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Audience reactions to peace journalism: How supporters and critics of the Israeli policy process escalation and de-escalation oriented media frames¹

Kurzfassung: Der vorliegende Aufsatz berichtet über ein Experiment, das den israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt als natürliches Laboratorium für die Untersuchung verwendet, wie eskalations- und deeskalationsorientierte Zeitungsnachrichten von den Rezipienten verstanden werden. Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass Medienframes und individuelle Frames sowohl direkte Effekte als auch komplexe Interaktionseffekte auf das Textverständnis zeitigen. Insbesondere verschwindet der Effekt von Medien-War-Frames, wenn diese mit den individuellen Frames der Probanden unvereinbar sind, und die Propagandafunktion von Berichten über Gewalt und menschliche Opfer kann neutralisiert werden, wenn sie in einem Peace-Frame dargestellt werden. Wenn sich die Probanden bereits a priori zugunsten der Täterseite positioniert hatten, können sie jedoch Reaktanz erzeugen.

Abstract: This paper reports on an experiment that uses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a natural laboratory for studying how recipients make sense of escalation vs. de-escalation oriented news articles. The results of the study indicate that media frames and individual frames have both a direct effect and complex interaction effects on participants' text understanding. Particularly the effect of media war frames diminishes if they are incongruent with participants' individual frames, and the propaganda function of reports about violence and human casualties can be neutralized if framed according to a peace frame. If participants had a priori positioned themselves in favor of the perpetrator, they may produce reactance, however.

1. Introduction

1.1 Models of peace journalism

Despite the countless studies that critically examine the exploitation of the media for war propaganda, it was only toward the end of the Twentieth Century that peace researchers, media scholars and journalists focused their attention on the question of how the media could be used as a catalyst for conflict transformation and constructive conflict resolution. In order to accomplish this, models of peace journalism (PJ) concentrate on two processes by which the media contribute to the social construction of reality: agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw 1972) and framing (Goffman 1974).

Agenda setting theory deals with the question of which topics are introduced into public discourse, and attributes the influence of the media to decisions about which stories are newsworthy and what importance and how much space should be assigned to them. Since prominent news factors – like simplification, negativism, personalization, and elite orientations – contribute to the escalation prone bias of traditional war reporting (cf. Galtung 2002), it is above all the news selection process that Galtung places at the center of his PJ-model which confronts traditional war reporting with an alternative form of conflict and peace coverage that is guided by a general win-win orientation, gives voice to all parties, exposes falsehoods on all sides, identifies all evil-doers, highlights peace initiatives and focuses on creatively dealing with conflict and on people as peacemakers, etc.

Framing means "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 1993, 52). Depending on how it is framed, the same situation can be placed in a completely different light.

According to Deutsch (1973), the escalation dynamics of conflicts are decisively influenced by whether a conflict is interpreted as a competitive or a cooperative process. Competitive conflicts have a tendency to expand and escalate and go together with typical misperceptions that become a motor of conflict escalation. Such perceptual distortions are found on all sides of conflicts, and particularly in long-lasting intractable conflicts they use to harden into societal beliefs that include, among others, belief in the justice of one's own cause and one's own victim status, the delegitimization of the enemy, and belief in maintaining personal and national security through a policy of strength (Bar-Tal 1998). Furthermore, virtually everyone who tries to make sense of an escalated conflict will do so in one of two ways. He may either adopt a *war frame* that endorses the beliefs of one of the parties, or he may try to understand the conflict according to a *peace frame* that overcomes these perceptual distortions and accepts the justification (of at least some) of the opposing side's demands, recognizes shared victim roles, refrains from delegitimizing the opponent and has confidence in achieving personal and national security through a peace solution (Kempf 2011).

Consequently, it is this cognitive-emotional framework that Kempf (2003) placed at the center of his PJ-model, which con-

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trasts escalation oriented media war frames with an alternative framing that is de-escalation oriented with respect to each of the five dimensions: conceptualizing the conflict (win-win vs. win-lose), assessment of the conflict parties' rights and aims (balance vs. antagonism), evaluation of their actions and behavior (cooperation vs. confrontation), emotional involvement in the conflict (constructive vs. destructive emotions) and incentives for social identification (cooperative vs. confrontational social commitment).

During the years since Galtung (1998) and Kempf (1996) published the first drafts of their PJ-models, the very concept of peace journalism has entailed a large body of empirical research and theoretical debate. Two of the critical arguments arising from this are relevant for the present paper. (1) The criticism that "the mainstream media can ill afford to abandon news values, as this would jeopardize the economic base on which they are forced to operate" (Hanitzsch 2007, 5) and (2) the speculation that the concept of peace journalism is based on the obsolete assumption of strong, causal and linear media effects (Hanitzsch 2004, 186).

Both these viewpoints have been challenged by a number of empirical and experimental studies, whose results speak in favor of peace journalism and constructive conflict coverage.

1.2 Audience acceptance of de-escalation oriented framing

Even if one assumes that news factors are "selection structures of public communication whose scope includes not only journalism, but also its public" (Hanitzsch 2004, 188), this does not imply that news factors are rigid entities that cannot be changed or undermined. Empirical studies indicate that both the media and the public are much more flexible than news factors theory claims. Content analyses of news coverage on the Middle East conflict during the Oslo Process (Annabring 2000, Kempf 2003) and of German press coverage of France after the Second World War (Jaeger 2004, 2005, 2009) have shown that news factors like simplification, negativism and personalization are dealt with by the media in quite flexible ways. Also in its preferences the public is much less oriented to news factors than is commonly assumed. Thus Wolling (2002) found that information quality is an essential factor for the evaluation of news coverage programs, and as Eilders (1997) has shown, the more political knowledge readers have, the less they will be influenced by traditional news factors. The better informed they are, the more they will have formed their own views about which aspects of an issue are relevant to them.

More directly related to the PJ-project, a series of experimental studies has demonstrated that traditional escalation oriented conflict coverage is in fact *not* better suited to awakening reader interest, but rather de-escalation oriented peace journalism has the same potential. Peace journalism *does* have a public, and recipients are more competent and more interested in differentiated conflict representation than is commonly assumed.

- Although the findings of Bläsi et al. (2005) and Sparr (2004) indicate that traditional news factors like negativity and personalization do have an effect on readers' interest in further information, they also show that this effect is not homogeneous, but depends on the complexity of the articles. Simplification has no news value of its own, quite to the contrary, and more complex reporting can attract audience interest even for issues which – in terms of traditional news factors – have less news value (Kempf 2005, Möckel 2009).
- As regards the evaluation of the articles as comprehensible, unbiased, balanced and impartial, etc., de-escalation oriented articles were never accepted less than the other text versions (Bläsi et al. 2005, Sparr 2004, Kempf 2008, Möckel 2009, Schaefer 2006, Stuntebeck 2007, Kempf & Thiel 2012)¹. In most of the experiments (Bläsi et al. 2005, Schaefer 2006, Stuntebeck 2007, Kempf & Thiel 2012), de-escalation oriented texts were even better accepted, and Bläsi et al. (2005) found that lack of interest, in combination with a negative evaluation of the articles, decreased steadily the less escalation oriented and the more de-escalation oriented the articles were.

Experimenting with different types of media and presenting differently framed news stories about a variety of conflicts to various types of audiences (cf. table 1), these experiments also reveal certain limitations that PJ should take into account.

- The acceptance of de-escalation oriented news articles is greater if they refrain from interpreting the situation within a radically reversed framework (Bläsi et al. 2005, Kempf 2005). Editorializing articles that are not limited to a de-escalation oriented frame, but rather explicitly argue against the mainstream framing, are regarded as more partisan than articles which follow this line (Jackson 2006).
- Whether de-escalation oriented media frames are accepted depends on the nature of the audience as well: A difference in the acceptance of the various text versions was *not* found among the readership of provincial papers (Sparr 2004), which is generally less interested in the topic (Kempf 2005), and Schaefer (2006) found a significant interaction

1. The experiments by Peleg & Alimi (2005), Haack (2007) and Nerad (2009) did not include an evaluation of the articles, and the experiment by Jackson (2006) did not use articles that apply a de-escalation oriented media frame.

between gender and the text version. Women are more likely than men to accept de-escalation oriented articles, and men are more likely than women to accept escalation oriented articles.

- Media frames incompatible with recipients' individual frames are rejected as less comprehensible, more biased and less impartial. The stronger their position in favor of one of the parties, the more recipients tend to regard even media peace frames as partisan, and the more they position themselves in favor of one side, the more they regard reports about this side's violence as biased in favor of the opponent (Kempf & Thiel 2012).

Authors	Bläsi et al. (2005) Annabring et al. (2005)	Sparr (2004) Kempf (2005)
Conflict context	Yugoslavia after the fall of Milošević	
Issues	1. Violent conflict in Southern Serbia 2. Handover of Milošević	
	3. State contract Serbia-Montenegro	3. Kostunica's offer of dialogue to Rugova
Type of media	Quality press	Regional press
Text genre	News articles	
Average text length	453 words	230 words
Text versions (frames)	1. Escalation oriented 2. Original text (moderately escalation oriented) 3. Moderately de-escalation oriented	
	4. More determinedly de-escalation oriented	4. Escalation oriented with reversed partiality (pro Serbia)
Targeted audience	Readership of the German quality press	Readership of an Austrian provincial paper
Sample size	384	378
Authors	Schaefer (2006)	Jackson (2006)
Conflict context	War on terror	
Issues	Terrorist attacks by 1. Al Quaida in NY and Madrid 2. The Indonesian army in East Timor 3. The Aum sect in Tokyo	History of the conflict between Russia and Chechnya
Type of media	Quality press	
Text genre	Commentaries	Background articles
Average text length	1155 words	695 words
Text versions (frames)	1. Escalation oriented, in favour of military measures 2. De-escalation oriented, against military measures	
		1. Neutral text 2. Same text, enhanced by elements of moral disengagement 3. Same text, enhanced by arguments against moral disengagement
Targeted audience	German students	
Sample size	163	132
Authors	Peleg & Alimi (2005)	Kempf (2008)
Conflict context	Israeli-Palestinian conflict	
Issues	Ratification of the Road Map by the Israeli government	
Type of media	Quality press	
Text genre	News articles	
Average text length	319 words	338 words
Text versions (frames)	1. Neutral 2. Focus on pro Palestinian state contents 3. Focus on contra Palestinian state contents	
Targeted audience	Israeli students	German students
Sample size	26	227

Table 1: Experimental studies on the acceptance and effects of peace journalism and de-escalation oriented conflict coverage (part 1)

Authors	Möckel (2009)	Kempf & Thiel (2012)
Conflict context	Israeli-Palestinian conflict	
Issues	Outbreaks of violence and attempts to reanimate the peace process during the Second Intifada	1. Palestinian Suicide attack in Tel Aviv 2. Israeli military operation "Hot Winter" in Gaza
Type of media	TV news	Quality press
Text genre	Feature	News articles with illustration and caption
Average text length	2:39 minutes	616 words
Text versions (frames)	1. War journalistic framing as defined by Galtung 2. Peace journalistic framing as defined by Galtung	1. De-escalation oriented peace frame 2. Pro Israeli war frame 3. Pro-Palestinian war frame
Targeted audience	German students and adults	German population
Sample size	146	394
Authors	Haack (2007)	Stuntebeck (2007, 2009)
Conflict context	Foreign deployment of the German military	
Issues	Fictitious extension of the UNIFIL mandate in Lebanon	Misbehaviour of German soldiers in Afghanistan (so-called "Skull-scandal")
Type of media	Quality press	
Text genre	News articles with illustration and caption	
Average text length	503 words	393 words
Text versions (frames)	1. Responsibility frame, in favour of foreign deployment 2. Risk frame, against foreign deployment of the German military 3. Neutral frame	—
Targeted audience	German students	
Sample size	799	267
Authors	Nerad (2009)	
Conflict context	Integration of Muslim immigrants in Germany	
Issues	Planned construction of a mosque in Munich	
Type of media	Quality press	
Text genre	News articles	
Average text length	441 words	
Text versions (frames)	1. Win-win frame 2. Win-lose frame	
Targeted audience	German secondary school pupils	
Sample size	336	

Table 1: Experimental studies on the acceptance and effects of peace journalism and de-escalation oriented conflict coverage (part 2)

1.3 Effects on participants' attitudes and cognition

According to the present state of media effects research, the audience is no passive receiver of information, but rather a "final arbiter, who chooses which of the available considerations are relevant and who decides how important each consideration should be" (Kinder 2003, 378). From this we should not conclude that peace journalism is condemned to be ineffective, but rather that we need an exact study of the conditions and factors under which it becomes effective. The experiments outlined in table 2 are a first step in this direction.

Experiments by Peleg & Alimi (2005) and Annabring et al. (2005) have shown a definite effect of a peace journalistic framing on short-term memory and text comprehension, as well as on the manner in which recipients interpret the reported issues.

- Peleg & Alimi (2005) presented three groups of Israeli students with differently framed news articles about the ratification of the Road Map by the Israeli government: an (unstructured) neutral article, and two structured articles that

accentuated either contents that speak in favor of or respectively against the creation of a Palestinian state. They found that participants who read a structured text recalled more items than those who read a non-structured text, and participants who read a pro-state text recalled more pro-state items, while participants who read an anti-state text recalled more anti-state items. Moreover, the structured text readers categorized the items in a more concise and concentrated fashion, and structured frames favoring a Palestinian state led to a more consistent understanding of the text than the other text versions.

- Annabring et al. (2005) presented four groups of participants with differently framed news articles about conflict events in former Yugoslavia after the fall of Milosevic and measured how participants made sense of the articles through a content analysis of essays in which they depicted the respective events in their own words. The results show that appreciation of the new beginning in Serbia, an unbiased assessment of present Serbian positions and appreciation of democratic change in Serbia were found most frequently among participants who had read a de-escalation oriented article; it was least frequent when the article was escalation oriented, and its frequency increased steadily the more de-escalation oriented the article was. On the other hand, criticism of the Serbian past, a continuation of the old enemy image and a refusal to acknowledge democratic change were found most frequently among participants who read an escalation oriented article. Criticism of the Serbian past and the persistence of the old enemy image were also least frequent when the article was de-escalation oriented, and their frequency decreased steadily the less escalation oriented the article was.

Authors	Bläsi et al. (2005) Annabring et al. (2005)	Sparr (2004) Kempf (2005)
Design	Post-test comparison of experimental groups	None
Focus	Effects of media frames on recipients' a posteriori framing of the reported events	None
Measurement instruments	Content analysis of essays	None
Methods of data aggregation	Construction of typical response patterns via LCA	None
Authors	Schaefer (2006)	Jackson (2006)
Design	Post-test comparison of experimental groups	Repeated measurement
Focus	Effects of media frames on recipients' 1. Tendency to moral disengagement 2. Approval of concrete military measures	—
Measurement instruments	1. Terrorism scale 2. Attitude scale (4 items)	—
Methods of data aggregation	1. Score construction 2. Score construction	—
Authors	Peleg & Alimi (2005)	Kempf (2008)
Design	Post-test comparison of experimental groups	Repeated measurement
Focus	Effects of media frames on recipients' 1. Short term memory 2. Comprehension 3. Threat perception	Effects of media frames and recipients' a priori mental models on their a posteriori evaluation, whether 1. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essentially religious 2. A continuous Palestinian territory is a threat to Israel
Measurement instruments	1. Memory test 2. Categorization test 3. Meaning test	Paired items
Methods of data aggregation	1. Number of recalled items 2. Co-occurencies matrices 3. Cross-tabulation	Item score differences and construction of typical response patterns via LCA

Table 2: Measurement of the effects of peace journalism and de-escalation oriented conflict coverage (part 1)

With regard to the influence of peace frames on the attitudes of recipients, the results are uneven, and a positive framing effect could only be shown in studies by Peleg & Alimi (2005), Schaefer (2006) and Haack (2007), but not in studies by Jackson (2007), Möckel (2009), Kempf (2008) and Nerad (2009).

- Peleg & Alimi (2005) found that the majority of the participants who had read a pro-state text were afterwards divided between "approval" and "approval/disapproval" of the statement that "a Palestinian territorial continuity is *not* an existential threat to Israel", while "disapproval" dominated among those participants who had read an anti-state text.
- Schaefer (2006) presented two groups of participants with differently framed commentaries about terrorist attacks, and found that de-escalation oriented texts induced a lesser tendency to moral disengagement (Bandura 1986, 1990) and less acceptance of concrete military measures.
- Haack (2007) presented three groups of students with differently framed news stories about a fictitious extension of the UNIFIL mandate in Lebanon and found that risk framing (against foreign deployment of the German military) reduced participants' support.

Authors	Möckel (2009)	Thiel & Kempf (present study)
Design	Post-test comparison of experimental groups	Post-test comparison of experimental groups
Focus	Effects of media frames on recipients' tendency to moral disengagement	Effects of media frames and recipients' a priori mental models on their a posteriori framing of the reported events
Measurement instruments	Terrorism scale	Content analysis of essays
Methods of data aggregation	Score construction	Construction of typical response patterns via LCA
Authors	Haack (2007)	Stuntebeck (2007, 2009)
Design	Post-test comparison of experimental groups	Repeated measurement
Focus	Effects of framing on a posteriori attitudes toward foreign deployment of the German military 1. In the specific case 2. More generally	Effects of framing and a priori mental models on a posteriori attitudes toward foreign deployment of the German military
Measurement instruments	1. Single item. 2. Attitude scale	Paired items
Methods of data aggregation	1. Item-scores 2. Score construction	Item score differences and construction of typical response patterns via LCA
Authors	Nerad (2009)	
Design	Repeated measurement	
Focus	Effects of media frames and recipients' a priori mental models on their a posteriori 1. criminality threat perception, and 2. social disturbances threat perception	
Measurement instruments	Paired items	
Methods of data aggregation	Item score differences	

Table 2: Measurement of the effects of peace journalism and de-escalation oriented conflict coverage (part 2)

Other experiments have shown that already news selection has an influence on the conflict perception and/or on the conflict-relevant attitudes of the recipients, and to be sure dependent on recipients' *a priori* attitudes and/or the mental models (individual frames) according to which they interpret the conflict, and independent of the respective media frames.

- Stuntebeck (2009) presented two groups of students with differently framed news articles about serious misconduct on the part of German soldiers in Afghanistan (so-called "Skull-scandal") and found a negative shift in their attitudes toward the foreign deployment of the German military after they had read the article; and
- Jackson (2007) found a steady decline in moral disengagement after she presented three groups of students with differently framed background articles about the history of the conflict between Russia and Chechnya.

The assumption that these effects are due to a dominant peace orientation among German students is supported by the absence of any framing effects in Jackson's (2007) study, and by Stuntebeck's (2009) results. According to the latter study, participants who were presented with a responsibility frame (in favor of foreign deployment) changed their attitudes even more in a negative direction than those who were presented with a risk frame (against foreign deployment of the German military). The results of Haack (2007), Kempf (2008), Möckel (2009) and Nerad (2009) also support the assumption that framing effects are limited by participants' *a priori* attitudes:

- Haack (2007) found that a 'responsibility' framing (in favor of foreign deployment of the German military) was largely ineffective and did not lead to higher support rates.

- A repetition of Peleg & Alimi's (2005) experiment with German students (Kempf 2008) did not find a framing effect on participants' assessment of whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was essentially religious and/or whether a continuous Palestinian territory was an essential threat to Israel.
- Möckel (2009) presented two groups of participants with Lynch & McGoldrick's (2004) paradigmatic (war- vs. peace journalism) TV features on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and found no framing effect of the film versions on participants' moral disengagement; and also
- Nerad (2009), who presented two groups of secondary school pupils with differently framed news articles about the planned construction of a mosque in Munich, found no general effect of win-win vs. win-lose framing on the degree to which participants perceived Muslim immigrants as a threat.

The conjecture that the limitation and/or lack of framing effects in the studies by Haack (2007), Jackson (2007), Möckel (2009), and Stuntebeck (2009) was due to a dominant peace orientation among German participants is derived from Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance and based on the assumption that recipients may devalue, suppress or reject issues and frames that are inconsistent with their *a priori* mental models (Kempf 2008). Since these experiments did not measure participants' peace orientation and its interaction with the news stories they had read, the assumption nonetheless remains somewhat speculative. However, empirical evidence for the effects of participants' mental models is provided by the results of Kempf's (2008) and Nerad's (2009) experiments.

- Kempf (2008) captured participants' *a priori* mental models of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict via typical response patterns to the questions of (1) whether the conflict can only be resolved by a political settlement, and (2) whether Palestinians are (in)capable of managing their own affairs. He found a decisive effect, which was independent of the respective media frame, however. After reading an article about the ratification of the Road Map by the Israeli government, participants' agreement with interpreting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as essentially religious decreased, and their assessment of Palestinian territorial continuity as *no threat* to Israel increased, particularly among those participants who interpreted the conflict within a de-escalation oriented mental model.
- Nerad (2009) also found a clear and frame-independent effect of participants' *a priori* mental models on how they changed their immigration-related threat perception after they read an article about the planned construction of a mosque in Munich. Assessing participants' mental models via a selection of items from van Dick et al.'s (1997) acculturation-scale, Nerad found that the perceived threat increased among participants with a low acculturation-score (which speaks for an assimilation/segregation model), while it decreased among participants with a high acculturation-score (which speaks for an integration-model).

Summarizing these results, it seems that the selection of news has a stronger effect on recipients' attitudes than their framing. Merely devoting attention to a topic can be enough to bring about an (at least short-term) change in attitude (Jackson 2007, Kempf 2008, Stuntebeck 2009, Nerad 2009), which is, however, largely independent of the media frame and is instead dependent on recipients' *a priori* mental models (Kempf 2008, Nerad 2009). An effect in the direction of the media frames could, however, only be found by Peleg & Alimi (2005) and Schaefer (2006), as well as also by Haack (2007), but only when the media frame was congruent with the recipients' (suspected) previous attitudes and biases. However, if it is incompatible with the participants' actual (Kempf 2008, Nerad, 2009) or suspected (Haack 2007, Jackson 2007, Möckel 2009, Stuntebeck 2009) attitudes and biases (or prejudices), it remains either ineffective or even causes a contrary effect (Stuntebeck 2009).

1.4 Towards a theory of media effects

An explanation of these results is provided by Kempf's (2008) theoretical model, according to which short-term media effects are due to the (selective) activation of the *a priori* mental models according to which recipients interpret the respective conflict.

The concept of mental model, which is rather infrequently used in media effects research, originally stems from cognitive psychology and was first used by Kenneth Craik (1943) in his book *The Nature of Explanation*. According to van Dijk & Kintsch (1983), mental models are dynamic representations of situations, events or objects which offer a cognitive-emotional interpretation frame (Kempf 2008) that functions to assimilate, organize and understand information in detail, take social judgments, make predictions and draw conclusions, or to describe and explain how a system operates (Stuntebeck 2009).

According to Kempf (2008), the mental models with which participants make sense of a conflict have both an emotional and a cognitive component. The emotional component is constituted by participants' *concern* about the conflict, and their sensitivity for the *ambivalence* of its prospects. The cognitive component is constituted by the frame according to which the conflict is interpreted and manifests itself in the way participants *position* themselves to the conflict. In many cases, there is not just one mental model available to the recipients, however, but rather there are competing mental models

according to which the context of information can be organized (Kempf 2008, Nerad 2009, Stuntebeck 2009). The influence of political news on the recipients' conflict perception can then be understood as a two-step process. In a first step, the media frame guides which mental model is actualized. In a second step the information is integrated into this model and aligned with existing attitudes (Haider-Markel & Joslyn 2001, Nerad 2009, Stuntebeck 2009), whereby also the model itself undergoes a gradual modification (Kempf 2008).

Since recipients do not always have a mental model of a given conflict, media effects are not only dependent on their having a particular kind of mental model, however, but also on whether they have any such a model at all. When just one mental model is available to them, (positive) framing effects will occur if the media frame is compatible with recipients' individual frame (i.e., the way they position themselves to the conflict), while otherwise the media frame will be either ineffective or even produce a negative effect (in the direction contrary to the media frame). If competing mental models are available to the recipients, the media frame will activate the model that is in accord with the media frame and produce a positive effect (in the direction of the media frame).

Even though the assumption of framing effects of single news stories on recipients' attitudes is implausible, it can nevertheless be expected that – in the long run – peace journalism will have an effect on recipients' attitudes towards the respective conflict (and maybe even towards conflicts in general). As experiments by Annabring et al. (2005) and Peleg & Alimi (2005) have demonstrated, media frames have a clear positive effect on recipients' text comprehension, and since it is not the information provided by the text but the sense that recipients make of it, which is integrated into their mental models, it can be assumed that a consistent peace framing will gradually transform their mental models in the same direction.

Neither of these experiments controlled for participants' *a priori* mental models, however, and despite the extensive literature on influencing factors (cf. Dahinden 2006) the way how media frames and individual frames interact in the process of meaning making still needs further research. Contributing to fill this gap is the aim of the present article, which uses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a natural laboratory for studying the complex interplay between media contents and media frames and recipients' mental models in the broader context of the mainstream media landscape and the societal climate. For a study of German participants the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is particularly suitable, not only because of its media presence over several decades, but also because, as does scarcely any other conflict, it challenges the German public to take a position.

In the center of our study, which uses data from the same experiment as Kempf & Thiel (2012), is the question of how escalation- vs. de-escalation oriented media frames, on one hand, and individual frames (*a priori* mental models), on the other, have effects on the understanding of newspaper reports on Israeli vs. Palestinian violence with Palestinian vs. Israeli victims and bring about an escalation- vs. de-escalation oriented understanding of the reported events. In order to measure the participant's text understanding, we used the method of Annabring et al. (2005), who asked their participants to read a newspaper article and then write essays describing the reported events in their own words. These essays were then content-analyzed in regard to escalation- vs. de-escalation oriented aspects.

How German participants make sense of news articles about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be understood without taking into account Germany's mainstream media landscape and societal climate. More than 60 years after the Holocaust, there is still a notable potential for anti-Semitic attitudes in Germany (cf. Deutscher Bundestag 2011, Kempf 2013), and even for those who have learned the World War II lesson of "never again fascism, never again war", this lesson is quite ambivalent with regard to positioning oneself to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While "never again war" implies a tendency toward adopting a peace frame, "never again fascism" can be interpreted in two ways; (1) as support for the *victims of National Socialism*, which implies a tendency toward unconditional solidarity with Israeli policy and a weakening of the peace frame, and (2) as support for *human rights worldwide*, which implies a tendency to refrain from supporting at least some aspects of Israeli policy and includes expressing solidarity with the Israeli peace movement and at least a certain degree of empathy with the Palestinian side. Although this implies strengthening the peace frame, it creates the dangers of shifting to a war frame and siding with the Palestinians (Kempf 2011a).

Using a slightly modified version of Kempf's (2011b) positioning scale, the results of the *Anti-Semitism and the Criticism of Israel* (ASCI) survey (Kempf 2013) reveal that this ambivalence is real: A majority of Germans are critical of Israeli policies, and both pacifism and human rights orientation play a constitutive role for the way they position themselves to the conflict. Although a relatively large group of participants (15.4% of the representative quota sample) took no position at all, the overwhelming majority (45.1%) interpreted the conflict in a peace frame with a partly pro-Israeli (12.1%) and a partly pro-Palestinian tendency (33%). A large group (20.8%) interpreted the conflict in a pro-Palestinian frame that is already very clearly polarized and so-to-speak "on the edge of a war frame". Pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian hardliners who interpret the conflict in a war frame were, with 9.8% and respectively 8.7%, approximately equally large minorities. With the exception of the pro-Israeli hardliners, all these groups (even those who sympathize with Israel) share the view that the aim of Israeli

policy is the continued oppression and disenfranchisement of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, they condemn Palestinian terror attacks (almost throughout) more severely than Israeli military operations. The latter are condemned more strongly only by pro-Palestinian hardliners, but they also do not justify terror attacks.

In contrast to German public opinion, which is predominantly critical of Israeli policies, criticism of Israel is often branded by politicians and the media as anti-Semitic,¹ whereby a public climate arises that creates a certain reserve with regard to remarks critical of Israel. This also has effects on the mainstream coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the German press which counteracts a reporting situation unfavorable to Israel with framing supportive of Israel (cf. Maurer & Kempf 2011, Gaisbauer 2012), while at the same time, however, positions critical of Israel are suggested by accompanying photographs that make Israel appear overly powerful (Hagemann 2011).

In connection with the recurring stereotypical reports on Palestinian or Israeli violence and Israeli or Palestinian victims this contradiction can lead to satiation on the basis of which the reports tend rather to cause annoyance (hypothesis 1), part of the audience does not even think about the relevant news items (hypothesis 2) and/or it refrains from forming its own opinion about the reported events (hypothesis 3).

If they think about the newspaper articles and attempt to understand them, it can be expected on the basis of the results of the ASCI survey that a relevant group of German recipients is peace-oriented and avoids an escalation oriented interpretation of the reported events in favor of a de-escalation oriented understanding (hypothesis 4).

Among those recipients whose interpretation of the events is escalation oriented, partisanship for Israel will be less commonly found than partisanship for the Palestinians (hypothesis 5), whereby, however, because of the above-named reserve, as a long-term effect of mainstream reportage and also as a result of the ambivalence of the World War II lesson we can expect that a pro-Palestinian interpretation will be less radical and contain fewer anti-Israeli moments than conversely (hypothesis 6).

This expectation is also supported by the fact that critique of Israel is only accompanied with anti-Semitic attitudes among a minority of the Germans and is qualified among the majority by a human rights commitment (Kempf 2012a). Results of the ASCI survey indicate that a human rights commitment reduces anti-Semitic as well as anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic attitudes and exerts pressure to take a position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Why participants tend rather to position themselves according to a pro-Palestinian than according to a pro-Israeli frame is *not* a function of their human rights orientation *per se*, however. It is the interaction between participants' human rights orientation and their beliefs about whether Israeli policy aims at the continued oppression and disenfranchisement of the Palestinians that determines the direction of partisanship (Kempf 2014).

Taking this into account, we assume that both media frames (hypothesis 7) and individual frames (hypothesis 8) have a direct effect on how participants interpret the depicted issues. These effects are not linear-additive, however, and particularly the effect of media war frames diminishes if they are incompatible with participants' individual frames (hypothesis 9).

If participants do not have an *a priori* mental model of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the other hand, their ability to make sense of the articles they read will be limited (hypothesis 10).

Due to recipients' sensitivity to the propaganda function of reports about violence and its victims (Kempf & Thiel 2012), we further assume that the effect of the scenario depicted in the articles (Israeli vs. Palestinian violence) will be limited: Since the majority of Germans are more negative about Palestinian attacks than about Israeli military operations, we assume that the propaganda effect of reports about Israeli violence will be weaker and result in less escalation oriented framing of the essays (hypothesis 11).

Nonetheless, the propaganda effect of reports about violence should be highly visible: it reduces partisanship for the perpetrator and promotes a text understanding in favor of the victim side, especially when the participants have already *a priori* positioned themselves in their favor, and the media frame has the same bias (hypothesis 12).

If recipients' *a priori* positioning in favor of a conflict party is reinforced by a similarly oriented media frame, reports on the victimization of the opponent remain ineffective, however. Instead, the recipients continue to interpret the article in the sense of their *a priori* positioning (hypothesis 13).

If recipients' *a priori* positioning in favor of a conflict party is reinforced by reports on the victimization of this party, deviant media frames (ones incompatible with the *a priori* positioning) remain ineffective. Instead, the recipients interpret the article *a fortiori* in the sense of their *a priori* positioning (hypothesis 14).

1. The parliamentary debate on the alleged anti-Semitism of the small leftist political party Die Linke (cf. Melzer 2011), the media uproar on the (doubtlessly quite naive) poem by Günther Grass (cf. Krell & Müller 2012) and the debate over Jakob Augstein, the publisher of the leftist weekly newspaper *Der Freitag*, are dramatic examples of this.

2. Method

2.1 Experimental design

After filling in a pre-test questionnaire, $n = 394$ participants were randomly assigned to six experimental groups which differed neither with respect to participants' age, nor with respect to gender, religious affiliation, educational level, or with respect to the participants' human rights orientation, pacifistic attitudes, concern about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, knowledge about the conflict, sensitivity for the ambivalence of war and peace and/or positioning to the conflict (cf. Kempf & Thiel 2012).

Each of the experimental groups read a news article that reported about either an April 2006 Palestinian suicide attack in Tel Aviv, or an Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip at the end of February/beginning of March 2008, and each of these scenarios was framed either (1) according to an escalation oriented pro-Israeli war frame, (2) according to an escalation oriented pro-Palestinian war frame, or (3) according to a de-escalation oriented peace frame which focuses on the burdens of war for both parties (cf. table 3).

Frame	Partisanship	Scenario	
		Palestinian terror attack / Israeli victims	Israeli military operation / Palestinian victims
War frame	Pro-Israeli	"Suicide Attack: Terror Shakes Tel Aviv"	"Offensive in Gaza: Israel Cracks Down on Constant Fire by Militant Palestinians"
	Pro-Palestinian	"Suicide Attack in Tel Aviv: Israel Announces Retaliation"	"Gaza: Israel Kills Dozens of Palestinians: Peace Talks Canceled"
Peace frame	Neutral	"Suicide Attack Shakes Tel Aviv"	"Gaza Strip: Dozens of Dead and Injured in Battles"

Table 3: Scenarios, frames and partisanship of the news articles (from Kempf & Thiel 2012)

The articles were composed of original quotations taken from the German quality press, and the framing of the articles was constructed according to Kempf's (2003) model of escalation versus de-escalation oriented conflict coverage. A content analysis of the articles ensured the comparability of the frames in regard to their escalation and/or de-escalation orientation, and their empirical evaluation by means of the text assessment scale ensured that they did not differ in regard to their ability to stimulate interest in further information, nor did they differ with respect to their evaluation as reasonably informative, interesting, credible, comprehensible and well-balanced (cf. Thiel 2011).

After reading the articles, participants were asked to evaluate them on a slightly modified version of the text assessment scale by Bläsi et al. (2005), and to write an essay on their own view of the events reported in the article.

The instructions for participants' *essays* read as follows:

Now please try to describe the events you have just read about and their background from your own viewpoint. Take into account thereby especially the aspects of this conflict that appear important to you. If there is not enough space, you can continue writing on the next page.

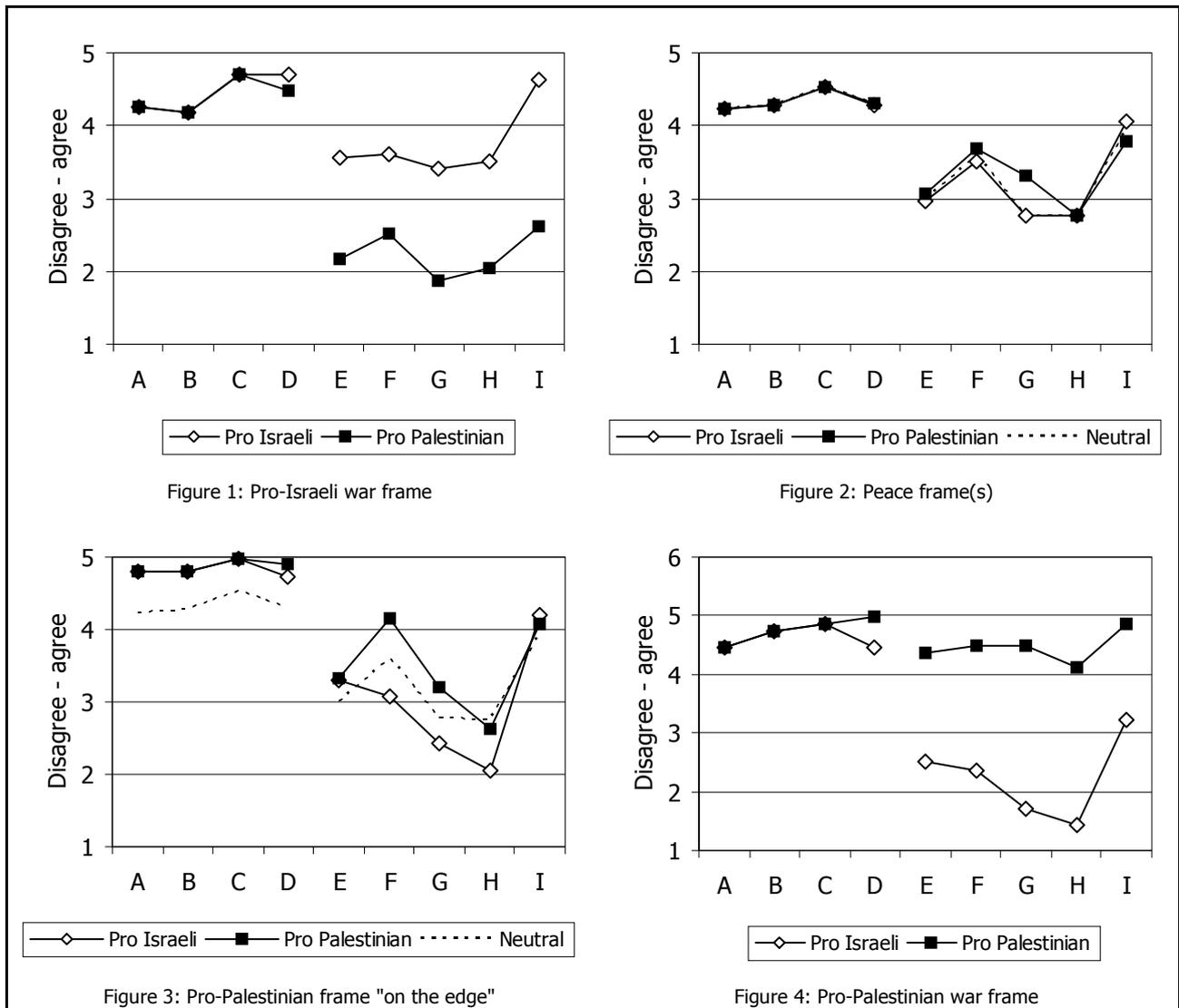
In order to control for anti-Semitic, anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic attitudes, the post-test also included the scales AP (Devaluation of Palestinians), IK (Demonizing Islam) and MA1 (Dislike of Jews) from the ASCI survey (Kempf 2013).

2.2 Individual frames

In order to reconstruct the *a priori* individual frames according to which participants interpret the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the pre-test included the *Positioning-Scale* (POSI) of the ASCI survey (Kempf 2013), which classifies participants into nine classes according to the way they make sense of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- Three of these classes are not sufficiently familiar with the conflict to be able to form an opinion. These classes are made up of participants who neither agree nor disagree with the statements in the items (class 9), who mainly respond in the "Don't know" category (class 8), and/or who mainly do not respond to the items at all (class 7).
- Three classes interpret the conflict according to a peace frame that is not completely neutral, however, but displays sympathy either for Israel (class 6) or for the Palestinians (class 2) and/or puts the blame on Israel (class 4).
- Two classes interpret the conflict according to either a pro-Israeli (class 5) or a pro-Palestinian war frame (class 3), and another class interprets it according to a pro-Palestinian frame that is close to the edge of a war frame (class 1).

For the purpose of the present study we aggregated these nine classes into four groups of participants who either do not position themselves to the conflict (classes 7, 8 and 9) or interpret the conflict according to a pro-Israeli war frame (class 5; cf. figure 1), according to a pro-Palestinian frame that is at least "on the edge" of a war frame (classes 1 and 3; cf. figures 3 and 4) or according to a peace frame (classes 2, 4 and 6; cf. figure 2).



- A Solution by negotiation
- B Violence deepens gap
- C Account of both sides' needs
- D Accentuation of own side's needs
- E Need to force the opponent

- F Criticism of opponent's policy
- G Deligitimation of the opponent
- H Legitimation of own side's warfare
- I Condemnation of opponent's violence

2.3 Content analysis of the essays

The content analysis of the essays included a classification of the ways participants dealt with the article they had read as (a) (almost) not dealing with the text at all, (b) taking up only one or two aspects, or (c) dealing with the reported incident in a more detailed way; and four content analytical dimensions,

1. Reactions to the text;
2. Reference to external factors;
3. Escalation-oriented statements; and
4. De-escalation-oriented statements,

each of which was operationalized by a set of five to nine binary variables (cf. table 4). The coding of the essays by two independent raters resulted in good to very good inter-coder reliabilities ($M_{\kappa} = .83$; $SD_{\kappa} = .10$).

Reactions to the text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with the logic of conflict • Expressing resentment or mistrust against the article and/or the media in general • Lacking interest in the conflict and/or the conflict parties • Expressions of concern • Anger, rage and/or resentment at the conflict in general • Resignation towards violence • Plattitudes like "Violence breeds counter-violence"
Reference to external factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reference to third party interventions • Negative reference to third party interventions • Attributing the conflict causes to global interests • Attributing the conflict causes to religion • Attributing the conflict causes to human nature
Escalation-oriented statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antagonistic reasoning • Pro-Israeli statements • Pro-Palestinian statements • Anti-Israeli statements • Anti-Palestinian statements
De-escalation-oriented statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection of war and violence • Call for and/or approval of a peaceful conflict resolution • Call for a fair balance of the resolution and/or the process by which it is approached • Questioning of the win-lose model and/or putting the negative effects of violence on record • Critical evaluation of both sides' rights and intentions • Critical evaluation of both sides' behavior • Alienation from the escalation-oriented leadership on both sides • Referring to victims and/or the civil society on both sides • Emphasizing shared perspectives

Table 4: Content analytical variables

2.4 Data analysis and interpretation strategy

The statistical analysis of the content analytical data proceeded in three steps (cf. figure 5). As a first step, Latent-Class-Analysis (LCA) was applied to each of the content-analytical dimensions in order to identify the typical patterns into which the respective variables combine. As a second step, the essays were assigned to the identified (first-order) classes, and the reliability of the assignment was measured by mean membership probabilities (MEM). As a third step, finally, a second-order LCA was computed in order to identify the ways these classes combine (1) with each other, (2) with participants' *a priori* positioning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and (3) with the characteristics (scenario and framing) of the articles the participants read.

Due to the rather small sample sizes, LCA-model selection was based on CIC-Index (Reunanen & Suikkanen 1999). The fit of the selected model was evaluated relative to the *a priori* distribution using the Proportional Reduction in Error Index (PRE; Goodman 1972), and (where applicable) relative to the Pure-Random-Model using the Explanatory Power Index (EP; Kempf 2012b).

The interpretation of the second-order LCA was split into two processes, the first of which focuses on the content analytical classification of the essays and describes the meta-patterns into which the various content analytical (first-order) classes combine. The second process, finally, focuses on the interaction between media frames and individual frames and analyzes (a) the frequency of these patterns within media frames, scenarios, and participants' *a priori* positioning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as (b) the frequency of media frames, scenarios, and participants' *a priori* positions within the second-order classes.

In order to control for anti-Semitic, anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic factors, finally, Analysis of Variance was used to compare the identified classes with respect to their mean scores on the respective post-test scales.

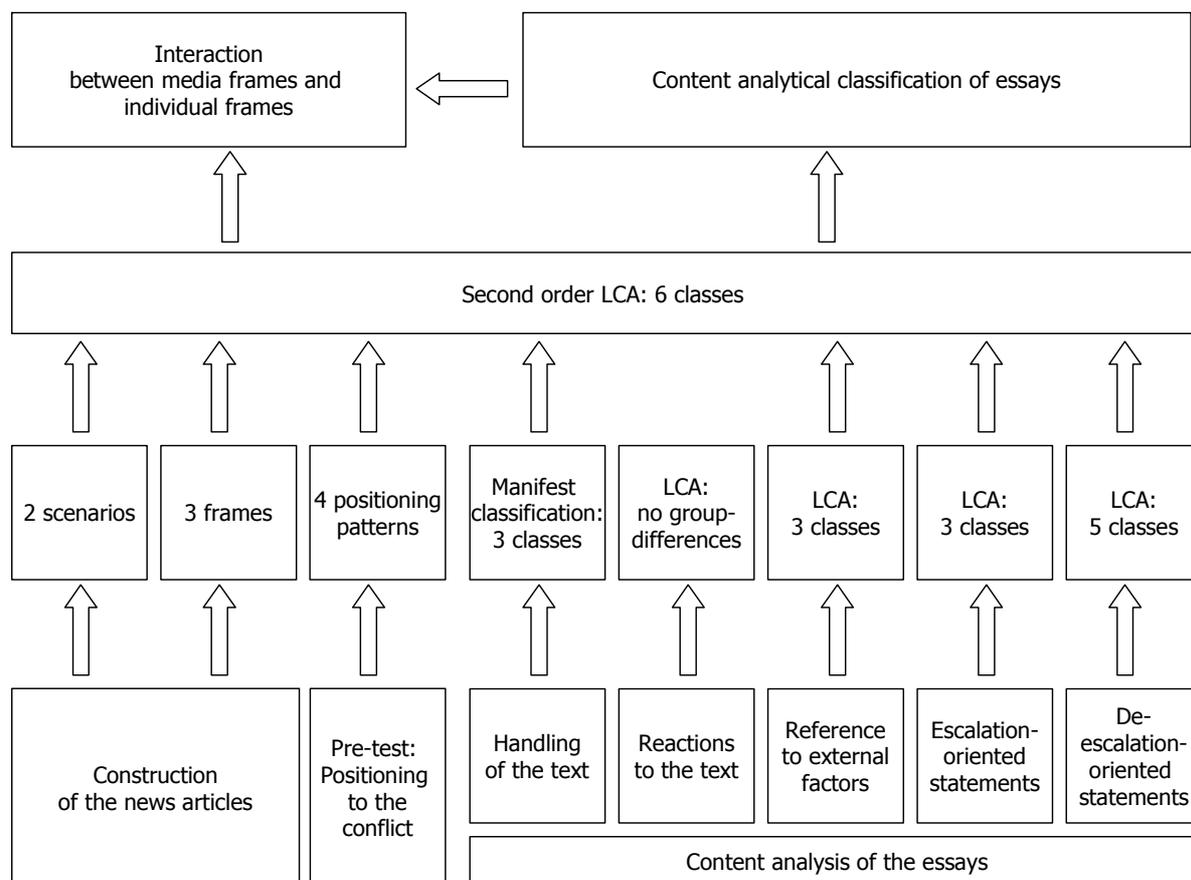


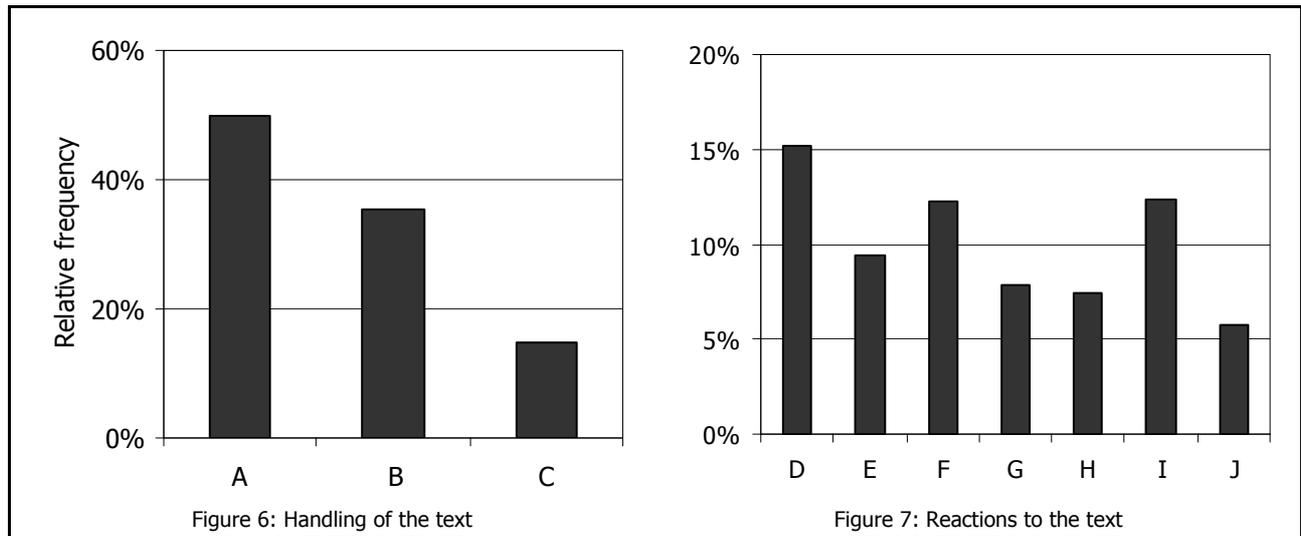
Figure 5: Experimental design, data analysis and interpretation strategy

3. Results

3.1 Handling of and reactions to the text

The classification of the essays with respect to the participants' handling of the article they had read confirmed our assumption that the recurring stereotypical reports on Palestinian and/or Israeli violence lead to satiation. Part of the audience does not even reflect on the relevant news articles (hypothesis 2). The results are much more dramatic, however, than we would have expected (cf. figure 6): 50% of the participants did not deal with the text in their essays (A); another 36% touched on only one or two aspects (B), and only 15% dealt with the reported incident in a more detailed way (C).

Also confirmed was that reports on Palestinian and/or Israeli violence tend rather to elicit annoyance (hypothesis 1): Participants' reactions to the text (cf. figure 7) were occasionally marked by a very general reference to the logic of conflict (D: 15.2%), expressions of resignation towards violence (I: 12.4%), lack of interest in the conflict and/or the conflict parties (F: 12.2%), and resentment or mistrust of the article and/or the media in general (E: 9.4%); less frequently by expressions of concern (G: 7.9%), and/or of anger, rage and/or resentment at the conflict in general (H: 7.4%); and in some cases by platitudes like "Violence breeds counter-violence" (J: 5.8%).



- A (Almost) no dealing with the text
- B Picking up of one or two aspects only
- C Dealing with the reported incident

- D Dealing with the logic of conflict
- E Expressing resentment or mistrust against the article and/or the media in general
- F Lacking interest in the conflict and/or the conflict parties
- G Expressions of concern
- H Anger, rage and/or resentment at the conflict in general
- I Resignation towards violence
- J Platitudes like "Violence breeds counter-violence"

Surprisingly, an LCA of these variables resulted in a 1-class solution (cf. table 5), which indicates that the distribution of these variables expresses a general mind-set which constitutes a homogeneous undertone that is likewise typical for all of the essays and does not differentiate between them.¹

Model	ln(L)	n(P)	df	L-Ratio	p	AIC	BIC	CIC
PR	-899.21	1	126	92.89	n.s.	1800.43	1804.40	1800.21
LC1	-884.57	7	120	63.60	n.s.	1783.14	1810.97	1781.65
LC2	-879.75	15	112	53.96	n.s.	1789.50	1849.15	1786.32
LC3	-875.12	23	104	44.70	n.s.	1796.24	1887.70	1791.36
Sat	-852.77	127				1959.54	2464.54	1932.59

Table 5: Reactions to the text. Goodness-of-fit statistics of the first-order LCA

3.2 Reference to external factors

Model	ln(L)	n(P)	df	L-Ratio	p	AIC	BIC	CIC
PR	-532.90	1	30	74.33	< 0.001	1067.81	1071.78	1067.60
LC1	-520.95	5	26	50.42	< 0.01	1051.90	1071.78	1050.84
LC2	-506.28	11	20	21.08	n.s.	1034.56	1078.30	1032.23
LC3	-500.83	17	14	10.18	n.s.	1035.66	1103.26	1032.05
LC4	-500.14	23	8	8.80	n.s.	1046.28	1137.74	1041.40
LC5	-499.48	29	2	7.48	< 0.05	1056.96	1172.27	1050.81
Sat	-495.74	31				1053.48	1176.75	1046.90

Table 6: Reference to external factors. Goodness-of-fit statistics of the first-order LCA

1. Accordingly, the dimension of participants' reaction to the text was not further considered in the second-order LCA (cf. figure 5).

LCA of participants' reference to external factors resulted in a 3-class solution (cf. table 6; PRE = 99.41%; EP = 86.30%; MEM = 0.97):

- Class 1 (cf. figure 8) is characteristic for 80.6% of the essays, which (almost) do not refer to any external factors at all.
- Class 2 (cf. figure 9) is characteristic for 11.1% of the essays, which are marked by approval of third party interventions (A: 78.9%).
- Class 3 (cf. figure 10) is characteristic for 8.3% of the essays, which are marked by references to global interests (C: 99.8%) and often reject third party interventions (B: 39.6%).

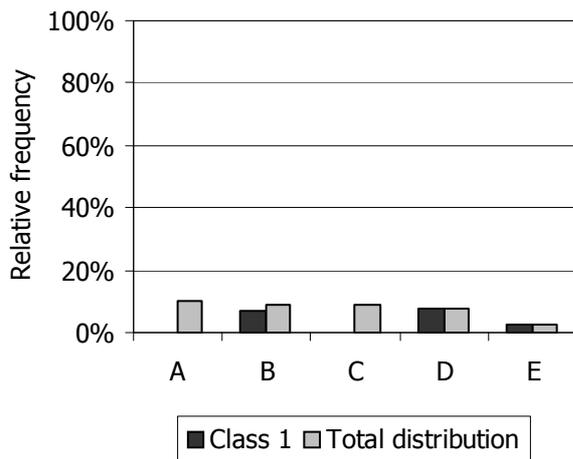


Figure 8: Reference to external factors, Class 1 (80.6%)

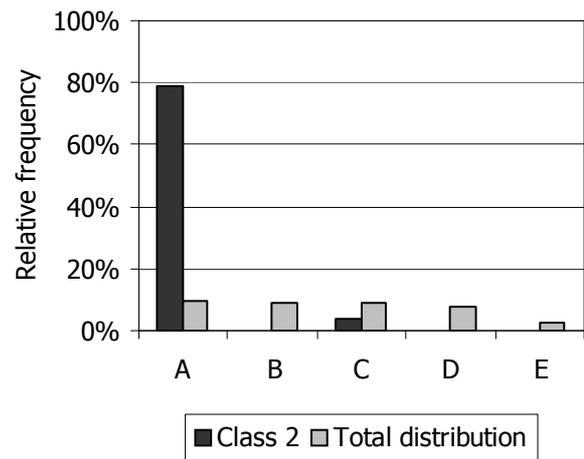


Figure 9: Reference to external factors, Class 2 (11.1%)

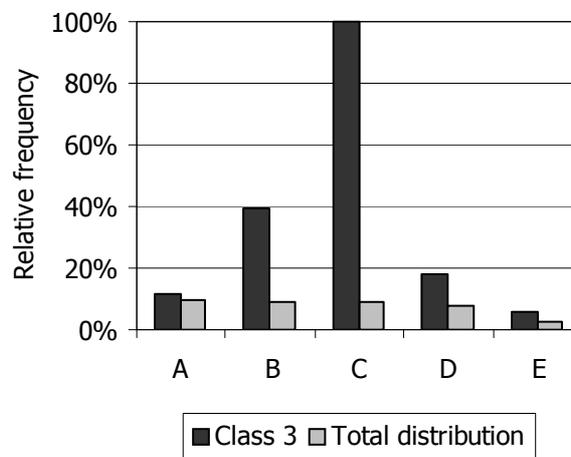


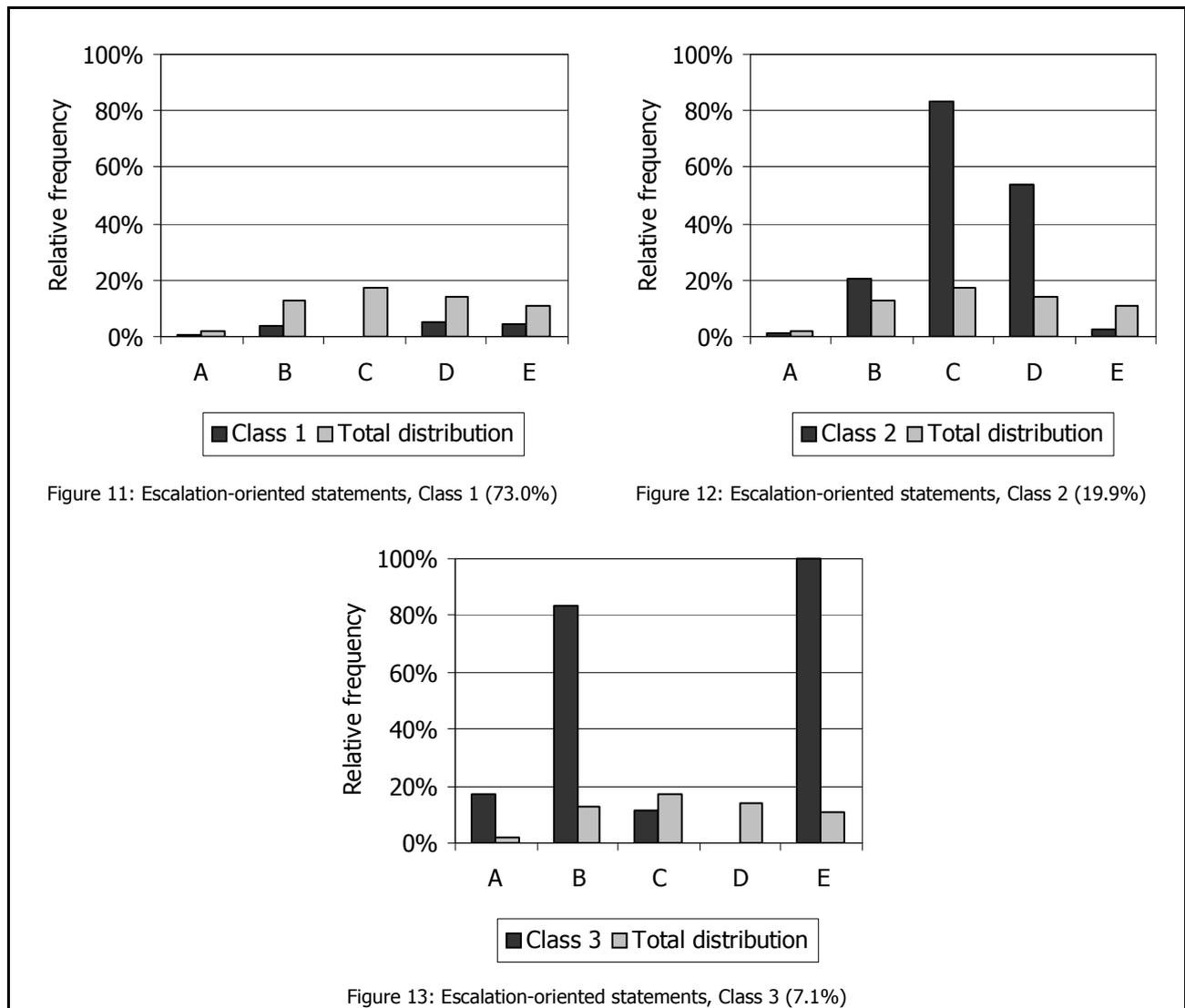
Figure 10: Reference to external factors, Class 3 (8.3%)

- | | |
|---|---|
| A Positive reference to third party interventions | D Attributing the conflict causes to religion |
| B Negative reference to third party interventions | E Attributing the conflict causes to human nature |
| C Attributing the conflict causes to global interests | |

3.3 Escalation oriented statements

Model	ln(L)	n(P)	df	L-Ratio	p	AIC	BIC	CIC
PR	-701.86	1	30	241.48	< 0.001	1405.72	1409.69	1405.50
LC1	-668.67	5	26	175.10	< 0.001	1347.34	1367.22	1346.28
LC2	-630.26	11	20	98.28	< 0.001	1282.52	1326.26	1280.19
LC3	-586.41	17	14	10.58	n.s	1206.82	1274.42	1203.21
LC4	-586.35	23	8	10.46	n.s	1218.70	1310.16	1213.82
LC5	-582.23	29	2	2.22	n.s	1222.46	1337.77	1216.31
Sat	-581.12	31				1224.24	1347.51	1217.66

Table 7: Escalation oriented statements: Goodness-of-fit statistics of the first-order LCA



A Antagonistic reasoning
B Pro-Israeli statements
C Pro-Palestinian statements

D Anti-Israeli statements
E Anti-Palestinian statements

An LCA of the escalation oriented statements that were included in the essays resulted in a 3-class solution (cf. table 7; PRE = 99.33%; EP = 95.62%; MEM = 0.96).

- Class 1 (cf. figure 11, p. 16) is characteristic for 73.0% of the essays, which (almost) do not contain any escalation oriented statements at all.
- Class 2 (cf. figure 12, p. 16) is characteristic for 19.9% of the essays, which are marked by pro-Palestinian (C: 83.2%) and anti-Israeli statements (D: 53.6%).
- Class 3 (cf. figure 13, p. 16) is characteristic for 7.1% of the essays, which are marked by pro-Israeli (B: 83.5%) and anti-Palestinian statements (E: 99.8%).

Comparison of class 2 and class 3 confirms our assumptions that a pro-Palestinian interpretation of the articles would be more frequent (hypothesis 5), but less radical than a pro-Israeli one (hypothesis 6): Class 2 is nearly three times as frequent as class 3, and with comparably strong pro-Palestinian or respectively pro-Israeli framing of the essays, anti-Israeli statements are less frequent in class 2 than anti-Palestinian statements in class 3.

3.4 De-escalation oriented statements

Model	ln(L)	n(P)	df	L-Ratio	p	AIC	BIC	CIC
PR	-1641.97	1	510	819.08	< 0.001	3285.94	3289.91	3285.72
LC1	-1571.39	9	502	677.92	< 0.001	3160.78	3196.57	3158.87
LC2	-1430.45	19	492	396.04	n.s.	2898.90	2974.45	2894.87
LC3	-1393.13	29	482	321.40	n.s.	2844.26	2959.57	2838.11
LC4	-1368.00	39	472	271.14	n.s.	2814.00	2969.08	2805.72
LC5	-1349.66	49	462	234.46	n.s.	2797.32	2992.16	2786.92
LC6	-1347.01	59	452	229.16	n.s.	2812.02	3046.62	2799.50
LC7	-1328.93	69	442	193.00	n.s.	2795.86	3070.23	2781.22
Sat	-1232.43	511				3486.86	5518.78	3378.43

Table 8: De-escalation oriented statements. Goodness-of-fit statistics of the first-order LCA

An LCA of the de-escalation oriented statements that were included in the essays resulted in a 5-class solution (cf. table 8; PRE = 90.43%; EP = 71.38%; MEM = 0.90).

- Class 1 (cf. figure 14, p. 18) is characteristic for 49.2% of the essays, which (almost) do not contain any de-escalation oriented statements at all.
- Class 2 (cf. figure 15, p. 18) is characteristic for 16.8% of the essays, which are marked by a focus on peaceful conflict resolution (B: 95.2%) and a rejection of violence (A: 49.2%).
- Class 3 (cf. figure 16, p. 18) is characteristic for 12.8% of the essays, which are marked by a focus on both sides' victims (H: 68.1%) and the denial of win-lose and/or putting the negative effects of violence on record (D: 36.8%) (cf. figure 16).
- Class 4 (cf. figure 17, p. 18) is characteristic for 12.6% of the essays, which are marked by a critical evaluation of both sides' behavior (F: 81.9%) and/or intentions (E: 80.0%).
- Class 5 is characteristic for 8.6% of the essays, which are marked by a comprehensive de-escalation orientation which includes all of the relevant variables (cf. figure 18, p. 18): Critical evaluation of both sides' behavior (F: 86.9%) and/or rights and intentions (E: 77.5%), call for and/or approval of peaceful conflict resolution (B: 77.7%), questioning the win-lose model and/or putting the negative effects of violence on record (D: 71.6%), referring to victims and/or civil society on both sides (H: 62.6%), call for a fair balance of conflict resolution and/or the process by which it is approached (C: 60.7%); rejection of war and violence (A: 50.5%), alienation from escalation oriented leadership on both sides (G: 41.6%), and emphasizing shared perspectives (I: 33.0%).

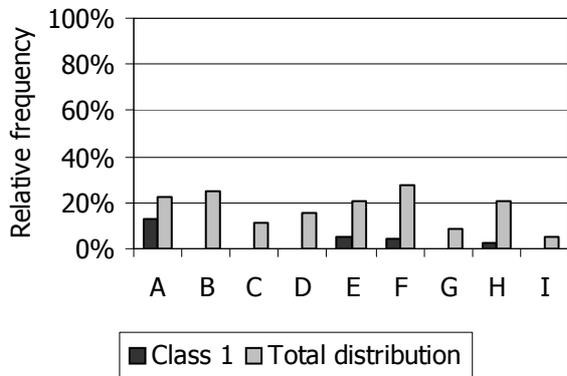


Figure 14: De-escalation-oriented statements, Class 1 (49.2%)

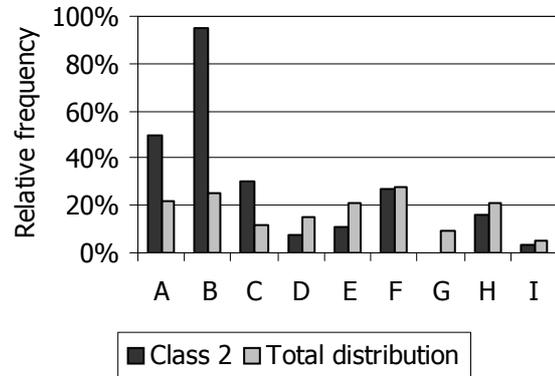


Figure 15: De-escalation-oriented statements, Class 2 (16.8%)

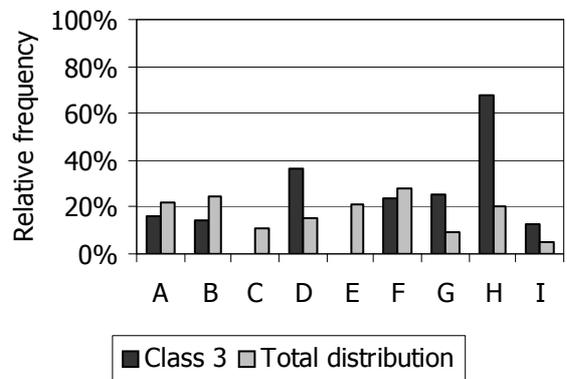


Figure 16: De-escalation-oriented statements, Class 3 (12.8%)

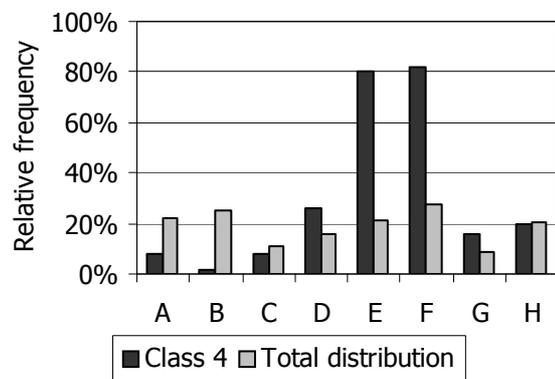


Figure 17: De-escalation-oriented statements, Class 4 (12.6%)

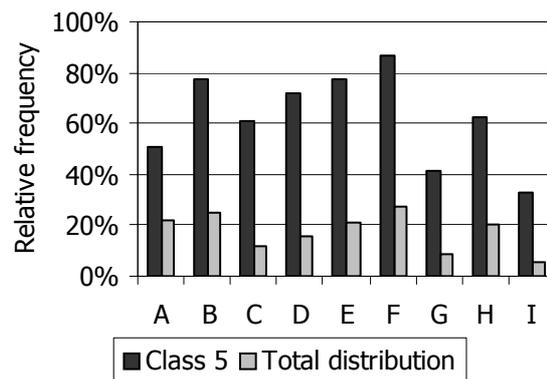


Figure 18: De-escalation-oriented statements, Class 5 (8.6%)

- A Rejection of war and violence
- B Call for and/or approval of a peaceful conflict resolution
- C Call for a fair balance of the resolution and/or the process by which it is approached
- D Questioning of the win-lose model and/or putting the negative effects of violence on record
- E Critical evaluation of both sides' rights and intentions
- F Critical evaluation of both sides' behavior
- G Alienation from the escalation-oriented leadership on both sides
- H Referring to victims and/or to the civil society on both sides
- I Emphasizing shared perspectives

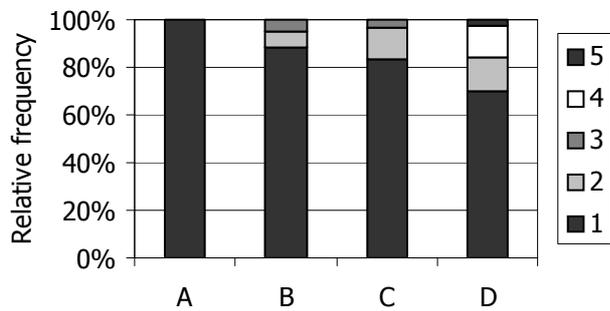


Figure 19: Content-analytical classification of the essays, Class 1

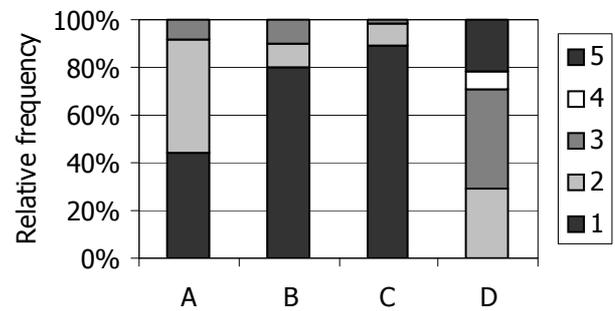


Figure 20: Content-analytical classification of the essays, Class 2

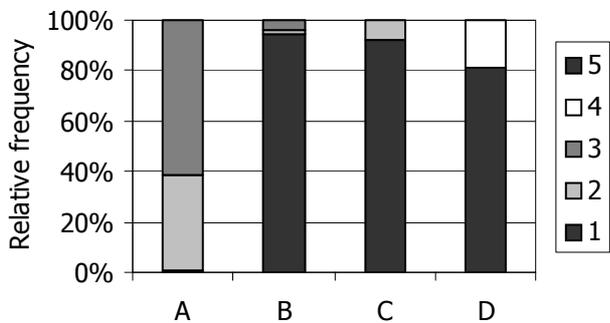


Figure 21: Content-analytical classification of the essays, Class 3

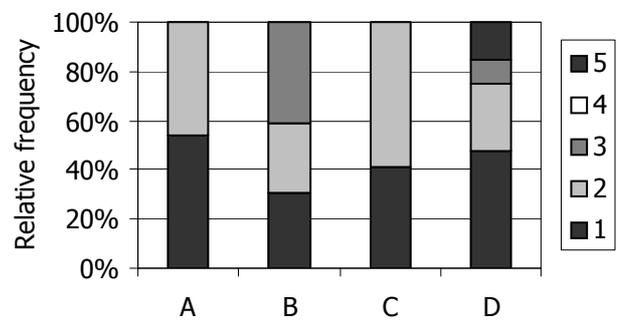


Figure 22: Content-analytical classification of the essays, Class 4

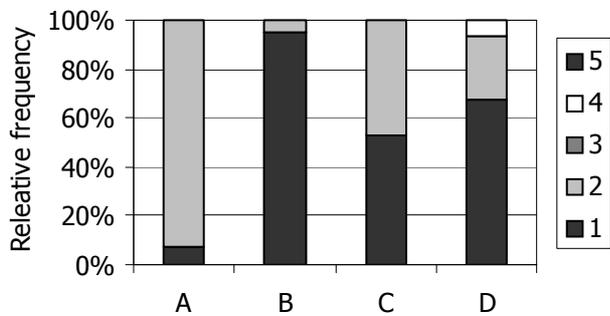


Figure 23: Content-analytical classification of the essays, Class 5

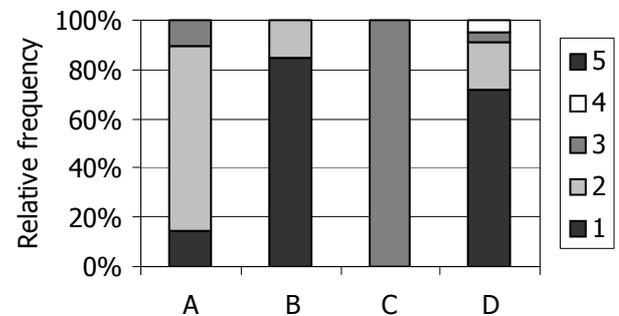


Figure 24: Content-analytical classification of the essays, Class 6

A Handling of the text:

1 = (Almost) no dealing with the text; 2 = Picking up of one or two aspects only; 3 = Dealing with the reported incident

B Reference to external factors:

1 = (Almost) no reference at all; 2 = Approval of third party interventions; 3 = Reference to global interests and rejection of third party interventions

C Escalation oriented statements:

1 = (Almost) none; 2 = Pro-Israeli and anti-Palestinian statements; 3 = Pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli statements

D De-escalation oriented statements:

1 = (Almost) none; 2 = Focus on peaceful resolution and refusal of violence; 3 = Focus on both sides' victims and denial of win-lose; 4 = Critical evaluation of both sides' behaviour and intentions; 5 = Comprehensive de-escalation orientation

3.5 Second-order LCA

Model	ln(L)	n(P)	df	L-Ratio	p	AIC	BIC	CIC
LC1	-2611.96	16	3223	998.88	n < df	5255.92	5319.54	5252.52
LC2	-2577.67	33	3206	930.30	n < df	5221.34	5352.56	5214.34
LC3	-2549.70	50	3189	874.36	n < df	5199.40	5398.22	5188.79
LC4	-2523.87	67	3172	822.70	n < df	5181.74	5448.16	5167.52
LC5	-2505.09	84	3155	785.14	n < df	5178.18	5512.19	5160.36
LC6	-2486.24	101	3138	747.44	n < df	5174.48	5576.09	5153.05
LC7	-2472.61	118	3121	720.18	n < df	5181.22	5650.43	5156.18
LC8	-2461.26	135	3104	697.48	n < df	5192.52	5729.33	5163.87
Sat	-2112.52	3239				10703.04	23582.44	10015.76

Table 9: Goodness-of-fit statistics of the second-order LCA

A second-order LCA resulted in a 6-class solution (cf. table 9; PRE = 65.15%; MEM = 0.87) which identifies different ways of making sense of the articles that the participants had read and relates them to the interaction between the textual characteristics (scenario and framing) of the articles and the participants' *a priori* positioning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

3.5.1 Content analytical classification of the essays

Characteristic for participants who avoid dealing with the article they read (class1) and/or avoid any framing of the conflict in their essays (class 3), two of the identified classes confirm our assumption, according to which satiation with media reports on Palestinian and/or Israeli violence led to the result that part of the audience does not think about it at all (hypothesis 2) and/or refrains from forming an opinion on the reported events (hypothesis 3).

- Class 1 (Avoidance of dealing with the text; cf. figure 19, p. 19) is characteristic for 31.4% of the essays. Participants who wrote these essays do not deal with the article they had read (A = 1: 100%), and most of them neither refer to external factors (B = 1: 88.4%) nor make any escalation oriented (C = 1: 83.5%) or de-escalation oriented statements (D = 1: 69.7%). Only occasionally do they reject violence and call for peaceful conflict resolution (D = 2: 14.5%) and/or criticize both sides' behavior and intentions (D = 4: 13.2%).
- Class 3 (Avoidance of framing the conflict; cf. figure 21, p. 19) is characteristic for 19.6% of the essays. Although the participants who wrote these essays deal with the reported incident (A = 3: 61.6%) or take up at least one or two aspects of the article they had read (A = 2: 37.7%), they almost completely avoid framing the conflict: 94.7% of their essays do not contain any reference to external factors (B = 1), 92.0% do not contain any escalation oriented statements (C = 1), and 81.0% do not contain any de-escalation oriented statements either (D = 1). Only occasionally do they criticize both sides' behavior and intentions (D = 4: 18.9%).

In accordance with hypothesis 4, a relevant group of participants (class 2) framed the essays in a de-escalation oriented way.

- Class 2 (De-escalation oriented framing of the conflict; cf. figure 20) is characteristic for 26.8% of the essays. While many of the participants who wrote these essays did not deal with the article they had read (A = 1: 44.4%) or took up only one or two of its aspects (A = 2: 47.5%), and while most of them did not refer to any external factors (B = 1: 80.0%), the characteristic features of these essays are the avoidance of any escalation oriented statements (C = 1: 89.5%) and a consistent emphasis on de-escalation oriented aspects. This includes a focus on both sides' victims and the rejection of win-lose (D = 3: 41.5%), a focus on peaceful conflict resolution and a rejection of violence (D = 2: 28.7%), a comprehensive de-escalation orientation (D = 5: 22.0%) and/or at least a critical evaluation of both sides' behavior and intentions (D = 4: 7.6%).

Three of the identified classes (class 4, 5 and 6) confirm our expectation that among the participants who understand the reported events in an escalation oriented manner, a pro-Palestinian framing of the essays is more common (hypothesis 5), but is, however, less radically pronounced (hypothesis 6) than a pro-Israeli framing.

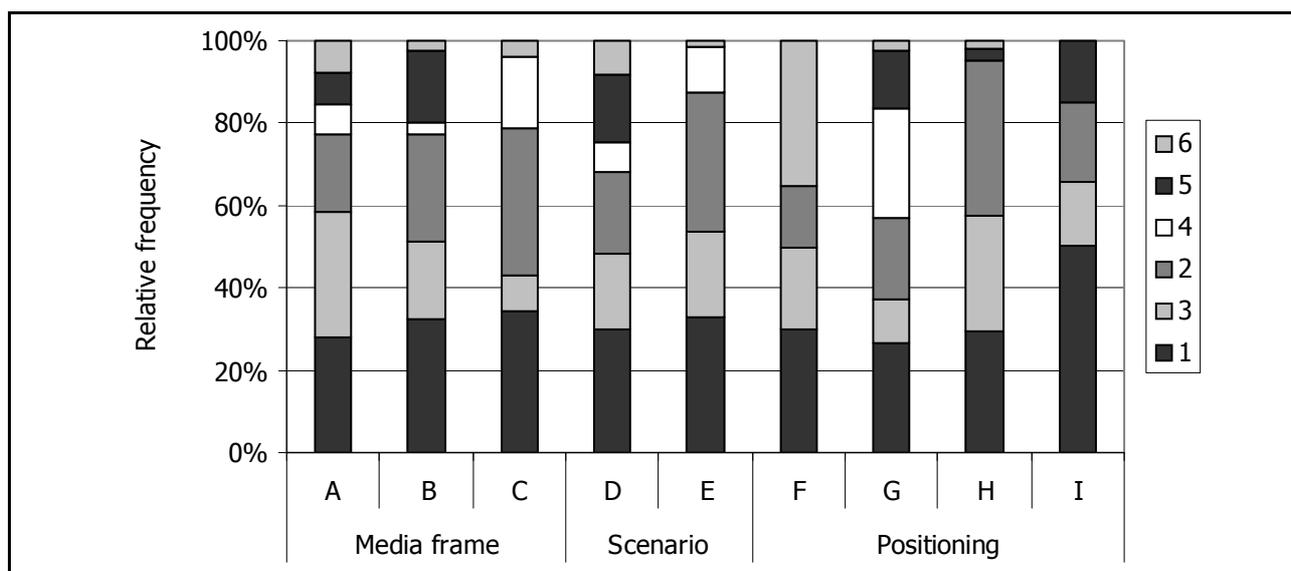
Two of these classes are characteristic for participants who framed their essays in an escalation oriented way that is partisan for the Palestinians (cf. figures 22 and 23). Both of these classes are characterized by both a high proportion of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli statements (C = 2) (class 4: 58.7%; class 5: 46.8%) and a complete lack of any pro-Israeli and/or anti-Palestinian statements (C = 3).

- Class 4 (Conflict-related pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Israeli framing of the conflict; cf. figure 22) is characteristic for 9.1% of the essays. The participants who wrote these essays focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict *per se* rather than on the article they had read: 53.9% did not deal with the article (A = 1), and another 46.1% took up only one or two of its aspects (A = 2). In contrast to all other classes, the majority took external factors into account as well (B = 2-3: 69.0%), and in spite of the strong emphasis on escalation oriented aspects in favor of the Palestinians (C = 2: 58.7%), many of their essays (52.1%) also contained de-escalation oriented statements: 26.9% rejected violence and focused on peaceful conflict resolution (D = 2), 9.7% rejected the win-lose model and focused on both sides' victims (D = 3), and another 15.4% gave a comprehensive account of de-escalation oriented aspects (D = 5).
- Class 5 (Text-related pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Israeli framing of the conflict; cf. figure 23) is characteristic for 8.2% of the essays. As compared with class 4, the participants who wrote these essays referred to the text they had read more strongly, and only a few of them (A = 1: 7.7%) did not deal with the article they had read. At the same time, they brought fewer external factors into play (B = 2-3: only 5.2%), and their essays contained fewer de-escalation oriented statements (D = 2-5: only 32.3%).

One of the identified classes (class 6) is characteristic for participants who framed their essays in an escalation oriented way that is partisan for Israel in a quite radical way (cf. figure 22, p. 19): 100% of these essays are dominated by pro-Israeli and/or anti-Palestinian statements (C = 3).

- Class 6 (Pro-Israeli and/or anti-Palestinian framing of the conflict; cf. figure 24, p. 19) is characteristic for 4.8% of the essays. Similar to class 5, only a few of the participants who wrote these essays avoided dealing with the article they had read (A = 1: 14.5%), most of them did not bring external factors into play (B = 1: 84.3%), and rather few of their essays included de-escalation oriented statements as well (D = 2-5: 28.0%).

3.5.2 Interaction between media frames and individual frames



Media frames:

A Pro-Israeli war frame; B Pro-Palestinian war frame; C Peace frame

Scenarios:

D Palestinian violence / Israeli victims; E Israeli violence / Palestinian victims

Positioning:

F Pro-Israeli war frame; G Pro-Palestinian war frame or "on the edge" of a war frame;

H Peace frame; I No position

Content analytical classification of the essays:

1 = Avoidance to deal with the text; 3 = Avoidance to frame the conflict; 2 = De-escalation-oriented framing of the conflict; 4 = Conflict-related pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Israeli framing of the conflict; 5 = Text-related pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Israeli framing of the conflict; 6 = Pro-Israeli and/or anti-Palestinian framing of the conflict

Figure 25: Frequency of content-analytical patterns within media frames, scenarios and participants' *a priori* positioning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹

1. Attention: The sequence of the second-order classes 2 and 3 is reversed in figures 25-28.

In accordance with prior studies by Annabring et al. (2005), the results in figure 25 indicate that media frames have a direct effect on the ways participants make sense of the news stories they read in the study (hypothesis 7).

- A pro-Palestinian framing of the essays (class 4 and 5) is most frequent (20.6%) among participants who read an article that was framed according to a pro-Palestinian war frame (B), and least frequent (14.6%) among participants who read an article that was framed according to a pro-Israeli war frame (A).
- A pro-Israeli framing of the essays (class 6) is most frequent (7.9%) among participants who read an article that was framed according to a pro-Israeli war frame (A), and least frequent (2.3%) among participants who read an article that was framed according to a pro-Palestinian war frame (B).
- A de-escalation oriented framing of the essays (class 2) is most frequent (36.0%) among participants who had read an article that was framed according to a peace frame (C) and much less frequent among participants who had read an article that was framed according to a war frame (pro-Israeli war frame: A = 18.9%; pro-Palestinian war frame: B = 25.7%).

At the same time, the results in figure 25 show that individual frames also have a direct effect (hypothesis 8).

- A pro-Palestinian framing of the essays (class 4 and 5) is most frequent (40.3%) among participants who had already *a priori* positioned themselves in favor of the Palestinians (G).
- A pro-Israeli framing of the essays (class 6) is most frequent (35.3%) among participants who had already *a priori* positioned themselves in favor of Israel (F).
- A de-escalation oriented framing of the essays (class 2) is most frequent (37.7%) among participants who had already *a priori* positioned themselves according to a peace frame (H).

In accordance with hypothesis 9, the effects of media frames and individual frames are not linear-additive, however, and particularly the effect of media war frames diminishes if they are incongruent with participants' individual frames (cf. figure 25).

Regardless of how the news articles were framed,

- none (0.0%) of the participants who had *a priori* positioned themselves in favor of Israel (F), and very few (3.0%) of those who had positioned themselves according to a peace frame (H), framed their essays according to a pro-Palestinian frame (class 4 and 5), and
- very few of the participants who had *a priori* positioned themselves in favor of the Palestinians (G: 2.6%) and/or according to a peace frame (H: 1.9%), framed their essays according to a pro-Israeli frame (class 6).

In accordance with hypothesis 10, the majority of the participants who had no *a priori* position to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (I) either avoided dealing with the article they had read (class 1: 50.3%) or avoided framing their essays (class 3: 15.6%) (cf. figure 25). The rest of them (34.1%) framed their essays either in a de-escalation oriented way (class 2: 19.0%) or according to the text-related variant of a pro-Palestinian frame (class 5: 15.1%), but never (0.0%) according to a conflict-related pro-Palestinian frame (class 4) and/or according to a pro-Israeli frame (class 6) (cf. figure 25).

- Avoidance of dealing with the text (class 1) was slightly more frequent among participants who had read an article framed according to a peace frame (C: 34.1%) or according to a pro-Palestinian war frame (B: 32.5%), than among participants who had read an article that was framed according to a pro-Israeli war-frame (A: 27.9%).
- Avoidance of framing their essays (class 3), on the other hand, was least frequent among participants who had read an article framed according to a peace frame (C: 8.9%) and most frequent in reaction to articles that were framed according to a pro-Israeli war frame (A: 30.6%).

In accordance with hypothesis 11, the propaganda effect of reports about Israeli violence was weaker and resulted in less escalation oriented framing of the essays than reports about Palestinian violence (cf. figure 25).

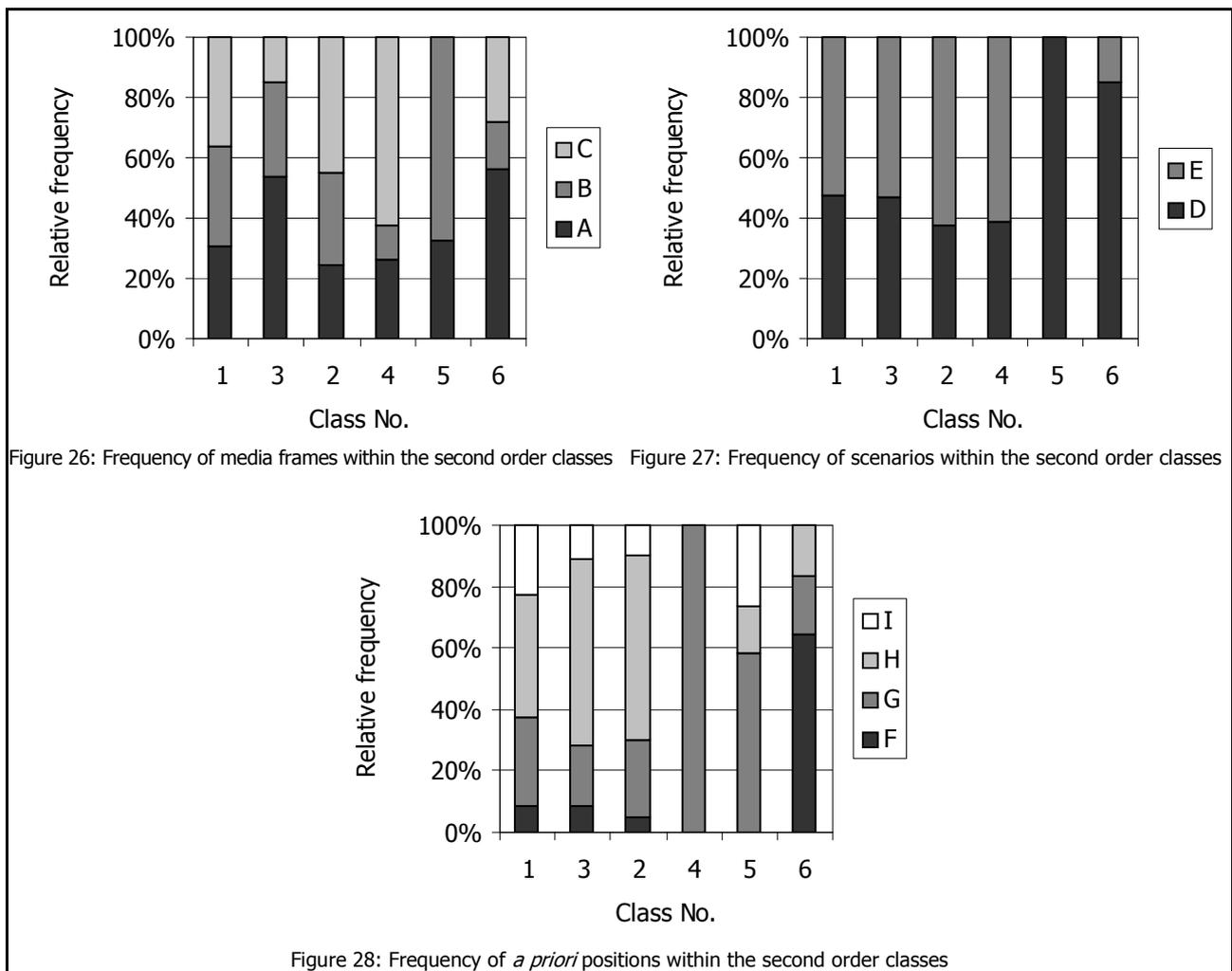
- De-escalation oriented framing of the essays (class 2) was more frequent among participants who had read an article about Israeli violence (E: 33.6%) and less frequent among participants who had read an article about Palestinian violence (D: 20.1%).
- Escalation oriented framing of the essays (class 4, 5 and 6), on the other hand, was more frequent among participants who had read an article about Palestinian violence (D: 31.6%) and much less frequent among those who had read an article about Israeli violence (E: 12.7%).

Hypothesis 12, according to which the propaganda function of reports on violence is neutralized in favor of a de-escalation oriented text understanding, if a media peace frame coincides with an *a priori* individual frame in agreement with it, could be confirmed for Israeli violence, but not, however, for Palestinian violence.

- The majority of the participants who framed their essays according to a de-escalation oriented frame (class 2) had *a priori* positioned themselves according to a peace frame (H: 59.6%; cf. figure 28) and had read an article about Israeli violence (E: 62.6%; cf. figure 27) that was framed according to a peace frame (C: 45.0%; cf. figure 26).

The same holds for hypothesis 12, according to which the propaganda effect of reports about violence further a text understanding in favor of the victim side, if the participants had already positioned themselves *a priori* in their favor and the media frame has the same bias.

- Only 15.0% (cf. figure 27) of the participants who framed their essays according to a pro-Israeli frame (class 6) had read an article about Israeli violence (E).
- The majority of the participants who framed their essays according to a pro-Israeli frame (class 6) had already *a priori* positioned themselves according to a pro-Israeli war frame (F: 64.7%; cf. figure 28) and had read an article about Palestinian violence (D: 85.0%, cf. figure 27) that was framed according to a pro-Israeli war frame (A: 56.4%, cf. figure 26).
- Among the participants who framed their essays according to a pro-Palestinian frame, the share of those who had read an article about Palestinian violence (D) – quite to the contrary – is extremely high (class 5: 99.9%) or only declined to a marginal extent (class 4: 38.5%).



Media frames:
A Pro-Israeli war frame; B Pro-Palestinian war frame; C Peace frame

Scenarios:
D Palestinian violence / Israeli victims; E Israeli violence / Palestinian victims

Positioning:
F Pro-Israeli war frame; G Pro-Palestinian war frame or "on the edge" of a war frame;
H Peace frame; I No position

Class numbers:
1 = Avoidance of dealing with the text; 3 = Avoidance of framing the conflict; 2 = De escalation-oriented framing of the conflict; 4 = Conflict-related pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Israeli framing of the conflict; 5 = Text-related pro-Palestinian and/or anti-Israeli framing of the conflict; 6 = Pro-Israeli and/or anti-Palestinian framing of the conflict

Conversely, the reactance postulated in hypotheses 13 and 14 could be shown only for those participants who framed their essays according to a pro-Palestinian frame. In agreement with hypothesis 13, reports about Israeli victims remained not only ineffective, but rather evoked a pro-Palestinian interpretation, if participants' *a priori* positioning in favor of the Palestinians was reinforced by a pro-Palestinian media war frame.

- 58.4% of the participants who framed their essays according to a text-related pro-Palestinian frame (class 5) had already *a priori* positioned themselves in favor of the Palestinians (G: 58.4%; cf. figure 28), and had read an article about Palestinian violence (D: 99.9%; cf. figure 27) that was rather framed according to a pro-Palestinian war frame (B: 67.4%; cf. figure 26).

The reactance was even more strongly pronounced if participants' *a priori* positioning in favor of the Palestinians was reinforced by reports about Palestinian victims (hypothesis 14). If this was the case, the deviant (incompatible with the *a priori* positioning) media frames remained ineffective, and the participants interpreted the articles more than ever in the sense of their *a priori* positioning.

- All of the participants who framed their essays according to a conflict-related pro-Palestinian frame (class 4) had already *a priori* positioned themselves according to a pro-Palestinian war frame (G: 100%; cf. figure 28), and the majority of them had read an article about Israeli violence (E: 61.5%; cf. figure 27) that was rather framed according to a peace frame (C: 62.3%; cf. figure 26) or to a pro-Israeli war frame (A: 26.2%; cf. figure 26).

That this reactance is displayed particularly as a response to media peace frames is an unexpected result that highlights the barriers that peace journalism needs to surmount if conflicts are highly escalated and the polarization of the conflict parties has hardened.

3.5.3 Class differences with respect to anti-Semitic, anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic attitudes

Anti-Semitic attitudes do not come into question as an explanation for this. Table 10 shows that the members of class 4 who frame their essays according to a conflict-related pro-Palestinian frame reject not only anti-Semitic, but also anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic statements the most strongly and thereby are the least burdened with prejudices. Class 5, which frames the essays according to a text-related pro-Palestinian frame, to the contrary, displays the least rejection of anti-Semitic statements, and class 6, which frames the essays according to a pro-Israeli frame, displays the least rejection of anti-Palestinian statements and even displays a tendency to agree with Islamophobic statements.

Scale	Class 1	Class 3	Class 2	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	F	df	p
AP	2.05	1.90	2.03	1.57	1.97	2.19	3.650	5. 377	0.003
IK	2.66	2.49	2.61	2.17	2.69	3.32	4.835	5. 379	< 0.001
MA1	1.80	1.47	1.52	1.31	1.59	1.51	3.514	5. 377	0.004

Table 10: Analysis of variance: Comparison of second-order classes with respect to anti-Semitic, anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic attitudes. AP = Devaluation of Palestinians; IK = Demonizing Islam; MA1 = Dislike of Jews. Scale points: 1 = Prejudice; 2 = Rather prejudice; 3 = Partly both; 3 = Rather justifiable; 4 = Justifiable

4. Summary and discussion

The aim of the present research project was to study how German recipients make sense of differently framed news articles about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how media contents, media frames and recipients' *a priori* mental models of the conflict interact in this process. For this purpose, six groups of participants were presented with news articles that reported about either a Palestinian suicide attack or an Israeli military operation. Each of these scenarios was framed either according to a pro-Israeli war frame, a pro-Palestinian war frame or a de-escalation oriented peace frame. After reading the articles, participants wrote essays on their own view of the events reported in the article, and their text understanding was assessed using a content analysis of their essays.

The findings of the study speak in favor of the peace journalism project and confirm results found by Annabring et al. (2005), according to which escalation vs. de-escalation oriented media frames have a direct effect on how recipients make sense of the news stories they read. This effect is limited, however, by recipients' individual frames (*a priori* mental models), which show both a direct effect and a complex interaction with media frames and media contents. Particularly the effect of media war frames diminishes if they are incongruent with recipients' individual frames, and the propaganda function of reports about violence and victims (cf. Herman & Chomsky 1988) can be neutralized if framed according to a media peace frame. Contrary to the widely held assumption of many journalists and media researchers that "violence sells" (cf. Kunczik 1990, Hanitzsch 2007), the recurring stereotypical reports of Israeli and/or Palestinian violence tend rather to annoy Ger-

man recipients. As a result, part of the audience does not even deal with the relevant news items and refrains from forming a personal opinion about the reported events.

At the same time, however, the results also show the effectiveness of war journalism sensu Galtung (2002) and limits of the peace journalism project that advise to dismiss any schematic application of Galtung's (2003) widely cited table of war/violence vs. peace/conflict journalism and/or Kempf's (2003) checklist for escalation vs. de-escalation oriented conflict coverage. They point to the necessity of taking into consideration mainstream media discourses and the over-all societal climate in which peace journalism operates. Thus Kempf (2003) has already pointed out that the transformation of a war discourse into a peace or reconciliation discourse must be a gradual process that takes into account the degree of escalation of the respective conflict, and Bläsi (2009) has argued that a society is much more likely to be prepared to accept the ideas and practices of peace journalism in a non-violent conflict stage than in wartime.

If participants had already *a priori* positioned themselves in favor of the Palestinians, reports about an Israeli military operation with casualties on the Palestinian side promoted a text understanding in favor of the Palestinians, even if the article was framed according to a peace frame. Furthermore, if supported by a pro-Palestinian media war frame, reports about a Palestinian attack with Israeli victims also did not reduce partisanship for the Palestinians, but instead produced reactance and definitely led to a text understanding in favor of the Palestinians. Thereby the participants in this case dealt in particular detail with the text in order to support and maintain their *a priori* position.

The resounding impact of the recipients' *a priori* mental models that comes to expression thereby is found only with participants who had positioned themselves in favor of the Palestinians, and appears to contradict the findings according to which (1) pro-Israeli hardliners interpret the newspaper articles relatively more radically in favor of Israel than pro-Palestinian ones, and (2) the propaganda effect of reports about Israeli military operations and Palestinian victims is in all weaker than that of reports about Palestinian attacks and Israeli victims. This contradiction can, however, be resolved if one takes into account the mainstream media discourse and the societal climate in Germany.

Thus the relatively weaker propaganda effect of reports about Israeli violence and Palestinian victims can be attributed to the fact that Palestinian attacks are generally more strongly condemned than Israeli military operations; and the resounding impact of an *a priori* positioning in favour of the Palestinians can be understood as a counter-reaction to the contradiction between the mainstream coverage which counteracts reportage situations unfavorable to Israel by a pro-Israeli framing (cf. Maurer & Kempf 2011, Gaisbauer 2012) and the accompanying photographs that paint the picture of an overwhelmingly superior Israeli power (Hagemann 2011) which – according to readers' beliefs – aims at the continued oppression and disenfranchisement of the Palestinians.

Conversely, we can assume that the stronger negative perception of the other side by pro-Israeli hardliners is due to long-term effects of the pro-Israeli framing of the German mainstream reportage. That pro-Palestinian hardliners are more reserved in this regard can, however, also be attributed to the ambivalence of the World War II lesson and/or to the reluctance to expose themselves to accusations of anti-Semitism. This mixture of sympathy for the Palestinians and the effort to avoid exposing oneself to accusations of anti-Semitism could also explain the reluctance to form one's own opinion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which was found with those participants who had already *a priori* avoided taking a position on the conflict. That is, however, not an alternative interpretation. Rather, one can assume that all these factors are at work simultaneously.

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