

# Bias in Coverage of Duke Lacrosse Case and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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## Duke Lacrosse Scandal

2006 a black female student at North Carolina Central University falsely accused three white players on the Duke Lacrosse team of raping her. The prosecution filed charges claiming it had DNA evidence. But the DNA did not match any of the players. The players were eventually cleared by a Durham County grand jury after a investigation. The case stirred discussion about racism and entitlement of student athletes.

Journalists, from New York Times, Washington Post, News and Observer jumped at the chance to crucify privileged student-athletes. They took what the district attorney said as fact without looking into the truthfulness of his statements. Reporters rushed to judgment against the players, with News and Observer putting the players pictures on the front page with a title reading, “Players accused of Rape”, which resulted in the public's opinion to be tainted.

Journalists should have followed SPJ Code of Ethics, which states: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable and transparent. They should have been fair and balanced in their reporting. They should have written only the facts and not included their personal feelings about the case. After facts about the case were discovered, many journalists switched their previous narrative from a pro-prosecution slants to pro-victim theme.

## ABC News’ Unethical Misreport: Bias in Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

An ethical journalist follows the Society of Professional Journalist’s Code of Ethics. The Society declares four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism. The four principles are to seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently and to be accountable and transparent.

Diane Sawyer, a former anchor for ABC News, misidentified the aftermath of an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City, Palestine on an an edition of ABC’s “World News” in April of 2014. The Israeli airstrike was reported as a senseless act which victimized the Israeli’s rather than the Palestinians. The mistake was made due to ABC News’ lack of research and communication with the reporters in Palestine. Sawyer’s on-air mistake and her course of action can be evaluated through SPJ’s four standing principles.

Sawyer and her team should have verified who the people were in the pictures and videos and where they were gathered from to ensure a valid newscast. The lack of verification infringes on the principle to seek truth and minimize harm. ABC took the correct course of action by apologizing for their error. The correction and transparency from ABC News and Sawyer was executed professionally.