West Bank, and Israeli officials' "cynical use of [9/11] to exploit the tragedies for their own purposes" (p. X).

Finally, PMW's leader, Bouzid, was well informed about the importance of framing the struggle for the news media, and he published three books between 2002 and 2003 to help activists learn how to frame their message and influence news media, including *Countering the Spin: A Handbook for Answering the Familiar Myths and Distortions about the Middle East Conflict*, *The Media Playbook: A Handbook for Media Activism and Criticism on the Middle East Conflict*, and *Framing the Struggle: Essays on the Middle East and the US Media*. In these books and on PMW's website and listserv, Bouzid emphasized the importance of framing the conflict for journalists. He explained,

The aim is to adopt **one common set** of expressions and words when engaging the mainstream media, with the hope of instituting [a] linguistic and therefore conceptual framework for thinking and talking about the struggle that can compete with the well-honed and carefully crafted language of the Israel-first propaganda machine [his emphasis].

Whereas pro-Israel groups repeated the terms "security" and "terrorism" to root the conflict's cause in Palestinian terrorism and explain Israel's actions as an effort to increase its security against that terrorism, Bouzid encouraged PMW activists to repeat the terms "occupation" and "independence" to frame the conflict's roots in Israel's occupation and characterize Palestinian violence as resistance against the occupation in an effort to gain independence from Israel. Repeating these terms would construct a story that would help Americans understand the Palestinian plight. Bouzid (2002, p. 15) explained:

[Activists] need to go beyond showing how Israel is mistreating the Palestinians: they need to explain *why* they [i.e. Palestinians] are doing what they are doing. Just cataloguing Israeli transgressions will not do; such cataloguing, without a framework that holds these actions together, will not result in people changing their mind about the basic narrative.

This is because:

A tightly coherent picture compels one to believe that it is based on reality, even when it is based on pure myths and falsifications. By the same token, a fragmented story, even when based on glaring reality, is hard to absorb; its reality is reduced to disconnected anecdotes, each eliciting sympathy, but together creating a world of confusion (2002, p. 79).

Finally, PMW critically evaluated and adjusted its strategies as it learned about journalistic responses to those strategies, changing tactics in an attempt to overcome journalistic defenses. It initially pursued the reframing of the conflict via what I am calling a systematic monitoring strategy. That is, PMW carefully monitored a news organization's coverage of the conflict over a period of several months, presented its findings in face-to-face meetings with news organization staff, and argued that its monitoring reports revealed that news organizations had violated their commitment to professional requirements. Activists argued, for example, that news organizations deviated from "the facts" by failing to report the conflict from within the framework of international law, failed to balance competing accounts of the same event and issue, and pointed to newswriters' public statements about their commitment to the public to suggest that there was a discrepancy between news content and journalists' stated obligations. Its archives suggest that PMW thought that this strategy would convince news organizations to repeatedly mention Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories as fact and to balance the official Israeli narrative with the Palestinian narrative. PMW adjusted its monitoring campaigns when faced with resistance from targeted newswriters, and also sought to influence news coverage via distributive action.

That is, it massively mobilized its members to bombard news organizations with complaints following incidents of coverage it considered poor.

All of these attributes suggest that PMW was well prepared for its campaigns to influence coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so that an analysis of PMW's campaigns to influence news media and the outcomes of those campaigns will yield insights about the potential of and limits to dissident power that we may expect from other dissident watchdogs.³ PMW was an extremely large, even transnational movement, and was able to put intense and immediate pressure on news organizations to revise coverage of the conflict, and the members also met individually and in small groups with the staff of the news organizations they lobbied. That PMW pursued its objectives via systematic monitoring and distributive action will tell us something about the effectiveness of differing lobbying strategies. That the media monitor accepted the tenets of professional journalism may have appealed to journalists who are careful to remain professional, so the study of PMW-media interactions will provide insights about what kinds of criticisms news organizations consider "journalistically useful." PMW was composed of thoughtful, intelligent people and relentlessly sustained its activities for years. Thus, PMW is an ideal case to examine if we want to make claims about dissident watchdog power because an analysis of PMW's strategies, interactions with

³ For example, Ahron Shapiro of the *Jerusalem Post* wrote, "The Palestine Media Watch (<http://www.pmwatch.org>) is one of the best media monitoring sites I've encountered, period," and added, "Many pro-Israel media monitoring sites could learn a lot from Palestine Media Watch." See <http://www.cambridgeforecast.org/richard863/MIDDLEEAST/PMW-ACTION.html>

newswriters, and its successes and failures will tell us something about the kind of labor required by dissidents if they are to influence news coverage and will reveal the potential power of dissidents to impact news coverage.

An examination of PMW-media interactions is also ideal for beginning to understand dissident power in the newsmaking process because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is such a sensitive topic. Out of the hot button issues that the press covers, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been called “the hottest button” (Okrent, 2005). This makes the study of the case worth pursuing because journalists are most defensive of their craft when they confront criticisms of their coverage regarding the most sensitive issues. As the most sensitive issue to cover, their defense mechanisms will be most visible. Thus, examining PMW-media interactions and what news organizations and newswriters have to say about PMW will help us identify the means through which news organizations resist revising their coverage of sensitive topics. By identifying the professional and ideological obstacles that newswriters erect during media monitoring campaigns, we can understand the limits to dissident power in the newsmaking process and discover what revisions in news content and journalistic practice newswriters allow, which will tell us something about the relationship between professional practice and the ideologies of U.S. power that journalists accept as they do their work, as well as the content of the “social contract” between the public and the news media.

Finally, as a pro-Palestine group in the U.S. -- which has a long strategic and special relationship with Israel -- PMW may be considered a “dissident among dissidents.” Although it attempted to overcome its dissidence by acting as a guardian in

some respects, the centrality of Israel to U.S. overseas objectives, the sensitive place that Israel occupies in the American psyche, and the prevalence of Orientalist attitudes in the West helped put the monitoring group at an extreme disadvantage in its ability to shape news coverage of the conflict. If we can show that PMW was able to produce changes in news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, groups that are “less dissident” may be able to produce even more meaningful changes in news coverage of issues important to them via media monitoring.

Importance of the Study

Having established that PMW is an ideal case to study, I also want to say that this study is important because media monitoring is not only intended to produce flak meant to influence media representations but also to begin a conversation about the proper role of journalism in a society. Carlson (2009, p. 273) put it this way:

Theoretically, the power of media criticism to shift attention to news practices in order to challenge existing news frames necessitates greater attention to the operations of media criticism surrounding any news controversy. To the body of news reporting on a given story, we must add the body of accompanying media criticism to gain a full view of the competition over how news generates shared meaning.

One cannot completely understand the production of news content without considering the role that media watchdogs play in the newsmaking process. So, Carlson suggests directing scholarly attention away from the production of propaganda to the contestation of that propaganda, not only by traditional social movements but by media monitoring groups as well, to more fully understand the creation of shared (and contested) meaning, which is what I do in this dissertation.

But this study is about much more than the competition over shared meaning. Given the propagation of media monitoring groups in the Internet age, including grassroots and Internet-based groups like PMW, the study of watchdogs becomes important as the conversation about journalism's normative requirements expands to the public and pressure groups. This study, then, is also about the "social contract" between the public and the press and the struggle by the people to define that contract and force news organizations to commit to it. Hayes (2008) argued that watchdogs are most effective and most useful to a democracy when they can show that news organizations have violated their social contract to the public by lobbying news organizations to revise their content, practices, and standards when news organizations deviate from the obligations imposed on them by their profession and sense of public service.

Throughout this study, I evaluate Hayes' (2008) claim by examining how the strategic interactions between a dissident watchdog group and several news organizations led to a reshaping of PMW-media relations and how those interactions led newswriters to defend the content they produced despite criticisms from activists that they admitted were valid. Hayes seems to think that a social contract between the public, as defined by professionalism and newswriters' public statements about their commitments to the public, is completely unmediated by and unattached to ideology. I argue, however, that that social contract includes contradictory stipulations that pull newswriters in competing directions and that journalists must resolve the tension that arises between those contract stipulations when dissident activists make critiques that resonate with newswriters' public service and professional senses but do not resonate with the

ideologies that inform newswork. Activists can create criticisms that are professionally resonant for newswriters precisely because they tap into newswriters' sense of professionalism and public service, but newswriters' daily work is also snagged up in routine service to a dominant ideology, so dissidents create tensions for newswriters that must be resolved when they actively critique journalistic practice.

Dissidents can create tensions precisely because there is a relative autonomy that exists between the professional and ideological paradigms that inform newswork. Even as professional practices routinely serve elite interests, professionalism itself provides a "real independence" from the direct control of powerful factions (Gitlin, 1980, p. 12). Besides legitimizing power, then, news institutions must also legitimize themselves with the public, which leads to occasional bouts with the powerful (Schudson, 2003); professionalism in journalism "has always been strongly connected to the idea of serving the public" (Kunelius & Ruusunoksa, 2008, p. 666). News media are also contradictorily tied up in power, organized to monitor but also reflect power's interests, even adopting contradictory values about respect for order and suspicion of those who establish that order (Hallin, 1986). The press, therefore, is "semi-independent" from power's ability to shape media discourse and there is a debate about the extent of that independence (see Bennett & Livingston, 2003), but the limits of that independence exist at the "core hegemonic values" of a society and whenever elites decide that the press has gone "too far" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 12). In other words, there is an *occasional* tendency toward those boundaries and a still rarer tendency to breach those boundaries, a claim even accepted

by Herman and Chomsky (2002) who note that guardian flak-producers try to “contain any deviations from the established lines” (p. 28).

When dissidents become active, then, they may be able to increase the frequency or intensity of that tendency toward boundary approaches and breaches by appealing to professional standards and norms as well as to the news media’s public interest obligations. The news media’s tendency to question the ideological paradigm that informs coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be rare but that paradigm is also more vulnerable than the organizing principles that motivate U.S. foreign policy more generally and that inform newswork of America’s role in the world. This ideological paradigm, then, is something like Gitlin’s (1980) “hegemonic frame”; while flexible and resilient it is couched underneath and within a “hegemonic ideology,” so that the frame becomes more changeable than the meta-frames within which it exists. Newswriters, for example, have been shown to expand their “news net” when events call into question the dominant narrative that Israeli violence is a response to Palestinian violence, and even to question the utility of the narrative (Handley, 2008, 2009).

This study is also important because the struggle over the words and images used by the U.S. news media to describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an ideological extension of the physical Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whereas official Israel and its supporters would have the American public believe that the conflict is about Palestinian terrorism and Israeli security, Palestinians and their supporters want the public to believe that the conflict is about the realities imposed on them by – and Palestinian resistance to – Israel’s occupation, illegal under international law, of Palestinian land. Because of the

central role that the U.S. plays in mediating the conflict, the struggle over the images and words used in the American news media represents an effort to control how the American public and officials interpret the causes of the conflict and perceive its solutions.

Winning this ideological contest goes a long way toward ‘winning’ the conflict in Israel and the Palestinian territories. The group’s strategy for changing the conditions on the ground in Israel and Palestine, then, was to revise coverage of the conflict in the U.S. news media. Its premise was that if the American public were properly educated about the conflict, then it would put pressure on the U.S. to solve the conflict in a way that served Palestinian nationalism. To affect coverage and educate the public, PMW attempted to align its objectives with U.S. power and to make pragmatic arguments about journalism’s professional practices by appealing to its public obligations.

Thus, there is a question about the potential power of an emerging Arab lobby in the U.S. to shape U.S. foreign policy and public discourse. Given shifts in U.S. geopolitical strategy and public opinion and increasing Arab American activism, opportunities have opened for the Arab lobby to influence U.S. foreign policy and media discourse. One study already discussed the strategies of the Arab lobby and its potential power to influence U.S. foreign policy (see Marrar, 2009), but here I assess the potential of that lobby to influence public discourse via its campaigns to influence news media representations of the conflict.

This study seeks to add to media-movement models that focus on resistance by studying a media watchdog as a unique social movement. The study of media-movement relationships is an important tradition in critical scholarship because it focuses on

peoples' ability to actively resist media representations and operates as an antidote to critical research that overemphasizes structural domination and ideological critique, and operates as an alternative to research that frames the outcomes of struggle over meaning in terms of all-or-nothing victory or defeat. Referring to General George Patton, Cleaver (2000) suggested that if Patton had done what critical theorists do – focus on critique, not resistance – his opponents would have “rolled over him with his army” (p. 57).

Reviewing the Frankfurt School's critical research output, Cleaver complained, “[I]f one's attention is focused uniquely on the enemy's activities on the battlefield, the battle will assuredly be lost” (p. 57). He advised scholars to produce strategic knowledge by reading struggle from the movement's point of view. Instead of viewing media-movement struggles as having all-or-nothing stakes, then, this study will demonstrate Gramscian improvements in media coverage across time. For Gramsci (1971), movements can create “molecular changes,” what I am referring to as substantive modifications of a dominant narrative, that “progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes” (p. 109).

Whereas much critical research has focused on the reasons that U.S. news organizations produce propaganda on behalf of elite interests, this study documents the attempts by a dissident watchdog, PMW, to convince news organizations that they produce propaganda and evaluates the watchdog's effectiveness in producing changes in news coverage and practice. Historically tracing PMW's activities between 2000 and 2004, this study describes PMW's strategies, documents the watchdog's strategic

interactions with newswriters, and assesses its effectiveness in producing coverage and practice changes.

Yet this study acknowledges at the outset that there are limits to dissident media watchdog power. The goal of this study, then, is to decipher the boundaries that limit what dissident media monitoring groups can accomplish and to identify the range of possible outcomes on news media representations and journalistic practices when dissident groups become active as flak-producing media monitors. I suggest that to understand those limits one must look to the material interests of powerful sources (e.g., states or corporations), the dominant meanings found in the broader culture (e.g., liberalism), and the institutional, professional, and ideological factors that shape how news is produced. With respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I suggest that we can transfer the model developed by scholars and critics who have studied the role that the Israel and Arab lobbies play shaping U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East to help understand the limits of PMW's and the Israel lobby's power to influence news media representations. The relationship between U.S. foreign policy and the Israel and Arab lobbies helps us identify those limits and possibilities. A review of that relationship will also establish the strategic and special bond that exists between Israel and the U.S. and that undergirds the dominant narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so I discuss that relationship here.

The Lobbies and U.S. Foreign Policy

It is worth reviewing what scholars and commentators have said about the ability of the Israel and Arab lobbies to influence U.S. foreign policy because, as I discuss in the next chapter, similar claims have been made with respect to the Israel lobby's ability to influence U.S. news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and as the Arab lobby becomes more active a question arises about the extent to which it can influence news coverage of the conflict. A review of the debate about the lobbies' ability to influence U.S. foreign policy may provide insights about their ability to influence U.S. news coverage of that conflict.

Two scholars who have received the most attention because of their assertions about the role of the Israel lobby in shaping U.S. foreign policy and public discourse are John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. They defined the Israel lobby as a "loose coalition of individuals and organizations who actively work to shape U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction" (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006, p. 2). This lobby, they argued, is "almost entirely" responsible for the "overall thrust of U.S. policy" in the Middle East (p. 1). With the end of the Cold War the U.S. has no strategic interests in continuing its relationship with Israel. That the U.S. has continued to arm Israel, they argued, can only be explained by the existence of a strong domestic Israel lobby that shapes U.S. foreign policy in Israel's, not the U.S.'s, interests (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

Other scholars have argued that the U.S.-Israel relationship cannot be explained by the existence of the Israel lobby, at least the way it is defined by Mearsheimer and Walt as a set of external organizations that intrude upon what would otherwise be rational

and moral behavior by the U.S. public and policymakers. Instead of defining the Israel lobby as a coalition of individuals and organizations, others have observed that U.S. public and elite support for Israel transcends any lobby, making the “lobby” the culture itself or the state (Albert, 2007; N. Chomsky, 1999; Dershowitz, 2006; Miller, 2008). Chomsky stated, “If you look at the actual influence, in my opinion, the most influential pro-Israel lobby is not AIPAC; it is American liberal intellectuals” (N. Chomsky & Achcar, 2007, p. 61).

Scholars have also observed that the U.S. has perceived strategic interests in Israel and U.S. strategic planners trump lobbies and domestic opinion when they come into conflict (N. Chomsky & Achcar, 2007, p. 62; Zunes, 2006). Stephen Zunes (2006) argued,

In a region where radical nationalism and Islamist extremism could threaten U.S. control of oil and other strategic interests, Israel has played a major role in preventing victories by radical movements, not just in Palestine but in Lebanon and Jordan as well. Israel has kept Syria, with its radical nationalist government once allied with the Soviet Union, in check, and the Israeli air force is predominant throughout the region (p. 5).

For Zunes, Mearsheimer and Walt were wrong, then, when they explained U.S. foreign policy as the result of the Israel lobby. “Indeed,” Zunes argued,

it strains credibility to assume that such an overwhelming bipartisan consensus of lawmakers would knowingly pursue policies they believe to be contrary to the national security interests of the United States. There is plenty of historical precedent, however, for a wide bipartisan consensus of lawmakers myopically pursuing policies which end up hurting U.S. interests (p. 7).

Although U.S. foreign policymakers may behave irrationally, they make their own decisions and pursue U.S. interests as they deem fit. Citing confrontations between the lobby and the Eisenhower, Reagan, Carter, and both Bush administrations, Zunes

showed that geopolitical planners' decisions trump the power of the Israel lobby and public opinion when the latter two come into conflict with the former.

The reason the Israel lobby appears powerful, most agree, is because "its agenda normally parallels the interests of those who really hold power in Washington" (Zunes, 2006, p. 8). The only reason a "pressure group will dominate access to public opinion or maintain consistent influence over policy-making," Chomsky argued, would be "if its aims are close to those of elite elements with real power" (N. Chomsky, 1999, p. 17).

Spending years helping mediate the conflict for several administrations Miller (2008) wrote,

I've come to some basic conclusions: in our system domestic politics has a strong voice in but not a veto over policymaking; AIPAC is the guardian of an already entrenched pro-Israeli tilt and is effective at making the case for a close U.S.-Israeli relationship but much less so when it comes to affecting American diplomacy toward the Arab-Israeli issue; an administration strongly committed to pursuing Arab-Israeli peace almost always trumps the opposition of domestic interest groups, but not without some messy fights (pp. 77-78).

Albert (2007) argued that the Israel lobby's influence could be found in its ability "to create an intellectual climate in which the mass public believes that the 'special interest' policies that they advocate are congruent with the 'national interest' and the nation's values" (p. 84). Operating within U.S. foreign policy frameworks has given the lobby access to power and the ability to influence U.S.-Israel relations within those particular frameworks. Marrar (2009) agreed that the U.S. strategic relationship with Israel has made the pro-Israel lobby's job much easier but has been successful in its ability to translate Israel's interests into U.S. interests, including the perception that the U.S. and Israel are partners in a single global war against terrorism. He argued that it

“may be concluded with certainty that AIPAC and the rest of the pro-Israel lobby are much more effective and powerful *because* policymakers and public opinion agree with their basic premise that the US ought to support Israel for a multiplicity of reasons” (p. 82). But, “Such a consensus,” he continued, “did not necessarily lead to the *specific* policies that the US implemented during the periods under examination” (p. 82). The 1990s, he argued, were “a period of wild success for AIPAC and the pro-Israel lobbying it coordinated in the peace process” (p. 67).

Thus, scholars typically agree that the pro-Israel lobby seems more powerful than it really is because its interests align with the interests of those who hold real power. When the strategic interests of the U.S. come into conflict with the objectives of the lobby, the Israel lobby’s lack of power comes into focus because what is deemed in the strategic interests of the U.S. trumps the wishes of the lobby. Yet, the lobby is able to effectively exploit American cultural affinities for the Jewish state and U.S. foreign policy frameworks to help align Israeli and American interests. Because the lobby operates within American foreign policy frameworks, scholars make room for the Israel lobby to influence U.S.-Israel relations. As Miller (2008) put it, the Israel lobby is a “guardian” of Israeli interests that are already aligned with officially perceived American interests.

Because U.S. strategic interests help determine who is given access to power and who wields influence, geopolitical shifts and changing American public opinion have eroded the Israel lobby’s exclusive access to power and opened the door to the Arab lobby, creating possibilities for the lobby to influence U.S. policy toward the Middle East

(Marrar, 2009). Marrar (2009) observed that American elite and public support for the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict helped give the Arab lobby access to power. He argued,

No one would be able to counterbalance the pro-Israel lobby's strength unless there was first and foremost, a stated American interest in doing something that does not simply accept the interests of the Jewish state alone. The two-state solution is precisely that. Land for peace, the cornerstone for that solution, has been accepted not just internationally and by domestic factors such as public opinion and foreign policy elites, it is a premise to which even the pro-Israel lobby has nodded (p. 83).

The first *Intifada*, which began in 1987, was harnessed by pro-Arab lobbyists in the U.S. to call for changes in U.S. foreign policy. The group had some sway with lawmakers, including Mary Rose O'Carroll who would eventually become the president of the ADC, and helped convince officials and the public that the Palestinian problem needed a solution. When Saddam Hussein attempted to exploit the Palestinian issue in the first Gulf War, the Arab lobby mobilized to reinforce American officials' realization that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was causing it problems in the region. The end of the Cold War meant that pro-Israel groups could no longer point to the threat from the Soviet Union as a reason for the U.S. to support Israel and could no longer point to the Palestinians as a stooge of the USSR, giving "the pro-Arab voice a better position to be heard since it was no longer drowned out by the deafening cacophony of the East-West rivalry" (p. 99). The Arab lobby was given access:

[A]s American policymakers adopted a more cordial position toward Palestinian aspirations, there was a correlative warming up to groups like the AAI [Arab American Institute]. This suggests that regardless of whether Arab American lobbyists were responsible for *causing* changes in elite perceptions before or after the end of the Cold War, once US energies were dedicated to bringing about

peace, they were in a better position to influence policy by adding their voice to an issue with majority public resonance (p. 102).

Although the U.S. “war on terrorism” and the Bush administration’s eventual concession to Ariel Sharon that Israel’s strikes against the Palestinians were part of the same “war on terrorism” hurt the Arab lobbyists’ efforts, official U.S. commitment to the two-state solution kept the door open to pro-Arab groups. “The extent to which the U.S. is truly committed to Israeli-Palestinian peace, however, is debatable as indicated by President George W. Bush’s legitimization of Israeli settlements that render, despite his rhetorical commitment to it, a two-state solution impossible (Khalidi, 2005). Zunes (2006, pp. 15-16) argued:

It has long been in Washington’s interest to maintain a militarily powerful and belligerent Israel dependent on the United States. Real peace could undermine such a relationship. The United States has therefore pursued a policy that attempts to bring greater stability to the region while falling short of real peace. Washington wants a Middle East where Israel can serve a proxy role in projecting U.S. military and economic interests.

Simultaneously, the U.S. “war on terrorism” may have facilitated and harmed the Arab lobby’s efforts. On the one hand, it highlighted the problem of the Israeli occupation for the U.S. but on the other hand the fight against “terrorism,” in which Israel became a key ally in at least rhetorical terms with the U.S., put Palestinians on the wrong side of that “war on terrorism” and continued and extended Israel’s belligerency in the region. The emergence of the “war on terrorism,” therefore, represented both an opportunity and an obstacle for the Arab lobby.

Problem Statement: The Relative Power of Dissidents

As the review of the role that the Israel and Arab lobbies play formulating U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East suggests, a lobby's power is limited to helping to nuance U.S. foreign policy within the bounds set by policymakers. Working within the boundaries set by policymakers, lobbies' interests may overlap with elite interests, which gives them power to shape foreign policy in meaningful but not fundamental ways. The problem for analysts is to figure out where those interests overlap and to locate the potential ability of lobbyists to influence policy within the parameters erected by policymakers.

Because of the U.S. news media's routine reliance on American officials to provide information and interpretations about foreign and domestic conflicts and issues, I suggest that media watchdogs face a similar situation to lobbyists seeking to shape foreign policy. Media monitoring groups are limited in their ability to influence news media representations within the boundaries made acceptable by those elites and limited in their ability to influence news coverage to making criticisms that resonate with professional journalists, so it is my task to understand where PMW's interests overlap with the interests of the powerful and where its critique of coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may appeal to professional journalists.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the *New York Times* framed Israel's Operation Cast Lead as an Israeli response to Palestinian violence, which would indicate that PMW did not have much success influencing news coverage of the conflict because its ultimate objective was to convince news organizations to quit reporting from within

the framework that the conflict is caused by Palestinian or Arab violence from which Israel must defend itself. And, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, this story has historically been the U.S. news media's ideological paradigm that informs coverage of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian violence.

We may also not expect PMW or other dissidents to have much power shaping the news because the propaganda model (Herman & Chomsky, 2002) and "strong hegemony" model (Gitlin, 1980) explain news coverage as the result of institutional structures, professional practice, and ideologies that serve powerful interests and marginalize or subvert potential gains made by dissident movements. The propaganda model predicts that the most effective media watchdogs are those whose interests are aligned with real power and whose flak is meant to keep coverage within acceptable boundaries so that news media more fully commit to those boundaries, instead of changing those boundaries to reflect dissident interests. From this point of view, the Israel lobby's media monitoring groups can impact the dominant narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by reinforcing it.

PMW's lack of influence on the framing of the conflict in the *New York Times*, however, does not mean that the media monitoring group was unable to impact coverage in other ways or that it was unable to impact the narrative of the conflict at other news organizations. Indeed, even Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, the authors of the propaganda model, seemed to indicate their belief that PMW could affect news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when they agreed to serve on PMW's advisory board in April 2001.

In fact, there have been signs that pro-Palestine media watchdogs can influence news media representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Journalists themselves have noticed the emergence of a “Palestine lobby.” Tim Phelps of *Newsday* observed that there was almost no pro-Palestine response to his articles between 1987 and 1991 but that had changed over time (Dunsky, 2008). Clyde Haberman of the *New York Times* noted a change in the amount of pressure that pro-Palestine groups put on his paper:

What has changed in the last couple of years is that there has been sufficient growth in the number of Arab Americans – with Palestinians being a special subset – to make themselves heard. So what exists now that did not exist when I was a correspondent are various groups willing to present the Palestinian perspective on the issue and the Arab perspective in general, and to take on what they consider to be unfair coverage. I heard very little back from Arabs when I was there from '91 to '95, maybe 5 percent [of reader feedback]. I heard more when I went back for two months in the summer of 2001 (quoted in Dunsky, 2008, p. 350).

There are also indications that pro-Palestine readers and groups had some effect on coverage. Haberman admitted that pro-Palestine groups persuaded him to reconsider the use of the word “terrorist” in relation to Palestinian violence. Combined pressure by pro-Israel and pro-Palestine groups in the 1990s convinced the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to hire academics to audit its coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, publishing those studies and publicly presenting them (Wu, Sylvester, & Hamilton, 2002). Daniel Okrent, the public editor of the *New York Times*, once admitted that pro-Palestine groups were correct when they accused the paper of possessing a “structural geographic bias.” The paper’s correspondents, that is, by living inside Israel and not the occupied Palestinian territories, were more likely to interpret the conflict from Israel’s point of view. Okrent recommended that the paper remedy that bias (Okrent, 2005), suggesting that when

media monitors make criticisms that resonate for professional reasons newswriters may revise coverage practices. On the other hand, journalists reported that they resisted pressure from media watchdog groups. Haberman confessed, “I would probably be lying if I didn’t admit that some of the more strident letters did not make me want to dig in a little bit and in my own stubborn way think, ‘You’re not going to push me around’” (quoted in Dunsky, 2008, p. 351).

Because there are occasional signs that dissidents can influence news media representations, some scholars have responded to the propaganda and “strong hegemony” models by constructing alternative media-movement models that help them understand the means through which movements can advance their frames in the news media. The “dialogic” (Barker-Plummer, 1995) and “dialectical” (Kumar, 2007) models, for example, emphasize a social movement’s strategic maneuvering to influence news media representations. I review these models more thoroughly in the next chapter but for now it is enough to say that they were formulated as a remedy to research that repeatedly shows how news media serve elite interests as opposed to anyone else’s. Barker-Plummer and Kumar hope to identify how dissident social movements can impact news media in a way that serves their interests. The dialogic and dialectical models ask the researcher to identify the means of resistance available to movements in their efforts to influence news media representations as well as the mechanisms of domination inherent in professional practice and media institutions that help subvert potential movement gains. Whereas Barker-Plummer and Kumar focus on traditional social movements, I examine the means of resistance available to dissident media watchdogs and the mechanisms of domination

employed by newswriters; and study the interactions between a dissident media monitoring group, PMW, and newswriters to begin to understand the relative power of dissident media monitors to influence news coverage. My goal is to identify limits to dissident media monitoring power in the newsmaking process, make claims about dissidents' ability to influence news coverage via media monitoring, and ask what dissident ability and inability to shape news practices and media representations has to say about journalists' professional paradigm (i.e. reliance on "just the facts," deference to official sources to provide range of acceptable interpretations, the expansion and contraction of the news net, balance, a focus on events and individuals instead of history and systems) and its relationship to the ideological paradigm (i.e. the narrative that Israel's violence is a defensive response to Palestinian terrorism as it is informed by the strategic and special relationships between the U.S. and Israel).

As I stated above, PMW attempted to influence news representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict via systematic monitoring and distributive action and it sought two types of changes in news content and journalistic practice: substantive and superficial influence. Substantive influence refers to a real step toward the reaching of a media monitor's key objective. Thus, for PMW, a primary objective was to reframe the conflict so that Palestinian violence would become defined as a response to Israel's illegal occupation. In this case, then, substantive influence refers to the legitimation of the manifestations of a group's frame with news media. This type of influence occurs when a flak-producing group pursues systematic monitoring as a media monitoring strategy. Thus, substantive influence is a positive, for the dissident, Gramscian "molecular change"

that begins to recolor the interior of an ideological paradigm that helps “modify the pre-existing composition of forces” within the contours of that narrative that may add up to a paradigmatic shift in coverage (Gramsci, 1971, p. 109). Whether systematic monitoring results in substantive influence, however, depends on a number of mediating factors, including restrictions set by the ideological paradigm as well as the extent to which a critique is perceived as professionally resonant (i.e., criticisms that resonate with journalists because they suggest a violation of professionalism or public interest duties) by targeted newswriters.

Superficial influence refers to the ability of a watchdog to influence news coverage in ways that do not directly impact the framing of the conflict or result in long-term changes in professional practice or standards (e.g., firing a reporter, issuing an apology). This type of influence occurs, I claim, when a monitoring group pursues distributive action as a strategy. Its impact on the framing of an issue exists in relation to the watchdog’s status as a guardian or dissident. While distributive action may prove useful to either type of watchdog in gaining press attention, guardians only need to produce superficial changes to maintain the ideological boundaries around news coverage and that is because these superficial changes reinforce a dominant narrative by creating a chilling effect. Guardians, for example, do not need to seek substantive changes by arguing with newswriters but can reinforce a news organization’s commitment to the premises that inform coverage by complaining until a reporter is fired. While dissidents will try to reinforce those colorings of a dominant narrative that are favorable to their position – sympathetic coverage of Palestinians or criticism of Israeli tactics, for example

– they cannot reinforce a dominant narrative because they have no narrative to reinforce. In this way, distributive action and superficial results are less useful to them than they are for guardians.

To understand how meaning is created and struggled over one must also understand the mechanisms of domination available to targeted newswriters. Newswriters possess several means available to them that help them resist revising their coverage when confronted with watchdog criticism, including the defense of their professional paradigm as proof that coverage is adequate, which limits what can be accomplished via media monitoring. Defense mechanisms are often employed by journalists in an attempt not only to defend coverage but to preempt possible criticisms.

I argue that a central component of the professional paradigm is the tendency by newswriters to report news in a way that allows them to avoid producing content that will predictably result in flak from powerful interests and guardian lobbies. While there is a tendency for newswriters to approach or breach the ideological borders that inform newswriting, whether real or perceived, guardians seek to curb that tendency so that it becomes less frequent and more restricted. When dissidents become active, however, newswriters cannot avoid flak, but are instead forced to confront flak-producers from either side of a controversial issue. By becoming active, then, dissidents may be able to increase journalistic tendencies toward boundary approaches or breaches. Whereas guardian watchdogs are advantaged in their strategic interactions with newswriters because they do not need to change news content or news practices but only to reinforce content patterns or news practices that serve their interests, dissidents must make

arguments about journalism's proper role in society to have a substantive effect on content. Some of these arguments, especially when framed in a way that accepts the professional paradigm and appeals to newswriters' sense of public duty, inevitably lead to an internal tension for newswriters who recognize the appeal and validity of an argument but who also recognize that the revisions that the criticisms imply may lead to substantial revisions to the professional or ideological paradigms. This tension encourages newswriters to find ways to defend their coverage decisions, which creates new conditions of media-movement struggle and new logics that inform strategic choices. Newswriters, for example, strategically defend coverage choices when dissidents become active by arguing: If two competing interest groups complain about our coverage, then we must be doing something right. Although this journalistic "axiom" is invalid (both groups might have legitimate complaints, for example), it encourages dissidents to bombard news organizations with complaints about coverage because when taken to its logical end, it suggests that coverage is biased when only guardians complain about it. Ironically, then, the axiom defeats its own purposes for journalists because they invoke it to curb criticism and also harms dissidents because it encourages them to pursue distributive action, an unhelpful and even harmful media monitoring strategy. Systematic monitoring, by contrast, helps reveal the incoherent claims that professional journalism makes as well as the ideological character of the "social contract" that exists between the public and press.

Newswriter defense mechanisms, I argue, can stand in the way of improving journalistic practice and the relationship between the public and newswriters. They also

reveal the ideological character of the professional paradigm because, as I will demonstrate, newswriters will both “boost” the professional paradigm to defend their coverage and denigrate the principles in the professional paradigm when criticisms that are otherwise professionally resonant imply revisions in the professional paradigm that would result in conflict between a dominant ideology (in this case, that Israel’s violence is a defensive necessity and not aggression) and professional practice.

What PMW was able to accomplish – increased access to the press, the legitimization of its frame manifestations, publication of its criticisms and opinions, and so forth -- via its strategies under the conditions in which it campaigned can tell us several things. First, it will tell us much about the hope to reform media representations via dissident media monitoring. Second, it will allow us to examine the resilience and flexibility of the professional paradigm and ideologies that shape the news when news organizations are faced with intense, sustained mobilized opposition from well organized and well informed groups. Third, it will provide insight into the content of the press’ “social contract” with the public. Finally, it will give some indication of the potential power of an emergent Arab or Palestine lobby to influence public discourse about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As the Arab lobby emerges to contest news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and as other dissident flak-producers organize to contest issues important to them, it becomes important to understand their relative power in the newsmaking process. These groups seek to alter the ideologies of power that newswriters accept as they accomplish their work, and may do so by arguing that journalists have failed in their

responsibilities to the public. Newswriters, although they seek to avoid flak from guardians, can no longer avoid flak when dissidents begin to compete with guardians. Thus, it is unclear how journalists will respond to increased dissident activity and to what extent dissidents can influence news coverage. This study takes an empirical step toward understanding this problem.

In the next chapter, I introduce my theoretical perspective to more fully discuss the limits of dissident media monitoring power in the newsmaking process and to assess the range of possible changes in news media representations that may occur following dissident media monitoring and lobbying campaigns.

CHAPTER TWO:

Theoretical Framework

As I stated in the previous chapter, I consider PMW a dissident media watchdog. Dissident watchdogs are media monitoring groups whose interests do not mesh well with the interests of dominant factions in elite policymaking circles and whose frameworks for understanding U.S. foreign policy are not aligned with dominant U.S. foreign policy interests and dominant meanings found in the culture. Dissidents may align themselves with power as much as possible, but in terms of their particular dissidence on an issue they do not possess routinized access to the press and do not have allies who do either.

In the last chapter I briefly mentioned that scholars have begun to develop models to focus on how traditional dissident social movements seek to advance their frames in U.S. news media. The dialogic and dialectical models were developed to argue against the strong determinism found in the propaganda and strong hegemony models and to refocus critical theory on resistance as opposed to domination. Before I describe these new models and their application to dissident media monitors, I need to review what the propaganda and strong hegemony models have to say about how news representations are created.

The Propaganda Model and Media Watchdogs

According to the propaganda model dissidents do not possess the ability to significantly shape the newsmaking process. Instead, the propaganda model focuses on structural domination to suggest that five “filters” shape news content in a way that

serves the domestic and foreign interests of powerful interests in the business world and in the state (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). The concentration of ownership and interlocking relationships between media owners and businesses that have a domestic political agenda and stake in U.S. foreign policy interventions help reduce the diversity of information and opinions presented by U.S. news media.

Advertisers limit diversity by putting pressure on news organizations to produce content that is consistent with the dominant ideology in the U.S. that, by definition, considers U.S. foreign interventions good for America and the affected country. Newswriters routinely rely on ideologically “proper” experts to provide information and interpretations about policy issues and events by geographically and temporally organizing themselves around powerful individuals and institutions whose interests are aligned with and help shape the dominant ideology (Tuchman, 1978), so that news content “reflects the social [and power] structure outside the newsroom” (Gans, 2004, p. 81). Routine reliance on these sources provides reporters with the organizing logic that gives meaning to that which they report (Reese, 2001), so that U.S. news media have a long history supporting U.S. military activities around the globe and U.S. foreign policy more generally (Hallin, 1986; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Kumar, 2006).

The propaganda model, then, situates journalists’ professional paradigm within and in service to a larger ideological order despite newswriters’ defense of their craft as ideologically neutral. The professional paradigm includes the journalistic belief that “the facts” can be fully separated from values (Schudson, 1978), the use of facts that describe events instead of facts that explain those events (Gitlin, 1980), routine reliance on official

sources to define what news is (Tuchman, 1978), and the claim that truth is best discovered by “balancing” competing accounts (Mindich, 1998). Even as there is a tension in the paradigm between its claim that newswriters are objective realists or detached relativists (Reese, 1990), the professional paradigm insists that whatever content newswriters produce is defensible by claiming to have no ideological commitments.

Finally, the propaganda model suggests that well-funded parties who have an interest in reproducing the dominant social system are able to produce enough flak – that is, negative feedback about news content or practice – to keep news content from deviating from acceptable ideological boundaries. Beyond this, these groups press news media “to join more enthusiastically” to accept the premises of the powerful and “conditions the media to expect trouble (and cost increases) for violating” their standards of bias (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, pp. 27-28); they accuse news media of having “insufficient sympathy with U.S. foreign-policy ventures” and insufficient sympathy with other premises that the powerful hold (p. 28).

Thus, the propaganda model only considers that those media watchdogs whose interests align with the powerful, or what I call “guardian” media monitors, can affect news coverage. Guardians influence news coverage by producing flak that forces news organizations to defend the decisions they make and increases the costs for news organizations that approach or occasionally breach the boundaries ideologically acceptable to powerful forces, and in doing so may maximize the distance between what newswriters actually produce and the boundaries that the powerful deem un-crossable

and decrease the frequency or intensity with which the news media approach or breach those boundaries.

A guardian's task is to curb the real or perceived occasional tendency of the news media to approach or breach acceptable ideological boundaries and they have been shown to be successful. Thus, a public television station might lose corporate funding when those corporations deem a program too critical of business (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). While news coverage of the U.S. torture of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib did not question the motives of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, it did approach the ideological boundary that defines U.S. troops and policy as inherently "good." Guardian monitors became active in criticizing the press for "bias" against the U.S. military, whose criticisms gained much attention from the press (see Carlson, 2009). Journalists who reported about the Reagan administration's support of the Salvadoran military that massacred hundreds of citizens in El Mozote approached acceptable limits, and were curbed when the administration, the business press, and guardians became active, resulting in their removal from foreign policy reporting (Meisler, 2003). When CNN's Eason Jordan accused the U.S. military of targeting and murdering U.S. journalists without evidence, his statements violated both acceptable ideological boundaries and professional journalism boundaries; the guardian blogosphere became active and Jordan resigned, attributing his resignation to those bloggers (Hayes, 2008). When PBS produced a thirteen part series on Vietnam, guardians successfully aligned themselves with the Reagan administration to "reclaim" space for conservative voices in the "liberal" media (Hayes, 2008).

Yet, in an effort to maintain their autonomy, newswriters also resist pressure from guardians so that despite the activities and successes of flak-producers like Accuracy in Media, professional journalists defended the publication of Abu Ghraib photographs as necessary if they were to achieve their watchdog function (Carlson, 2009), and the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have resisted Accuracy in Media's challenges even when its founder, Reed Irvine, bought stock in those companies (Hayes, 2008).

With respect to coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, some scholars and critics have expressed a belief that the Israel lobby is a central cause of what they consider pro-Israel coverage in the U.S. news media (e.g., Khalidi, 2005; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006, 2007; Petras, 2006), but against this position I argue that the Israel lobby acts as a guardian watchdog that reinforces coverage patterns that are produced by other actors and seeks to raise the costs for newswriters who occasionally produce coverage that is critical of Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories and realign Israel's utility for the U.S. in media representations when fissures between the two states become public.

Coverage of the Conflict and the Israel Lobby

Historically, U.S. news media have covered the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts in a way that favors official Israel's narrative of the conflict while simultaneously subsuming Israel's interests under U.S. interests. Covering the Arab-Israeli conflict, media were cautiously pro-Israel and aggressively anti-Arab, depicting

Israel as a David defensively fighting for its survival against an Arab Goliath, but never as critical of the Arabs as they were of the Soviets (Suleiman, 1970, 1974; Trice, 1979). The Palestinians, however, were portrayed even more negatively than the Soviets (Trice, 1979) and did not emerge as distinctly Palestinian, but were submerged under an Arab nationalism, until 1973 when Israel was represented as a people who found themselves in an intolerable position imposed on them by the Palestinians (Terry, 1975; Terry & Mendenhall, 1974).

During the first *Intifada* the Palestinian image improved as more coverage portrayed the Palestinians as David against an Israeli Goliath (Daniel, 1997; Palmer, 1997; Zaharna, 1997). However, news media also portrayed the conflict as a “cycle of violence” between two ancient enemies (Collins & Clark, 1992; Jahshan, 1989; Roeh & Cohen, 1992); and although the Palestinians were more likely to be portrayed as a David than in past coverage, this “injustice” frame did not become the dominant story (Noakes & Wilkins, 2002). Instead, news media continued to construct Israeli violence as a defensive response to initial Arab or Palestinian violence and terrorism. Pollsters simply asked if the scale of the response was inappropriate: “Has Israel’s response to the uprising been too harsh?” (Gilboa, 1989).

During the second *Intifada* news organizations dropped the occupation from coverage (Ackerman, 2001), constructed Israeli violence as a response to Palestinian terrorism (Pednekar-Magal & Johnson, 2004; Philo & Berry, 2004; Ross, 2003; Zelizer, Park, & Gudelunas, 2002) and constructed the same “Israeli response” story, critical only of the scale of the “response,” during the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war (Kalb & Saivetz,

2007). As Friel and Falk (2007) put it: “This omission [from news coverage of the illegal occupation] leaves even sophisticated readers with the impression that the Palestinians are the initiators of violence and wrongdoing, and that the Israelis are merely responding to insurgent violence within their own territory” (p. 16). By omitting the occupation from coverage, the conflict is represented as one in which Jews and Muslims have historically battled over the same piece of the land and the implied solution is religious and ethnic tolerance or the eradication of Palestinian terrorism, not an end to the occupation (Philo & Berry, 2004).

As I reviewed in Chapter One, the U.S. has long held a strategic and special relationship with Israel. Because Israel is a U.S. ally and because the U.S. news media have a long history supporting U.S. foreign policy and those states that further U.S. interests around the globe, a narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that favors the official Israeli interpretation of that conflict’s causes and solutions is hardly surprising. Besides ideological constraints, there are also practical constraints, some of them imposed by Israel, that limit reporters’ ability to get information from Palestinian sources and contextualize events as well as cultural differences between Palestinians and Western reporters that limit reporters’ ability to gather information in a limited amount of time (Dunsky, 2008; Philo & Berry, 2004). The Israelis have also built a sophisticated public relations apparatus that facilitates journalistic work and increases reporters’ reliance on official Israeli representatives, thus far unmatched by the Palestinians (Dunsky, 2008).

Thus, it is true that U.S. news coverage favors official Israel’s narrative conflict of the conflict, but there are ways to explain that coverage without relying exclusively or

even primarily on the existence of the Israel lobby. That the U.S. news media frame Israel as a problem when it interferes with U.S. objectives would seem to eliminate the possibility that we can most adequately understand coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by rooting our explanations for that coverage in the Israel lobby.

Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) probably come closest to expressing the true power of the Israel lobby in relation to the U.S. news media when they argue that it works to prevent critical discourse from appearing in media content. However, they exaggerate the lobby's power by focusing strictly on the lobby's activities in order to explain coverage. What I would argue is that Mearsheimer and Walt do not give sufficient attention to the real "manipulation," which includes the ideologies of U.S. power that inform newswork and the routinized functioning of the press. It is most likely that the pro-Israel lobby's power is limited to guarding the ideological boundaries around coverage of the conflict that have been erected by officials. By producing flak, guardian watchdogs help keep the gates closed to alternative voices and ensure that the news gates quickly close when they open. The Israel lobby's power exists because its interests converge with, though are not necessarily identical to, state power; and its frameworks tap into master myths that help justify the means through which the U.S. pursues its strategic interests around the globe. Although the lobby does not necessarily have routinized access to the press, sources with similar interests do, which may give the appearance that the Israel lobby wields more power over U.S. news media than it actually does.

If an Israel lobby were truly a central cause of U.S. news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we would expect that U.S. news media would create meaning that serves Israel's interests even when U.S. and Israeli interests diverge. That is not, however, what we find. Before Israel was established in 1948 the *New York Times* opposed Zionism because it was concerned that Zionism would harm U.S. Cold War interests (Evensen, 1992); and the Arab-Israeli conflict was interpreted through a Cold War lens before the dissolution of the Soviet empire, so that Israel and the Arab states were said to threaten the Middle East stability that the U.S. sought as a means to prevent a Soviet invasion (Daugherty & Warden, 1979; Lederman, 1992; Mousa, 1984; Terry, 1975; Terry & Mendenhall, 1974; Wagner, 1973). News media were also critical of Israel when its strikes against the Palestinians during the Al Aqsa *Intifada* were thought to interfere with U.S. "war on terrorism" objectives (Handley, in press; Ross, 2003; Ross & Bantimaroudis, 2006) and Arabs and Palestinians have been portrayed more positively when they cooperate with the U.S. (Mousa, 1984; Zaharna, 1997). Thus, it becomes more difficult for the guardians of pro-Israel news coverage to guard the boundaries acceptable to them when Israel and the U.S. come into conflict; yet they are able to make resonating arguments, as they ally and reinforce arguments made by powerful bi-partisan officials, that redefines otherwise problematic Israeli behavior as consistent with U.S. foreign policy objectives (Handley, in press).

Moreover, no one has convincingly made the case that the Israel lobby is a central factor that shapes coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) noted that the lobby organized demonstrations against NPR in 33 cities in

May 2003 and was able to get contributors to withdraw \$1 million in support to Boston's WBUR, but did not document an effect on coverage. Seth Ackerman (2001) observed that CAMERA, the most prominent pro-Israel media watchdog, and other pro-Israel media critics aggressively issued press releases and paid for advertisements that accused news organizations of pro-Palestine bias when the second *Intifada* began but documented only a correction regarding a photograph's caption. Marda Dunsky (2008) observed that in the wake of the second *Intifada* news organizations published pro-Israel criticisms and documented the Israel lobby's activities in the news pages and the columns of public editors while giving less attention to pro-Palestine media critics. But this may not have been an occurrence unique to the Israel lobby. Writing about press critics following the American torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, for example, Carlson (2009) observed that "critics on the right" generated a greater response from newswriters than "critics on the left" by publishing right-wing criticisms of news coverage in the press. This, then, indicates the level of entrenchment by hawkish groups within the news media, as opposed to the level of entrenchment by pro-Israel groups only.

According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), the publication of one's critique in the news pages can help control or change media representations: "Not only do the news criticisms get on the news agenda ... but they may cause revisions of media practices or policies" (p. 184). Despite the fact that Dunsky (2008) noticed that the pro-Israel watchdogs' criticisms of news coverage were published, she found evidence that reporters dismissed pro-Israel criticisms. Journalists told her that "reader reaction had little if any affect on how they went about reporting the story" (p. 283). The effects that

journalists acknowledged were more general and were not necessarily produced by pro-Israel groups. Barton Gellman of the *Washington Post* told Dunsky that readers' criticisms compelled him "to scrutinize certain aspects of his work more closely," in an attempt to make his language as "neutral" as possible (p. 285).

On the other hand, because of its relationship to power, it is not implausible to claim that the Israel lobby would have some effect on news media representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It seems intuitive that there would be an effect on content following major boycotts against news organizations that result in the removal of funding and a chilling effect that ends in less critical coverage of Israel, affecting the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The mass mobilization of watchdog activists, particularly when a watchdog is close to the state and when it stirs government officials in an effort to help them reestablish interpretive power, may subtly persuade reporters to keep news media discourse within acceptable bounds. Research has shown that media watchdogs can become "effective" press critics when they offer fact-based arguments, mobilize the public, and criticize the news media according to professional journalistic criteria. They can also become influential (or coercive) when they are close to state power (Hayes, 2008), so it is not unreasonable to say that pro-Israel media monitors can influence the news media, and in fact, the propaganda model predicts they will. The Israel lobby is not a central factor in shaping U.S. news coverage of the Israel-Palestinian lobby, but it helps reinforce the dominant framework by repeatedly claiming that the U.S. news media are biased against Israel.

Resistance in Media-Movement Models

The propaganda model helps clarify the limits to and potential of guardian media monitors to influence news coverage of issues important to them, but here I am interested in the potential of dissident media monitoring groups to shape the news so I need to review media-movement models that conceptualize resistance to media messages.

Whereas the propaganda model focuses on structural domination and predicts that guardian groups reinforce dominant coverage trends by policing news organizations, other scholars have studied media-movement interactions to emphasize resistance to dominant news narratives (Entman, 2003; Wolfsfeld, 1984, 1997). Yet the literature on social movements that seek to influence news representations has been heavily influenced by Gitlin (1980) who, advancing a “strong hegemony” argument, seemed to suggest that journalism’s professional routines will ensure that social movements will forever be marginalized while the social order is legitimized through the trivialization of the movement or through the incorporation of its less threatening interpretations. The “hegemony of routines,” that is, ensures the legitimacy of the dominant social order by encouraging the public to interpret social movements as threats to that order.

Others have criticized Gitlin’s “strong hegemony” thesis, arguing that it is “simply too deterministic to accommodate the day-to-day complexity of media-movement relationships,” claiming that it “obscures the reflexivity of movement strategists and the contradictory nature of news itself” (Barker-Plummer, 1996, p. 27). By focusing on finalized media representations, instead of focusing on what role movements play in shaping the representations of themselves and their issues, Barker-

Plummer (1996) claimed that the strong hegemony model makes it “impossible to tell how much of a movement’s coverage is the outcome of hegemonic news processes and how much is the result of movement choices” (p. 29).

To remedy this, Barker-Plummer (1996) proposed a “dialogic” model of media and social movements. Unlike the determinant propaganda and strong hegemony models, the dialogic model proposes that the outcomes of media-movement interactions are indeterminate. A model that stresses indeterminacy, it “comes with no guarantees” (p. 32). The dialogic model asks the researcher to identify the strategies that movements have used to gain access to and frame their message via the mass media and determine the outcome of those strategies. “In short, what worked and what has not? A dialogical understanding may produce *critical or strategic* knowledge, knowledge that may be used to produce change” (Barker-Plummer, 1995, p. 311, emphasis in original).

In several studies, Barker-Plummer showed that the women’s movement employed both “pragmatic” and “radical” strategies to gain access to the press and frame their message for it, resulting in different outcomes for the movement and its representation in the news media. A pragmatic strategy, that is the decision by a movement to take news practices as a given to be used by the group and the decision by the group to limit its complaints about the social world to those which are most ideologically palatable to a news organization, resulted in improved access to the news media. Activists who pursued radical strategies by challenging news routines and trying to advance ideologically threatening interpretations about the social world, however, remained marginalized (Barker-Plummer, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2003). PMW, similarly,

pursued a pragmatic strategy by aligning itself with U.S. power and by accepting the professional paradigm.

Similarly to Barker-Plummer's critique of the "strong hegemony" thesis, other scholars have criticized the propaganda model for overemphasizing "big picture" structural domination to the expense of examining the more micro-details about how social movements can strategically interact with news organizations to advance their frameworks in news content. Ryan and colleagues demonstrated the ability of social movements to affect media representations despite the odds against them by exploiting news routines and ideas about newsworthiness. A group in New Bedford, Massachusetts, critical of U.S. foreign policy in Nicaragua, advanced its issues in the local news media; and a union in Boston was able to successfully frame issues important to it in the press (Ryan, 1991). Another group helped create sympathetic coverage for its issue by piggybacking (i.e. providing a news organization with a local angle on a national story) on a Supreme Court case and decision (Ryan, Carragee, & Schwerner, 1998). A black community group in Boston was able to change media representations of its community when it partnered with the Boston Association of Black Journalists "to proactively suggest a reframing of their neighborhood [in local Boston television stations]" (Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001, p. 178).

Kumar (2007) proposed a dialectical model, which "examines both the ways in which the status quo is upheld (mechanisms of dominance) and how critical views might enter the media (mechanisms of resistance)" (p. 38). Like the dialogic model, the dialectical model proposes to understand media-movement relationships as constituting

strategic interactions between movements and the press. Whereas the dialogic model pays most attention to the strategic maneuverings of a social movement, the dialectical model encourages a researcher to spread her attention to movement strategies, news media's mechanisms of domination, and the sociopolitical context in which the media-movement struggle takes place (e.g., a labor struggle in the neoliberal phase of capitalism). Mechanisms of dominance include the economic power wielded by parent corporations and advertisers, the practical constraints of newsgathering, and the ideological limitations of professional journalism. The dialectical model asserts that the news media only cover dissent significantly when a large movement challenges the dominant order. For Kumar, how a movement is "represented depends on the context in which the struggle takes place and how it unfolds. A central part of the dominance/resistance model is *an emphasis on studying these concrete circumstances* as a way to understand the struggle for hegemony" (p. 52, emphasis in original).

Whereas news media typically produce propaganda on behalf of elite interests, the dialectical model proposes that the mass mobilization of movement activists makes it possible for journalists to create news content that serves the interests of the movement. Because of the 1997 UPS strike, Kumar argued, "several journalists were able to take advantage of the climate to write reports on pension grabs, productivity versus wage cuts as a source of economic growth, and several other labor-related subjects that otherwise would have been difficult to justify" because labor issues are not newsworthy for a capitalist press system (p. 164).

I should note that the dialogic model has not been free from criticism, however. Noakes and Wilkins (2002) called it “a needed reminder that news reporting is often contradictory and that social movement activists are reflexive,” but added that it “sacrifices the strength of the ‘strong hegemony’ arguments” because it does not grant the larger context in which the movement takes place its due influence (p. 653). Noakes and Wilkins wished to recognize the larger context in order to “shift the standard research question from *whether* social movement frames gain access to the media to *under what conditions* they do so” (p. 653). On the Palestine issue, they found that coverage of the first *Intifada* varied over time not so much in accordance with movement strategies but with larger geopolitical factors. Noakes and Wilkins emphasized external sponsorship by the U.S. of the PLO to explain frame shifts, noting “it is clear that the actions of social movements and shifts in social and political contexts do matter” (p. 666). Others have also concluded that social movement frames gain legitimacy within the press when the state and other powerful actors make decisions whose meanings are consistent with the interpretations bound up in the movement’s frame (Barker-Plummer, 1996; Ryan et al., 1998), so it is up to the movement to exploit these conditions to advance their frames in the press.

These latter conclusions are consistent with the view that guardian watchdogs, like the Israel lobby, only wield power with the U.S. news media because their interests align with real power and would seem to preclude the possibility that PMW would be able to influence media representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of the fact that it is a dissident watchdog. However, in some ways the political context in which

PMW operated may have been advantageous to PMW's efforts, moving the media monitoring group into a relatively less dissident position. As part of an overall Arab lobby in the U.S., PMW's calls for Palestinian independence implied that the conflict would end when Israel and the U.S. accepted a two-state solution, to which the George W. Bush administration officially committed itself following the 9/11 attacks (Marrar, 2009). Moreover, the second *Intifada* had begun almost one year before the 9/11 attacks against the U.S. Following the attacks, the Bush administration criticized Israeli violence against the Palestinians in order to help win Arab support for the U.S. "war on terrorism" (Marrar, 2009). The strained U.S.-Israeli relationship was represented in the news pages of both elite and popular newspapers. For several months following 9/11 Israel's incursions into Palestinian territory were framed as a strategic liability for the U.S. (Handley, in press). This suggested that a positive U.S.-Israel relationship was not taken for granted in the U.S. news media, and that the watchdog group could take advantage of the relatively more vulnerable character of the dominant narrative at that moment, especially because of its pragmatic approach toward general U.S. foreign policy. Moreover, unlike traditional social movements that try to appeal to the public, watchdogs try to make appeals that resonate with professional journalists. I discuss the implications of this in more detail below.

Dissident Media Watchdogs as Unique Social Movements

As the section above attests, dissident social movements have been able to advance their frames in the news media by pursuing pragmatic strategies that fit the

practical and ideological requirements of professional journalists, massively mobilizing so that they become newsworthy, and recognizing where their interests and interpretations overlap with the interests and interpretations of powerful sources. Despite a patriarchal society and newsroom, the women's movement made gains in the press; although racism pervades U.S. society, black community activists managed to reframe their community at local TV stations; the U.S. news media overwhelmingly support U.S. foreign policy but activists managed to critique U.S. foreign policy in the local press; and labor activists advanced their interests in the press despite the typical anti-labor leanings of the major U.S. news media.

All of these experiences suggest that dissident groups can affect news coverage of issues important to them despite ideological and professional obstacles to the advancement of their interests. There is also precedent to suggest that dissident watchdogs can influence news media coverage. Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), for example, has criticized the U.S. news media for their overwhelming reliance on sources who are hawkish with respect to U.S. foreign policy, and Hayes (2008) found that news media have adjusted their guest lists in the wake of FAIR campaigns. Carlson (2009) observed that professional trade journals agreed with many FAIR criticisms of the media's coverage of U.S. torture of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib. That FAIR was able to influence news coverage and that its critique resonated with professional trade journals suggests that guardian watchdogs are not the only type of watchdog that can influence news media content. I consider FAIR a "dissident" watchdog. It is a progressive group whose interests are not aligned with the interests of the powerful, especially because it

has criticized the U.S. news media's reliance on conservatives to dominate U.S. foreign policy discussions and because it advocates for structural reform of the news media. This suggests the possibility that PMW, also a dissident watchdog, would be able to affect the news media. Moreover, other liberal-leaning flak-producers and media monitors, although not dissident, have been able to affect news media programming and representations. Comedy Central's John Stewart, for example, has been credited with ending CNN's *Crossfire*, and the watchdog Media Matters for America has been credited with ending a Don Imus show after he used racist language to refer to African American women (Hayes, 2008).

As a dissident media watchdog, the means by which PMW might be able to influence news coverage is different from traditional social movements, the mechanisms of domination that dissident media monitoring groups confront differ from the obstacles placed in front of traditional movements, so the outcomes of dissident media monitoring campaigns may differ from the outcomes we may expect from traditional social movements campaigns.

Traditional movements attempt to control or change media representations of themselves and their issues by creating public events that news media cover. They may complain about coverage, but the brunt of their work is dedicated to creating events that attract news media attention. Therefore, they take professional routines and ideas about newsworthiness as a given and try to use them to their advantage.

Watchdogs seek to control or change media representations by studying those representations, arguing directly with newswriters on a face-to-face basis that they are

“biased” or have failed in some journalistic manner, and saturating a news organization’s communication channels with complaints during periods of coverage that are relevant to issues important to them. Watchdogs do not use news routines to their advantage to create public events for news media to report, but argue privately with newswriters that the coverage they produce has failed to uphold professional standards or practices, seeking to define what those standards or practices are, or that those standards and practices themselves are flawed.

The mechanisms of domination that watchdogs face also differ from traditional social movements. When creating public events that news media cover, traditional social movements subject themselves to what Gitlin (1980) called the “hegemony of routines.” News media, that is, tend to construct social movements as irresponsible and meddling threats to a social order to encourage the public to dismiss their criticisms out of hand, focusing not on their issue agendas but on their behavior and appearances. Those issues that do make it into the press are “hegemonically incorporated” by limiting what can be talked about to that which is not ideologically threatening to a dominant social system or taming ideological threats through the very process of coverage.

Dissident media monitoring groups do not create public events for news media to cover, but instead argue with newswriters directly about their coverage either in face-to-face meetings or through other communication channels (e.g., email or over the phone). Watchdogs can argue that professional routines themselves are flawed, but would face journalistic resistance to that argument by news organizations that have been shown to defend and boost their professional paradigm when challenged (Bennett, Gressett, &

Halmon, 1985; Berkowitz, 2000; Hindman, 2003, 2005; McCoy, 2001; Reese, 1990; Robinson, 2006, 2007). Alternatively, watchdogs can argue that journalists have violated their own professional practice in some way, which may appeal to newswriters who are careful to stick to their professional guns. Carlson (2009) observed that media monitors actively struggle to define the professional paradigm to represent their interests or the public interest. I argue that the “social contract” between the press and public enables dissidents to formulate criticisms that resonate with newswriters for professional and public interest reasons, but I also argue that that same contract stipulates that even some resonating criticisms can not be accommodated in practice, particularly when the revisions implied by the criticism would result in news practices or content that violates the proper ideological boundaries that inform what meaning newswriters create. Thus, dissidents create tensions for newswriters because they appeal to the social contract’s stipulation that journalists serve the public, and in doing so they force newswriters to recognize the stipulation that they serve power. Newswriters must, therefore, find ways to resolve that tension, which creates a new terrain of struggle between media and movements and new logics for continued strategic maneuvering.

The Ideological Paradigm that Guides Professional Routines

Traditional social movements and dissident media watchdogs pursue different strategies to influence news coverage of issues important to them, which establishes different relationships between these movements and the professional paradigm.

Traditional movements accept the professional paradigm and attempt to exploit it to their

advantage, but media monitors either argue that news media stray from their commitment to professionalism or that professionalism itself needs revision. In either case, both dissident social movements and dissident media monitoring groups pursue their objectives in an ideological context unfavorable to them, and this is important to acknowledge because ideologies are not only imposed on the final news product via journalistic reliance on official sources but also by meanings found in the dominant culture.

Journalism acts as “ritual” by reinforcing “common sense” views about how the world works (Carey, 1992), and several studies have established the mythological role of news media. News organizations draw from commonly recognizable archetypes to impose meaning onto a set of facts and circulate a society’s “master myths” back into it (Lule, 2001). Journalists “craft cultural resonance” to match “pre-existing belief systems.” By imposing a cultural “goodness-of-fit” narrative onto a set of facts, they make sure that the audience is able to interpret the meaning of a story (Ettema, 2005, pp. 133, 146). As an added benefit, archetypes make newswork more efficient because reporters can simplify complex and idiosyncratic facts about infinite occurrences and an ever-changing world by interpreting them within and fitting them into an established narrative (Bird & Dardenne, 1988, p. 338). The U.S. news media have sometimes, for example, employed a Wild West archetype – in which the U.S. steps in an attempt solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict -- in an effort to facilitate an American public’s ability to interpret the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Nossek & Berkowitz, 2006).

Guardian watchdogs, therefore, are not only advantaged because sources with similar interests have routine access to the news media but also because the lens through which they interpret the world is similar to the dominant culture's lens. Dissident watchdogs are not only disadvantaged because sources with similar interests do not have routinized access to the press but also because they may be limited in their ability to tap into a society's master myths. Although specific geopolitical developments may have proved advantageous to PMW, the watchdog also operated in a more general cultural context in which the U.S. not only held a strategic relationship with Israel but in which Westerners carry with them a long history of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-Palestinian sentiment.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said (2003) traced a history in which the Occident, that is Europe and America, continuously constructed an Orientalist discourse in numerous works by "poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators" to define Arabs and Muslims as the Occident's "contrasting image, idea, personality, [and] experience" (p. 2). These Orientalist beliefs have been "insinuated" in the state and transmitted in popular magazines and entertainment media (Jhally, 2007; Little, 2008). They have been sucked up by the mainstream media that have legitimized the apparatus that has produced Orientalist discourse and who have reinforced those beliefs by circulating them back to the public (Kamalipour, 1997; Said, 1997). The dominant narrative has been questioned but quickly resurrected, when its empirical credibility is challenged by events on the ground, to maintain the image of the Jew as archetypal victim and the Arab as archetypal villain (Handley, 2008, 2009).

These common archetypes influence how news decisions are made, reinforcing the construction of these archetypes in the press. Israeli news organizations construct Palestinian Land Day protests as a threat to the Jewish state, for example, which informs their choice to organize their reports around information and interpretations given to them by police (Wolfsfeld et al., 2000).

Newswriters' reverence for officialdom also influences coverage. Israel's violence-makers are given official sounding names because Israel is recognized internationally as an independent state whereas Palestinian violence-makers are more likely to be defined in terms of criminality and disorder (Barkho, 2008; Dunsky, 2008).

Moreover, PMW operated in a cultural climate in which Israel is believed to share a similar history to the U.S. and its people to share similar values. There are perceived similarities between Christianity and Judaism that are taken to mean that Jews are seen as protectors of the "holy land" against Muslims (Dunsky, 2008). The political right in the U.S. points to Israel as a capitalist and high-tech economy, and liberals believe that as the only purported democratic state in the Middle East, Israel must be protected. The U.S.-Israel relationship also resonates with Americans because they perceive that both states were founded by immigrants who fled persecution in one region to establish a safe haven for their people in another region (Albert, 2007). Entertainment media have justified the violent displacement of indigenous populations by each new immigrant nation. Native Americans were viewed as hostile enemies among colonial settlers and expansionists, and the 1958 novel and 1960 film *Exodus* compared the indigenous Palestinian population to American Indians (Miller, 2008). Given the U.S. genocide against Native Americans,

some argue that Americans excuse Israel for its policies toward the Palestinians (Mamdani, 2004).

Framing the Message: The Professional Route to Ideological Change

To sum up so far, dissident watchdogs directly make their case to newswriters that coverage of issues important to them are “biased” either because journalists strayed from their professional obligations or because the professional paradigm itself is flawed. The obstacles that they have to overcome in order to influence news coverage of issues important to them include journalists’ reliance on the professional paradigm to defend their coverage of issues, their axiomatic belief that complaints from competing interest groups constitute proof that coverage is adequate, and the ideologies of U.S. power that inform newswork.

Ideologically, the U.S. has long held a strategic relationship with Israel and the public has had a special relationship with the Jewish state matched by Oriental attitudes. These three trends help account for the existence over time of the dominant U.S. news media narrative that frames Israeli violence as a “response” or “retaliation” to initial Palestinian violence or terrorism, and the primacy of U.S. objectives for the U.S. news media explains why news organizations criticize the scale of Israel’s violence when it is disproportionate to Palestinian violence and/or when it interferes with U.S. strategic objectives, even as the violence itself is framed as a response.

According to its archives, PMW’s ultimate objective was to produce what it called a paradigmatic change in coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tired of

coverage that defined the root cause of the conflict as Palestinian terrorism, activists wanted the U.S. news media to blame Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, illegal under international law, for the conflict.

As a dissident watchdog whose interests do not line up well with the interests of the powerful and whose interpretations of the world do not align with the culture's dominant mythologies, it would be extremely difficult for PMW to change the dominant narrative of the conflict. The U.S. news media's long employment of the narrative suggests that it is what Reese (2007) has called a "macro-framework" that "comes closer to ideology." Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can vary to include criticisms and praise for all actors involved in the conflict even as the basic narrative remains the same. According to the dominant narrative, the problem is Palestinian terrorism and the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to eradicate that terrorism. However, newswriters have occasionally publicly questioned the utility of the narrative, suggesting both narrative vulnerability and resilience. That is, there exists a relative autonomy between the professional and ideological paradigms that inform newswriting, and following their professional instincts, newswriters both question and repair dominant narratives (Handley, 2008, 2009). This would suggest the possibility that seeking to change the ideological content of news via the targeting of professionalism may be a fruitful avenue for dissidents to explore.

To change coverage via systematic monitoring, watchdogs must frame their message in a way that their audience – newswriters -- consider empirically credible and resonant. Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and structure the

social world and they can be detected as informing news content by the appearance of language and images that are manifest indicators of the latent frame (Reese, 2001).

Frames are empirically plausible when those who advance them are perceived as credible and knowledgeable about a particular issue and when there is a perceived fit between what is empirically or experientially accepted as the truth and the meaning found in the frame (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1988). Cultural resonance refers to the capacity of a frame to “strike a chord” in those exposed to it (Snow & Benford, 1988). To strike that chord, frames must possess a “narrative fidelity” with a society’s pre-existing stock of meanings, beliefs, practices, myths, and values. If frames appear to be consistent with a society’s “master frames” (e.g., rights, choice, justice, freedom), a social movement may find its frames being accepted by others (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gamson, 1988, 1998). By creating messages that possess a narrative fidelity and empirical credibility, movements may be able to advance their frames to the news media and higher-level officials (Entman, 2003).

While possibly limited in their ability to tap into the society’s master myths by Orientalist attitudes, nothing could prevent PMW activists from tapping into the master myths of journalism when they directly and privately targeted newswriters. By operating privately, PMW did not have to frame the message for a public but could frame the message for journalists themselves, tapping into the values that inform the profession. Exploiting journalists’ belief that they operate as fact-providers and information gatherers, for example, PMW could attack the dominant narrative at its empirical weak spots by providing evidence that Israel was an aggressor that systematically targeted

Palestinian civilians and exploit the rift in the U.S.-Israel relationship in the process. PMW may have also been able to create more space for the Palestinian narrative by providing factual evidence that newswriters had violated their professional commitment to balance. On the other hand, both guardian and dissident watchdogs may cite the values of the journalistic profession as leverage with which to produce change, meaning that newswriters will boost their own definitions of professionalism over those coming from media monitoring groups (Carlson, 2009). What is not clear, then, is the extent to which dissident watchdogs can affect news content when they can make appeals that resonate with professional journalism but that do not resonate with the country's ideological air. Examining how news organizations negotiate the tensions that arise when a watchdog's criticisms appeal to the professional paradigm but not the ideological paradigm, then, will yield cues about the relationship between the two paradigms, illuminate the content of the "social contract" that exists between the people and the press, and reveal how newswriters' choice of "tension relief" strategies create new conditions that help determine the next phase of a media-movement struggle.

The Problem and Research Questions

Because the extent to which dissident media monitoring groups can influence news coverage of issues important to them and the conditions under which they can do so are unclear, this study examines PMW attempts to influence the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *Charlotte Observer*, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, CNN, and several smaller news organizations during its most active years (2000-2004) to identify the

strategies PMW pursued to affect news media representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyze its interactions with the newswriters it targeted to identify mechanisms of resistance available to journalists, and assess PMW's effectiveness in producing changes in news coverage in line with its interests.

I define effective media monitoring several ways. According to Barker-Plummer (2000), traditional social movements can be considered effective when they (1) gain basic access to the news media, (2) are able to produce positive representations of themselves in the media, and (3) when they can transfer their issue agenda to the media agenda. Traditional social movements are also effective when they "create, however temporarily, an open marketplace of ideas" and force a "democratic representation" of their issues in the news media (Kumar, 2007, p. 113). Media monitors are successful when they accomplish these goals.

They can also be effective several other ways. Most specifically, for Hayes (2008), watchdogs are effective when their critique leads to (1) the dismissal or reassignment of an offending newswriter, (2) content or programming changes, (3) reforms of a news organization's standards or practices, and (4) public debate about the issue. Less significantly, for Hayes, watchdogs are effective when (5) news organizations quote the watchdog as an authority on issues of press performance, (6) the watchdog has a following or (7) inspires a movement, (8) the watchdog has established analytical templates used by other critics, and (9) when its criticisms have "gained currency among other critics and scholars" (p. 4).

While these criteria are important, I argue that an evaluation of a social movement's effectiveness must also consider a social movement's ability to change the frameworks from within which journalists construct the news. As previously stated, PMW's ultimate objective was to create what it called a "paradigmatic change" in the way the U.S. news media covered the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The media monitoring group pursued that change by seeking both substantive and superficial changes in news media content and journalistic practices and standards. By substantive influence, I mean those changes media monitors are able to produce in news content that convince news organizations of the legitimacy of particular manifestations of their counter-frame so that those manifestations of the frame would appear in future news content. Changes in journalistic practice would help ensure that those manifestations would repeatedly appear in news content. The reasoning that justifies the pursuit of substantive changes is that as they add up, a paradigmatic change will occur; calling them substantive, then, is appropriate, because they represent substantive steps toward the watchdog's goal to reframe the conflict. Substantive influence refers to long-term changes in news content and professional practice that help chip away at the overall ideological paradigm that informs coverage of an issue to leave in place a movement's preferred frame. These, then, are positive Gramscian "molecular changes" that modify the colorings of the dominant narrative, perhaps rendering it more vulnerable to future attack" (p. 109).

Superficial influence refers to short-term changes in news content or professional practice that do not by themselves lead directly to the legitimization of the watchdog's counter-frame manifestations. This type of influence is limited to a particular episode

and does not lead to long-term change in news content and practice. Therefore, these types of changes are more useful for guardian media monitors because when guardians produce superficial changes, they reinforce those frameworks that inform news coverage, maximize the distance between what newswriters produce and the acceptable ideological boundaries around news coverage, and decrease the frequency and intensity with which newswriters approach or breach those boundaries. When dissidents produce superficial changes, however, they cannot reinforce the boundaries that inform a narrative and that is because they have no boundaries to reinforce. While I demonstrate that distributive action led to media coverage of the group, I argue that PMW's critique was "hegemonically managed" in a Gitlinian sense. That is, the critique was covered in order to tame it, more than it was to consider it, and protect the boundaries that informed newswriting.

PMW pursued substantive and superficial influence via systematic monitoring and distributive action, so in this study I ask how effective these strategies were at producing changes in news media content that served PMW's interests. I seek to identify types of journalistic resistance to PMW campaigns, whether PMW was able to overcome journalistic resistance, what impact journalistic resistance had on PMW's choice of strategies, and what types of criticisms launched by PMW resonated with newswriters and resulted in changes in news content and practices. I ask the following questions:

- (1) How do newswriters come to consider a criticism "journalistically useful," and how does the definition of a "journalistically useful criticism" enable and limit what can be accomplished via media monitoring?

- (2) How do newswriters reconcile the tensions that arise when activists make complaints that resonate with newswriters' sense of professional and public interest duties but do not resonate with the ideologies that inform newswriting?
- (3) How do the strategic interactions between activists and newswriters change the conditions of struggle, encourage new strategic logics, and alter the relationship between the movement and the media?
- (4) How do strategic choices by activists and newswriters affect movement objectives?

Hayes (2008) argued that press critics are most effective when they systematically study news media content, make fact-based arguments, and use professional journalism standards as the criteria with which they evaluate a news organization's coverage. Recognizing deviations from this "social contract," that is professionalism and newswriters' public statements about their obligations to society, watchdogs can influence news coverage, Hayes (2008) suggested. Initially PMW employed systematic monitoring as a strategy in an effort to produce substantive changes in news content and journalistic practices and standards. That is, PMW activists throughout the country produced long-term studies of news media content, met face-to-face with newswriters to critique their coverage of the conflict, and used professional standards as the leverage with which they tried to support their claim that news coverage unfairly supported official Israel's narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Against Hayes (2008), I will argue that it is difficult to pin down exactly what "social contract" exists between the public and newswriters who subscribe to the

professional paradigm. This dissertation will show that the ideologies of U.S. power that journalists accept are much more influential than professional practices in shaping the content of news, so that dissident media monitors who seek to influence news coverage within professional journalistic parameters are limited in what they can achieve because the professional paradigm is more attached to power than it is autonomous from it. Yet, by appealing to newswriters' professional senses dissidents may also move the news media in meaningful but limited ways, taking substantive steps toward the reframing of an issue but never fully reaching it.

While several media-movement scholars have celebrated the ability of social movements to critically evaluate and adjust their strategies (e.g., Barker-Plummer, 1995; Hayes, 2008; Kumar, 2007), I will argue that social movements can become too responsive to journalistic defense mechanisms. As dissidents organize to compete with guardians, they may take journalists' axiomatic statement that their coverage is adequate if two sides complain too seriously by trying to become "louder" than their competitor. In doing so, newswriters come to resent dissidents, and dissidents no longer provide criticisms that might resonate with newswriters.

According to Hayes (2008), watchdogs do "everything right" when they systematically monitor news media content, make fact-based arguments that resonate with the professional paradigm to journalists that their coverage is flawed in some way, and create a movement. PMW initially did "everything right," so what PMW was able to accomplish via its strategies will tell us something about the potential ability of dissident media monitors to influence the newsmaking process and the "social contract" between

the press and public. PMW was also a group that took seriously newswriters' criticisms of its methods, and carefully observed and learned from its interactions with the news organizations it targeted. PMW's adjustment of its strategies in the wake of journalists' mechanisms of resistance, therefore, will inform us of the limits to dissident media monitoring power to shape news content and practices, yield insights about the hope to reform media representations and news practices via media monitoring, and inform us of the nature of the "social contract" between journalists and the public.

CHAPTER THREE:

Method

Because I want to determine the extent to which dissident media monitoring groups may be able to influence news coverage of issues important to them, and because I presume that any effects those groups are able to generate will take time due to journalists' resistance to watchdog efforts, I need a methodology that guides an analysis of watchdog-media interactions as they occur over time. The methodology should provide a means to study the watchdog-media interaction and determine the outcomes of those interactions. In particular, the method should allow me to demonstrate what PMW was able to achieve, what types of journalistic resistance it overcame and what types of criticisms of news coverage resonated with targeted newswriters (i.e., what types of criticisms are "journalistically useful"), and should allow me to make claims about the potentials of and limits to dissident media monitoring due to professional and ideological obstacles to a dissident's objectives as erected by news organizations.

As I reviewed in the previous chapter, the dialogic and dialectical models suggest a methodology for the study of the processes by which social movements try to influence media representations, and Hayes (2008) outlined several ways that watchdogs are effective. The dialogic model calls for an analysis of media-movement relationships that does not focus exclusively on the representations of a movement but emphasizes a movement's strategic adaptability as it varies across time and in interaction with newswriters. It asks, "How do movement strategists and journalists interact?" (Barker-Plummer, 1995, p. 311), and seeks to understand the range of outcomes made possible by

a movement's strategic choices. The researcher analyzes news coverage of a group, recognizing that it made a particular choice about how it interacted with a news organization that will impact its representation in the news media, and I suggest that the strategies watchdogs choose in their attempts to influence news media will impact their ability to affect representations of issues important to them.

The dialectical model compels the researcher to understand media-movement interactions as processes that occur over time while recognizing the mechanisms of resistance available to movements as well as the mechanisms of media dominance that may subvert potential gains, and I propose that the factors that limit what watchdogs can achieve are not only institutional but ideological and professional. Some of these obstacles, however, can be overcome by a movement's strategic maneuvering and its exploitation of an occasionally shifting ideological atmosphere, so researchers should study the "concrete circumstances" of struggle as they occur over time (Kumar, 2007, p. 52), and recognize that those struggles occur in specific sociopolitical or geopolitical contexts.

These models propose that to properly understand framing struggles, one must not focus only on media representations but emphasize the mechanisms for change and resistance available to both activists and news media staff. This includes recognizing that a particular struggle occurs within a specific context, which in the case of PMW includes the strategic interests that the U.S. possesses in the Middle East, the particular shape of the U.S.-Israel relationship when PMW was active, and the ideologies that create a special relationship between Israel and the U.S.; understanding how journalism works;

acknowledging means available to activists to influence media representations as well as the means available to newswriters both to close off avenues for change and to create space for alternative discourses in news content; and documenting outcomes of those struggles.

The dialogic and dialectical models obligate the researcher to understand the struggle from the point of view of the movement and the media. Understanding the totality of the media-movement struggle is consistent with a qualitative methodological paradigm that recommends the triangulation of multiple sources of data to get a complete picture of the phenomena under study (Potter, 1996). To do so, I pored through PMW's archives, including its website, the monitoring reports it produced of news content, the books and pamphlets it published, and its listservs. I studied newspaper and professional trade journal coverage of PMW and its criticisms of the news media, and interviewed key PMW leaders and the newswriters that activists most aggressively targeted and interacted. Analyzing the archives and news content and interviewing key activists allowed me to put a timeline together of significant events in the PMW-media struggle and allowed me to understand how PMW and media workers interacted with each other, and to determine what the media monitoring group was able to accomplish and how strategic choices by both activists and newswriters created new conditions from which future struggles will originate.

All of my methods were qualitative, and the qualitative approach to research favors the "detailed descriptions of the concrete experience" of some phenomenon (Potter, 1996). While this approach rejects the search for universal laws that may lead to

social scientific predictive capabilities, Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 240) claim that “thickly described data do permit readers to determine when and how the claims might ‘transfer’ to their own situations.” I seek to suggest the limits to and range of possible outcomes that dissident watchdogs may expect given particular strategies and the context within which they struggle by studying PMW-media interactions over time.

I analyzed PMW’s strategies between October 2000 and through 2004 by examining its historical archives, the years that PMW was exceptionally active, to understand how it presented itself to the news media and how it targeted those media in an effort to influence them. Although I emphasized PMW’s strategic behavior, I studied PMW-media interactions by examining PMW’s archives that describe those interactions, which included emails with news staff; interviewing newswriters who were lobbied by PMW; and studying news and professional trade journal coverage of PMW’s activities and criticisms.

Most of my data came from PMW’s archives. The archives were stored on the Internet,⁴ but include books that Ahmed Bouzid, PMW’s founder and president, published about the watchdog’s strategies.⁵ Archives contained PMW’s monitoring reports of newspapers, descriptions of PMW’s organization and history, strategic principles and suggestions, calls to action to its grassroots activist network, descriptions

⁴ These include PMW’s website (www.pmwatch.org), its public listserv (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pmwatch-action-calls>), its blog (pmblog.blogspot.com and <http://pmwatchletters.blogspot.com/>), and its facebook.com page. In April 2009 some of these websites went offline, but before the termination of the websites I saved the archives in print and/or electronic copy.

⁵ *The Media Playbook, Countering the Spin, and Framing the Struggle: Essays on the Middle East and the US Media.*

of interactions with newswriters, and claims and examples of failures and successes. Archives included over 1,000 documents, and I examined these documents with an eye toward understanding PMW's strategies, including its empirical claims about news coverage and its normative claims about journalism's role in society; and I analyzed its interactions with newswriters to determine the outcome of its campaigns by identifying what kinds of criticisms targeted newswriters considered "journalistically useful," determining the extent to which news organizations adjusted coverage when confronted with a professionally resonant criticism to help make claims about the nature of professional journalism's "social contract" with the public, and establishing that some criticisms were ideologically and professionally unacceptable, thus limiting what media monitors can accomplish.

The cases I study include PMW's efforts to influence the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *Charlotte Observer*, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, and CNN. These were the cases for which the most data were available from the archives, which allowed me to understand PMW's strategies, review its interactions with newswriters, and create ways to measure the outcomes of its efforts. The archives for these cases gave me sufficient information to construct interview questions for activists and PMW-targeted newswriters and to construct content analyses of news media content.

To help determine the outcomes of watchdog strategies and interactions with newswriters, I interviewed PMW activists about their perceived successes and failures and interviewed targeted newswriters so that they could give me their take on PMW's campaigns and influence on news coverage. PMW's archives and newswriters'

published statements about the media monitor provided sufficient information that allowed me to tailor questions to specific activists and newswriters, which jogged their memories and enabled them to answer my questions in some detail. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and two hours, depending on the number of questions I had for the participants, the level of detail required to answer those questions, level of memory, and the participant's individual talkativeness. Interviews took place by phone and email.

Interviews were designed to understand the media-movement interaction from the particular agent's – whether an activist or an employee of a targeted news organization -- point of view (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Potter, 1996). I devised a number of questions that were suited to each individual involved in PMW-media interactions and then proceeded from there to pursue further questions that arose from participants' statements made during the interview. As other researchers who discuss interviewing as a methodology have pointed out, multiple interviews allowed me to compare competing accounts of the same situation and draw conclusions about the validity of those claims, specifically claims about PMW's successes and failures (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Dean & Whyte, 1969; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Interviews were designed to understand PMW-media interactions from the participants' point of views, help fill in missing gaps in the group's archives, and to confirm or reject archival and interview claims. I review this in Chapter Four.

In Chapters Five and Six I narrate PMW's turn toward distributive action as its primary strategy, as opposed to systematic monitoring, and demonstrate that the strategic shift began to result in attention from the news media but also led the watchdog to

unwittingly pursue superficial effects that did not advance its primary objective to reframe the conflict. I pay particular attention to PMW's strategy to impact CNN's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during summer 2002, contextualizing the struggle within the framing struggle that was occurring between the Bush administration and other elites about whether Israel's military strikes against the Palestinians were a strategic liability or asset for the Bush administration's "war on terrorism." Piecing together PMW-CNN interactions from PMW's archives, I examined PMW's records with an eye toward examining its strategies to influence CNN, its interactions with CNN personnel to determine "journalistically useful" criticisms, and the outcomes of its strategies on news content.

In Chapter Seven I turn my analysis to newswriters' published statements at the time of the PMW-media interactions. Searching PMW's archives and the Lexis-Nexis database, I collected all news and professional trade articles that mentioned Palestine Media Watch or that implicated PMW or its allies. I analyzed these texts in an effort to understand what kinds of critiques PMW generated that resonated with newswriters, what changes news organizations made as a result of those criticisms, and the types of criticisms PMW activists made that news organizations rejected in order to identify the limits to and potential of dissident media monitoring groups to shape news coverage of issues important to them.

As an ideological analysis, my task in Chapter Seven was to (1) determine the preferred reading of a text, (2) identify whose interests were supported by the text, and (3) identify the rhetorical features used to support those interests (Foss, 1996). I studied

how journalism's professional form both allowed for the inclusion of PMW's critique and enabled the news organizations to defend and boost the professional paradigm. I also analyzed the statements of the authors of each article as well as the newswriters they quoted or paraphrased to identify several types of journalistic resistance to watchdog criticisms, including ideological "boosterism"; and I seek to understand what kinds of criticisms from media monitoring groups they find "journalistically useful" and why.

My task in Chapter Seven, as well as the entire study, required what Pauly (1991) called an "immersion in the materials." I looked for recurring patterns and then tested my preliminary conclusions against other forms of data (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Having previously examined PMW's archives, I determined what details news organizations left out in their coverage of PMW's activities and criticisms to make inferences about what kinds of criticisms news organizations consider most ideologically threatening as they reported about PMW's activities and criticisms.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Systematic Monitoring as a Strategy

If we are to understand the relative power of dissident media monitors in the newsmaking process, we first need to recognize the means of resistance available to watchdogs (i.e., the strategies they can and do pursue) and identify the mechanisms of domination available to newswriters (i.e., the strategies they employ to resist revising coverage in the wake of watchdog criticism). We also need to discover what media monitoring strategies work and what strategies fail to create revisions in news content and journalistic practices and standards, and we need to explain why they work or fail. That is, we need to understand the process by which both activists and newswriters strategically maneuver in interaction with each other as they attempt to advance and defend their interests.

Hayes (2008) argued that watchdogs can be most effective when they accept the professional paradigm as a given and provide evidence to suggest that a news organization has violated its commitment to professionalism. Throughout this study I presume that activists will find most success when the criticisms they make resonate with journalists to the extent that those criticisms are seen as “journalistically useful” by targeted newswriters. Yet, as Carlson (2009) demonstrated, competing watchdog groups can invoke the professional paradigm to make very different critiques about coverage, so journalists may boost their own definitions of professionalism to defend the content they produce. Therefore, two questions that guide the analysis in this chapter are: How do newswriters come to consider a criticism “journalistically useful,” and how

does the definition of a “journalistically useful criticism” enable and limit what can be accomplished via media monitoring? How do newswriters negotiate the tensions that arise when activists make complaints that resonate with newswriters’ sense of professional and public interest duties but do not resonate with the ideologies that inform newswriting?

In this chapter I attempt to answer these questions by examining the extent to which systematic monitoring was an effective watchdog strategy for PMW. I describe activists’ attempts to influence news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *Charlotte Observer*, and *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. Systematic monitoring refers to a strategy by which activists monitor a media outlet’s coverage of an issue important to them over a period of time, present their findings to key news staff, and argue that the paper’s coverage was flawed in some way.

This chapter is divided into two sections. First, I describe the interactions between activists and newswriters as each protagonist attempted to critique and defend the content of the opinion pages and I identify the outcomes of those interactions. Second, I describe the interactions and outcomes with respect to activists’ attempts to influence news coverage and newswriters’ defense of that coverage. Analyzing these strategic interactions and their outcomes by examining common trends in PMW’s archives as well as through interviews with key members of the media monitoring group and those newswriters that it lobbied will help us identify how newswriters come to see a criticism as “journalistically useful,” and how they negotiate the tensions that arise when a criticism that is otherwise professionally resonant is not ideologically useful.

Activists employed systematic monitoring as a strategy in order to achieve what I call substantive effects. Substantive influence refers to the production of revisions in news coverage or journalistic practices that indicate that a news organization has legitimized particular indicators of a movement's frame so that those manifestations would repeatedly appear in the future. Producing several substantive changes, activists stated, would lead to a "paradigmatic change," or the complete reframing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to root the conflict's cause in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, not Palestinian terrorism. One member of the watchdog group, for example, told fellow activists,

The other side [i.e., the pro-Israel lobby] knows full well that to win the media war you need to wage and win the smallest battles, battle after battle. And so, they continue on pressing for what may seem to be details – e.g., calling Gilo a Jewish neighborhood rather than what it is, a settlement.

Winning these smaller battles would lead to the erosion of the news media's paradigmatic frame and leave the watchdog's "international law" frame in its place. Replacing the phrase "Jewish neighborhoods" with "settlements" or "colonies," for example, would represent a substantive victory that, along with other substantive victories, would lead to paradigmatic change. The watchdog's archives suggest that activists believed they could convince news organizations to reframe coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so that newspapers would not present the conflict as one in which Israel responded to Palestinian terrorism but to one in which Palestinians responded to Israeli occupation. From this, the public would have a new understanding of the conflict and apparently pressure the U.S. to adjust its policies in the Middle East in a way favorable toward Palestinian rights.

Bouzid's statements to fellow activists suggest that he believed systematic monitoring would compel journalists to yield to the group's critique and revise coverage following the monitor's campaigns, especially if activists provided evidence that supported their argument that journalists deviated from their obligation to rely on facts (and for the watchdog, the proper fact to mention was that Israel's occupation is illegal, according to international law) and abandoned their professional commitment to balancing worldviews (i.e., include more of the Palestinian narrative in news articles and opinion columns). Monitoring reports of news coverage were the group's "bread and butter." Bouzid argued,

If you accuse a paper that they rarely give the Palestinian Authority quote space, they will react by saying that no, they do. Unless you *show them* exactly, with details and figures, that they don't, they will try to contradict you, even when they have no idea what they are talking about! So, maintain those reports and keep them updated. You will be glad you did when you are facing the editorial [board.]

He continued: "*The main thing is to force them to justify their paradigm.* If you get them to even look at the underlying framework of thinking – in this case, the notion that Israel is merely defending itself – as something challengeable you have won half of the battle."

Hayes (2008) argued that press critics are successful when they show that a news organization has violated its social contract to the public, and for PMW news professionalism was that contract. By pointing to what it called deviations from the norms of professional journalism, the activists attempted to gain leverage in their attempts to influence the news organizations they targeted. I will demonstrate that newswriters are, to some extent, responsive to dissident watchdogs and concede

“journalistically useful” points and occasionally make revisions in content and practice, but against Hayes I argue that it is difficult to state precisely what the social contract is between the public and news organizations because newswriters will defend the ideological content of their coverage even at the expense of principles that inform the professional paradigm. Newswriters will make revisions in coverage to the extent that the criticisms that imply those revisions are professionally resonant, but journalistically useful criticisms are only useful to the degree that the revisions they imply would not contradict a dominant ideology. Thus, criticisms must also be “ideologically useful” for U.S. power if revisions in content and practice are to be made.

Strategies to Influence Opinion Pages

PMW’s monitoring reports indicate that its activists initially believed that newspapers’ staff members were unaware that their editorial pages favored official Israel’s interpretation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the group framed its critique not to suggest that newspapers were biased but to offer ways to improve the quality of the targeted newspapers. In its January 2001 study of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s opinion pages, for example, PMW wrote, “Our aim in writing this report is to raise the Philadelphia Inquirer’s awareness of its own editorial coverage of the Middle East crisis. Our aim is not to characterize or label the Inquirer, but to examine its product and the quality and variety of what it is offering its readership.”

The group produced several reports in which it made a statement similar to the one above, and in all of its reports it concluded that the *Philadelphia Inquirer*,

Washington Post, Charlotte Observer, and the Atlanta Journal Constitution

overwhelmingly supported official Israel's view of the conflict in their opinion pages. To remedy this imbalance in the distribution of opinions, activists attempted to appeal to newswriters' professional commitments by arguing that in publishing many more of what they called pro-Israel columns over pro-Palestine or balanced columns, newspapers had violated their obligations to fact and to balance.

First, PMW argued that the opinion page editors, although in charge of choosing which opinions to publish, needed to commit themselves to choosing columns based on the extent to which opinions expressed in those columns were informed by fact. For the monitors, those facts could be found in international law. For example, activists who targeted the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Charlotte Observer* argued that most of the published columns that were sympathetic to Israel expressed opinions that were rooted in myth. Pro-Palestine columns, by contrast, "stress basic realities that 'pro-Israeli columns ignore: mainly, they highlight the illegal character of Israeli actions, the reality on the ground, and characterize Israel as the aggressor rather the victim.'" Balanced columns, according to the group, were also based in fact, and "tend to stress the morally obvious, legally sound, and some very basic, given factual realities."

Second, activists attempted to use newspapers' social contract to the public – newswriters' commitment to balance and statements that they made expressing that commitment – in an effort to redistribute the diversity of columns to include more pro-Palestine and balanced columns. Watchdogs who targeted the *Washington Post*, for example, quoted Fred Hiatt, the *Post*'s editorial page editor, in their monitoring reports

that summarized their studies of the paper's distribution of opinion columns. According to those reports, Hiatt had previously stated, "I don't think it's my job to match opposing political views column for column, but I do think that we should try to have other points of view represented on that page." PMW argued that of 45 opinion columns that the *Post* published between 6 October 2000 and 16 March 2001, 37 were pro-Israel, 5 were pro-Palestine, and 3 were balanced. In their report, the activists argued,

This report leaves no question that The Washington Post has failed to provide its readers with a balanced offering of opinions on the Middle East conflict. The few attempts it has made at providing the other side of the story (or at providing an objective, balanced perspective) has been drowned in the overwhelming mass of one-sided commentary it has published to date. Overall, a narrow point of view was consistently presented to readers with minimal efforts to give voice to the opposite standpoint.

PMW recommended that the *Post* publish a wider range of views about the conflict on its opinion pages: "Readers have the right – and indeed, the expectation – to hear all arguments from all involved parties. In the future, The Washington Post should work to provide its readers with equal exposure to the pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli perspectives, as well as the objective, balanced point of view."

In an attempt to increase access to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to learn more about how the *Inquirer* chooses which opinion columns to publish, Bouzid wrote in one of his reports about his interaction with the paper's staff,

John Timpane's [the paper's commentary page editor] reaction to Palestine Media Watch's initiative to establish contact [according to Bouzid, Timpane admonished PMW for not following proper procedure when it attempted to contact him] was clearly at variance with his public statements of October 4, where he states: 'Get in touch by repeated e-mails and phone calls, and we **will** get connected.'

In an effort to redistribute column space to include more pro-Palestine and balanced opinions, activists suggested names of columnists who were sympathetic to the Palestinian narrative that newspapers could syndicate, including Norman Solomon, Alexander Cockburn, Charlie Reese, Holger Jensen, and Ray Hanania, among others.

The monitoring group was also willing to abide by guidelines to gain access to newspaper staff and to the opinion pages set forth by news organizations if newswriters would only explain those guidelines to the activists. Bouzid, for example, wrote in one of his reports to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*,

We are well aware that the opinion page staff faces a mountain of material through which it needs to wade every day, but several dozens of unanswered email queries makes communication with the opinion page staff very difficult. The only email communication we received from John Timpane was an admonishment about how we were not following procedure, sent to us after several weeks and dozens of emails. We would gladly have followed whatever procedure Mr. Timpane prefers to better establish a working relationship with him and his staff had he explained to us the procedure from the outset.

Journalism's Resistance and Journalistically Useful Criticisms

Now that I have laid out the monitor's strategies to influence the opinion pages at these papers, we can turn our attention to newswriters' defense mechanisms to determine the obstacles a dissident monitoring group might confront, to assess how dissidents might strategize to overcome those obstacles, to determine what criticisms are "journalistically useful," and to understand how newswriters reconcile criticisms that they acknowledge are valid but whose implied revisions would lead to significant changes in newswriting and challenges to the ideological paradigm. Determining all of this will help us determine the limits to and potentials of dissident media monitoring when

dissidents pursue systematic monitoring as a primary watchdog strategy, and help us understand the nature of the “social contract” between the press and the public.

First, newswriters may resist a watchdog’s criticisms for practical reasons (i.e., “practical resistance”), deflecting the responsibility for the content of the opinion pages from themselves to the public. Newswriters complain that they can only publish that which is made available to them, which must be of high quality, so that the distribution of opinions about controversial issues does not reflect the editorial position of the staff but the activities and quality of thinking by interest groups. Mike King, who was the public editor at the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* when PMW was active, for example, suggested that if the distribution of columns reflected a pro-Israel tilt, that was because pro-Israel groups were more active than pro-Palestine groups:

You try your best [to provide balance]. From a logistical standpoint, the pro-Israel community was better organized in 2002 in terms of writing columns and making them available to the media than pro-Palestinian groups and locally more people churn out the pro-Israel point of view and we’re not getting that from pro-Palestinian groups in Atlanta to that degree but Palestine Media Watch did it and that was helpful (personal communication, 27 August 2009).

Activists attempted to overcome practical resistance by suggesting that there were excellent columnists who were sympathetic to the Palestinians whom newspapers could syndicate, but fell short of achieving that goal because newspaper editors resisted for financial and ideological reasons. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* did not syndicate the pro-Palestine columnists that Tanya Hsu, an activist in Atlanta at the time, recommended for financial reasons:

Money. They just didn’t want to do it because of money. As I recall they even gave a figure. It cost \$125 per person for syndication or something like that. These journalists are getting quite rich without us giving them extra money,

which I thought was just an outrage but there you go (personal communication, 18 August 2009).

Mike King recalled that the paper would not pick up new columnists for financial reasons, and suggested that if the paper had a pro-Israel tilt in its distribution that was by accident: “We were under contract so we had to run those – so Thomas Friedman might be on a Monday and Charles Krauthammer on a Tuesday – and we didn’t have an option to drop a column just because it was pro-Israel” (personal communication, 27 August 2009).

The columnists that PMW supported were not prominent enough for papers to syndicate, suggesting professional reasons to not revise coverage in the wake of a dissident campaign. When Edith Garwood, an activist in North Carolina, suggested that the *Charlotte Observer* syndicate Ray Hanania and others, “their response was that these people weren’t of the same ‘quality’ as for instance William Safire, who was a Pulitzer Prize winner and who consequently wrote from a pro-Israel perspective” (personal communication, 18 July 2009).

Ahmed Bouzid, Palestine Media Watch’s president, attempted to combat newswriters’ “practical resistance” by initiating a “Column writing campaign” in December 2000. He encouraged activists to write opinion columns, send them to him, and in turn he would distribute those columns to newspapers across the country. He explained that the campaign was necessary to combat practical resistance:

In my communications with various national newspapers, my complaint over the absurd disproportion of column and opinion space given to pro-Israeli voices vs. the meager space given to pro-Palestinian voices (the ratio according to our data is 8-to-1) has been met time and again with the same response: we would LOVE

to publish more pro-Palestinian columns, except that we are not getting the submissions.

A column writing campaign would provide news organizations those columns they sought and allow PMW to compare the number of columns submitted to those published in an effort to use news organizations' own words – that is, their social contract -- as leverage with which to force them to publish PMW columns. As Bouzid put it,

Our effort is mainly to build a solid case against the major newspapers that we have submitted X columns in a period of time, but they have published only some small number of them, while at the same time as usual giving ample space to pro-Israeli voices.

These data, he explained, “will serve us well when we meet face to face with newspaper boards and at least stare them down when they want to justify their blockade because of ‘lack of material’ from the Palestinian side.” To some extent, the strategy seemed to work, and Bouzid noticed that his activists' columns appeared on Yahoo!'s Middle East coverage section on 9 January 2001, yet the activists produced no evidence that the strategy resulted in a long-term redistribution of what it considered pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, and balanced columns. It appears that newswriters do not find criticisms of their opinion pages, when those criticisms use “the facts” and balance as leverage to adjust the distribution of column space, journalistically useful.

However, the evidence does suggest that activists increased their access to newspaper staff and were able to publish columns that they wrote. This is because newswriters reported that they were happy to hear the alternative point of view. That PMW even became active, then, was “journalistically useful” for newswriters who were responsible for the opinion pages because newswriters did not have to expand the labor

required of them to improve the diversity of the opinion pages and could push the labor on to the activists. Regarding the *Charlotte Observer's* opinion editors, Garwood reported, "They were pleased to see and meet with us actually because they said they were visited regularly by dignitaries or such that would voice a pro-Israel perspective. They were happy to hear the alternative voice" (personal communication, 18 July 2009). Mike King, who was the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* public editor when PMW activists lobbied him, agreed that newswriters enjoyed hearing from pro-Palestine activists. "We always had the pro-Israel side of the conflict in our ear, so it was valuable when Palestine Media Watch came along" (personal communication, 27 August 2009). Lillian Swanson, who was the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* ombudsman when PMW lobbied the paper, reported that it was a good thing pro-Palestine groups became active as media watchdogs: "We didn't hear much about the Palestinian point of view before that. It was a great contribution. Good for them. Good for them. After all, it's the public's newspaper" (personal communication, 28 August 2009). Tanya Hsu, a leading activist in the watchdog's Atlanta chapter, noted that her meeting with *Atlanta Journal Constitution* staff introduced her to a sympathetic staff member who encouraged her efforts:

There's another one – David Diesel, I think – he was extremely sympathetic and, in fact, he called me afterwards and we had many meetings afterwards where he gave me more, you know, airtime, if you will, tried to encourage me to write op-eds specifically for the paper. And that relationship continued for quite a while until I left for Saudi Arabia and then all bets were off (personal communication, 18 August 2009).

The activists and newswriters agreed that PMW's activities resulted in the publication of more pro-Palestine columns in the opinion pages. However, it was only a

slight improvement. Edith Garwood, the leader of PMW's chapter in Charlotte, North Carolina, explained that following her 2002 meeting with the *Charlotte Observer's* staff,

. . . no promises were made, but I noticed that the Deputy Opinion Page Editor, Jane McCallister-Pope who was responsible for choosing the guest opinion pieces started using the pieces I submitted and even specifically requested one when Rachel Corrie was killed in March 2003 (personal communication, 18 July 2009).

The effect of PMW's campaign, Mike King stated, slightly increased the number of columns representing the pro-Palestine point of view at the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*: "They [PMW activists] might tell me that there is an interesting piece in the *New York Times* or coming to the *Times* and I would walk that over to the editorial page editor and so, yes, it probably helped" (personal communication, 27 August 2009).

Again, however, the influence was minimal. As Jennifer Grosvenor, an activist with Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights, a group that allied with PMW and If Americans Knew to produce a report of the *Oregonian's* coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, put it, "I would say that there's probably been two a year that I could say either absolutely, I pitched something and he [the editorial page editor] ran them or I was pitching something and he ran something similar. But, you know, before in the study they had one run a year, so two a year?" (personal communication, 7 July 2009). Tanya Hsu suggested that she thought her April 2002 monitoring report of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* opinion pages and meeting with the paper's editorial staff resulted in a small improvement in the diversity of the opinion pages. "In the short-term," she told me, "there was an improvement. I will call it a gentle improvement but over the long-term, I would say about a year to eighteen months later, that seemed to be gone" (personal communication, 18 August 2009).

Thus, PMW was able to overcome newswriters' "practical justification" for the distribution of pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, and balanced columns in their opinion pages by becoming active, which gave them access to newswriters. Although activists were able to publish columns in the opinion pages and successfully recommend columns for publication, however, they hardly affected the distribution of pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, and balanced columns in the papers. At least one activist reported sensing a sort of "ideological resistance" on the part of newspaper staff that, despite her continued efforts to promote the Palestinian narrative, prevented further success. When the Bush administration decided to invade Iraq, Tanya Hsu claimed, the ideological and geopolitical context had regressed in a way that made expressing pro-Palestine opinions unpopular:

The knee-jerk reaction came back. Now, to be precise I cannot tell you whether or not that was because our effectiveness had worn off or whether it was a matter of group hysteria, national hysteria, over the fact that there's a war in Iraq. And by default Israel-Palestine was included in that because obviously that is the cause of the angst and the problems in the Middle East to begin with, so I think that it would be unfair to say that our particular coverage wore off. We did complain. We continued to complain. We were pretty strong in complaining, relentless actually (personal communication, 18 August 2009).

Newswriters also stated that they did not believe PMW's results that newspapers' distribution of pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, and balanced columns were so heavily tilted toward the pro-Israel spectrum. Mike King said, "We had a disagreement about what 'neutral' columns meant. My revelation was what that they considered biased or slanted, we would consider explanatory and information or they would consider it pro-Israel" (personal communication, 27 August 2009). If newspaper staff did not believe

they were violating their commitment to balance, therefore, they did not need to revise their practices.

At other times, activists generated critiques that resonated with newswriters, creating tensions among newswriters for ideological and professional reasons. In a column he published after the activists met with the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* editorial staff in April 2002, King wrote that pro-Palestine activists made a "valid point" when they argued that "their view should get more space on the opposite-editorial pages, but "worr[ied] that pledging to seek differing opinions on those pages carries an unrealistic expectation of 'balance,' there and elsewhere in the paper" (King, 2002). Although activists made themselves journalistically useful by becoming active and although they made professionally resonant criticisms by invoking balance as a professional obligation, King ultimately denied that balance was a professional obligation and suggested that to provide balance in the opinion pages would mandate irresponsible news practices elsewhere in the paper.

According to a report of his April 2001 meeting with the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* editorial staff produced by Ahmed Bouzid, the leader of PMW's Philadelphia chapter, newswriters deflected activists' claims that news organizations have an obligation to the public to provide a wide array of opinions about controversial issues. Bouzid reported confronting what I call "public resistance." That is, newswriters may resist revising coverage following dissident watchdog campaigns by blaming the public for expecting that controversial issues should be covered a certain way and relieving themselves of their professional responsibilities in the process. One editor, according to the report of

the meeting, “started off by saying that we are ‘pursuing a chimera’ if we thought we could attain a paradigm shift in Americans’ perspective of the conflict by pushing for more accurate coverage.” Throughout the meeting, according to PMW’s report, newswriters attempted to shift the focus of the discussion away from journalism’s normative obligations and direct it toward the public’s ideological expectations, whereas Bouzid attempted to keep the discussion centered on what he seemed to consider the paper’s social contract to the public.

Finally, activists were confronted with what I am calling newswriters’ “axiomatic resistance.” If in arguing with activists newswriters cannot reconcile the validity of a critic’s argument with the professional or ideological paradigms, newswriters can attempt to cut off criticism by asserting that their coverage is adequate because the watchdog’s issue competitor also complains about coverage. Although Atlanta-based activists thought they had created a “slight improvement” in the number of pro-Palestine columns accepted for publication by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Mike King, the paper’s public editor, resorted to “axiomatic resistance” following the paper’s meeting with PMW members. In a column he wrote in response to the meeting, King wrote, “There’s an old axiom among reporters: If what you write makes people on both sides of a controversy mad at you, then you probably reported it fairly. I don’t hold to it because it’s just a cheap response to valid criticism much of the time.” In the very next paragraph, however, King applied the axiom to defend his paper’s coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: “Still, I can’t help but think about that old saying as dozens of

newspapers across the United States come under fire for ‘biased’ coverage of the violence in the Middle East” (King, 2002).

Following the watchdog’s report of the distribution of opinion columns in the *Washington Post*, Ahmed Bouzid reported to fellow activists on the PMW listserv, “Rania Awwad, head of PMWatch Washington Post team, has been involved in an intense debate with Michael Getler, Ombudsman of the Washington Post. She and her team are working very hard at pressuring the Post to do the right thing.” However, according to PMW, Getler “stated (predictably) that the pressure from the Israeli lobby on the Post is much stronger than that from the pro-Palestinians – as if that were a justification for the way they have been covering the crisis.”

In response to axiomatic resistance, the PMW president urged fellow activists to “even things out for the man,” amplifying and multiplying their voice so that Getler could not point to louder criticism from the pro-Israel side as a reason to dismiss the watchdog’s critique. As activists made criticisms that resonated with newswriters’ sense of public and professional duties but whose implied revisions would suggest significant changes in newswork and a threat to the ideologies that inform that work, newswriters invoked their axiom in an attempt to cut off criticism. This defense mechanism, then, created new conditions from which activists could logically strategize. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, activists resorted to distributive action that got newswriters’ attention but did not advance their interests and soured the relations between newswriters and activists.

Strategies to Influence News Coverage

Activists monitored their local newspaper's news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to determine how the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, *Charlotte Observer*, and *Atlanta Journal Constitution* framed the conflict, and produced several reports, most which included analyses of news content over a period of a few months. Like its attempt to produce changes in the opinion pages, PMW argued that the papers had violated their social contract by failing to root their coverage of the conflict in a framework established by international law and by adopting official Israel's preferred narrative of the conflict as their own.

Edith Garwood and other activists found examples of coverage that they argued were inaccurate because they deviated from the facts of international law. One story in the *Charlotte Observer*, for example, stated that Jerusalem was Israel's capital. Garwood argued that this was inaccurate,

The United Nations Security Council passed U.N. Security Council Resolution 478 on August 20, 1980 declaring Israel's 'basic law' declaring Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital as null and void due to East Jerusalem's status as 'occupied territories.' 14 to none passed the resolution with one abstention, the United States.

In another monitoring report that she produced, Garwood claimed that the *Observer* referred to the Palestinian territories as "captured" or "held" instead of "occupied," so she reminded the paper of their status under international law:

Israel has been an "occupying force" following the acquisition of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip during the 1967 War. Israel has been consistently recognized by the international community as an "occupying power" and is obliged to follow the Fourth Geneva Conventions and other international statutes and laws required of all "occupying powers."

The activists attempted to show how coverage of the conflict was not neutral but informed by a framework that favored official Israel's interpretation of the conflict. Garwood, for example, observed in one report that the *Charlotte Observer* published the following headline: "As Israelis live in fear, Palestinians simmer." In her report, she wrote, "Although the headline is probably true for a segment of the population, it is just as true to use 'Palestinians live in fear, Israelis simmer' as an alternative headline." In other words, activists attempted to provide an alternative framework to support their argument that the coverage overwhelmingly adopted not what they would consider a neutral framework organized around international law but a framework that favored official Israel's narrative.

There were other ways, according to the activists, in which news organizations violated their professional obligations. Ahmed Bouzid, the head of the Philadelphia chapter, for example, argued that the *Philadelphia Inquirer* violated its commitment to the public when it failed to publish maps that indicated what Ehud Barak offered at Camp David. For Bouzid, newspapers had a responsibility to provide information that would educate the public about important issues. "It is truly startling, to say the least," Bouzid wrote in one report to the *Inquirer's* staff, "that a conflict that is in its core a conflict over land would be covered over a long stretch of time without ONCE presenting a map depicting the state of the offers presented on the table."

Garwood attempted to establish that there was a disconnect between the *Charlotte Observer's* content and the staff's claims about its content (i.e., its social contract). Robin Thrana, the *Observer's* Copy Desk Chief, Garwood wrote in her 2003 report of the

paper's coverage, stated, "[A]ll a reader has time to do is glance at the headline, rather than the article," so, "Our primary goal is to make headlines as accurate and clear as possible," as well as "neutral." Garwood argued that the *Observer* did not live up to Thrana's commitment. One headline read, "Israeli troops returning fire when journalist killed," and Garwood critiqued the headline based on the content of the story: "The story is about the shooting death of a journalist in the course of doing his job. The headline spotlights one of the standard excuses given by the military which is given in the last sentence [i.e., that Israeli soldiers are merely responding to aggression]. Also, the headline is misleading in that it says 'Israeli,' which suggests an unbiased civilian, not an army spokesman." She added, "The headline should read in an unbiased, factual manner, such as 'Journalist killed by Israeli troops' or 'Journalist killed while filming in Gaza' or 'Journalist killed,' not one party's response."

Newspapers, argued the media monitors, also violated their obligation to avoid editorializing in the news pages when they adopted the preferred official Israeli narrative as a fact to be reported, and not a claim made by Israeli officials. Bouzid complained that the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* reporters stated as fact that Israel "responded" or "retaliated" to Palestinian violence instead of reporting that Israeli officials "claimed" their violence was in response to Palestinian violence. "[T]he words 'respond' and 'retaliate' and some of their variations," Bouzid wrote, "are presented as fact rather than as points of view or justification offered by the Israeli side." Adopting the terms as the paper's own without attributing it to a source, he argued, meant that the paper had not reported facts but had begun to editorialize in favor of official Israel's preferred narrative.

The activists also learned from journalists' criticisms of their strategies, and adjusted tactics in wake of journalistic resistance. The D.C. PMW watch team, for example, noted that Michael Getler, the *Washington Post's* ombudsman, had "repeatedly advised readers and critics of the Post's Mideast coverage to examine the paper's coverage over time, and cautioned against making judgments based on one news article or one week's worth of stories." In response, the D.C. team decided to expand its monitoring period from a few months to almost two years' worth of coverage. D.C. activists turned to Lexis-Nexis to count the number of times the *Washington Post's* news pages stated factually – rather than as a claim made by an official – that either Israelis or Palestinians responded or retaliated to the other's violence. Activists claimed to find that the *Post* overwhelmingly characterized Israeli violence as a response to initial Palestinian violence.

Journalistically Useful Criticisms and Journalistic Resistance

Now that I have laid out the watchdog's strategy to influence news coverage of the conflict, I want to identify types of journalistic resistance to that strategy in order to determine what forms of resistance PMW was able to overcome and what forms of resistance limited the activists' ability to influence coverage. Again, I seek to determine what kinds of criticisms newswriters considered "journalistically useful" to help assess what dissidents can hope to achieve when they pursue influence via systematic monitoring campaigns, which will also help illuminate the relationship between the professional paradigm and the ideologies that inform newswork as newswriters attempt

to negotiate the tension between the ideological paradigm and what resonates with their sense of public duty.

There is some evidence to suggest that watchdogs can make journalistically useful criticisms when they appeal to newswriters' sense that they are obliged to educate the public about important issues. However, there is some disagreement among newswriters about those obligations. For PMW specifically, it is unclear whether criticizing newspapers for failing to provide context that helps explain the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is useful for newswriters. In the wake of one of the D.C. team's campaigns, Michael Getler, the *Washington Post's* ombudsman at the time of PMW's campaigns, for example, wrote a column in which he complained, "There has not been enough information [in the *Post*] about the Israeli settlements, or about what happened in 1948, 1967 and 1973 for readers who don't know or need to be reminded" (Getler, 2002, May 5). Mike King of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, however, claimed that providing context was not a news organization's job. He explained that most readers, not only critics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, complained that the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* did not provide enough context about issues and events, but he turned to the professional norm to focus on the latest event to defend the paper's coverage:

And there was frustration on both sides [pro-Palestine and pro-Israel] and constant criticism that we weren't complete with our historical context. Well, what do you want us to do? Start 3,000 years ago? They would say we didn't go back far enough. Yeah, we didn't because it was not a history. It's a story about what happened (personal communication, 27 August 2009)

It is unclear, then, whether it is a “journalistically useful” strategy for watchdogs to complain about a lack of context. Some newswriters think it is, whereas others do not; and even those who think it is a “journalistically useful” critique to complain about a lack of context may not have much power to affect news coverage. Getler, for example, agreed that context was important if the public was to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

The point is people don’t understand that Palestinian life is lived under occupation. Some of those conditions are the equivalent of being under attack or tortured and endlessly humiliated. They [Palestinians] see it as retaliating for occupation and see themselves as terrorized, living under terrorism. Americans need to understand that Palestinians are feeling like they’re being terrorized and this needs to be occasionally explained, especially for younger readers who may not have a sense of the history (personal communication, 12 August 2009).

However, he did not have much power to shape the news. His ability to influence coverage was limited to correcting “facts” and issues of structure, but he could not expand the professional paradigm to focus less on the facts that describe events and more on those facts that explain events:

It depends. It depends if they [the news staff] agree with me or not and you can never tell what impact you’ll have on it. An ombudsman doesn’t have much force with presentation or approaches, but does with facts, and sometimes we disagree. So it depends, but I think my presence – and I also write an internal memo to the staff, not just the public column – so they’re very aware of you and keep you in mind, but it’s hard to provide evidence of an effect (personal communication, 12 August 2009).

Newswriters admitted that there were other “journalistically useful” points the watchdog made, but also recognized several professional barriers that stood in the way of revising coverage. The Philadelphia activist team, for example, shared a report of its analysis of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s photographic representation of the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict on its front-pages between 28 March and 15 June 2002 with Lillian Swanson, the paper's ombudsman. The report indicated that the paper published only one above-the-fold photograph of Palestinian suffering and nine photographs that depicted Israeli suffering. I asked Swanson whether PMW's empirical analysis was valid and whether its complaint was normatively valid. She reported that both were valid:

I thought it was legitimate because we weren't paying attention and in the heat of putting out a newspaper you look to put out the best picture and those can be very powerful and my role was to bring to the editors complaints. Palestine Media Watch had shown us that we had nine on one side and one or two for the other. I think it was really important for key decision-makers on the front page to see that there was a pattern and I don't think they were stepping back but you hope over the course it's balanced. But there's no equivalence – just because you show Palestinian suffering doesn't mean you have to show Israeli suffering – but it was important that over time there was an accurate picture (personal communication, 28 August 2009).

As an ombudsman, however, she did not have much influence over the paper's coverage: "I would be the last person to say that editors snapped to attention and said we were wrong when I approached them. People take information in but they're defensive and skeptical because they've been dancing around these fires for years and jaded and have to make tough decisions in a limited time frame" (personal communication, 28 August 2009).

In fact, at the time, there are indications that newswriters resorted to "professional resistance," indicating that despite acknowledgement of valid criticisms, newswriters could either accommodate criticisms within the professional paradigm or, when a criticism was valid but its implied revisions suggested conflict with the professional paradigm, dismissed those criticisms to keep the paradigm intact. In response to PMW's complaint about the photographs, Swanson published a column in

which she wrote that despite complaints the *Inquirer* did not change its approach to reporting the conflict: “So it goes in the media war, where American newspapers – by most accounts, far more pro-Israeli than their western European counterparts – take it on the chin from both sides. And keep on reporting” (Swanson, 2002, 15 July, A6). Despite valid criticisms, *Inquirer* staff also resorted to their axiom to justify coverage of the conflict. When two reporters at the *Philadelphia City Paper* asked Swanson if criticism from pro-Israel and pro-Palestine groups indicated that the paper adequately covered the conflict, Swanson reportedly told them, “‘I guess that means we’re probably doing a good job,’ she allows. ‘I think it’s a sign that we’re on the right track’” (Bolling & Lewis, 2002).

Activists can also make gains when they argue that the use of certain terms to describe an event’s key players misrepresent “the facts.” Following a campaign in which D.C. activists complained that the *Washington Post* inappropriately called Jewish settlers who attacked Palestinians “vigilantes,” Michael Getler, the paper’s ombudsman, published a column in which he agreed with PMW’s criticisms. He wrote that the term “vigilante” “can, indeed, understate the actions taken” (Getler, 2002, June 9). When I asked Getler if PMW’s criticism in this case was a “journalistically useful” point, he said it was. “The settlers were perpetrating the attacks, not responding, so we needed to call it like it is” (personal communication, 12 August 2009). In this case, it was a matter of fact that settlers were perpetrating the violence, not responding to Palestinian violence, so the “journalistically useful” point was that the paper got its facts wrong. However, whereas PMW urged the *Post* to label settler violence “terrorism,” Getler only stated that settler

violence can be “understated,” indicating ideological limits to the watchdog’s efforts to influence coverage in a way that is more consistent with its interpretation of the conflict. It could not be considered a fact that settler violence is terrorism.

Similarly, there are indications that newswriters found PMW’s criticisms that papers strayed from the facts as represented in international law a “journalistically useful” criticism. In May and June 2001 Ahmed Bouzid complained that the *Philadelphia Inquirer* had published maps of the Middle East that incorrectly indicated that the Golan Heights were part of Israel. After he informed the *Inquirer*’s staff about the error in the map, the paper revised its maps by August 2001. Swanson explained that “their complaints prompted us to go back and see the sourcing of the maps and whether they were as neutral as we can make them” (personal communication, 28 August 2009). Her decision, she stated, was based on the map’s deviation from international law:

My memory is that the maps we were running had been produced a few years before and had not been updated to include new borders as internationally recognized. We changed our maps to reflect those internationally recognized borders. We were attempting to be accurate and factual, and saw that what we had printed was outdated. That was why we redrew some of the boundary lines on the maps. These were issues that were brought to our attention by the Palestine Media Watch after we had printed a map that they felt was unfair (personal communication, 1 September 2009).

The *Charlotte Observer* published a similar map in June 2003, and by October 2003, following complaints from PMW activists, the paper had revised its maps of the region. The paper’s erratum, according to PMW’s archives, read:

A map of Israel in the June 12 Observer did not fully describe who controls the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The map incompletely showed the Golan Heights; it should have outlined the political borders, which Israel has occupied since the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. In addition, the map oversimplified who is in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinians have some

control in those areas; Israel also has some control. The Israeli military has made incursions into those areas. The map also should have not marked Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Israel considers Jerusalem to be its capital; the United Nations and United States don't recognize Israel's claim.

Alix Felsing, the *Charlotte Observer's* foreign and national desk editor, was responsible for investigating the watchdog's complaint about the map, and was careful not to say that the paper's decision to revise the map was based on international law. Felsing struggled to explain how she determined that the map was wrong and needed revision:

That's the problem. I was trying to figure out the purpose of the map and what we were trying to show and show geographical and political boundaries, not who it belongs to but where it was and we tried to be clear about what we were showing and trying to show it was occupied – instead of Israel or Palestine (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

These revisions, I suggest, are examples of substantive influence, indicating that systematic monitoring was a somewhat successful strategy that worked to PMW's advantage and that "the facts" of international law, to a degree, resonated with newswriters. Edith Garwood, the activist in charge of the PMW-Charlotte team, found some success "educating" Felsing about the conflict, so that Felsing even admitted that in the wake of Garwood's criticisms she began to look for what she called more "neutral" language to describe the conflict.

Felsing also explained that Garwood was "very reasonable and would lay out the facts and we could trust her as she mentioned that issues would keep coming up. It was nice because it was a discussion and I learned from that without having to think: Am I being spun? Where am I being spun?" (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

Felsing was cautious because the conflict is an "emotional issue," but acknowledged that

Garwood had educated her about discursive patterns in the news media, especially in the wires. Felsing explained: “We noticed the language in the wires. Journalists had not chosen neutral language and adopted the language of Israel. They would say ‘neighborhoods’ when they could be called settlements or that they were disputed. ‘Neighborhoods’ was a euphemism. And ‘separation barrier’ for Israel and AP used it as a ‘fence’ whereas Palestinians deal with it as a ‘wall’” (personal communication, 20 August 2009). She went to her staff to inform them to look out for patterns:

I had three assistant editors and myself as national editor. And I had a meeting with them about the wires and would say, “This is what we need to look for.” And everything is loaded on each side and we’re seeing it from an American point of view and we expected the wires to question language the same way we do but it was from the Israeli point of view and the same as the *New York Times*. It was very Israeli centric (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

Felsing also called staff of the wire services if she noticed a pattern and would ask, “What’s going on?” The Associated Press informed Felsing that she was free to edit its stories however she wanted, which Felsing did not find very useful in her attempt to learn about the conflict and better reflect the Palestinian narrative.

Garwood’s level of knowledge about the conflict was also extremely deep, Felsing explained, and she and her staff found it hard to compete with that as they were trying to learn about the conflict. She asked, “What do you do?” When I asked how she tried to learn about the conflict to address Garwood’s concerns and assess her criticisms, she began speaking about the wire services again as educational devices:

We subscribed to all the wires, except Reuters, so we had the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, Associated Press, Knight Ridder, the *Chicago Tribune*, and it was a comprehensive list, and so we read all versions of a story that we were going to publish and by doing that you start to see how they portray events to see

little differences with language and you start to see patterns (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

I asked if they tried to compensate for those patterns:

Yeah. We were a McClatchy paper so we had more pull with them. They want us to use their stuff. But I'd say here's the problem: This language should be different. Why not do a Palestinian cover story with an Israeli cover story? You want us to use your stuff and here's why we're not using it. The AP is such a monolith and they didn't care if we used their stuff or not (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

Both Swanson and Felsing, then, used the term “neutral” to describe language that was consistent with international law, indicating that criticisms based on facts as understood by principles laid out in international law at least partially resonated with newswriters as “journalistically useful.”

However, like Swanson and Getler, Felsing's ability to shape news coverage was limited. Garwood reported that she learned from her interactions with *Observer* staff that newswriters were so overworked and the newsroom built so much like a factory that it was difficult for her to influence the narrative; there were simply too many newswriters to “educate” in order to have an effect:

Another obstacle was if I “educated” an editor on these language issues and they actually took the time to carefully edit the stories, there were usually 3-5 different people putting the stories together and people were rotated through different desks and responsibilities so it was difficult to “educate” everyone and each individual had a different level of acceptance (personal communication, 18 July 2009).

In short, there are newswriters sympathetic to Palestinians, or at least to “the facts” as understood by international law, but their capacity to influence news coverage of the conflict is limited by professional constraints -- or “de facto resistance.”

Other “journalistically useful” points, newswriters claim, are made when watchdogs observe newspapers deviating from the standard practice of attributing a claim to a source. Mike King of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, for example, mentioned that both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel monitors legitimately criticized the paper for failing to attribute a claim in its coverage. Overall, however, the watchdog did not have much of an impact on coverage. King stated that PMW’s existence made the paper more careful but that PMW was not able to force a change in the paper’s “approach” to covering the conflict:

Both sides had legitimate complaints, so I’d ask an editor about how something was phrased and the most common mistake was that we didn’t attribute something we said to a source but stated it like a fact and this happened on both sides. Groups would seize on these as evidence of bias, and it made us more aware but it doesn’t mean we have to change our approach for how to cover it. But it’s helpful to understand where these groups are coming from (personal communication, 27 August 2009).

However, the D.C. team criticized the *Post* for adopting the terms “retaliation” and “response” as factual descriptions of Israeli violence instead of as claims made by Israeli officials that their violence was a response, and no change occurred following its campaign. In fact, the ideological paradigm was so flexible that newswriters could accommodate “journalistically useful” criticisms without adjusting the ideological contours that framed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Michael Getler, for example, conceded that PMW made a valid criticism when the *Post* did not report that Israel demolished several Palestinian homes, but framed those demolitions as a “response” to Palestinian violence:

A half-dozen readers complained about the *Post* all but ignoring in the Jan. 11 paper, the demolition of dozens of Palestinian homes in the Gaza Strip by Israeli

tanks and bulldozers. The Israeli action was *in retaliation* for the killing of four Israeli soldiers the day before, but the *reprisal tactic* of demolishing homes is extremely controversial. A U.N. spokesman said the demolitions were the most extensive since new fighting erupted in September 2000. The U.S. State Department criticized the action along with the *Palestinian violence and terror that preceded it* (Getler, January 20, 2002, my emphasis).

Moreover, no significant professional revisions were made to adjust coverage in the wake of other PMW campaigns. As the above block quote from King suggests, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* did not adjust its “approach” to covering the conflict. Similarly, Swanson said that the watchdog’s campaigns did not force any significant changes in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s approach to covering the conflict, but said simply that PMW made news staff more careful about their coverage:

We never changed our policy at all based on complaints of Palestine Media Watch but we were more careful because of their analyses and complaints and how methodical it was, and it was difficult to listen to them sometimes but I felt strongly that their side had to be heard but it was hard to hear. They were so organized, so methodical, that even though they were a small number it made their voice bigger because they were so organized (personal communication, 28 August 2009).

The watchdog’s impact, Swanson explained, was that it “kept us on our toes because we knew they were always there and always watching.” She said that it was a good thing that the watchdog became active: “These were professional journalists and they [PMW] made sure we were reading every word, but we didn’t change coverage as a result, but we were always aware of what we were doing because of their activist role. And that influence was new” (personal communication, 28 August 2009).

Sometimes, for both professional and ideological reasons, newswriters dismissed a criticism out of hand. Ahmed Bouzid of the watchdog’s Philadelphia chapter argued that news organizations had an obligation to publish a map of Ehud Barak’s offer at

Camp David because the details in the map would educate the public about the controversy surrounding Arafat's "rejection" of Barak's "generous offer." Bouzid reported, however, that one journalist at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Michael Matza, rejected his claim that it was the paper's responsibility to publish the map on the basis that no official maps were released. That is, Matza reportedly resorted to "professional resistance," reliance on official sources to broach a subject, when he defended the paper's decision not to run maps.

Bouzid argued with Matza that he and the staff had the professional obligation to educate the public: "We pointed out that as journalists it is their job to investigate and provide information, even when nothing official is released. We pointed out that maps do exist that give a very close approximation of the offers out there." When the activists continued to argue, Matza reportedly resorted to "public resistance." According to Bouzid, Matza defended the paper's content by taking the focus off the paper's professional obligations to the public: "Michael Matza argued that we should not expect people to change their minds simply by showing them a map." Bouzid responded, "as journalists, they are obligated to offer as accurate and complete a picture as possible, rather than to worry about whether their coverage will or will not cause a paradigm shift."

The Philadelphia activists also criticized *Inquirer* staff for not using the term "terrorist" to refer to Israelis who commit violence. The staff pointed out that the paper's policy was to avoid labeling the people who commit violence but instead to describe their means of violence (e.g., calling a person who straps on an explosive belt a suicide bomber and not a terrorist), but did use the term "terrorism" to describe some acts of

violence. Bouzid responded that he agreed with the policy but wondered why the paper did not label some types of Israeli violence terrorism. The response that Bouzid reported Paul Nussbam, the paper's foreign desk editor, gave indicates that the paper resisted PMW's critique for professional reasons: "[C]haracterizing Israeli action is not hard since all the terms are clear cut and ready: there is an army, with soldiers as actors, and armies conduct military operations, etc., whereas in the case of Palestinians, the assignations are less specific." According to the monitor's report of its meeting with Nussbaum, that is, the paper's staff resisted revising coverage to call Israeli violence terrorism because of its reverence for officialdom.

But there were also ideological limitations to what PMW could achieve. When Bouzid responded that the *Inquirer* could label Palestinian violence not terrorism but "freedom fighting," Nussbaum retorted, "[H]ell will have to freeze over before we start calling anyone involved in this conflict a 'freedom fighter.'"

As this review suggests, there are ideological and professional constraints that limit what dissidents can achieve via systematic monitoring, even when newswriters find a particular critique professionally resonant. The ideological paradigm can be so flexible that it can accommodate minor revisions in journalistic practice, and newswriters can adjust professional practices to the degree that those adjustments do not threaten the dominant ideology. Dissidents try to influence coverage by appealing to journalists' sense of professional and public duties, but when these create tensions between the professional and ideological paradigms or suggest significant revisions in

either, newswriters reconcile their dilemma by denying that they have the public and professional obligations that activists say they have.

PMW was able to manage to produce some substantive changes, but as I discuss in the next chapter, those changes took a lot of time and effort to produce. In combination with the length of time it took activists to produce substantive changes and activists' perception that pro-Israel groups significantly influenced coverage of the conflict, ideological and professional obstacles create new conditions for struggle that can lead dissidents to become too adaptable in their strategic choices, abandoning, though not without reason, limited but fruitful strategies to pursue strategies that do not work or actually harm their interests.

Conclusions

In order to understand the relative power of dissident media monitors in the newsmaking process, it is necessary to establish a monitor's successes and failures and to explain why the group was successful in some areas but not in others. In Chapter Two I outlined my criteria for effective media monitoring, which included gaining basic access to news staff and the news and opinion pages (Barker-Plummer, 2000), affecting news practices (Hayes, 2008), and producing substantive and superficial changes.

In this chapter I established that Palestine Media Watch met some of these criteria, and therefore can be considered an effective press critic by Barker-Plummer's and Hayes' criteria. By becoming active, its members increased their access to newspaper staff, successfully published op-eds in targeted newspapers and recommended

the publication of op-eds written by writers with pro-Palestine sympathies. Activists also affected the newsmaking process by compelling news organizations to revise their maps of the Middle East and to look for more “neutral” language to report the conflict, representing substantive victories for the watchdog.

Besides establishing that a dissident watchdog can affect news media representations and the newsmaking process, however, I want to decipher the extent to which dissidents can affect news media coverage of issues important to them. That is, I want to explain why watchdogs can affect news coverage in some ways but not others and I want to understand how the outcomes of these strategic interactions create new conditions from which activists and newswriters strategically pursue their interests.

If watchdogs accept the professional paradigm as a given, they are most effective when the criticisms they make are somehow “journalistically useful” for newswriters, which helps explain what PMW was able to accomplish. With respect to the opinion pages, it was “journalistically useful” for newswriters to hear alternative points of view, so they and the activists who targeted them reported that PMW’s activities were appreciated because it helped newswriters understand where the watchdog’s activists were coming from. Before PMW became active, newswriters suggested that they did not publish more pro-Palestine columns because no one made high quality columns available to them. To have a dissident group provide these columns, then, was useful for newswriters who cited practical reasons for not publishing more pro-Palestine opinions.

But PMW’s activities only minimally redistributed column space. The dissident was able to affect content slightly, but only within professional and ideological

boundaries. Newswriters simply did not, the evidence indicates, believe that PMW's analyses of the distribution of pro-Israel, pro-Palestine, and balanced columns were correct; and they denied that "balance" was a professional obligation when activists cited the discrepancy between columns published and a news organization's social contract to the public. This suggests that the "social contract" is variable. Newswriters are most likely to consider a criticism "journalistically useful" when the revisions they make can be accommodated without shifting the professional and ideological paradigms and when they do not require much effort. They will deny that a criticism is "journalistically useful" or refuse to make revisions even as they accept that a criticism is professionally resonant when those revisions will cause conflict between the dominant ideology. News organizations reconcile the tension that dissidents create by invoking their axiom, resorting to public resistance, or denying that they possess the very public and professional obligations that activists exploited to create a journalistically resonating critique. The "social contract" is also variable among individual newswriters, but those who are most sympathetic to that social contract as dissidents define it work within professional and ideological constraints that limit their ability to maintain that contract.

Smaller news organizations were also dependent on bigger papers, which provided pro-Israel opinions. Newswriters, then, grant improved access to activists when they become active, but also defend their publication decisions as adequate by citing the public's ideological expectations about how an issue should be covered, professional constraints, and their favorite axiom.

In terms of affecting the news, the evidence suggests that dissident criticisms may resonate with journalists to the extent that dissidents can establish that a paper's reportage violates "the facts" as laid out by authorities. In this case, PMW was able to affect news content and news content practices by pointing to instances of coverage whose constructions violated the facts as understood in international law. Both the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Charlotte Observer* revised their maps of the Middle East, and the *Charlotte Observer's* staff searched for more "neutral" language from which to report the conflict – that is, language that is neutral to the extent that it is consistent with international law. However, there were professional and ideological obstacles that limited the extent to which PMW could convince news organizations to more fully frame the conflict based on principles found in international law. Both activists and newswriters cited professional constraints that acted as a sort of "de facto resistance" to further change; and ideologically, news organizations continued to represent the conflict as one in which Israel responded to Palestinian terrorism despite substantive progress toward the legitimization of the international law framework.

As I demonstrate in Chapter Seven, newswriters tend not to recognize that they frame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so dissidents can compel revisions in coverage when criticisms are based in fact but not in frames. This might explain why news organizations revised the maps of the region. Maps can be shown to be factually correct or incorrect, but news coverage itself is more fluid in that stories often include contradictory information and alternative but subordinate frames. Despite a dominant framework, that is, news stories can and often do include information and interpretations

that are inconsistent with the meaning constructed by a dominant framework. The contradictory nature of news, then, allows newswriters to defend their content and practice against critics. Whereas information in a story can be demonstrated to be factually correct or incorrect, story structures cannot be shown to be “right” or “wrong,” so dissidents are limited in their ability to make substantive change. In sum, PMW made substantive progress, but newswriters accommodated its substantive critiques without completely reframing the issue, which suggests the flexibility of the professional paradigm and the dominant narrative that informs newswriting.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Turn Toward Distributive Action

I have explained that the dialogic and dialectical models understand the relationship between media and social movements as interactions in which both newswriters and activists strategically maneuver by learning from their interactions with each other in an attempt to defend and advance their overlapping and competing interests. There is no presumption in these models that movements will learn for the better, however, and I will argue here that dissidents can harm their own interests by becoming too strategically flexible in taking the logic of journalistic resistance, particularly the logic of journalists' "axiomatic resistance," too literally and too seriously. Journalists' resistance to dissident strategies, that is, can have an adverse effect on a dissident media watchdog movement when the movement's key leaders are too willing to play by journalism's rules, abandoning the pursuit of more fruitful but limited strategies (i.e., systematic monitoring) to pursue strategies that cannot further their interests or can even harm them. I will also argue here and in the remaining chapters that a central tenet of the professional paradigm is the tendency by newswriters to erect defense mechanisms in an attempt to curb a media monitor's criticisms once a media monitoring campaign has begun, and to try to predict what kinds of news constructions will bring about flak from powerful sources in an attempt to prevent flak-producing campaigns from beginning in the first place.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, PMW pursued substantive changes via systematic monitoring, but as I discuss below the watchdog slowly abandoned systematic

monitoring as a primary strategy and began to pursue substantive changes in news coverage primarily via distributive action instead. That is, activists massively mobilized to immediately saturate news organizations with complaints following particular periods or episodes of coverage they considered flawed. If this strategy did not advance the watchdog's interests as I argue in this and the next chapter, then, I need to ask: How do the strategic interactions between activists and newswriters change the conditions of struggle and the relationship between the movement and the media? I suggest that new conditions of struggle require strategic adaptation, and reveal that those conditions encourage the use of particular strategies by activists and newswriters that may end in poor relations between press and public.

Journalists' Strategic Resistance and Substantive Progress

As I argued in the previous chapter, the best evidence that PMW was able to generate substantive changes in news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be found in revisions to maps of the region that newswriters made following the watchdog's campaigns. As I stated, newswriters found the criticism of the maps "journalistically useful" because the maps deviated from fact as understood in international law, suggesting that news organizations take seriously what international law has to say about the conflict. Yet it took some time for newswriters to revise the maps. The monitor criticized the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in May and June 2001, but the paper did not revise its maps until later that summer. The watchdog criticized the *Charlotte Observer* in June 2003, but the paper did not revise its maps until October.

In each case, activists grew impatient with the amount of time it took for the papers to revise their maps, so in each case they turned toward distributive action – that is, they urged activists to flood the papers with complaints – in their attempt to force the papers to revise their maps. In June 2001 Lillian Swanson, the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* ombudsman, e-mailed Ahmed Bouzid to advise him against further distributive action campaigns and explained the reason for her delay: “I was sorry to see that you issued a call for a worldwide e-mail campaign about the *Inquirer's* publication of a map that failed to show that the Golan Heights is occupied territory.” The delay was due to the fact that she had been dealing with several other issues, and she wrote, “I fully intended to respond by the end of the week, and had already initiated conversations here in the newsroom with key people.”

In response to Bouzid's initial complaint, she wrote that the paper's staff

decided to review all our maps of the area, discard any that are not up-to-date, and have actually begun that process. We will also convene a meeting of the appropriate desks next week to review the maps we will run. So, you can see, your e-mail to Paul [Nussbaum] and me prompted that action.

In other words, Swanson cited looming professional obligations to explain her delayed response to Bouzid's complaint and tried to inform Bouzid that his original complaint – issued before he called on activists to bombard the newspaper with complaints – was what compelled the paper to action, not the distributive action campaign. She then invoked “strategic resistance” to the watchdog's campaign by advising Bouzid that his call to distributive action actually hurt PMW's interests. Swanson wrote, “As I have said before, these daily critiques and a worldwide call are really counter-productive to your cause and your issue. No newspaper will respond to it.

In fact, it only increases the chance that we will not hear you when it is most critical.”

Bouzid justified the distributive action campaign by arguing that the paper had failed its obligation to the public: “I would have expected a swift reaction not on the fourth time, but on the first time. I understand that you are busy, but publishing an erroneous map about a conflict that is 99% about borders and land is serious.”

Bouzid, that is, did not recognize Swanson’s professional obligations, and therefore was unlikely to abide by Swanson’s advice about proper watchdog strategy because it was not until he issued a call to his activists to flood the paper with complaints that he received a reply from the paper. Similarly, Michael Gelter, the *Washington Post*’s ombudsman, advised watchdogs to avoid distributive action campaigns and deal individually with newswriters instead. On 29 July 2001 he published a column in which he wrote that “letters these days [about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict] arrive almost exclusively by e-mail, and the vast majority are driven by media-watch campaign organizations on both sides of the conflict. They arrive by the hundred, maybe even a thousand.” The campaigns, he wrote, do not have an effect on editors. “More effective, I believe, are e-mails or calls from individuals that go to *journalistically useful* points” (Getler, 2001, July 29, my emphasis). Getler explained that distributive action campaigns are not useful because the criticisms come from people who do not read the paper that they criticize and include offensive rhetoric:

If you’re the subject of a campaign, it doesn’t convey the same thing as an individual calling to convey his own thoughts. So you may get 1,000 or more emails a day from people who do just what they’re told. But sometimes what they point out is right but I would rather have the leader of an organization individually call me up to say our paper is biased or whatever. Many of the letters are filled

with vitriolic rhetoric and I'd say 80 percent of them never read the *Post* (personal communication 12 July 2009).

Again, however, watchdogs are likely to ignore newswriters' "strategic resistance" when they perceive that distributive action is the best strategy to pursue changes. PMW's Washington, D.C., chapter, for example, reported that it was "having a little trouble catching the attention of the Ombudsman of the Washington Post, Michael Getler, and so we turn to you, gentle pmwatcher." Following its complaint that the *Post* did not report an incident in January 2002 in which the Israeli army demolished Palestinian homes, several activists contacted the paper to complain. Following their campaign, Getler published a column criticizing the *Post* for failing to cover the incident, so PMW began to see distributive action as a fruitful strategy:

Washington chapter [PMW] members wrote and called the Post's ombudsman, Michael Getler, to demand an explanation for why the Rafah home demolitions were not reported. In his weekly column on the following Sunday, Getler mentioned the complaints about the newspaper's silence on the home demolitions, before proceeding to discuss the event in detail. This initial success was publicized on the PMWATCH email list, and soon similar strategies were being tried in cities across the country (Mango, 2003).

Getler wrote:

A half-dozen readers complained about the Post all but ignoring in the Jan. 11 paper, the demolition of dozens of Palestinian homes in the Gaza Strip by Israeli tanks and bulldozers. The Israeli action was in retaliation for the killing of four Israeli soldiers the day before, but the reprisal tactic of demolishing homes is extremely controversial. A U.N. spokesman said the demolitions were the most extensive since new fighting erupted in September 2000. The U.S. State Department criticized the action along with the Palestinian violence and terror that preceded it (Getler, January 20, 2002).

The substantive progress that PMW made at the *Charlotte Observer* also took time to produce and did not occur until after its activists resorted to distributive action, so

the archives indicate that the watchdog began to perceive that massive mobilization was the best strategy to produce change even though the delays in change occurred for other reasons.

In Edith Garwood's 2003 report of the *Charlotte Observer's* coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she noticed that the *Observer* published a map that falsely depicted Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the Golan Heights part of Israel. She argued, "The Golan Heights appear as part of Israel-proper. This is highly misleading and inaccurate. Although Israel attempted to annex the Golan Heights in December of 1981, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 497 unanimously reaffirming 'the inadmissibility of land by force' based on the U.N. Charter, principles of international law, and relevant security council resolutions." She continued,

Jerusalem is identified with a star, as the capital, while Tel Aviv only as a major city with a dot. ... [T]his attempt by Israel to annex Jerusalem and declare it their capital was also rejected by the international community, including the United States. To this day the United States still has their embassy in Tel Aviv, not Jerusalem, and the majority of nations do not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but Tel Aviv.

Although Alix Felsing, who often interacted with Garwood, would have typically handled the complaint, she was leaving for vacation and delegated the task to Tracy Yochum, the *Observer's* assistant national editor, who responded to Garwood on 25 June 2003. Yochum had forwarded Garwood's concern to the paper's graphics department. The graphics editor told Yochum that *Observer* "graphics follow the style of the Associated Press for all text and National Geographic for all maps." Yochum explained her decision, "Though Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights is disputed, National Geographic shows the Golan Heights as part of Israel territory."

On 30 June 2003, Garwood, who was also leaving for vacation, described her experience on PMW's website. Urging PMWers to contact the *Observer* she wrote,

If you want to measure the extent to which the standards of American journalism have sunk, your best barometer is no doubt the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There you will find not only the usual lack of investigative backbone that now prevails across the American journalism landscape, or the remarkable self-censorship with which the America media goes about "covering the news," but at times you will encounter what can only be described as an astonishing and breathtaking OPEN refusal by the US media to live up to even the most basic responsibilities of a journalist or running a newspaper.

She complained to activists that "there is something truly shocking reading an editor explain why they published something by pointing out that they did so because someone else did as well: since National Geographic and AP did it, the editor is saying, then it must be OK!" She asked, "Is this really where American journalism has come to – to the point where editors don't even think that it is problematic to say that they won't bother to independently settle the most basic facts about the most explosive and enduring conflict of the last half century?"

Garwood also lobbied Alix Felsing. "At the time," Garwood told me, "Ms. Felsing didn't really argue, but said she would look into it." Garwood continued to contact Felsing: "Over the four month period, I provided links to the international laws I cited to help substantiate my arguments and gave her the name and phone number to a person on the Israel/Palestine desk at the State Department to confirm the facts and verify the U.S. position on Jerusalem and the Golan Heights" (personal communication, 18 July 2009). The *Observer* issued an erratum on 19 October 2003:

A map of Israel in the June 12 *Observer* did not fully describe who controls the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The map incompletely showed the Golan Heights; it should have outlined the political borders, which Israel has

occupied since the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. In addition, the map oversimplified who is in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinians have some control in those areas; Israel also has some control. The Israeli military has made incursions into those areas. The map also should have not marked Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Israel considers Jerusalem to be its capital; the United Nations and United States don't recognize Israel's claim.

The next day Bouzid posted, "Newspaper issues important erratum on Jerusalem!" He noted, "PMWATCH's Charlotte, NC, director, Edie Garwood, has been in dialogue with the newspaper ever since [it issued an inaccurate map in June] – that is, for more than 4 months!" Seemingly a small victory that took much effort to achieve, Bouzid was thrilled anyway. Garwood struggled long and hard, he explained, "But not in vain! Her efforts have born fruit in a big way!" For Bouzid, it was an important victory because it suggested that PMW could successfully persuade the news media to abandon professional reliance on other media and take international law seriously. It was also a sign that PMW could successfully undermine competing frames and force news media to take steps that legitimized the Palestinian and international community's framework for understanding the conflict. Forcing the change, for PMW, was also a sign that the *Observer* had begun to take its obligation to the public seriously and accept basic facts.

Alix Felsing, however, described the situation as a fiasco that would have been corrected more quickly if PMW did not issue a letter-writing campaign:

That whole episode was really unfortunate and it [the map] was an error. And I was gone and my team wanted nothing to do with Edie. My team was shut down because she called so much and called bias and we don't have the same level of expertise as her. The error happened right when I was about to come back into town and then leave town again, so I delegated the task to Tracy to figure it out and write a note and send it (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

Felsing stated that Tracy Yochum's response could have been "phrased more graciously." Felsing explained that Garwood was also going on vacation at the time, and did not have time to deal with the map problem and issued a call for a letter-writing campaign on PMW's website. Felsing did not call it a success for the watchdog: "PMW holds this as an example of a triumph but I don't see it as a triumph but as poor communication on both sides." When I asked if the paper would have corrected the map without the email campaign, Felsing responded, "Yes, we would've corrected that map much more quickly than we did. When I got back from vacation I had to deal with emails and my team's reactions and I needed to take time to figure out the issues" (personal communication, 20 August 2009). She explained that her team "shut down" and that her team wanted nothing to do with Garwood and "wanted to never deal with it again." PMW sent one or two hundred emails to the staff, and many of these were personal attacks. The email campaign, Felsing explained,

. . . it was basically personal attacks. I had one or two hundred emails, which was a fair amount for that time. And they were nasty, saying we were making mistakes because we were below the Mason-Dixon line and are stupid and must have married our brothers, and demanding Tracy's job (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

In other words, the distributive action campaign, according to Felsing, actually slowed the watchdog's ability to produce substantive changes in line with its interests. It was more useful, for Felsing, to discuss issues individually with Garwood, who she admitted educated her about issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Garwood "made me aware of what maps we were using and how complex things are and difficult it is to develop an expertise in this area when we're a bunch of generalists and the Middle

East issues are 3,000 years old and some things fall through the cracks” (personal communication, 20 August 2009). However, as an editor with professional obligations, she needed time to research the issue: “I poked around a little bit and did a little research and asked why were these issues about the Golan Heights and the maps guy was trying to show geographical borders, but not political borders, but as political borders they were not correct” (personal communication, 20 August 2009).

Finally, activists also made claims that suggested they perceived that pro-Israel groups had a lot of power over the newsmaking process. The D.C. team, for example, read into Michael Getler’s columns about the *Post*’s coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a way to placate the paper’s pro-Israel critics. At one point the activists wrote, “Mr. Getler has yet to devote a single column to pro-Palestinian concerns. The only time that Mr. Getler has even deigned to address our concerns was in his June 9, 2002, column, in which he mentions pro-Palestinian concerns obviously as a way to counter the accusation that the Post is pro-Palestinian, rather than deal with the concerns on their own terms.” Bouzid, that is, claimed that the *Washington Post* only publicly dealt with pro-Palestinian concerns in order to prove to pro-Israel groups that the paper was not pro-Palestinian; Getler’s column, for Bouzid, then, was not an attempt to improve news coverage but an attempt to appease pro-Israeli critics. Faced with newswriters’ “axiomatic” form of resistance and perceiving that pro-Israel groups effectively influenced news coverage via distributive action, they began to adjust their strategies in their attempt to create a paradigmatic change in news coverage.

The Effect of Axiomatic Resistance on PMW's Strategy Choice

My review above and in the previous chapter suggests that there are professional and ideological obstacles that limit the extent to which dissident watchdogs can produce substantive changes via systematic monitoring. My review also shows that the production of those changes can take time and that the time required to produce those changes can frustrate activists. Here, I argue that the logic of newswriters' axiom that their coverage is adequate if both sides of an issue complain about coverage – invoked in an attempt to curb complaints -- actually encourages distributive action when activists take it literally, even though newswriters try to avoid distributive action campaigns and claim that they find one-on-one meetings with activists more useful.

Bouزيد's contributions to the PMW listserv indicate that he began to view distributive action as a way to “neutralize” pro-Israel groups and allow newswriters to more effectively do their job covering the conflict. In September 2001 Bouزيد urged activists to contact and criticize the *USA Today* for publishing a story that was critical of Israeli settler violence against Palestinians. His complaint was that the story was not critical enough of Israel because it did not define settler violence as “terrorism.” Some activists questioned whether the strategy was appropriate, given that the article was sympathetic to Palestinians. Bouزيد explained that by criticizing the paper, activists would neutralize pro-Israel groups' influence over paper and help PMW overcome journalists' “axiomatic resistance”:

In our many interactions with newsdesk editors, journalists, and ombudsmen, whether it's the NYTimes, the Washington Post, or a small town paper, we have discovered that almost without exception, whenever newspaper people can no longer answer rationally to justify some of their shabby journalism, they always

come back to their ace in the hole – and that is: ‘well, we receive a lot more complaints from the other side, you know.’

The watchdog leader asked members to imagine that a pro-Israel watchdog group was meeting with the editors of *USA Today*. He asked them if it were better for the Palestinian cause if *USA Today* editors explained to the pro-Israel group that they had received praise or criticism from pro-Palestine groups. Bouzid said that it was obvious that criticism was more useful to the paper’s editors because the editors could point to pro-Palestine complaints to resist revising coverage based on pro-Israel complaints. That is, Bouzid took newswriters’ axiomatic statement seriously and literally, and attempted to exploit it for his group’s gain by mobilizing to criticize new coverage of the conflict. When pro-Israel groups complained about coverage, Bouzid seemed to reason, his watchdog’s activities would enable editors to respond, “Well, we receive a lot of complaints from the other side, too.” PMW would “help” the newspaper by criticizing it, which would allow newswriters to defend their coverage against pro-Israel criticism by invoking “axiomatic resistance.” Even though newswriters invoked axiomatic resistance to curb complaints, then, the watchdog’s activists took the axiom to mean that they should increase, concentrate, and amplify their complaints:

So, I call on you again to do your best and HELP Mr. Kelley [the reporter] by pointing out to the USA Today that while he has broached an important topic, and we thank him for that, we still want real journalism, and that as a journalist, he should apply the same language to all terror, no matter who is responsible.

Distributive action became increasingly important as Bouzid and other activists were repeatedly met with “axiomatic resistance” when they critiqued news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During a 2002 March debate with journalists at the

National Arab Journalists Conference in Chicago, newswriters reportedly responded to Bouzid's criticisms by saying, "the other side complains much more vociferously than you do!"

That newswriters reportedly told Bouzid not only that coverage was adequate because both sides complain about it, but that they did not need to revise their coverage because the other side complained "more" about coverage than PMW, Bouzid concluded,

In other words, after all is said and done, after all the high talk about journalistic integrity and a commitment to rendering a faithful image of reality, it all boils down to who complains the loudest, who is the biggest nuisance, and who makes the most trouble. ... [W]e have only ourselves to blame if we don't turn into relentless irate nags who won't rest no matter what (2003, p. 77).

Thus, newswriters strategized to defend their coverage against PMW's substantive arguments by invoking their favorite axiom – our coverage is adequate because both sides complain about it, and we do not need to revise coverage based on your complaints because the other side is louder than you are – and the monitor attempted to maneuver around "axiomatic resistance" by becoming "relentless irate nags." Distributive action, not systematic monitoring, became the key strategy to produce substantive changes in news coverage of the conflict. Bouzid wrote to his activists in May 2002 that they needed to donate money to PMW leaders so that the watchdog could advertise its existence and purpose in magazines and websites:

Expensive as this may be, this is a key activity because our main goal at this point, given that we believe that we have come to the bottom line regarding what works and what does not, is to massively mobilize against the US media. To do that, we need a whole lot more people participating, and the only way we can do that is to make PMWatch known to as many people as possible.

This is not to say that there were other reasons that PMW pursued distributive action as a strategy. As I indicate in the next chapter, the watchdog always considered it an important tactic as part of its systematic monitoring strategy, but when journalists invoked their axiom to resist making substantive changes without providing more substantive justifications for their coverage, they were unaware that they were encouraging activists to become “relentless irate nags.” Thus, in this case, newswriters’ choice of strategic defense created a more antagonistic relationship between activists and news organizations, which prompted a new strategic logic for the activists. Activists needed to become irate nags, according to their leader’s logic. But if the “bottom line regarding what works and what does not” pointed to relentless nagging (i.e., distributive action) as the key to influence, was anything substantive accomplished? I answer this question in the next chapter, turning specifically to study a transnational PMW campaign to influence CNN’s coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2002.

CHAPTER SIX:

Distributive Action's Effects on Movement Objectives

As I explained in the previous chapter, dissident watchdog movements operate strategically by learning from their interactions with newswriters to identify the obstacles that newswriters place in front of their ability to produce substantive influence. In addition to allowing for this strategic adaptability, the dialogic and dialectical models suggest that the strategies movements choose will have an effect on the movement's organization and what can be accomplished. In the previous chapter, I noted that while newswriters found one-on-one meetings with critics more helpful to the watchdog's objectives, at least when the watchdog made "journalistically useful" criticisms, than distributive action, they also resorted to "axiomatic resistance" in an attempt to cut off and avoid criticism. This form of journalistic resistance, I demonstrated, encouraged PMW (in combination with the watchdog's impatience and perception about pro-Israel groups' power) to revise its strategy. PMW began to pursue substantive influence via collection action instead of systematic monitoring.

In this chapter, I ask the following question: How do newswriter defense mechanisms and activists' strategies affect the movement itself and its objectives? In answering this, I argue that distributive action is not conducive to the achievement of a dissident's goal to reframe an issue because it encourages activists to pursue superficial effects. Superficial influence refers to the ability of a watchdog to affect news coverage in a way that is limited to a particular episode that does not impact the long-term framing of an issue. Watchdogs can still pursue substantive change when they are collectively

active, but I argue that the ideological context in which a distributive action campaign occurs limits what can be accomplished via massive mobilization and systematic monitoring; and in an attempt to placate dissidents, newswriters can throw them “superficial bones.” That is, newswriters attempt to shut down distributive action campaigns by superficially revising coverage. What I argue, however, is that these “superficial bones” advance guardian interests and do nothing to advance the interests of dissidents.

Before I make these arguments, however, I want to briefly demonstrate that PMW pursued its objectives via distributive action from its beginning as a watchdog organization, although massive mobilization was initially a subordinate tactic in its systematic monitoring campaigns; that distributive action was an effective tactic in producing superficial changes; and that there were reasons besides newswriters’ resort to “axiomatic resistance” that activists began to reprioritize distributive action as their primary strategy.

The Initial Justification for Distributive Action

Although not initially a primary strategy, PMW always called distributive action an important weapon in its arsenal to influence news coverage, and its leaders quickly found reason to pursue changes in news coverage via massive mobilization. Almost immediately into the watchdog’s existence, Ahmed Bouzid, the watchdog’s founder and president, indicated that he learned “that the best results [in terms of gaining access to news staff] are usually obtained from those who pick a particular newspaper or media

outlet and persistently send them well written, intelligently argued, factually supported, letters on a daily basis.”

These campaigns, Bouzid suggested, resulted in improved access to targeted newspaper’s staff. PMW’s “gadfly” campaign – a weekly letter-writing campaign in which activists sent complaints to offending newspapers – reportedly increased the group’s basic access to newswriters, too:

What we are discovering is that editors become much more accessible as soon as I fax them a few dozen letters. The [Philadelphia] Inquirer has opened up, and so has the Boston Globe, and, to a lesser extent, but we will get there, the Washington Post and the NYTimes. These letters do get to them and they take them very seriously.

The watchdog’s column-writing campaign, begun in late 2000, also proved successful by February 2001: “We are in urgent need of columns that analyze the Sharon election from a Palestinian perspective. A couple of national US papers have contacted us with the request (finally!).”

Distributive action was also important because reporters with sympathies for the Palestinians reportedly warned that the only way their work would continue to be published was if activists wrote to newspapers in support of that reporting. Referring to the *Independent*’s Robert Fisk, Bouzid told his activists, “He might be pressured to stop writing if we do not support him. He has complained that if the Arabs and Muslims want him to keep writing, they have at least to say so to the paper’s editor, and thank him.” As a result, activists began to write letters in support of Amy Pagnozzi of the *Hartford Courant*, Bruce Ramsey at the *Seattle Times*, and Holger Jensen of the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Bouzid also reported that American reporters sympathetic to telling the Palestinian narrative informed him that complaints from pro-Palestine activists would help newspapers justify reporting that was more critical of Israel, and “neutralize” the influence wielded by pro-Israel groups over coverage:

I have been told more than once by editors and reporters, off the record, that they wish they were getting more complaints from pro-Palestinian voices. Why? So that when debates in the editorial board are raging, the fact that pro-Israelis are inundating them with complaints is neutralized, so that facts, common sense, rationality, and a sense of fairness and professional objectivity may prevail.

Reportedly, PMW’s distributive action campaigns not only increased the watchdog’s access to targeted news staff, but newswriters were shocked that activists could mobilize so quickly. Following a campaign in protest of what Bouzid called several newspapers’ failure to report that a Palestinian baby was killed as a result of Israeli violence,

A couple of editors have in fact written me back expressing astonishment over how pmwatch was able to mobilize massively. I told them that this is only the tip of the iceberg and that should the many millions of supporters of Palestine mobilize and start writing regularly, they will look back at our present mobilization as child play.

Unlike substantive influence, which took much time and effort to produce, news organizations began to revise their coverage of the conflict in superficial fits in the immediate aftermath of distributive action campaigns, which seemed to provide PMW’s activists relatively instant gratification and helped justify the use of distributive action to produce coverage changes. Bouzid, for example, observed that Fox News had removed a story from its website about Israeli spies in the U.S., and he attributed the decision to remove the story due to pressure from AIPAC and CAMERA. PMW massively

mobilized in an attempt to force Fox to republish the story. Fox later republished the story, and Bouzid's comments to his activists indicate that he believed that Fox's decision was due to the massive mobilization of PMW's activists: "The resuscitation [of the story] took place 3 days after PMWatch issued an action call. ... The call resulted in a couple of hundreds of letters to FoxNews from PMWacthers."

Bouzid reported that Canada's *Edmonton Journal* publicly apologized for publishing a political cartoon that PMW considered racist, and credited activists' mobilization for the apology: "The paper has received literally HUNDREDS of emails from pmwatchers and beyond, and I can assure you that our massive response was a determining factor in pushing them to issue the public apology."

This success, and the means by which the activists achieved it, proved, for Bouzid, that distributive action was an effective strategy, but his response also indicates that the watchdog's eventual turn toward distributive action was due to his perception that pro-Israel watchdogs were extremely successful when collectively acting. "That a paper would get hundreds of pro-Palestinian rights emails in a day or two," Bouzid told his activists, "is truly a milestone to be celebrated. For the first time, I feel very good about our reaction. Now you know how it must feel on the other side. They don't like something and so they react swiftly and en masse. And guess what: they get results."

As I argued in the previous chapter, newswriters, though unaware of it, actually encouraged PMW to adjust its strategy from systematic monitoring to distributive action when they resorted to "axiomatic resistance." Bouzid claimed that PMW's very existence, then, was a victory for people with sympathies for the Palestinians because

newswriters could employ the axiom to defend themselves against pro-Israel critics and produce coverage more critical of Israel. The dissident watchdog group, then, seemed to think that it had “neutralized” the pro-Israel lobby. “Now,” Bouzid told his activists, “it is routine to hear editors and reporters answer Zionist critics by saying: ‘If we were so pro-Palestinian, how come we are being accused of going soft on Israel?’”

The activists’ perception that newspapers were more responsive to pro-Israel critics also led them to abandon systematic monitoring to pursue distributive action. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Bouzid encouraged his activists to become “irate relentless nags,” and this was because pro-Israel activists behaved “hysterically” and reportedly received prompt attention following their distributive action campaigns whereas PMW received almost no attention despite its systematic reports and respect for newswriters. The only logical conclusion, Bouzid argued, was to match the pro-Israel groups’ “hysterics.” In December 2003, in response to his failed attempt to meet with *Inquirer* staff in an effort to convince them to publish an entire opinion page dedicated to Arab and Muslim issues and his perception that that same staff was much more responsive to pro-Israel groups’ efforts (reportedly successful) to devote an entire opinion page “to air their grievances,” Bouzid told his activists, “[T]he Philadelphia Inquirer responds only to massive campaigns!”

Bouzid issued a distributive action campaign: “And so,” the activist’s leader wrote, “taking our cue from the Inquirer about what impresses them to action and what does not, we proceeded to mobilize.” The action call he issued “generated more than a hundred letters and phone calls to Amanda Bennett [the *Inquirer*’s editor-in-chief] and

the editorial board, urging the board to be fair and responsive.” The effort was successful. On 2 February 2004 Bouzid wrote, “After a long struggle PMWATCHers and supporters who joined our call, The Philadelphia Inquirer has finally relented to devoting a Sunday opinion page to Arab and Muslim issues!” The page appeared on February 4, and it “was devoted to how Arabs and Muslims in the US have fared since 9/11, including a piece on media coverage of Muslim women.”

Other distributive action campaigns also resulted in superficial changes in news coverage. PMW reported, “On January 30, 2004, the Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) published an op-ed piece from Stanley Crouch ... in which the author lectured the Palestinians and their supporters for allegedly not adopting peaceful and non-violent means of resistance against the Israeli occupation,” and which pointed to Martin Luther King as evidence that non-violent resistance works. The report of the incident continued, “The publication of the piece came mere days AFTER members of the International Solidarity Movement [ISM] had submitted op-eds to the AJC in which they EXPLICITLY wrote about how the Palestinians were indeed engaged in non-violent resistance,” which was timed to correspond with Martin Luther King’s birthday on January 19. The *Journal Constitution* did not publish the submission. Bouzid stated, “This is a clear case of aiding and abetting the distortion of reality!”

On 16 February 2004, the watchdog reported, “AJC finally gives space to non-violent activists!” “After weeks of complaint and protest,” activists involved with the campaign explained,

the Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) has finally decided to relent and to address its grievous injustice against the International Solidarity Movement, and in

general the non-violent resistance movement in Palestine. Today, the AJC ran an opinion piece by ISM activist Adam Shapiro, which focused on the conditions of Palestinian activist Ayed Morar and the abuse he has suffered under Israeli authorities as a nonviolent resistance organizer in Palestine.

The column compared the struggle for Palestinian human rights to Martin Luther King's struggle for civil rights.

On 14 December 2004 PMW-Atlanta issued an action call regarding what it called "[c]owardly censorship at [an] Atlanta TV station." Bouzid explained, "In this case a television station in Atlanta decided that they were not going to air a local group's attempt to submit to the Israeli Consulate a petition calling for the removal of The Wall. The official explanation? They couldn't get the 'other side of the story' from the Israeli Consulate!"

Activists contacted Jennifer Rigby, the station's news director. In their letters, they argued that the station, WSB-TV, had violated standard journalistic practice. "Are you telling us that you never cover a story without getting both sides?" they asked. "Given this rationale, any story could be stopped by one party refusing to comment. A responsible journalist would air the story with a statement that the consulate was contacted but refused to comment." Apparently this was a journalistically useful criticism because the next day Rani El-Hajjar, an activist in Atlanta, reported that in response the station aired the segment. Joe Parko of the American Friends Service Committee Middle East Peace Program, described his conversation with Rigby and the station manager. He reported, "They were stunned by the volume of e-mails that they had received from around the world. Obviously, our message had gotten out on the world-wide web and generated a fantastic response from around the world."

The Effects of Distributive Action Campaigns

These experiences suggest that the watchdog was able to affect news coverage following its distributive action campaigns, and turned to it because it provided gratifications that were more immediate than those provided by systematic monitoring. Yet the changes they affected took much effort to produce and resulted only in superficial effects that did not advance the group's ability to create substantive and ultimately paradigmatic change. It took several hundred letters to convince a political cartoonist at the *Edmonton Journal* to apologize for drawing what PMW considered a racist cartoon, although the group's activists were able to force that apology within a day. After several weeks of struggle, the monitor was finally able to compel the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to grant it an entire op-ed page, but for a single day. It took the watchdog several weeks to convince the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* to publish a single column when it pursued distributive action as a strategy, and PMW mobilized activists across the globe to saturate an Atlanta television station with complaints, and accomplished its objective, but that was to affect only a single story.

This is not to say that the watchdog's distributive action efforts completely impeded its interests. Indeed, Ahmed Bouzid, PMW's founder and president, began to receive public attention when news media published his criticisms of their coverage and invited him as a guest to discuss media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The timing of the group's attention from news media suggests that "relentless irate nagging" improved its basic access to news media. Whereas PMW activists were generating slightly less than 300 letters per month in the watchdog's first few months of activity and

whereas Bouzid complained to his activists that they were not mobilized enough, by February 2002 activists became extremely active in their letter-writing campaigns. Indeed, within the first five days of February, activists had written 309 letters (Bouzid kept track of these letters by asking activists to blind copy him their emails to news organizations), and Bouzid set his organization's letter-writing goal to 2,000 letters for February. On 1 March 2002 Bouzid announced that activists had written 2,138 letters in February, and noted that this count did not measure the group's true force: "Now, many of those letters were actually sent to many outlets, so that the count can easily be pushed to a multitude of 2,000 – probably pushing the letter count to above 20,000 copies of emails sent via the pmwatch interface."

That month PMW's critique of U.S. news media first appeared in a U.S. newspaper, giving the watchdog an audience to consider its substantive proposals. Bouzid successfully published a column in the *Pittsburgh Post-Dispatch*. In it, he criticized the way that reporters interviewed pro-Israel and pro-Palestine guests:

I have watched literally hundreds of interviews by the US media of Israeli officials, spokespersons, scholars and journalists sympathetic to the Israeli point of view, and yet, I can count on one hand the number of times when the interview was not merely a forum for the pro-Israel guest to repeat, unchallenged in any way, meaningful or otherwise, the usual mantra that Israel is acting out of pure self-defense (2003, p. 66).

In the column Bouzid urged interviewers to ask their pro-Israel sources several questions: Why does Israel continue to pursue a policy that hasn't stopped terrorism? Why has Israel doubled the size of settlements if it were serious about pursuing peace? Bouzid accused reporters of committing several "journalistic infractions." These infractions included the tendency to avoid interviewing non-Palestinian and non-Arab

supporters of Palestinian national rights, and, among other things, phrasing questions in a way that served Israel's interests. Bouzid claimed that interviewers asked their sources, "Why does Arafat let Hamas commit acts of terrorism?" (p. 68).

In April 2002 the activists continued to intensify their letter-writing campaign – by 30 April, Bouzid had counted 3,826 letters for the month – and this seemed to get them attention. On 1 April, Bouzid told his fellow activists, "PMWatch is being bombarded with requests for interviews and TV and radio appearance." Nagging itself was what made it possible for Bouzid to appear, however briefly, on CNN. In April 2002 Aaron Brown invited Bouzid onto *News Night* to discuss PMW's critique of the news media. As Brown explained in the preface to his interview with the PMW President, Bouzid relentlessly hounded him. "One of our guests tonight will talk about bias he sees in the media," Brown reported, "He and I have been going back and forth on this for more than a week." At the close of the interview, Brown told Bouzid, "Ahmed, I can tell you this, you are relentless."⁶ Bouzid repeated several of the claims that his activists made in their monitoring reports, creating an opportunity to let journalists and the public consider substantive changes.

Distributive action, then, led activists to inadvertently pursue effects on news coverage that were not conducive to their key objective to reframe the conflict via a pursuit of substantive changes, but it also allowed them to present their substantive criticisms to the public and other newswriters because they were able to publish their criticisms in the U.S. news media. In the next chapter I analyze how news media and

⁶ <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0204/11/asb.00.html>

trade journals that mentioned PMW's activities framed the watchdog efforts, but now I want to turn my attention to the monitor's distributive action campaign to produce substantive changes at CNN in summer 2002 to further establish how ideology limits what dissidents can accomplish by limiting what can be called a "journalistically useful" criticism.

The June – September 2002 “Victims of Terror” Campaign

The dialectical model suggests that media-movement interactions occur within specific sociopolitical contexts that limit what movements can accomplish despite their choice of strategy to influence news media representations. The extent to which a mass labor movement can influence news media representations of labor issues when those media are owned by capitalists and when that struggle occurs during the neoliberal phase of capitalism, for example, severely limits what can be accomplished by labor, even as progressive gains are made (Kumar, 2007). Similarly, in response to Barker-Plummer's (1995) dialogic model, Noakes and Wilkins (2002) reminded scholars that, with respect to media-movement interactions about U.S. foreign policy, movements are best able to advance their frames in U.S. news media when the principles that guide the movement are in some way compatible with the principles that guide the geopolitical strategies of U.S. foreign policymakers.

News media, following the Bush administration's cues, immediately framed Israel's suppression of the Palestinian Al Aqsa *Intifada* as a strategic liability for the Bush administration's "war on terrorism" following 9/11, but by summer 2002, again

following Bush, had begun to frame that same suppression as conducive to “war on terrorism” objectives (Handley, in press). These events affected PMW’s ability to influence CNN’s news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so I tell that story now.

PMW’s CNN campaign followed Ted Turner’s 18 June 2002 comments he made during an interview with *The Guardian*. Describing both Israeli and Palestinian violence, he asked the interviewer, “So who are the terrorists?” and answered, “I would make a case that both sides are involved in terrorism.”⁷ The next day CNN, which Ted Turner founded, issued a statement that distanced the cable news network from Turner: “Ted Turner has no operational or editorial oversight of CNN. Mr. Turner’s comments are his own and definitely do not reflect the views of CNN in any way.”⁸

The watchdog’s activists contacted the network to express support for Turner’s comments but also learned that pro-Israel groups were contacting the network in droves. On 20 June 2002 one activist warned, “I called CNN to express my support for Turner’s candor, courage, and apt assessment of the situation. I talked to one of his secretaries, who said she’s received a lot of calls – ‘from one side more than the other,’ i.e. a lot of complaints.” Because pro-Israel groups had called to condemn CNN, the activist advised others to contact the network in support of Turner’s comments, “I thought you might want to put out an action call for folks to call or email in support for Turner.”

Worldwide, members quickly became mobilized.

⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2002/jun/18/terrorismandthedia.israel>

⁸ <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/US/06/18/ted.turner.terrorists/index.html>.

But there were larger developments that had an impact on PMW's ability to produce substantive changes. Handley (in press) demonstrated that powerful bipartisan officials in the U.S. Congress, members of the Bush administration, and elite and popular newspapers, indexing the official range of debate, had begun to merge post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy and Israel's military strikes against Palestinians into a single "war on terror" in summer 2002. This same development seemed to be taking place at CNN. On 24 June 2002 CNN's *Wolf Blitzer Reports* began airing a five-part series titled "Victims of Terror" and the network established an online memorial committed "to sharing the stories of the victims of terror."⁹ The series focused on Israeli deaths, and murdered Palestinians were not considered victims of terrorism.

PMW immediately mobilized its members in an effort to force CNN to produce an equivalent series and a memorial for Palestinian victims of Israeli terrorism. On 24 June 2002 Bouzid told his fellow activists, "Please do your part and make a phone call or two, write a letter or two, in protest of CNN. Tell them that all we are asking for is that innocent Palestinian victims be treated like full and complete human beings – the way CNN goes out of its way to do for Israeli victims."

CNN did not budge. "When Palestine Media Watch and other pro-Palestinian rights organizations in the United States approached CNN with the idea of airing a similar television series on innocent Palestinian victims of Israeli violence, along with a web memorial to those innocent victims," Bouzid reported, "CNN responded that its

⁹ e.g., <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/06/23/vot.terror.one/index.html>. That same day Bush gave a speech that the press later identified as the date of the administration's frame shift (Handley, in press).

current coverage is adequate and fair and therefore does not need to be supplemented with similar ‘in-depth’ and ‘special’ coverage for the Palestinians.” CNN explained why it produced the series,

CNN’s reporting two weeks ago was conceived and produced after two terror attacks killed 26 Israelis and injured many more. Those attacks were the most recent of an increasing number of suicide bombings that targeted Israeli civilians for mass killings over the last few months. Since the escalation in the conflict over the last two years, CNN has also produced special segments and programs when the violence, death and injuries for the civilian populations have risen to extraordinary levels for either side – Israelis and Palestinians.

The network defended its coverage: “Our coverage in the last two weeks has continued to include all aspects of the conflict, including those from the occupied territories. Our reports on LIFE AMID THE CONFLICT – THE IMPACT ON CIVILIANS, as they occur on all sides, will continue. CNN is committed to accurate, fair and honest coverage of this conflict.”

Pro-Israel pressure on CNN was so great that the cable news network responded to PMW by sending the watchdog a letter intended for pro-Israel groups, indicating that the network assumed that all flak would come from pro-Israel groups. Bouzid wrote, “Here is a reply from CNN to an activist’s complaint against the double standards regarding CNN’s series on Israel’s victims of violence. Clearly, they did not even bother to READ the content of the complaint and thought it was a pro-Israeli complaint – not the first time they did this.” That response to PMW was, “As part of our commitment to cover the victims rather than the terrorist, and to put the military situation in context, Wolf Blitzer began on Monday doing a series of special shows called ‘Victims of Terror.’ It focuses on the innocent people killed by terrorist bombs.” CNN’s response continued,

We have created a special website as part of CNN.com to document and personalize those killed in terrorist attacks. It can be found at www.CNN.com/victimsofterror. Sheila MacVicar has done a moving story on the grandmother and 5-year-old grandchild killed in the French Hill terror attack. We have also done stories in the past few days on those killed at Itamar and elsewhere. We have made it a general policy not to use or report on the videos supplied by the bombers.

PMW decided to participate in demonstrations against CNN scheduled for 30 June 2002. 150 people joined in the protests, organized by a group called Atlanta Palestine Solidarity (MacMaster, 2002, July 4). The watchdog issued a press release that accused the network of “bow[ing] to political and financial pressure from Israel and its supporters in the US after the recent comments made by Ted Turner.” The release stated that in doing so CNN had violated its journalistic obligations by failing to balance the suffering of each side. “CNN has compromised the most basic journalistic standard of BALANCE. Are Palestinians lesser humans? Do not Palestinians bleed? CNN News MUST be honest and fair. CNN must cover Palestinian victims of Israeli attacks by immediately providing its viewers” a series on Palestinian victims of Israeli terrorism and a web memorial to Palestinian victims.

On 27 June 2002 Bouzid asked his members, “What is the lesson to learn from all this? That our salvation will come only if we, EACH AND EVERYONE OF US, makes it his or her duty to mobilize, every day, whether we feel like it or not.” He asked,

Are we going to ONCE AGAIN, sit on our hands, maybe at best protest for a few days, and then move on with our busy lives, or are we going to get obsessed with the cause and push as hard as we can – EACH ONE OF US – until we get what we want: a 5-part series from CNN and a web site listing each and every single child, woman, and elderly Palestinian victim killed by Israel?

Its archives suggest that PMW viewed its enemy as the pro-Israel lobby: “As long as the AIPAC lobby will have the influence it has on US policy towards the Middle East, we Arabs and Muslims will suffer the consequences.” Bouzid seemed to miss the more dangerous point that important Democrat and Republican officials were beginning to reframe Israel as an important ally in a single global war against terrorism, which was then reflected in news coverage (Handley, in press). This framing trend was not limited to CNN but was occurring in other news media.

Within a few days, Bouzid was able to mobilize activists and begin talks with CNN. On 29 June 2002, PMW reported, “15 Organizations endorse CNN protest and rally.” This effort did not generate changes in news practices but only prompted “assurance resistance.” As Bouzid put it, “Many of us have been talking with CNN officials, and as things stand, CNN will NOT commit to a 5-part series on Palestinian suffering, nor on web pages on Palestinian civilians killed by Israelis. The best that we have gotten is a vague promise that something will be aired on Palestinian suffering in ‘the near future.’ Well, that is not good enough.”

By 3 July 2002, “34 organizations sign[ed] on the protest against CNN.” Bouzid urged his members to call and pressure the network:

Meetings with CNN officials in Atlanta and New York are being scheduled for next week. Please help us face them with a firm footing with your strong backing behind us. It makes a huge difference if they receive a sustained stream of emails and phone calls that tells them they had better nip this in the bud rather than let it spiral out of control. What they are counting on, as usual, is for us to get tired and go away.

On 5 July 2002, activists, having watched a PBS interview in which CNN executive Eason Jordan appeared two days earlier, complained, “CNN’s Eason Jordan

openly admits double standards.” Updating activists on PMW’s “tug-of-war with CNN,” Bouzid wrote, “This time, we have CNN on the record explaining why they won’t do the 5-part series and the web memorial.” CNN’s refusal to air a series for Palestinians or dedicate an online memorial to Palestinian victims had received some national attention. On PBS Jordan defended the decision, stating, “I think we’ve done many, many stories on Palestinian victims, and we will continue to do so.”¹⁰ He added,

[T]here’s a big difference ... between what’s happening in Israel and what’s happening in the Palestinian territories, because while it’s disputable whether Israel is targeting civilians, there’s certainly no irrefutable evidence of that in the territories. There’s no doubt that suicide bombers are going into Israel and intentionally killing civilians at random.¹¹

That day, PMW published a monitoring report on CNN’s coverage of the conflict, and used the evidence in the report as leverage in an attempt to force changes at the network. The monitor stated that it believed that CNN produced the series and memorial to Israeli victims because of pressure by pro-Israel groups and Israel itself. “Indeed, it is important to note that the new ‘Victims of Terror’ series followed immediately in the heels of a controversy sparked by Ted Turner, founder of CNN and vice chairman of AOL Time Warner, for comments that he made in a June 18, 2002, interview to *The Guardian* (UK).”

The activists tried to appeal to the professional paradigm by arguing that CNN practiced shabby journalism when it ignored “the facts”: “CNN’s assertion that ‘it’s disputable whether Israel is targeting civilians’ cannot professionally be used to justify disparities in coverage, and has in fact been strongly refuted by evidence compiled by a

¹⁰ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec02/media_7-3.html

¹¹ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec02/media_7-3.html

multitude of credible eyewitnesses reports from journalists on the frontline.” The PMW report tried to appeal to CNN’s “social contract” by including several appendices, including bibliographic references in support of the argument that Israel’s violence is terrorism, the Radio-Television News Directors Association Code of Ethics to convince CNN that it needed to be reminded of its normative obligations, and Chris Hedges’ October 2001 article “A Gaza Diary” that appeared in *Harper’s Magazine*.

The pursuit of a series and online memorial to Palestinian victims was both superficial and substantive. In their attempt to force CNN to produce a series and memorial, activists were attempting to undermine the underlying assumptions that informed CNN’s decision to produce a series and memorial for Israeli victims – Israelis are victims of Palestinian terrorism, Israeli violence against Palestinians is not terrorism, Palestinian violence is terrorism, and Palestinians are not victims of Israeli terrorism. Activists cited the BBC, Israeli press, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, Physicians for Human Rights, and the United Nations in an attempt to demonstrate that the IDF deliberately targeted Palestinian civilians. They pointed to reports by the Associated Press:

Moreover, CNN is to be reminded that the first Israeli to be killed by a suicide bomber in the current Intifada was on March 1, 2001 – more than *five months* into the second Intifada and *after more than 400 Palestinians had been killed* by Israeli soldiers, police, and armed colonists. According to the *Associated Press*, there have been a total of 242 Israeli deaths since January 2002 due to suicide bombers. In the month of March 2002 alone, Israelis killed 242 Palestinians [their emphases].

The ideological ground had shifted so much since the *Intifada* had begun and since Bush had initially defined Israeli violence as a problem for the “war on terrorism”

that CNN did not concede to any portion of PMW's critique as "journalistically useful." News organizations followed the Bush administration's lead in framing Israel as an ally in a single "war on terrorism," which necessarily meant that Israeli casualties were victims of terror while murdered Palestinians were not. CNN had merged Bush's conflict with Al Qaeda and Israel's conflict with the Palestinians into a single "war on terrorism." CNN.com published the following words on its memorial to Israeli victims of terrorism.

One of every 26,392 Israelis has been killed in a terrorist attack in the past six months. The same ratio applied to the population of the United States would equate to 10,888 American citizens. That's more than three times the number of people killed in the September 11 attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and aboard United Airlines Flight 93.¹²

In an attempt to co-opt the new "war on terrorism" meta-frame, the watchdog argued that the same statement could equally be applied to Palestinian victims of Israeli violence. PMWers informed CNN that one in every 3,648 Palestinians has been killed, or 713, since January 2002 by Israelis. "That's more than 26 times the number of Americans killed in the 9/11 attacks."

However, PMW reported that Eason Jordan rejected its insistence that Palestinians were victims of terrorism, too:

When a team from Palestine Media Watch met with him on July 10, 2002, and presented him with an extensive report quoting dozens of Human Rights organizations, including American and Israeli groups, along with respected journalists on the ground, showing beyond doubt that the IDF does intentionally target civilians, Mr. Jordan refused to even entertain the possibility that Israelis do indeed target civilians. The evidence did not matter.

¹² <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/06/23/vot.terror.one/index.html>

By 9 July, 39 organizations endorsed PMW's CNN protest. On 18 July, Bouzid updated PMWers on its campaign to obtain a 5-part series and a memorial to Palestinian victims, noting that it had been three weeks since PMW initially proposed the plan.

Since then, we have had numerous phone calls and face-to-face meetings with CNN executives to make our case. But instead of any indications that CNN is taking our request seriously, what we have noticed is a clear move by CNN to adopt a new approach to covering the conflict that is much more to the liking of the Israeli government and the Israeli public.

That same day, PMW tried to establish CNN protest chapters around the globe. "In our push to let CNN know that they cannot engage in blatant double standards and still claim that they are a respectable news organization, PMW is pushing forward with plans to start chapters of the CNN protest worldwide." Six days later it established chapters in Argentina, Bahrain, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Syria. Yet, PMW reported, "CNN expands its web memorial site!" PMW's push was now a month old, but "Since our initial request, CNN has not only done nothing to set up a Palestinian web memorial, but has in fact expanded and enhanced the Israeli web memorial." Activists responded aggressively. "[W]e need to push with as much determination as possible for a world-wide protest, and an international push to have CNN replaced with alternative sources of news – e.g., BBC, MSNBC, FSTV, etc."

On 5 August 2002, Bouzid wrote, "Please help us with spreading the word on this protest. To date, 77 organizations have joined in and 14 chapters of protest have been opened world wide." New countries included Canada, the Netherlands, and the UK.

The campaign seemed to produce an effect on content. That same day Bouzid reported, "CNN has somehow managed to get enough guts to set up what it calls a

‘gallery’ on the Gaza victims.” PMWers considered it no victory but an insult. “The problem with this ‘gallery,’ however, is that it has not ONE picture of a Palestinian victim. Instead, it has ONE picture of a lit candle, and 7 blank pictures and broken links!” Bouzid asked his members, “How long are we going to tolerate this insult?” He urged his members to take action: “Let CNN know that we are not interested in bones and symbolic gestures – let alone ‘galleries’ that have no pictures of victims in them! Palestinian victims and Israeli victims MUST be treated equal, and anything less is simply immoral!”

By 5 September 2002, CNN tried again. Observing that CNN had previously posted a “mini gallery” on the “victims of Gaza” that “contained not a single picture and not a single live link,” the watchdog observed that “CNN is giving it another shot and has now established what it is calling a ‘PALESTINIAN FATALITIES’ gallery.” PMW considered CNN’s new gallery another half-hearted attempt to “throw a bone” its way. The Palestinian rights group complained that by calling dead Israelis “victims” and Palestinian deaths “fatalities,” CNN did not value the lives of Palestinians.¹³

It was more evidence that CNN continued to resist PMW demands that the network should define Israeli violence as terrorism and that activists had failed to produce the substantive change they desired. The gallery was prefaced with the following words: “After a recent series of incidents in which Palestinian civilians were killed by Israeli military forces, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer launched an

¹³ The following live link -- <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/07/16/mideast/index.html> -- includes dead links to the victims and fatalities galleries.

investigation and requested recommendations on how such deaths could be prevented.” PMW mocked this as clearly ideological: “[I]n other words, there is this strange creature out there that is mysteriously killing Palestinians, and the head of the IDF is going to help the world find out what this creature is.”

Bouزيد urged his members along, noting that CNN protest groups had formed in Thailand and Australia, making 16 protest countries. He stated, “Please make sure to send a note to CNN to tell them that the only thing they have managed to do with their Palestinian gallery is to provide yet another vivid illustration of their abhorrent double standards. Let CNN know that we will not rest until Palestinian VICTIMS are given a gallery equivalent to the Israeli gallery.” All they achieved, however, was a superficial “bone” in the form of a “fatalities” gallery. A force without agency, not Israel, had killed Palestinians, creating “fatalities” but not “victims,” and PMW had failed to convince that Palestinians were victims of Israeli terrorism. Activists, through months of distributive action, had helped produce an online gallery for the Palestinian dead but the manifestation of their counter-frame was never legitimized. Besides CNN, Israel was reframed as a military ally in a single war on terrorism in the larger media environment (Handley, in press).

Considering the context in which PMW’s campaign to substantively influence CNN occurred, I claim that the specific outcome of the distributive action efforts more closely approximates the position put forth by Noakes and Wilkins (2002) than it does Barker-Plummer (2000) or Kumar (2007). Whereas Barker-Plummer and Kumar stressed that massive mobilization make changes in representations possible or even

likely, Noakes and Wilkins argued that only when real power sponsors a movement will mobilization affect mediated representations. It is up to movements to exploit those conditions to advance their frames, and the evidence suggests that pro-Israel groups successfully helped “guard” the ideological boundaries around the dominant narrative following Ted Turner’s violation, and, allying with powerful bi-partisan officials, helped realign Israel’s violence against Palestinians as actions consistent with a global “war on terrorism” led by the Bush administration.

PMW’s activities during spring 2002 and its summer 2002 “Victims of Terror” campaign against CNN occurred within a context in which important political elites were first questioning and then in agreement about the relationship between Bush administration’s post-9/11 “war on terrorism” and Israel’s military strikes against the Palestinians during the second *Intifada*. Handley (in press) demonstrated that elites were highly divided over whether Israel was a military ally in or strategic liability for the U.S. “war on terrorism” in spring 2002. That fracture in the U.S.-Israel relationship was represented in the news pages of important newspapers, but as Palestinian suicide attacks ratcheted up that spring and as political pressure mounted, the Bush administration eventually got in line with the rest of the political elite and reframed Israel as a military ally in its war on terrorism. Coverage shifted when Bush reframed Israel’s relationship to the war on terrorism, and reporters pegged the shift to a 24 June 2002 speech that Bush gave in which he called for the ouster of Arafat as the Palestinian Authority leader – the same time CNN began its “Victim of Terror” series and memorial devoted to Israeli victims of terrorism.

The fact that professional journalism takes its interpretive cues from the range of views found among political elites probably made it impossible for activists to convince CNN executives to frame Palestinians as victims of Israeli terrorism because that would situate Israel on the wrong side of the “war on terror.” Whereas before it would have been highly unlikely that U.S. news media would characterize Israeli violence as terrorism, the Bush administration’s insistence that Israeli violence was a strategic problem for the U.S. war on terrorism and that the U.S.-Qaeda and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts were separate would have made it unlikely that CNN would have been able to characterize Israelis as victims in the same war on terrorism. But when Bush shifted his framework for thinking about the relationship between Al Qaeda, Israel, and the *Intifada* into one in which both Israel and the U.S. were at war against a single enemy called terrorism it became possible for media to shift how they defined the cause of Israeli deaths.

When Ted Turner made his comments, both pro-Israel groups and PMW were mobilized to pressure CNN and elites had come together to fully situate Israel as an ally in a single “war on terrorism” and therefore victim of the same enemy: terrorism. What this suggests, then, is that social movements can exploit the disagreements among political elites to advance their frames. Only guardian watchdogs can substantively influence the news media via distributive action, although their ability to do so occurs through the *superficial reinforcement* of a frame. The journalistic practice of tossing superficial bones in an attempt to shut down campaigns is advantageous to guardian media monitors because they help reinforce the dominant framework. Newswriters also

toss superficial bones to dissidents, but dissidents have no dominant narrative to reinforce. This suggests that Noakes and Wilkins (2002) are correct when they say that external sponsorship provides the conditions with which social movements can exploit to influence media representations and calls into question whether watchdogs, by themselves, can produce meaningful changes via distributive action.

Distributive action may be an important strategy but when systematic monitoring is reduced in strategic importance, dissident watchdogs may impede themselves by searching for superficial changes instead of substantive changes. Systematic monitoring may be a requirement for dissident watchdogs if they wish to achieve substantive changes but those changes may only be achievable with elite-sponsored geopolitical strategic shifts. No matter what “facts” PMW gave to CNN, the cable news network never considered Palestinians victims of Israeli terrorism; Palestinians were only “fatalities.”

Conclusions

Many researchers have suggested that the massive mobilization of activists is necessary if movements want to influence news media representations (Barker-Plummer, 1995; Hayes, 2008; Kumar, 2007). I have established that distributive action, like systematic monitoring, helped increase activists’ basic access to news media, although newswriters complained about the strategy. The indications are that distributive action helped PMW publish its critique in the news media, which satisfies Barker-Plummer’s (2000) criterion that social movements are effective when they gain basic access to news media and their staff and when they transfer their issue agenda to the news media and

Hayes' (2008) criterion that watchdogs are successful when their critique leads to a public debate about an issue. Distributive action may have furthered PMW's key objective to reframe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then, because it led to media attention. That is, the publication of the watchdog's critique in newspapers, CNN, and trade journals increased the number of journalists who were exposed to PMW's criticisms, allowing a larger number of newswriters to consider the watchdog's substantive proposals than would otherwise have been the case. There is a question about the nature of that media attention, however, and I discuss the topic in the next chapter.

Here, in an effort to understand the relative power that dissident flak-producers possess in the newsmaking process, I want to demonstrate what can and cannot be accomplished via distributive action. The data indicate that by becoming "relentless irate nags" PMW was able to get quick attention from the news media it lobbied, but also suggest that in the process of shifting strategic prioritization away from systematic monitoring to distributive action, the watchdog's activists focused more on producing superficial, instead of substantive, change. Distributive action is an attractive strategy because it spreads the labor to many activists whereas systematic monitoring requires much labor by a few individuals. Activists might also be attracted to distributive action because compared to the results produced by systematic monitoring, distributive action provides immediate gratification, giving activists the illusion that they possess more power over the newsmaking process than they really do. That is, although the activists affected news decisions, they produced no long-term changes, and therefore the strategy

did not advance the group's interests and may have even harmed those interests because newswriters complained about distributive action as a strategy.

Whereas guardians can reinforce a dominant framework by producing superficial change that results in a chilling effect that reinforces a dominant narrative, a dissident in no way impacts a framework when its campaigns result in superficial influence.

Dissidents cannot produce a chilling effect because they do not have allies who have political or ideological power. Superficial effects are only useful to the extent that they reinforce a dominant framework, but dissidents have no narrative to reinforce.

That CNN threw PMW a "superficial bone" indicates that newswriters try to appease activists who become "relentless irate nags" in an attempt to convince activists to stop flooding news organizations with complaints. The tossing of superficial bones does not serve a dissident's interests but may help further a guardian's interests by reinforcing a dominant narrative. Nevertheless, dissidents may perceive that distributive action is the most useful tactic to produce change when they follow newswriters' favorite axiom to its logical end. If coverage is adequate when two competing sides complain about it, then according to the axiom coverage is biased when only one side complains. Dissidents, according to the axiom, must complain about coverage and complain louder than the other side to convince newswriters that coverage is biased against dissident interests.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Coverage of Palestine Media Watch

As I suggested in the previous chapters, distributive action inadvertently encouraged PMW's activists to pursue strategies that did not advance their interests and may have even harmed those interests. However, I also presented evidence that suggests that distributive action resulted in news media attention. Despite newswriters' claims that distributive action is a harmful strategy for watchdogs, then, activists are not likely to become immobilized in the face of "strategic resistance," especially when the logic of newswriters' favorite axiom encourages "relentless irate nagging."

In this chapter I ask: How did newswriters encourage their colleagues to interpret PMW's criticisms? I analyze news and trade journal coverage of the watchdog group, and pro-Israel media monitors mentioned in that coverage, to continue my effort to understand what newswriters consider "journalistically useful" criticisms and what revisions news organizations are willing to make to their coverage when they find a criticism professionally resonant and to identify the ideological and professional barriers that limit what can be accomplished via dissident media monitoring. That is, I use a different data set to answer the same questions I asked in Chapter Four: How do newswriters come to consider a criticism "journalistically useful," and how does the definition of a "journalistically useful criticism" enable and limit what can be accomplished via media monitoring? How do newswriters negotiate the tensions that arise when activists make complaints that resonate with newswriters' sense of professional and public interest duties but do not resonate with the ideologies that inform

newswork? Answering these questions will help illuminate the content contained in the “social contract” between the public and press.

In the first part of this chapter I demonstrate what kinds of criticisms newsworkers consider “journalistically useful” and how they come to decide that a criticism is useful. I also reveal how they strategically negotiate the tension created by criticisms that are professionally resonant but imply revisions that threaten the ideologies that inform newswork, and this strategic negotiation includes the denigration of professional principles to defend the content that they produce in the name of the public interest. In the second part of this chapter, I demonstrate that newsworkers also defend the content that they produce by employing those very professional principles they denigrate in order to defend both the professional and ideological paradigms that inform news content. Newsworkers, that is, simultaneously participate in professional paradigm boosterism and denigration in order to defend the ideologies that inform newswork and that serve power so that they do not have to come into conflict with power. Although newsworkers make contradictory and incoherent claims in defense of their craft and content, they frame each defense in a way to suggest that their defenses and criticisms are made in service to the public in order to claim that they have maintained their end of the bargain in the social contract.

Journalistically Useful Criticisms and Tension Relief

Newsworkers considered some criticisms useful when media monitors appealed to journalism’s role as a “fact-gathering” activity or when they appealed to journalists’

sense of what constitutes news. David Shaw of the *Los Angeles Times* and Sharyn Vane of the *American Journalism Review* both considered it a “failure” for California news organizations not to cover “Jewish Rallies.” Miriam Pawel, the paper’s assistant managing editor for local and state news told Shaw, “We should have covered it and it’s inconceivable to me that we didn’t.” John Carroll, the editor of the paper, told Shaw, “If we didn’t want to cover Israel’s Independence Day, we wouldn’t have had a reporter cover Israel’s Independence Day in Israel” (Shaw, 2002).

Neither Shaw nor his sources explained why it was a failure to choose not to cover the rallies. Vane, however, implied that it was a “failure” to choose not to cover the rallies because the *San Francisco Chronicle* had covered “a pro-Palestinian rally that garnered a smaller audience.” By failing to cover the rallies, news organizations violated an unspoken news value that suggests that larger crowds are more newsworthy than smaller crowds and if a smaller crowd’s rally is covered then the larger crowd’s rally must also be covered. Vane also opined that the *New York Times* “stumbled” “when it ran two large photos of pro-Palestinian demonstrators as part of its coverage of an event that drew 100,000 Israeli supporters and 200 supporters of Palestine” (Vane, 2002). One may presume that it was a journalistic mistake because the photographs did not accurately portray the size of the groups or capture the disparity in size between them.

Papers also changed journalistic assignments in response to pressure. The *Washington Post*’s Michael Getler criticized his paper for providing “imbalanced” coverage when it did not capture the human impact of Palestinian suicide bombings on Israelis, and stated that the mistake was due to the fact that reporters had been covering

Israel's military action in the West Bank. To remedy the imbalance, Shaw wrote, "The Post dispatched reporter Glenn Frankel to Israel, and he subsequently wrote two long Page 1 stories about the effect of suicide bombings there" (Shaw, 2002). Getler agreed with critics who argued that a story in the *Post*, titled "6 Die in Shootout at Settlement," "diminished the reality of five Israeli civilians killed in a Palestinian attack" (Getler, 2002, June 23).

Newspapers also made concessions to PMW and other pro-Palestine watchdogs. Daniel Okrent, public editor at the *New York Times*, conceded that pro-Palestine groups made a good point when they observed that the paper possessed a "structural geographic bias." Pro-Palestine watchdogs argued that the paper presented the Israeli view more often than the Palestinian view because reporters lived and worked in Israel, not the occupied Palestinian territories. Okrent agreed and suggested that the paper change its routines,

I do know that the angle of vision determines what you see. A reporter based in secular, Europeanized Tel Aviv would experience an Israel vastly different from one living in Jerusalem; a reporter with a home in Ramallah would most likely find an entirely different world. The Times ought to give it a try (Okrent, 2005).

Mike King, public editor of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, reported "local supporters of Palestinian liberation say their view should get more space on the opposite-editorial pages." He conceded, "They make a valid point and the newspapers' @issue editors are on constant lookout for thoughtful pieces that do that" (King, 2002). Michael Getler agreed with PMW that "the vigilante label [to describe Israeli settler violence] can, indeed, understate the actions taken," although he did not go so far as to label that violence terrorism, as PMW had urged the paper to do (Getler, 2002, June 9). The

Philadelphia Inquirer's Lillian Swanson asserted that U.S. newspapers are "by most accounts, far more pro-Israeli than their western European counterparts" (Swanson, 2002).¹⁴

Critics also make "journalistically useful" complaints when they point out structural issues in individual stories that do not provide sufficient balance for competing interpretations of events. Michael Getler explained what a journalistically useful structural critique would look like:

I recall stories in which some combat by Israelis took place and most of the information came from the Palestinian side and the Israeli sources was, say, way down in the story. This was a structural issue. Say there were 18 paragraphs that gave information from the Palestinian side and not until the 19th paragraph was there information from the Israeli side. That is a structural issue and a journalistic flaw. These can also occur "on the jump." Say the information comes from the pro-Israeli side on the front-page and the Palestinian information only comes after the story has jumped to page 10. It's very important to structure stories but also very difficult. You may not know how much space you'll get or where the jump occurs, but these are "journalistic points" (personal communication, 12 August 2009).

Some newswriters considered it a "journalistically useful" criticism when media monitors complained that news organizations focused too much on the facts of events and not enough on the context that gives meaning to events. *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*'s Mike King argued that news organizations needed to provide context to help readers understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He advised, "We need to move beyond the daily horror and provide background as well as stories emphasizing historical context and depth of analysis" (King, 2002). Getler opined that

¹⁴ Illustrating how content can be interpreted various ways, PMW interpreted Swanson's statement as a concession to pro-Israel groups, not to PMW.

so many of [the *Post*'s] stories do not contain the questions for Israelis citizens that also are at the heart of this tragic conflict. What about the 35 years of occupation? Has it been forgotten that people who live under occupation will resist? (2002, August 11).

Elsewhere, Getler criticized his paper for not providing context. "I think The Post has done less well providing context. There has not been enough information about the Israeli settlements, or about what happened in 1948, 1967 and 1973 for readers who don't know or need to be reminded" (Getler, 2002, May 5). He did not suggest that the occupation needed to be mentioned in every story, however, and admitted, "It's hard to put a lot of history into a 16-inch story" (Aamidor, 2003).

Barbara Matusow, writing in the *American Journalism Review*, denigrated the professional tenet of providing balance because she argued that it led to confusing, uninformative coverage. She wrote instead that it is "journalistically useful" to provide more depth for readers:

[T]he effort to achieve balance sometimes leads to bleached, uninformative reportage. To understand the peculiar tensions in Gaza, for example, and why Israel is contemplating a pullout, it's necessary to know that this tiny strip of land is home to 1.2 million Palestinians, while 7,500 Israeli settlers occupy 25 percent of the land and control most of the water resources. Yet the full picture is seldom sketched.

Others, however, did not consider it journalistically useful to provide more historical context. The *New York Times*'s Daniel Okrent stated that the paper "does not provide history lessons." To do so, he argued, to review what happened in 1948 and 1967, would result in "an endless chain of regression and recrimination and pain that cannot be represented in a year, much less a single day" (Okrent, 2005). Abe Aamidor, writing in *The Quill*, suggested that there is no one correct context and that providing

context would not help news organizations escape criticism anyway. He wrote, “Critics on both sides call for more context in the Middle East.” He cited the occupation since 1967, but said, “the call for context can be a two-edged sword,” citing pro-Israeli spokespeople who, in Aamidor’s words, “point[ed] out that the war against Israel predates the 1967 occupation, demanding that the conflict be reported from what scholars call a ‘Jewish survival’ perspective” (Aamidor, 2003). Everything about this conflict, in other words, was relative, and there were no solutions that would appease critics, which newswriters seemed to consider an important professional objective. That is, “journalistically useful” criticisms are not, for some newswriters anyway, criticisms that imply revisions in coverage and practice that will predictably bring about flak.

Instead, for newswriters, it is journalistically useful to write in a way that helps them avoid criticism. NPR’s vice president for news and information Bruce Duke explained to Barbara Matusow that despite pressure from CAMERA, NPR had decided to produce a series on the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Duke reported that colleagues elsewhere in the news industry had asked him, “Why are you asking for that kind of heartache?” He explained that other news organizations were “afraid to do a series like this because the ground is so treacherous politically” (Matusow, 2004).

In response to pressure from pro-Israel and pro-Palestine groups, according to Barbara Matusow, “some news organizations [responded by] go[ing] to elaborate lengths to come up with the most neutral-sounding formulations. The Philadelphia Inquirer has even invited in a rabbi and a linguistics professor to help determine what terminology to adopt.” She added, “One newspaper reporter acknowledged in an interview that she has

balanced the number of quotes in her dispatches to ward off criticism. Several editors admitted to keeping a rough ‘victimization’ count so they can’t be faulted for being more sympathetic to one side than the other” (Matusow, 2004).

In two separate articles, media commentators quoted from a *New York Times* spokesperson who said, “If occasionally the facts of a particular news situation seem likely to provide more satisfaction to one side than to others, our policy is to restore the balance promptly in our reporting” (Jurkowitz, 2003; Vane, 2002). It was an admission that the paper adjusted coverage to avoid criticism, and Sharyn Vane of the *American Journalism Review* approvingly commented, “It sounds reasonable” (Vane, 2002).

Even though PMW made the occasional criticism that newswriters acknowledged resonated with them on professional and public interest grounds, newswriters immediately contradicted themselves, relieving themselves and their profession from making any meaningful adjustments in content or coverage practices or standards. After claiming that PMW made a “valid point” when it sought balance in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*’s opinion pages, Mike King denigrated balance as a normative requirement, “But I worry that pledging to seek differing opinions on those papers carries an unrealistic expectation of ‘balance’ there and elsewhere in the paper.” He then contradicted himself further. He wrote, “Finding perfect balance in words and pictures every day in an ongoing conflict like this is almost impossible.” But then added, “But it is essential that we do so over the long haul” (King, 2002). Barbara Matusow, even though she advised papers to provide more context in their reports, immediately

reported, “There is a sense among the journalists I talked to that they have already explained the roots of the problem” (Matusow, 2004).

Despite his admission that the *New York Times* possessed a “structural geographic bias” that needed a remedy, Okrent ultimately relieved his paper from any responsibility for the representation of the conflict. He wrote:

It’s only a newspaper. It eventually comes to this: Journalism itself is inadequate to tell this story. Like recorded music, which is only a facsimile of music, journalism is a substitute, a stand-in. It’s what we call on when we can’t know something firsthand. It’s not reality, but a version of reality, and both daily deadlines and limited space make even the best journalism a reductionist version of reality (Okrent, 2005).

Okrent’s comments are an indication that newswriters participate in “ideological boosterism.” Even as he criticized the professional paradigm for its shortcomings, that is, Okrent ultimately did nothing to revise it, which was an implicit defense of any content that the *New York Times* produced. By definition, he seemed to suggest, whatever content the newspaper produced is adequate even though how it produced it is inadequate.

Sharyn Vane, writing in the *American Journalism Review*, advised news organizations to be as transparent as possible about the decisions they make when gathering and constructing the news. News organizations need to include:

more explanations of why news organizations made the decisions they do. Whether that takes the form of editors’ notes or columns by ombudsmen, readers need to know that the reason a suicide-bombing went inside the A section was because editors there were stronger contenders for the front page, not because there was a decision to hide or diminish the development.

However, the papers were accomplishing this task, Vane suggested, by simply including public editor columns about the watchdogs’ criticisms and the papers’

consideration of their criticisms (Vane, 2002). King advised that papers ought not to seek a “middle ground.” “Our goal as journalists,” he opined, “shouldn’t be to divine the middle ground between warring interests and track a straight line of facts that both sides would agree on.” This was because “Some days the facts overwhelmingly weight coverage in one direction or the other.” However, he sought that “middle ground” by arguing that the paper ought to (and did) write for “mainstream readers” (King, 2002). Okrent approved of the *New York Times*’s purported coverage from the “noninflammatory middle,” even though he conceded that the paper’s “conventional news story tropes” irritated watchdogs. He wrote, “But partisans desire heat. Detachment itself becomes suspect” (Okrent, 2005). Even as Okrent and others stated that it was impossible to avoid criticism, that is, they sought to avoid criticism by reporting from a “noninflammatory middle” that inflamed anyway.

Like King’s column, Okrent’s essay was full of contradictions. He admitted that the paper “makes selections,” but believed that “certain events [like acts of terrorism] force themselves into the newspaper.” Okrent asked, “Who can be dispassionate about an endless tragedy?” but then suggested that the *Times* “eschews passion.” Okrent criticized If Americans Knew, a key PMW ally, as a partisan source. Reviewing a study by If Americans Knew, in which the watchdog compared actual Israeli and Palestinian deaths as measured by B’Tselem with the number of deaths represented in the *Times*, Okrent opined, “The representatives of If Americans Knew earnestly believe that the information they presented to me about the killing of Palestinian children to be ‘simple objective criteria.’” He dismissed the criticism: “But I don’t think any of us can be

objective about our own claimed objectivity” (Okrent, 2005). Okrent admitted that the paper’s coverage was only a representation of reality, not reality itself, but took this to mean that journalists do not need to get at truth but merely needed to balance statements against each other.

Ideological Boosterism

In addition to denigrating principles of the professional paradigm, newswriters defended their coverage for ideological reasons, although they cited professional reasons as defense. Besides citing time constraints and the plethora of coverage on the Israel-Palestine conflicts to defend themselves in practical terms, newswriters suggested that their coverage was “down the middle” and could be criticized only by people on the margins of an unidentified ideological spectrum. Susan Martin of the *St. Petersburg Times* claimed that what she called “straightforward” stories “can prompt a flood of emails and letters accusing the reporters of being pro-Israel and pro-Palestinians” (Martin, 2001). By definition, a “straightforward” story should mean that any rational reader would not find something to criticize. That watchdogs from each side criticized these stories meant that the watchdogs were irrational. Mike King of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* said that critiques of the paper generally arrived from “those with strong feelings.” He asked, “Among those with strong feelings, can any story or column be truly neutral?” (King, 2002). Because people with “strong feelings” always detected bias in a paper, their allegations were to be dismissed out of hand. As a professional class following professional standards that eradicated individual ideology, newswriters and

news organizations themselves did not possess “strong feelings,” so coverage was adequate.

Newswriters admitted that they shaped their coverage for the “average” person in mind, although they did not state how they determined what an average person thought about the conflict, did not defend their claim that the “average” person’s thoughts should shape news of the conflict, or describe how their ideas about “average” people shaped news coverage of the conflict. CNN spokesperson Christa Robinson told David Bauder of the Associated Press that criticisms by CAMERA and PMW, two groups that news organizations placed on the margins of the ideological spectrum, proved that CNN was fair. “I think that’s how you discern that coverage is right down the middle,” she told Bauder, “if both sides are angry that they’re not getting enough attention” (Bauder, 2001).

Referring to PMW’s analysis of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*’s opinion pages, Mike King, the paper’s public editor, argued, “The analysis points to the difficulty many American newspapers have in finding a middle ground between what average readers might take from a story, or column, and what readers who are deeply passionate on one side or the other draw from the same words and opinions.” Watchdogs existed on the fringes of society, King suggested and, whereas PMW concluded that most of the columns in the paper were “pro-Israel,” King countered, “I suspect most readers would put many stories and columns in the neutral category than advocates on either side might.” He explained that the paper did not write with “those with strong feelings” in mind, but thought of “mainstream readers”:

Keith Graham, one of the international news editors here, says he and other editors and readers work hard to ensure the stories are written for mainstream readers, not those who weigh every word for bias (King, 2002).

Neither King nor Graham explained how they knew whom a mainstream reader was or how their conception of a mainstream reader influenced news coverage of the conflict, but part of the reason news organizations wrote for “mainstream” readers was an attempt to avoid offending either interest group. The *Los Angeles Times*’s David Shaw wrote, “The editors say their staff members realize how sensitive the Mideast situation is and they insist their papers make every effort to be evenhanded” (Shaw, 2002). Daniel Okrent of the *New York Times* stated that his newspaper always wrote with the “noninflammatory middle” in mind. The paper’s staff tried to “walk down the middle of a road during a firefight” (Okrent, 2005). Matusow asserted that most newspapers tried to cover the conflict “straight-down-the-middle” (Matusow, 2004). Newswriters did not explain why this unidentified “middle” should be a normative quality of journalism, except to suggest that it was practical because it helped them avoid criticism.

But reporting from the “middle” did not help them avoid criticism. In fact, to avoid criticism, they admitted, was impossible. Barbara Matusow said it was impossible to placate critics because neither side possessed a “common language to help newswriters report the conflict.” Instead, they spoke “radically different” languages. She asked, “But how do you mollify critics whose views are so far apart that about the only thing they agree on is that the news media are biased against them?” (Matusow, 2004). Several years later, following Israel’s Operation Cast Lead, the *New York Times*’s Ethan Bronner suggested that the lack of a common language made it difficult to report

the conflict. Bronner told a story about a Palestinian man named Faisal Hussein who was arrested by an Israeli police officer. When the officer told Hussein that he was a proud Zionist Hussein laughed. When asked why, Hussein explained, “I have never in my life heard anyone refer to Zionism with anything but contempt. I had no idea you could be a proud Zionist.” For Bronner, the story illustrated “how the two sides speak in two distinct tongues, how the very words they use mean opposite things to each other, and how the war of language can confound a reporter’s attempt to narrate ... this conflict in a way both sides accept as fair.” He said that reporting the story “require[s] common ground,” and that it was “difficult ... to narrate this war in a fashion others view as neutral” (Bronner, 2009). Bronner’s comments indicate that he searched for some linguistic “common ground” that would placate both sides and could be considered “neutral” not to some basic principles but to the extent that competing interest groups called them neutral.

Michael Getler wrote that the public became accustomed to a certain way of covering the conflict so that when news organizations deviated slightly from that coverage, the public perceived bias. He wrote that reporters “have also provided more steady coverage of the Palestinian side than they did in earlier conflicts, and it may be that some readers are not used to this” (Getler, 2002, May 5). Thus, just as PMW argued, there was a public backlash with coverage changes but Getler never wrote whether the public backlash affected coverage or not (i.e. a return to coverage practices).

Although newswriters did not explain how their ideas about the “average” reader influenced news coverage of the conflict, they left several clues. The new American

“war on terrorism” frame, deeply held beliefs about the Orient and the Occident, and an obsession with officialdom all informed coverage of the conflict. Journalists, although their comments revealed these influences, stated that professionalism was the only framework through which they processed the conflict.

Andrew Rosenthal of the *New York Times*, who appeared with Bouzid in an interview on Voice of America in May 2001, justified differential treatment of Israeli and Palestinian violence and victims because of the way the West recognized the two political entities. “There is a real distinction between the two sides and it’s very hard to grapple with, and that is that Israel is a constituted nation with a democratically elected government, and the Palestinians are not yet that. And, therefore, coverage of them tends to be slightly different.”¹⁵

Jim Rutenberg of the *New York Times* reported that CNN executives claimed that they “were not appeasing critics” following their decision to produce a five-part series on Israeli victims of terrorism in the wake of Ted Turner’s comments in which he defined Israeli violence as terrorism. Instead, “They said two suicide bombings on two consecutive days last month that killed 26 in Jerusalem – the same week Mr. Turner’s comments were published – persuaded them to put together the series on Israeli terrorism victims” (Rutenberg, 2002). The *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s Lillian Swanson explained that her paper’s policy was to avoid calling individuals “terrorists” because the paper’s “aim is to be as specific as possible in the description.” Therefore, “those who detonate

¹⁵ From PMW’s listserv.

explosives [are described as] suicide bombers,” not terrorists. The 11 September 2001 attacks, she stated, made the paper’s policy difficult to justify:

Since Sept. 11, it has become more difficult to defend the paper’s practice. After all, if suicide bombers struck on Broad Street, this newspaper would likely call them terrorists. Only when they hit overseas, in any foreign country, are they suicide bombers (Swanson, 2002).

Getler wrote, “News from the Middle East has come to overshadow the American war against terrorism that started *when other suicide bombers* commandeered jetliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center and Pentagon (Getler, 2002, April 7; my emphasis). Palestinian suicide bombings reminded newswriters of the 11 September 2001 attacks, also carried out by suicide bombers who were Arab. Swanson hinted that the national “war on terrorism” framework may have mapped onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and influenced the paper’s coverage of the conflict, but neither she, Rutenberg, or Getler considered the possibility that Israeli violence could be considered terrorism. The only violence worth considering terrorism was Palestinian violence, indicating an ideological resistance to the reframing of the conflict. Newswriters focused on the suicide bombings carried out by Palestinians and the 9/11 hijackers, indicating that they had characterized terrorism by the specific means of violence employed and who committed it instead of identifying terrorism by the violent agent’s purpose and target regardless of who committed the violence.

Moreover, that Israel was an internationally recognized state with the formal institutions of democracy meant that its violence could not be defined as terrorism. Michael Getler, in a statement similar to comments made by Andrew Rosenthal of the *New York Times* on Voice of America, reported that the conflict “involved a democratic

Israel with journalistic access to government. And it involves Palestinian territories with no real government, inaccessible leaders of militant groups, but lots of people who are suffering and whose stories need to be told” (Getler, 2002, April 7). In another column, Getler quoted Phil Bennett, the *Post*’s assistant managing editor for foreign news, to help explain why the distinction mattered. Bennett’s statement revealed that he possessed a framework that influenced how he interpreted specific instances of Israeli and Palestinian violence before they even occurred.

“Traditionally,” he says, “the Israeli government has been held, and holds itself, to a higher standard ... and so when countries that are democracies, that have a very self-conscious commitment to principles of individual rights and freedoms, then engage in actions that would appear to be in violation of that self-image and those commitments, that’s also news. In saying that, you of course open yourself up to all sorts of criticisms, but I think that’s a fact that also informs our coverage” (Getler, 2002, March 24).

The *Post*, then, started out from the “fact” that Israel and democracies hold themselves to certain principles. News organizations used the fact that Israel was an independent state and formal democracy to justify giving Israel an ideological advantage in the news pages while maintaining space to criticize Israel when it violated the “fact” that it held itself to a higher standard (although the violation of the “fact” did not, apparently, call into question whether it was “fact”). The Palestinians, by contrast, possessed no state and therefore could not be considered a formal democracy. This, along with the fact that it did not possess a military (only “states” have militaries), resulted in an ideological disadvantage in the news pages in relation to how the paper defined each side’s violence. Despite these admissions, others claimed that no official views informed coverage of the conflict. Daniel Okrent (2005) argued that the *New York*

Times did not have to accept international law. Okrent reported that Ethan Bronner considered the paper “neutral” and “unbound by such judgments.” By stating that the paper did not adopt “official views,” Okrent suggested that the *Times* possessed no framework besides professionalism. Newswriters and commentators simultaneously admitted and attempted to hide their ideological framework -- by invoking professionalism and considering their ideological framework a truth and not a framework -- that informed coverage of the conflict.

Although Getler covered the issues raised by PMW and other watchdogs at some length, and although he made several concessions to those groups, including PMW, he wrote several of his columns from within the very framework that PMW sought to change by referring to Israeli violence as a response to Palestinian violence. Although he argued that newspapers ought to provide more context when covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Getler continued to locate the root cause of the conflict in Palestinian violence, indicating the capacity of the ideological paradigm to incorporate into it legitimate professional criticisms without adjusting ideological boundaries that inform newswork. He wrote, “Ramallah and seven other major West Bank cities have been under curfew imposed by the Israeli military *after* the latest string of Palestinian suicide bombings killed 15 people last Sunday and Monday.” The stories about Palestinian “terrorist bombings, their impact, *the retaliation they provoke*, politics, and the ‘peace process’” have all become “numbingly familiar” (Getler, 2002, August 11; my emphases). Elsewhere, he wrote, “The Post has reported powerful stories about Palestinian suffering from the Israeli offenses *taken in response* to these [suicide

bombings] and other attacks” (Getler, 2002, April 7, my emphasis). In another column he wrote that a specific instance of Israeli demolition of Palestinians homes “was *in retaliation* for the killing of four Israeli soldiers the day before,” and called the demolishing of Palestinian homes a “reprisal tactic,” although a controversial one (Getler, 2002, January 20, my emphasis).

The Form of Coverage: Professional Paradigm Boosterism

As I demonstrated above, newswriters sometimes participated in the denigration of principles found in their professional paradigm when it helped defend the content of coverage. They also defended the ideologies that informed newswriting by situating media monitors on the margins of an unidentified ideological spectrum. Here, I show that while newswriters occasionally denigrated principles in the professional paradigm, they employed those same principles in their coverage of media monitors in order to “neutralize” the force of each side’s critique and elevate their own definitions of the professional paradigm – an act of paradigm boosterism.

The professional paradigm creates what Gitlin (1980) called the “hegemony of routines” that tends to frame movements as illegitimate threats to the proper functioning of some established order. Reporters focus on events, not issues; on individuals and individual problems, not systems and systemic pathologies; on conflict, not consensus; and on the fact that describes the story, not the one that explains it. These routines allow newswriters to incorporate unthreatening interpretations into news discourse and marginalize more ideologically threatening worldviews. Media monitors, then, when

they become “newsworthy,” are subject to the same “hegemony of routines” that subjugate traditional social movements. Distributive action, unlike systematic monitoring, leads to the hegemonic taming of a movement’s criticism in order to prop up journalism’s practices as adequate. Systematic monitoring, by contrast, can lead to those “molecular changes” that Gramsci mentioned that can color a ‘hegemonic frame’ (or, as I call it, an ideological paradigm) in a more positive way for a movement.

The publication of PMW’s criticisms and activities, I argue, was a contradictory success for the group because on the one hand it gave the activists a larger audience to advertise their organization and complaints than they otherwise would have had, but their criticisms of the press were also “hegemonically managed” by newswriters who covered the watchdog. What was really newsworthy was not PMW’s criticisms but newswriters’ ability to “adequately” report the Israeli-Palestinian conflict despite pressure from pro-Israel and pro-Palestine groups; the professional practice of balance “proved” that coverage was adequate; and watchdogs’ activities, not so much the substance of their critiques, were newsworthy.

Journalism’s Ability to Function During a Proxy War

The first way that news organizations boosted the professional paradigm was by framing media monitors as meddling disturbances to an otherwise adequate professional paradigm. Newswriters framed PMW’s activities and criticisms as one-half of a larger “proxy war” in which the physical Israeli-Palestinian conflict had ideologically extended to the U.S. in an effort by supporters of both sides to coerce the

U.S. news media into supporting one side in the war. Framing the story this way, news reporters and media commentators focused on extramedia “intrusions.” The implication was that without extramedia pressure, there would be no pressure, or other form of influence, that helped shape the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the news pages. This was a “War of Words” (Shaw, 2002), “The Other War” (*Columbia Journalism Review*, 2003), reporters were “Caught in the Crossfire” (Getler, 2002, May 5; Matusow, 2004), and “coverage of fighting in the Middle East has brought war to many newsrooms” (Aamidor, 2003). For the *New York Times*, “CNN Navigates Raw Emotions in Its Coverage from Israel” (Rutenberg, 2002). For the *American Journalism Review* these were “Days of Rage.”

In the *American Journalism Review* Barbara Matusow referred to watchdog activities as a “proxy war” between Israelis and Palestinians in the U.S. Matusow did not include PMW’s critique to seriously consider it but instead to illustrate how watchdogs on each side spoke “radically different” languages and came to radically different conclusions from their analyses of news coverage. Because of this fact one could not “mollify critics” or report in a way that pleased everybody because there was no “common language to help newswriters report the conflict” (Matusow, 2004). The implication was that news organizations should keep reporting as they always had, despite the criticisms, but also reveals that the professional paradigm includes the stipulation that newswriters try to find a way to report controversial issues that minimizes flak production.

“Balance” as Resistance

News organizations also boosted the professional paradigm by balancing competing watchdogs against each other to “neutralize” their critiques, and leave in place newsmakers’ definitions of professionalism. In several stories, news organizations and trade journals mentioned both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine groups. News organizations and trade journals transmitted each group’s claims, only to “balance”¹⁶ them against each other and/or against newsmakers’ claims.

PMW’s criticisms were transmitted in several stories but either “balanced” by pro-Israel criticisms or newsmakers who remained “detached” by stopping short of evaluating those criticisms. The *Columbia Journalism Review* published a debate between Bouzid and Ira Stoll, a pro-Israel media critic at smartertimes.com. The *Review* included Bouzid’s critique that the news media failed to provide maps that illustrated the true content of Ehud Barak’s “generous offer” and his critique that journalists needed to explain events and issues instead of repeating “common knowledge.” He wrote,

My view is that the media’s role is first and foremost to enlighten. Telling me that 9/11 is evil is redundant. Telling me what the perpetrators claim to be their motive, how they think, on the other hand, is information that is useful, since it enables us to better understand the threat against this country.

Bouzid criticized U.S. newsmakers for too often resorting to their professional axiom – if both sides criticize us we’re covering the conflict fairly – to avoid substantively confronting criticism. The debate was not unmediated. The journal asked both Bouzid and Stoll the same questions and let them answer, but did not evaluate the

¹⁶ The word “balance” is in quotes because consistent with Dunsky’s (2008) observation that pro-Israel groups received more attention from the press in the early 2000s, coverage and commentary tended to focus more on pro-Israel activities and criticisms.

substance of their responses. The journal simply balanced each side's criticism against the other. These were, according to the article, "Questions of Balance in the Middle East" (*Columbia Journalism Review*, 2003).

The professional resort to "balance" and detachment as a normative quality of journalism operated as a means through which journalists could avoid responsibility for their coverage and for their obligation to "truth." The *American Journalism Review* asked, "How do you describe a structure that is a 30-foot concrete wall in some places, a fortified fence in others?" The journal did not take up the substance of the matter by deciding which interpretation was closer to the truth but balanced three possible interpretations. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman called it "a strip – up to 100 yards wide – of razor wire, trenches, sensors and cameras"; *HonestReporting.com*, labeled it a "security fence"; and *PMW* called it an "Apartheid Wall" (*American Journalism Review*, 2004).

One newsworker stated explicitly that the form of journalism, particularly balance as a professional tenet, proved that journalists fairly covered the conflict. On 11 April 2002 Bouzid appeared on CNN's *News Night* with Aaron Brown.¹⁷ During that appearance, Bouzid critiqued the news media for "basic sloppy journalism" when they published maps that indicated that the Golan Heights belonged to Israel despite their status under international law and when news media referred to Israeli violence as a "retaliation." He criticized the U.S. news media for overwhelmingly hiring commentators who were "devoted to the Israeli narrative."

¹⁷ <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0204/11/asb.00.html>

During the interview Brown did not challenge any of Bouzid's claims but allowed Bouzid to transmit them to the audience uninterrupted. Before the interview, however, Brown informed the audience how they ought to interpret Bouzid's appearance on the show. The previous week Brown had invited a pro-Israel commentator to offer a critique of the news media. I previously argued that one of the reasons Bouzid appeared on CNN was because of his relentless nagging of Aaron Brown, but Bouzid served a useful purpose for Brown and CNN as well. His appearance would help CNN prove that it was fair and the watchdogs' criticisms illegitimate:

Last Friday, we invited a guest here, knowing he would accuse the network of being biased against the Israelis. *Just to prove we are both fair* and gluttons for punishment, tonight a guest who believes we, and in this case, I think he means the general media, including us, are biased against the Palestinian side [my emphasis].

Although news organizations and commentators occasionally conceded points to watchdogs on each side, by balancing pro-Israel and pro-Palestine criticisms against each other and against newswriters, the form of professional journalism helped inoculate the news media from the substance of the critiques. In a *Boston Globe Magazine* article, for example, Mark Jurkowitz overwhelmingly focused on the pro-Israel CAMERA's organizational strategies, criticisms of the news media, and its heated relationship with NPR. Jurkowitz never referred to PMW's critique of the news media and did not review its activities. Instead, he used PMW as a source with which to criticize CAMERA as an illegitimate media critic: "Ahmed Bouzid, executive director of the pro-Palestinian Palestine Media Watch, criticizes CAMERA for wanting news outlets to adopt 'value judgments on the conflict'" (Jurkowitz, 2003). The *Globe*, that is, turned to PMW to help

it resist pressure from the pro-Israel lobby, defending news practices and content in the process, supporting PMW's "neutralization" argument.

PMW Becomes Newsworthy

News organizations also boosted the professional paradigm by focusing on PMW's ability to become a newsworthy organization. In doing so, news organizations suggested that the professional paradigm was adequate and activists needed only to learn how to exploit it to their advantage. In October 2003 the *Online Journalism Review* reported PMW's activities and mentioned that pro-Palestine groups were becoming increasingly sophisticated at targeting the news media. The story's headline reported, "Palestinians Find Their Voice Online," and the author briefly summarized PMW's organizational strategies without transmitting its critique or considering its substance:

Palestine Monitor includes a section called Media Watch, while the Palestine Media Watch (PMWatch) site constantly monitors U.S. media coverage of Palestinian issues. PMWatch, an all-volunteer site with 39 "local chapters" in the U.S., issues alerts with explicit instructions on how to lobby the White House and Congress, and send letters to editors (Glaser, 2003).

A May 2002 *Newsday* article by Rita Ciolli made the point that PMW and other pro-Palestine groups were increasingly able to gain media attention. Ciolli reported, "For the first time, editors and ombudsmen say, Palestinian groups are demonstrating that they have learned the ropes of getting the media to pay attention" (Ciolli, 2002). The professional paradigm was perfectly adequate, that is, and watchdogs had learned to use them.

Minimal Mediation

PMW's most successful and least mediated transmission of its critique occurred in September 2002 when *Editor & Publisher* granted Bouzid a column in which he directly argued his case to decision makers and readers. He had almost full say about how to frame PMW's critique of the news media and did not completely cede editorial control to the newswriters who wrote about PMW.

In that article, which *Editor & Publisher* titled "Room with One View," Bouzid criticized the media for subscribing to the narrative that Israel responds to initial Palestinian terrorism and violence despite evidence from human rights organizations that demonstrates that Israel "deliberately and systematically" targets Palestinian civilians. Bouzid's essay described several PMW analyses. He surveyed twenty U.S. newspapers to determine which papers included a front-page photograph of IDF soldiers who shot Palestinians civilians in Jenin, and claimed that the only paper in the sample to cover it was the *Seattle Times*. Bouzid reiterated PMW-D.C.'s team's conclusions that the *Washington Post* defined Israeli violence as a "response" and "retaliation" to Palestinian terrorism and that the *Post* only applied the word "terror" to Palestinian violence. He concluded his essay by writing,

The examples I cite are not the exception but the rule. Needless to say, commitment to the prevailing paradigm is not confined to the printed press. The electronic media are just as guilty. Unless and until American journalists free themselves from the blinders they have decided to put on when covering the Middle East conflict, we will continue to suffer reporting that avoids the obvious and often presents as obviously true what is misleading, incomplete, or outright false (Bouzid, 2002).

The essay was not completely free of the *Editor & Publisher*'s editorial control. In 2003 Bouzid published the full version of his essay in his book *Framing the Struggle*. The essay revealed that Bouzid also made normative statements about journalism and described his interactions with specific journalists, but these statements and descriptions were absent from the *Editor & Publisher* essay. In the full essay, which he titled, "Blind Journalism, American Style," Bouzid criticized newswriters for believing, despite evidence to the contrary, that Israel did not deliberately target Palestinian civilians. He observed that the press's tolerance for Israeli violence was so high that they defined otherwise out-of-bounds violence as "mistakes." The news media "cling to the established narrative that only Palestinians deliberately target civilians in terrorist attacks" (Bouzid, 2003, p. 110).

He argued that that framework encouraged journalists to violate their responsibilities when professionalism required journalists to question their framework. Referring to a CNN's Aaron Brown's statement, "We don't believe the Israeli government would risk killing a couple of hundred people in order to maybe – maybe – get one guy'" (Bouzid, 2003, p. 107), Bouzid countered:

[A]t the heart of what professional journalists do – what makes them professional seekers of the truth – is their constant struggle to stand above their preconceptions and prejudices. What is shocking about Aaron Brown's remarks is not the fact that he was willing to give the benefit of the doubt to Israelis, or even that he laid out what he felt, but rather that he would openly terminate an investigative line on an assumption. Journalists are not supposed to start a story with a conclusion, let alone a conclusion drawn from an unlikely assumption (Bouzid, 2003, p. 108).

Bouzid also described Chris Hedges' October 2001 article in *Harper's* magazine in which Hedges "alleged that Israeli soldiers not only deliberately targeted some stone

throwing Palestinian children, but in fact routinely taunted them and incited them” (Bouzid, 2003, p. 109). Bouzid claimed that Hedges’ bosses at the *New York Times* told him that he, Bouzid, was making too much of Hedges’ claims. Bouzid wrote, “In [the editor’s] reality, Israelis do not commit such atrocities, and no amount of evidence is going to rattle his well-protected conceptual cage” (p. 111).

Bouzid described an instance in which Nolan Finley, editorial page editor of the *Detroit News*, wrote, in March 2002, that Palestinians love to target Israeli youth. Bouzid wrote, “In that piece, Mr. Finley cited no reports, no findings or investigations, no official statements from human rights organizations or respected journalists, showing that Palestinian terrorists ‘appear to be intentionally killing Israel’s kids’” (p. 111). Bouzid complained that Finley’s column was peculiar because in December 2001 Bouzid published a column in the *Detroit News* in which he “extensively quoted from Chris Hedges’ piece” (p. 111).

In short, in the *Editor & Publisher* version of his essay, Bouzid was not allowed to make normative statements about the proper role of journalism when covering the conflict, not allowed to name specific newswriters or describe his interactions with them, and not allowed to characterize Israeli violence as terrorism (he was allowed to state that the *Post* did not apply the word to Israeli violence). By omitting these criticisms, the publication boosted the professional paradigm over competing normative claims about journalism’s role in society. Bouzid was, however, able to cite human rights organizations to argue that Israel deliberately targeted Palestinian civilians, review PMW analyses of news content, and to argue that the newswriters’ commitment to the

narrative that Israel only responds to Palestinian terrorism did not fit the facts. PMW was allowed to present its empirical claims but the journal elevated journalistic definitions of their professional norms and obligations by excluding PMW's normative claims.

Conclusions

This chapter helps us understand the extent to which dissident media monitors might be able to affect the newsmaking process by reviewing what newswriters considered “journalistically useful” criticisms, identifying what revisions newswriters made in the wake of useful criticisms, and what limits they set to what watchdogs can achieve.

Watchdogs make “journalistically useful” points when they show that journalists get “the facts” wrong and when news organizations do not cover something that meets the criteria of “newsworthiness.” Again, however, there is disagreement about what is “journalistically useful,” indicating the varying meaning of the professional paradigm and therefore the variability of the social contract between the public and the press.

Newswriters do not agree with each other about whether they should provide more historical context or not, but those who do have a difficult time providing it. At other times, when watchdogs make claims that resonate with newswriters, journalists simply deny that a criticism is “journalistically useful.” The practice of “balance,” for example, has long been a central tenet of professional journalism, but when PMW criticized news organizations for not providing balance, journalists simply denied that balance was a normal journalistic practice and even explained how the use of balance may result in

coverage that presents a false picture of events even as they employed the principle in coverage of media monitoring groups. That is, newswriters denigrated the principle of balance in the name of the public interest and at other times invoked it in the name of public interest at different times in the media-movement struggle. This suggests that whereas others have observed that news organizations defend their professional paradigm to defend their coverage against critics, news organizations may actually criticize the professional paradigm when doing so helps them defend the ideological boundaries that inform the news. News organizations do not merely boost the professional paradigm but boost ideological boundaries as well.

On the other hand, however, newswriters also defended the professional paradigm when employing it helped them deflect watchdog criticisms. Whereas newswriters criticized the use of “balance” to defend the content of their coverage, for example, they also invoked it to defend their content. That news organizations covered both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine media watchdogs “proved,” for some newswriters, that they adequately covered the conflict. Coverage of the pro-Israel and pro-Palestine watchdogs, then, was a “superficial bone” meant to boost journalists’ professional practices as defense against criticisms and to please both sides in an effort to stop them from bombarding the news media with complaints. This finding suggests that newswriters will find anyway they can to defend the content they produce, both defending and criticizing a single principle at different points in a media-movement struggle, all in the name of the public interest and this allows them to state that they are committed to a social contract.

Newswriters, then, set up professional and ideological obstacles that help them defend their content against watchdog criticisms, boosting and criticizing the professional paradigm and boosting the ideological paradigm while denying that there is an ideological paradigm that informs coverage of the conflict. Newswriters were mere information-gatherers who could find no “common language” to tell the story of the conflict, but they also started out from certain “facts” (e.g., Israel holds itself to certain principles) to tell the story of the conflict, which explains the limits to what can be accomplished – “just the facts” can be fixed, but not the story that informs how those facts are organized and interpreted. Without a “common language,” no story informed the conflict, according to newswriters.

Within these professional and ideological boundaries, however, I have shown that watchdogs can influence news coverage of issues important to them but I make two qualifications. First, news organizations make few concessions and only do so when criticisms are based in issues of fact and (sometimes) balance, but not frameworks. Second, when news organizations concede that a criticism is professionally resonant, they are most likely to make behavioral changes when those changes do not result in long-term professional or substantive content changes. Concessions to pro-Israel groups operated at the superficial level of influence but news organizations actually made behavioral changes to act on their concessions, suggesting that guardians are advantaged because they can superficially reinforce a dominant framework. By contrast, concessions made to pro-Palestine groups operated at the substantive level of influence but news organizations found reason not to make any behavioral change that would have put the

content of the concession into practice. News commentators conceded that their news organizations needed to provide more balance in the news pages and to remedy their “structural geographic bias,” but they immediately contradicted themselves by suggesting that to include balance in the news and opinion pages is unreasonable and by suggesting that journalism is inadequate to tell the story of the conflict. Commentators who suggested revisions that went beyond isolated concessions contradicted themselves, decreasing the possibility that the news organization would carry out the suggested reform. Newswriters defended news content even at the expense of their professional paradigm, and tried to prevent watchdogs from criticizing them even as newswriters unwittingly encouraged distributive action complaints by invoking their favorite axiom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Relative Power of Dissident Media Monitors

The Utility of Systematic Monitoring and Distributive Action

In response to the propaganda and strong hegemony models, which focus on structural and hegemonic domination without considering a movement's ability to strategize in an effort to advance its preferred frameworks in the news media, scholars have developed the dialogic (Barker-Plummer, 1995) and dialectical models (Kumar, 2007) to refocus attention on resistance to media messages. Others (e.g., Carlson, 2009) have argued that one cannot completely understand the newsmaking process without examining the role that media watchdogs play contesting news media representations, and so in this study I have, using the dialogic and dialectical models as analytical guides, attempted to understand how dissident media watchdogs may shape the newsmaking process and affect news media representations by examining how Palestine Media Watch strategized to affect coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between 2000 and 2004.

To challenge the strong deterministic claims that the propaganda and strong hegemony models make, the dialogic and dialectical models acknowledge that movements engage in strategic interaction with the media, learning how to adjust their strategies in the process, which affects the outcome of their struggle and cannot be explained by hegemonic news processes or the "filters" that inform newswork. I have argued that strategic interactions between activists and newswriters create new conditions that encourage new strategic logics and require strategic adaptation for both activists and newswriters who try to change and defend news content and practices,

respectively, and I have shown how these interactions and adaptations have resulted in worsened relations between one dissident group and newswriters.

The goal of the dialogic and dialectical models is to produce strategic knowledge to help movements in their struggles to create better media representations, but, in rejecting the determinism of the strong hegemony and propaganda models, they come with “no guarantees” about the outcomes of strategic choices, making no claim that strategy X will lead to outcome Y. Yet, I think that Barker-Plummer (1995) can be read to suggest that social movements can increase the chances that their frames are successfully transmitted to news media by pursuing pragmatic strategies, and Kumar (2007) can be read to suggest that massive mobilization by a social movement can force news organizations to construct meaning about issues that serves the interests of the movement.

With respect to media monitoring, I want to suggest that, for dissident media monitoring groups, systematic monitoring is a better strategy to employ in comparison to distributive action. I argue this for three reasons. Systematic monitoring leads to substantive changes that lead to a “hegemonic incorporation” in the Gramscian sense. That is, it produces “molecular changes” that modify the composition of a dominant narrative even as the boundaries themselves are not changed, possibly rendering those boundaries weaker at some future point in the struggle. Distributive action, although it led to media coverage, also led to a “hegemonic incorporation” of PMW’s critique in a Gitlinian sense. That is, it was “hegemonically managed” or tamed.

Second, PMW was able to create substantive changes in news media content and practice when it employed systematic monitoring as its primary media monitoring strategy. Distributive action, by contrast, led to the dishing of “superficial bones” to the dissident, and seemed to sour newswriters’ respect for dissidents. Third, and more importantly, by pursuing systematic monitoring as a strategy and creating criticisms that resonate with newswriters’ sense of professional and public duties, dissidents help illuminate for newswriters the ideological character of their work and the incoherent claims they make in defense of that work. That is, dissidents create tensions for newswriters who may be attracted to a dissident’s critique but also recognize the ideological and professional limits to their ability to revise coverage. They must, therefore, resolve the tension that exists when activists point to the stipulation in newswriters’ social contract that they serve the public and the reality that they serve power. In this case, newswriters, I have shown, sometimes resolved that tension by denigrating some of the principles found in the professional paradigm. Unfortunately, newswriters denigrated that paradigm not to make revisions to close the gap between acknowledged public responsibilities and actual practice but instead to beat back attempts at changing the ideological paradigm that informs coverage of the conflict. In fact, the denigration was framed as a service to the public, so that news organizations did not have to admit that they had violated their social contract.

At other times newswriters reconciled the acknowledged difference between their professional and public duties and the frameworks that inform their newswriting by invoking their favorite axiom: The other side complains more than you do, so we do not

have to revise our coverage in your direction. Unfortunately, this strategic line of defense created new conditions that made it logical for activists to pursue distributive action as a primary strategy: If coverage is not biased because the other side complains more than we do, we should complain louder than the other side to prove that it is biased in the direction that we claim it is. Not only is this strategy ineffective because it does not lead to substantive changes, but it relieves newswriters of the tension they apparently feel when confronted with criticisms of their ideological content that resonate with them for professional and public interest reasons.

Distributive action, then, lets newswriters off the hook, and “boosts” the professional paradigm, despite its flaws. When PMW took the logic of newswriters’ axiom seriously, it logically concluded that the professional paradigm was fine and that the only problem with newswriting was the existence of the guardian Israel lobby. Therefore, its activists, according to their statements, thought that they could improve coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by “neutralizing” the guardian lobby. Indeed, newswriters encouraged this interpretation when they, in their coverage of pro-Israel and pro-Palestine media monitors, employed PMW to dismiss and therefore “neutralize” pro-Israel criticisms. The distributive action strategy led activists to accept newswriters’ definition of professionalism and public duties instead of challenging those definitions to sustain pressure on newswriters that would maintain the tension that the dissident created. Moreover, relatively good relations between newswriters and activists were hurt when the dissident pursued distributive action. PMW became an irritating pest that newswriters attempted to shoo away with superficial bones.

While acknowledging that dissidents may make substantive gains by employing systematic monitoring as a primary strategy, I also want to suggest that what can be accomplished via media monitoring is fairly limited. Noakes and Wilkins (2002) argued that the dialogic model sacrifices the strength of the strong hegemony thesis and reminded us that elite policymakers help set the limits for what frames are legitimated in the news media. Overemphasizing how activists strategically engage newswriters and maneuver around journalists' defense mechanisms also sacrifices the strength of the propaganda model because the propaganda model suggests limits for what can be achieved within that maneuvering. It is in understanding what can be accomplished within those limits that the dialogic and dialectical models make their most useful contribution. My objective, then, was to understand the extent to which dissidents can achieve success within these limits and explain what can and cannot be accomplished via dissident media monitoring.

My presumption was that dissidents become as effective as they can be when they make criticisms that newswriters find professionally resonant, increasing access to the news media and making substantive change in the progress. Indeed, Hayes (2008) advised watchdogs to take the professional paradigm as a given and complain when they perceive that a news organization has deviated from its professional obligations. Michael Getler, the *Washington Post's* ombudsman when PMW was active, claimed that watchdogs are most effective when their criticisms include "journalistically useful points" (Getler, 2001, July 29).

I have shown that dissidents can make “journalistically useful” criticisms that result in substantive changes. Newswriters were compelled to make revisions in content and news practices when PMW activists showed that newspapers’ content sometimes was constructed in a way that violated “the facts” as understood by international law; some newswriters indicated that the watchdog was correct when it argued that news organizations should provide more historical context to help readers understand current events of the conflict; news organizations adjusted coverage when it was shown that a “fact” was wrong or when they did not cover something that met the criteria of “newsworthiness”; and it was “journalistically useful” for watchdogs to become active because it provided news organizations a stream of opinion columns for potential publication.

At other times, however, newswriters acknowledged that a critique resonated with them but found a way to resist revising content and coverage practices when the implied revisions were too threatening to the professional and/or ideological paradigms that informed their work. The professional and ideological paradigms are both restricting and accommodating. They are restricting in that newswriters will reject criticisms when the revisions they imply require the fundamental alteration of either paradigm. They are also restricting in that criticisms that are otherwise recognized as professionally resonant will not lead to revisions in coverage if doing so would create conflict between newswriters and a dominant ideology. They are accommodating in that newswriters can incorporate the revisions implied by a “journalistically useful” criticism without fundamentally altering either paradigm.

That news organizations dismiss many criticisms and can accommodate others without challenging the professional and ideological paradigms could be interpreted as another instance of Gitlin's negative "hegemonic incorporation." However, the dialogic model asks us to identify which strategic choices social movements make in order to determine whether an outcome is the result of those strategic choices or a news organization's "hegemonic newswork." The substantive progress made by PMW was due to its sharp eye, constant monitoring, and sustained criticism of the news organizations it targeted. It is true that newswriters could accommodate these criticisms without altering their professional and ideological frameworks, but it is also true that these accommodations were made possible by the strategic decision that PMW made to pursue systematic monitoring. I argue, then, that these were acts of hegemonic incorporation, but are positive in a Gramscian sense. One newswriter even admitted that an activist leader had convinced her that there were discursive patterns in news content that favored official Israel's interpretation of the conflict, and sought to remedy that. However, there were professional constraints that prevented that remedy, a sort of "de facto resistance" instead of a hegemonic response.

Activists were able to create an uncomfortable tension among newswriters by exploiting journalists' sense of professional and public duties as a way to alter the ideological paradigm, so besides the hegemony thesis, I think this evidence also has something to say about the nature of the social contract that exists between the public and the press. How newswriters negotiated that tension is what is most interesting because it illuminates the content of the social contract. That dissidents can force substantive

revisions in content suggests that they can make “journalistically useful” points and suggests that newswriters take their “social contract” with the public fairly seriously. However, there was not always agreement about what constituted a “journalistically useful” criticism, and newswriters who acknowledged that many criticisms are useful for professional and public interest reasons also identified other professional and ideological constraints that limited what changes in coverage and content were possible.

When activists made criticisms that newswriters acknowledged were valid for professional and public interest reasons, other newswriters denigrated principles of the professional paradigm – the same principles that activists invoked to create the tension. Denigrating these principles, specifically balance as a professional norm, relieves the tension that newswriters seem to experience as a result of dissident systematic monitoring, and allows journalists to defend the content that they produce without admitting that they have violated a social contract. Indeed, they denigrated the principles in the name of the social contract. The problem with this strategic defense mechanism is not that newswriters’ criticism of balance is not valid – it is valid – but that they use it cynically to defend whatever they produce.

Because of journalistic defense mechanisms, I found it difficult to pin down exactly what a “journalistically useful” criticism is. The best answer, I suggest, is that journalistically useful points are those criticisms that can be accommodated by the professional paradigm with as little additional labor as possible and as long as the revisions they imply do not interfere with the ideologies that inform newswriting. News organizations will simultaneously defend the ideological and professional paradigms

when no tension exists between the two, but denigrate the principles of the professional paradigm when dissidents try to define those principles in a way that requires an antagonistic relationship between the press and the powerful.

All of this calls into question the existence of an unbreachable “social contract” between the public and press. If a real social contract existed, news organizations that acknowledged that a criticism resonated for professional and public interest reasons would revise coverage, practices, and standards until they are consistent with the principles bound up in the professional paradigm. There is a social contract between the press and public but it is breached by news media when newswriters recognize that a criticism is journalistically resonant, and compelled to that recognition by activists, but then reject the principles upon which makes a criticism resonant when taking them seriously would lead to a conflict with the interests who benefit from the ideologies that inform newswork.

The restrictive and accommodative nature of the professional and ideological paradigms, and the denigration of professional and public commitments when it helps newswriters defend the content that they produce, leads me to a view counter that of Hayes’ (2008) apparent optimism about the “social contract” that exists between the public and the press.¹⁸ Whereas Hayes (2008) assumed that the professional paradigm was separate from an ideological paradigm and argued that media monitors should accept the professional paradigm as a given and note deviations from that paradigm, arguing that

¹⁸ Hayes (2008) praised Accuracy in Media’s ability to force PBS to create programming changes “consistent with PBS’s own standards of balanced presentation of controversial programs” (p. 24).

the “social contract” between the public and press was not tied up in ideology, it seems to me that there is not much of a “social contract” between the public and the press. It is true that activists can create an uncomfortable tension for newswriters by seeking to force journalists to commit themselves to challenging power, but when newswriters both praise and denigrate a single principle in the professional paradigm (e.g., balance) to defend whatever content they produce at different times in the process of strategic media-movement interactions, it seems to me that the real content of the professional paradigm includes a stipulation that professional and public obligations are okay so long as they do not interfere with the interests of the powerful. This is why newswriters invoke axiomatic resistance: They cannot substantively defend their practices. The professional paradigm requires that newswriters do not take their obligations to the public too seriously if they are to remain in service to power, which explains why newswriters will yield to power instead of the force of a good critique.

Alternative Strategies: Toward a New Social Contract

The Arab or Palestine lobby’s ultimate goal, of course, is to change conditions on the ground for the Palestinians. From here, it seems that the Arab or Palestine lobby has a strategic choice to make. Working top-down, the lobby could work to influence official policymakers in an effort to change the official range of debate in Washington that the U.S. news media would then ‘index’ and transmit to the public, or it could work bottom-up to change the U.S. news media system so that it is more challenging of power and

more responsive to a public who might contest what ruling policymakers perceive to be the national interest.

The emergence of an Arab lobby means that Arab Americans and those sympathetic to the Palestinian narrative are attempting to influence one key “filter” through which news media decide what is news and how to shape it: the official sources upon whom news media rely (see Marrar, 2009). To some extent, the lobby can formulate interpretations that resonate with powerful people in foreign policy circles. In justifying general U.S. foreign policy and arguing that Israel policies in the occupied territories hurt U.S. interests, for example, PMW even had a potential ally in President George W. Bush who initially framed Israel’s incursions into the West Bank as a “strategic liability” for his “war on terrorism.” As the lobby grows and organizes, it could continue to form relationships with key members in Congress and policymakers in the executive and also pressure the news media to adopt the frameworks that their allied officials supply. Some newswriters, for example, seem willing to accept international law as the basis from which to understand the conflict, and policymakers, by officially adopting the two-state solution, have as well.

However, official rhetoric is quite different from actual policy, and Bush, who officially committed the U.S. to the two-state solution, also materially undermined that rhetorical commitment by legitimizing Israeli settlements, which make a real two-state solution impossible (Khalidi, 2005). While officials are willing to call Israeli aggression a liability publicly via the press, there are fewer indications that they are willing to call the occupation itself the cause of the conflict. Instead, there are indications that the

occupation advances the perceived interests of dominant factions among ruling policymakers (Zunes, 2006). If, then, dominant officials are influenced by a lobby only to the degree that a lobby's policy recommendations do not fundamentally deviate from, but help instead to nuance and modify, that faction's perceived interests (Marrar, 2009) and if the occupation serves those interests, as I have argued here, then the dominant narrative will not undergo a paradigmatic shift until that perceived interest changes and that is because the dominant narrative is informed primarily by those ruling policymakers who also have routinized access to the press.

Even if the Arab or Palestine lobby were successfully able to convince policymakers to radically change their interests in the Middle East and then pressure news organizations to internalize the frameworks that their new guardianship status would afford them, it would have done nothing to change the relations of domination that exist between news media and dominant ruling factions. The formerly dissident lobby would merely become a guardian of a new narrative that continues the old relationship between press and ruling officials. If dissident media monitors are truly concerned with the failings of the press, that is, and sincerely concerned with improving how news media work, then they will have to go beyond seeking substantive and superficial influence about a specific issue important to them and join a broader coalition concerned with improving democratic communications.

Perhaps PMW's core strategic mistake, and the mistake that other dissidents should avoid, was that it focused too intently on a single issue. It is true that the watchdog was at least peripherally involved with the media reform movement, but almost

all of its efforts were geared toward the reframing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to better reflect what international law says about the conflict. It is also true that activists made claims about journalism's proper role in society, but many of these claims were latent or were buried beneath the watchdog's avalanche of complaints about coverage of its single issue.

Partly as a response to newswriters' axiomatic resistance, the media monitor seemed to focus too intently on "neutralizing" the Israel lobby's ability to influence news coverage as opposed to challenging the other, more significant factors that shape news content. The "neutralization" argument assumes that absent activities of some guardian lobby, news organizations would adequately cover an issue. There are, however, several other "filters," in the language of the propaganda model, through which events and issues pass before they become news. In response to critics who argue that the Israel lobby is to blame for coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Zunes (2006) asserted that there is no reason to expect that U.S. news coverage of the conflict is any more supportive of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East than elsewhere around the globe, and the research that establishes U.S. news media support for U.S. foreign policy and interventions supports his assertion (Hallin, 1986; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Kumar, 2006; Reese, 2004; Reese & Buckalew, 1995). Even if the Israel lobby were "neutralized," the dominant narrative would remain in place, though its particular shadings may change. And if the Arab lobby were able to become a guardian, the dominant press-officials relationship would remain in place as well.

On the Palestine issue, the movement to reform the entire media system as opposed to exclusively reshaping the Israeli-Palestinian narrative is important because the principles that underlie U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East are not dissimilar to the principles that underlie U.S. foreign policy across the globe. The same structural factors that encourage the U.S. news media to support U.S. foreign policy objectives around the globe are at work in media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, while there may be particulars to the suffering of the Palestinian people and to the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither Palestinian suffering nor coverage of the conflict is, in principle, unique. In terms of reforming the media, there are bigger fish to fry. The biggest fish is the establishment of a more democratic media that contributes to the public shaping of what the U.S. national interest should be and that routinely challenges those policymakers who shape it.

Recognizing the limits to dissident media monitoring, whether dissidents follow the more useful but limited systematic monitoring strategy or the less productive distributive action strategy, I want to suggest that scholars who have focused on resistance to media messages, while usefully turning the field's attention away from "what can be read differently in a text" to "what can be done about a text," have too narrowly defined what it means to be an effective social movement and are too satisfied with minimal progress toward the establishment of more democratic media practices. Barker-Plummer (2000) acknowledged that media-movement struggles continue over the long haul (she offers only "(in)conclusions" in her examination of the women's movement) but assumes the legitimacy of the media system by suggesting that because

media are a site of struggle, it is up to activists to struggle within that media system. By working within the system, I have shown, activists can certainly make gains but that progress is limited by the professional and ideological constraints within which journalists work.

Kumar (2007) argued that because labor was mobilized in 1997, it forced what she called a “democratic representation of strikes in the media” (p. 113), but that victory was ephemeral – approximately two weeks’ worth of coverage – and did not remove the structures of domination that resulted in media representations that did not serve labor’s interests, but merely rendered them less potent for a short period of time. Indeed, Kumar conceded that any “accommodations [made by the news media to more fully serve the public’s interests] will be negated when the struggle dies down” (p. 173). It does not seem likely that a movement can sustain its struggle forever, so some other solution should be found.

It is important to note that while the dialogic and dialectical models force researchers to challenge claims made in the strong hegemony and propaganda models by examining the micro-details of the concrete struggles that occur between media and social movements, the strong hegemony and propaganda models usefully establish the limits of what can be accomplished by challenging media representations. When one studies those concrete micro-interactions, that is, one finds meaningful but extremely limited progress. The propaganda model suggests an entire “ideological air” that informs newswork through five “filters.” All of these filters must be challenged if progress beyond substantive influence and ephemeral framing victories is made. The Arab or

Palestine lobby in the U.S. has attempted to affect two of these filters by trying to influence U.S. foreign policymakers (see Marrar, 2009) and by “neutralizing” the guardian Israel lobby. Yet foreign policymakers are only influenced to the extent that a lobby’s interests resonate with and are not incompatible with the interests of groups with real power (Marrar, 2009) and even if an Arab lobby can “neutralize” the Israel lobby’s ability to shape news media content and practices there are issues of ownership, funding, and news practices that must be challenged. To influence news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then, will require a broader movement that can incorporate into it more, even competing, interest groups.

Hayes (2008) is also too satisfied with what it means to be an effective press critic. He argued, for example, that watchdogs are successful when their critique leads to the dismissal or reassignment of a reporter. This change, however, is probably most useful for a guardian interest group that does not have an interest in expanding the range of discourse available to the public, but with restricting it. He also advised monitoring groups to improve journalism by taking the social contract between the public and press as a given, but doing so may actually reinforce dominant and repressive patterns in news media. Unsatisfied with Hayes’ (2008) criteria, I have suggested that we should also consider the ability of dissident media monitors to influence the ideologies of U.S. power that newswriters internalize as they do their newswriting.

The production of substantive changes in news media via systematic monitoring, I suggest, is important when we look at what it means more abstractly. That is, by attempting to redefine newswriters’ professional paradigm in terms of its obligations to

the public, dissidents create tensions for newswriters who, the evidence indicates, begin to see the fault in the incoherent and ideological claims they make in defense of their craft and content. There seems to be a tension in the professional paradigm between service to the public and service to power, so activists can most effectively use the professional paradigm to their advantage by exploiting journalists' view of themselves as servants to the public and keep the pressure on despite newswriters' resort to their favorite axiom.

On the other hand, there is a tension in the professional paradigm between balance and truth, so watchdogs may make contradictory claims about that proper role of journalism and society because when they accept the professional paradigm as a given they are accepting the incoherent claims that journalists make. On the one hand, PMW wanted news organizations to balance pro-Israel and pro-Palestine perspectives, but on the other hand the watchdog wanted news organizations to tell (what it considered) the truth about the conflict by framing the conflict within international law.

In opposition to Hayes (2008), then, I argue that media monitoring groups are most useful not when they accept the professional paradigm as a given or when they accept journalists' definition of that paradigm but when they challenge its use for service to power and argue how it can be defined differently to serve public needs. The professional paradigm, then, is not a "thing" that journalists employ and from which media monitors can note deviations but a malleable process of journalistic work to be contested and refined. While scholars may find academic interest in the role that dissidents play in the newsmaking process and even sympathize with particular dissident

groups, the goal of both media monitors and scholars should not be limited to the pursuit of a single group's interests but directed instead toward the pursuit of a more democratic media system that improves the relationship between the public and the press.

Instead of following Hayes' (2008) advice to accept journalistic professionalism as a given, which is useful as far as it goes in leveraging influence, dissidents might consider rethinking their efforts and join a broad coalition – even composed of issue competitors – to create a more democratic media system.

Indeed, on 25 December 2003 Ahmed Bouzid acknowledged that a pro-Israel watchdog organization approached PMW to suggest a coalition to affect journalistic practice:

Irony of ironies, the action call against the *Inquirer's* double standards prompted Robert Sklaroff, an active member of the Israel-first pressure groups, and the very person who mobilized against the *Inquirer* for their July 31 cartoon, to call PMWATCH and to propose a joint project to pull from under the *Inquirer* their favorite rug: i.e., their tactic of telling each side, "well, if we were so much against you, how come the other side is accusing us of being so much against them?"

Bouzid called it an "interesting idea" but did not pursue it at that time because his interaction with Sklaroff revealed that the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was meeting with pro-Israel groups during a time that it refused to meet with PMW, and PMW quickly sought to remedy that. But if the factors that produce coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are not unique, that is if they are rooted in the concentration of ownership, reliance on official sources, the "hegemony of routines," and deeply rooted ideologies, then alliances like these – the formation of a broad coalition to create a more democratic media – seem important. Without a radical restructuring of media, and without mobilized resistance to

structures of domination, many victories regarding media representations will continue to be short-term, contradictory, and managed. There are, of course, other steps that watchdogs can take to advance their issue frames in the news media. As new media continue to emerge to allow a broader scope of discourses to the public, dissidents can find allies there. On this issue, for example, pro-Arab voices may find allies in Glenn Greenwald, a media critic and constitutional lawyer, who writes daily at Salon.com and is critical of the U.S.-Israel relationship and is invited as a guest on progressive news sites like *Democracy Now!* and mainstream cable shows like MSNBC. Or these groups may seek to create their own news media, which may “seep” into more mainstream news discourse on occasion.

But in terms of media monitoring, Carlson (2009) cautioned that media critics can be a distraction for difficult issues because watchdogs can derail “attempts to hold public conversations about issues” (p. 274) in their attempts to impose pre-existing frames on a news event. This is certainly a serious concern and one expressed by the journalists who were targeted by PMW, but there is no reason why watchdogs should be excluded from the conversation about how to create a more democratic media system or how to create better professional practices. Hayes (2008) argued that watchdogs are good for democracy. They are, but their power to create a more democratic society and media system is limited when they accept the tenets of an undemocratic media system and a professional paradigm that excuses and conceals journalists’ service to power, not people. In short, whereas some have asked whether social movement frames can gain access to news media (Barker-Plummer, 2000), and others under what conditions they do (Noakes

& Wilkins, 2002), this study has contributed to the literature on resistance and helps build the argument that while it does lead to progress, mobilized resistance against representations is limited in its capacity to generate and sustain change. We must ask if resistance against representations without continued struggle against the structures of media domination matters.

If journalism is inadequate to tell the story of the conflict, as Daniel Okrent says it is, then it should be revised until it is adequate. Journalism will remain inadequate when newswriters do not consider the legitimacy of criticisms leveraged by watchdogs but instead resort to their favorite axiom to deflect that criticism and defend its coverage no matter what is produced. Journalism will also remain inadequate if newswriters worry too much about criticisms by searching for some “common language” in an effort to help them avoid the attention of watchdogs. It is odd that newswriters would search for a “common language” to help them avoid criticism by pleasing each side of a sensitive issue for two reasons. First, conflict is an indicator of newsworthiness, so news organizations often deal with “uncommon language.” Second, newswriters themselves admit that they cannot avoid criticism, and still they try. The job of a news organization is not to seek out some “common language” that will help them avoid criticism but to produce coverage that questions and challenges power despite anticipated criticism.

A media monitor is most useful to society when it seeks to improve journalism and its relationship to democracy, not when it narrows its focus to complain about coverage of a singular issue important to it. Watchdogs, then, should help newswriters create a new professional paradigm that creates a real social contract with the public – a

paradigm with real principles that cannot be shoved aside when taking those principles seriously is deemed ideologically threatening – and that cannot be used by newswriters in an attempt to excuse and conceal their service to power. On the bright side, there are newswriters who find this appealing and take seriously their obligations to the public as illustrated in this dissertation by newswriters who wanted to provide more historical context and who noticed ideological patterns in the news but are limited in their ability to do anything about it.

News organizations should take the new social contract seriously, which means taking seriously watchdogs' claims that news organizations have deviated from their social contract. This means that journalists should not be afraid to be criticized. It is not a news organization's job to serve power, so news organizations should produce content that will predictably result in flak from the powerful and lobbies aligned with power; they should not seek the "middle ground" in an attempt to avoid flak. As they admit, they cannot avoid flak anyway, so they should produce coverage that will predictably result in it. If anything, the rise of dissident media monitors may help newswriters realize this. To help avoid headaches that come from distributive action and to improve relations with the public, newswriters should avoid resorting to their favorite axiom to defend their content but meet one-on-one with critics to discuss how better to serve democracy instead. As Mike King (2002) observed, journalists' resort to the axiom is "just a cheap response to valid criticism much of the time."

Study Issues

This study has sought to make claims about the potential of dissident media monitors to affect news media representations and journalistic practices in a way that serves their, and hopefully the public's, interests by examining how one media watchdog, Palestine Media Watch, strategized to influence coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the outcomes of its struggle with media workers. As opposed to studies that examine only news content to examine media representations, this study's methodological strength can be found in its analysis of how those media representations changed over time as a result of PMW's activities. Those representations, that is, are not only the result of media practices but of dissident activities, and the media monitor was somewhat successful in shaping representations of the conflict and the process by which news organizations covered it.

The use of multiple data sets – archives, interviews, and news coverage of the media monitor – and multi-methods – archival research, interviews, and textual analysis – granted a high degree of confidence that these findings are valid. For example, in Chapters Four and Seven I asked the same questions employing different data sets and different methods, and arrived at the same answers, and, analyzing coverage of the media monitor, confirmed many PMW claims made in its archives and found similar patterns of struggle between the watchdog and newswriters.

However, archives are never complete and I did not have access to most activists or the newswriters they targeted. There may have been other examples of PMW's successes that I missed because of this. However, the qualitative research paradigm

suggests that one can have a high degree of confidence that all appropriate data are gathered when the data begin to confirm each other – that is, when nothing new is being learned. Indeed, many interviewees made similar statements as other interviewees and these statements matched what was found in the archives and in news coverage of the watchdog. More data of PMW-media interactions may have nuanced these findings, but may not have contributed much more conceptually.

However, understanding dissident power in the newsmaking process will require an examination of more than just one dissident media monitor, just as Gitlin's (1980) study of one social movement did not end the conversation about media-movement interactions. As I stated in Chapter One, PMW is a "dissident among dissidents," albeit an exemplary monitor, so other dissidents may be able to accomplish more if they are less dissident or less if they are less well-prepared and committed to change. Moreover, there may be alternative strategies that dissident media monitors may pursue that I have not thought of here, so an examination of more media monitors may identify those strategies and analyze how other media-moment interactions affect media representations and practices. Dissidents may also become guardians when geopolitical or sociopolitical winds shift enough to affect their relationship with officials with real power, so any study of social change is limited by time constraints.

This study also brings up several conceptual issues. I have called the legitimation of the manifestations of a group's counter-frame "substantive" modifications of a dominant narrative. They do not change a dominant narrative, but they recolor its interior, which may render the narrative's boundaries more vulnerable at some future

point. There is a pro and con to using the term “substantive” to refer to these types of changes. On the one hand, they are substantive because they represent a change in news media content and practice that have long-term consequences for how the story of the conflict is told and how the news of it is gathered. Thus, they are substantive for one’s political goals because they represent a loss for the other side’s political objectives. If, for example, a pro-Palestine group can convince news organizations to use the term “settlement” or “colony” to refer to illegal Israeli construction on Palestinian land, they have won an important victory that delegitimizes the use of the term ‘neighborhood’ to refer to those same illegal settlements.

On the other hand, substantive changes only recolor the interior of a narrative; they do not, by themselves, corrode the boundaries of the narrative. Moreover, the substantive changes identified in this study occurred at single newspapers and it would take another study to identify whether substantive changes at individual news organizations extended outward to affect the broader public discourse offered by the mainstream U.S. news media. The issue, then, can be put this way: When can a change truly be called substantive? It will take much more than the legitimation of a manifestation of a counter-frame to change the dominant narrative, but substantive losses only create a stronger dominant narrative.

Second, while I have used the terms “guardian” and “dissident” media monitors, there are no doubt degrees of dissidence and guardianship. I pointed out in the introductory chapters that both guardians and dissidents may have interests that converge and diverge with power in different areas, can strategize to align themselves with power

as much as possible, and can make critiques that resonate with journalistic practice, so future researchers might want to explore how “less dissident” or “more dissident” groups can impact coverage. Guardians and dissidents may also exist at either end of the political spectrum, so that liberal-leaning media monitors like Media Matters act as “guardians” against conservative media figures who violate acceptable discursive boundaries (e.g., mobilizing to force the firing of Don Imus after racist remarks) and are not “dissidents” because they do not seek, for example, news practices that try to understand race relations from a more systemic, and less individualistic, perspective. Guardians may also seek too much in their efforts to influence news media, violating acceptable ideological boundaries at the end of the spectrum closest to their position on it and therefore becoming dissident. Besides journalistic autonomy, this may explain why news media workers resist guardian influence as well: At some point, all groups become dissident.

This, then, raises another conceptual point that researchers in this area need to address: Where are the ideological boundaries around an issue and when are they breached? In this study, I have called the dominant narrative that Israeli violence is a defensive response to initial Palestinian violence the “ideological paradigm” that informs coverage of the conflict. Thus, its boundaries are breached when news media, for example, call Palestinian violence a response to Israeli violence, and news media get closer to approaching those boundaries when PMW produced substantive changes that indicated the acceptance of its framework for understanding the conflict.

This narrative is much more vulnerable than the ideologies of U.S. power as it relates to foreign policy and capitalism but still quite flexible and resilient, so it may be the case that these larger meta-boundaries, or what Gitlin (1980) would call the “core hegemonic values” of the U.S., are never breached. Future researchers, then, need to signal what can possibly be breached or not. For example, the premise that capitalism is inherently good and the only possible economic system may be accepted by power and by the news media, but Gans (2004) noted that an “enduring value” that informs newswork is that of “responsible capitalism.” Thus, while power may accept capitalism as unquestionable, newswriters might breach the boundaries of capitalism’s particular shape during a given period when capitalism becomes “irresponsible.” While both political parties adopt neoliberal policies, for example, news media might question neoliberalism itself even though capitalism is not questioned.

This study also raises a few analytical questions. I suggested that possibility that as dissidents organize, they may increase the frequency or intensity with which news media approach or breach ideological boundaries. I, of course, did not measure the frequency or intensity with which news media approach or breach ideological boundaries, but instead examined how one dissident employed two different strategies in its efforts to produce substantive changes that would lead to a paradigmatic change and measured those results by interviewing activists, newswriters, and analyzing the watchdog’s archives and news and trade journal content. Future researchers would also need to interview activists and newswriters but also focus more on content analysis of news in order to measure the frequency and intensity toward ideological breaches, as well as

define what it means to more frequently and intensely approach or breach those boundaries.

Finally, there is a question about the specificity of these findings. As I stated, as different media monitoring strategies and journalistic defense mechanisms interact, they create new conditions of struggle that make future strategic choices logical. Even if newswriters' strategic choices are the same in other dissident-media interactions, the generalizability of this case to other cases may be limited by PMW's perception that pro-Israel groups wielded significant control over the newsmaking process. That is, other groups may confront newswriters' axiom but not take it seriously because they may not perceive that a competitor has significant influence over the newsmaking process and therefore not abandon systematic monitoring or another strategy. How other movements struggle to overcome journalistic defense mechanisms like this axiom and their ability or inability to do so will yield further clues about dissident media monitoring power in the newsmaking process and is a worthwhile pursuit for future research. On the other hand, however, this study helps us understand with more clarity the "rules" that govern journalistic work by extracting from these findings insight into what constitutes a "journalistically useful" criticism and the "social contract" that exists between public and press, and gives further insight into the flexibility and resilience of the professional paradigm and the ideologies of power that newswriters accept as they accomplish their daily work.

This study gives the field a more expanded view of the factors that need to be considered in the newsmaking and meaning-making process, and serves as an antidote to

research that considers movements hapless cogs without any agency in the newsmaking process. Dissidents can strategize to successfully change news media representations, although they can do so within fairly restricted limits. It is up to future researchers to understand where dissidents can affect coverage within those limits and even push back those limits.

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