Reporting Demonstrations: On Episodic and Thematic Coverage of Protest Events in Belgian Television News

Ruud Wouters

Reporting Demonstrations: On Episodic and Thematic Coverage of Protest Events in Belgian Television News

RUUD WOUTERS

Media attention is a crucial political resource for protest groups. This study examines the description of protests in Belgian television news. Specifically, it analyzes the degree to which the coverage of protests is episodic (event- or exemplar-oriented) or thematic (issue-oriented) and looks into the factors that drive these coverage types. Protest event data from police archives (Brussels; 2003–2010) are combined with detailed measures of television news content (public and private broadcasting) to analyze media description (N = 564). The results show that the coverage of protest is primarily thematic. Episodic coverage is dominated by coverage about the details of the event; exemplars are rarely used. Protests that are disruptive, staged by organizations with low media standing, and covered by the commercial station are more event-oriented. Reports of large demonstrations and reports with follow-up items contain more episodic-exemplar coverage. Results are discussed in light of the conditionality of the protest paradigm.

Keywords   protest, television news, media description, thematic/episodic coverage

Introduction

Protest events are communicative acts. They are staged to set in motion a process of indirect persuasion (Etzioni, 1970). Generating media attention is key in this respect (della Porta & Diani, 1999; Lipsky, 1968). Media attention allows for the diffusion and amplification of movement claims; it expands the scope of conflict. Hence, the filter that media apply to protest—that is, *whether* and *how* media cover dissent—is crucial for the potential impact of protest (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012).

This study focuses on the *description* of protest in television news. Extant research has established that protestors are depicted in ways that tend to undermine their substantive agenda (Boyle, McLeod, & Armstrong, 2012; Gitlin, 1980; Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, & Augustyn, 2001). Communication scholars speak of the "protest paradigm": a routinized template that journalists use to report protest (McLeod & Hertog, 1998). The core aspect of the paradigm is that news reports focus on the characteristics of the event instead of on the critique or concern the event raises. In the words of Iyengar (1991), coverage of protest is *episodic*, not *thematic*. Devoid of such issue context, protests appear senseless to the audience and can be more harmful than helpful for the protest group (Detenber,

Ruud Wouters is a post-doctoral researcher of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) at the Media, Movements and Politics Research Group (M²P), Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp.

Address correspondence to Ruud Wouters, University of Antwerp, Department of Political Science, Sint-Jacobstraat 2, 200 Antwerp, Antwerp, 2000 Belgium. E-mail: ruud.wouters@ua.ac.be

Gotlieb, McLeod, & Malinkina, 2007; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997).

   Two research questions take center stage in this study: (a) Is protest coverage indeed more episodic than thematic? and (b) Which factors drive these particular types of media coverage? This study contributes to the literature on news coverage of protests in three specific ways. First, it puts the generalizability of previous findings to a much-needed test. Most previous studies have been case studies of particular movements or marches in the United States context (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). Here, I compare television coverage across a large number of protests that differ in terms of issues, organizations, number of attendants, and degree of conflict in the non-U.S. context of Belgium. This puts the conditionality of protest description to a robust test. Second, I measure episodic and thematic coverage, the dependent variables in this study, much more in detail than previous studies have. I conduct an innovative and reliable second-by-second content analysis of original newscast footage instead of relying on less precise newscast abstracts. Finally, I make a distinction between two types of episodic coverage: event and exemplar coverage. This distinction is especially relevant with regard to protest coverage, but has never been tested empirically.

   To answer the research questions, I rely on two data sources. Police record data are used to determine the real-world situation of a protest event.[1] A media content analysis assesses how the events got molded by the media machinery. The setting of this research is Belgium.[2] All of the protest events studied were staged in the capital, Brussels (2003–2010). The results show that, contrary to expectations, protest coverage is more frequently thematic than episodic. Most attention in news items on protest goes to the causes, claims, and context of the event, not to its (incidental) details. Personal testimonies are rarely used in protest reports. More disruptive protests result in more event attention. Large demonstrations result in more exemplar coverage. Actions of organizations with higher media standing receive more thematic attention, corroborating the principle of cumulative inequality (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Protest coverage on the commercial channel, finally, is more event-focused, in line with the more sensationalist nature of commercial TV. Taken together, these findings point to the conditionality of the protest paradigm.

Protest Mediation: Selection and Description

For social movements, the path toward favorable media coverage is an uphill struggle. It consists of two subsequent battles (Wolfsfeld, 1997): a battle over access (*selection*) and a battle over meaning (*description*). Both phases of this process have been studied, albeit by researchers from relatively isolated fields.

   Social movement scholars have mainly investigated step one: How media *select* some actions over others and which event and newsroom characteristics guide media selection. Relying on media-independent sources—such as police archives—these studies show that few protests make it into the news. Demonstrations that attract many attendants, are disruptive, offer symbolic drama, are organized by strong sponsors, and are staged at the right time in an issue-attention cycle are more likely to become news (Hocke, 1998; McCarthy, McPhail, & Smith, 1996; Oliver & Maney, 2000). Differences in selection patterns were found between local and national newspapers (Barranco & Wisler, 1999), newspapers and television news (McCarthy et al., 1996), and commercial and public broadcasters (Wouters, 2013). In sum, the results on media selection of protest events tie in nicely with findings of media scholars on the importance of news values and news routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Communication scholars have primarily scrutinized media *description* of protest. Whereas selection studies show that few demonstrations become news, description studies hold that protest coverage communicates little substance. After the pioneering work of Gitlin (1980) and Chan and Lee (1984), McLeod and Hertog (1998) coined the "protest paradigm" concept. This fixed template, script, or narrative guides journalists "where to look and where not to look" and results in a number of traits typical of protest news items (Chan & Lee, 1984, p. 187).[3] Characteristic for the paradigm is the use of derogatory news frames: protest is framed as a confrontation between police and protestors and as a riot, circus, or freak show. Only rarely is protest presented within a frame of debate, as a legitimate controversy. Similarly, journalists rely on official sources, bystander portrayals, and invocations of public opinion—not on protest organizers—to define and give meaning to the event. Overall, the core of the paradigm is a focus on the noise and particulars of an event and a neglect of the reasons or issues that fueled the action. As a consequence, protest paradigm coverage tends to trivialize and even marginalize protestors (Detenber et al., 2007).

Interestingly, adherence to the paradigm is generally presented as a default condition. Curtailed by the power of political and business institutions, mass media act as agents of social control, support the status quo, and hence *always* mirror the paradigm and rarely deviate from it (McLeod, 2007; McLeod & Hertog, 1992, 1998). Theoretically, however, it is postulated that the more radical (goal) and militant (tactic) the protest, the more closely the paradigm will be followed. Only recently scholars have started to test this conditionality. Boyle and colleagues (2012), for instance, found especially group tactics to affect adherence to the paradigm. In an earlier contribution Boyle and other colleagues found group goals to matter too: status quo protests were treated more thematically than moderate and radical reform protests (Boyle, McCluskey, Devanathan, Stein, & McLeod, 2004). Dardis (2006) performed the first cross-national comparison and found U.S. coverage of Iraq War protests to follow the paradigm more closely than U.K. press coverage, reflecting the sociopolitical differences between both countries. Finally, Weaver and Scacco (2013) found the use of marginalization devices to vary by the ideological leanings of different U.S. cable TV news programs. This article follows in the footsteps of these studies and presents the most robust test of the core characteristic of the paradigm—the thematic or episodic nature of protest coverage—to date. It compares media independent information of protest to detailed content measures of the resulting news reports. It does so across many events, across a private and public television station, and in a non-U.S. context.

Episodic versus Thematic

In his seminal study *Is Anyone Responsible?*, Iyengar (1991) established how two types of news frames affect how individuals assign responsibility for political issues. News is either *thematic* or *episodic*. Thematic coverage places events into context, pays attention to trends, and presents general evidence. In contrast, episodic news treats events as particular cases in the form of event-oriented reports. Content analysis showed episodic coverage to dominate American TV news. Experiments revealed episodic coverage to elicit individualistic responsibility attributions for social problems. Thematic coverage, on the other hand, had the opposite effect and elicited societal responsibility attributions. As social movements generally blame systemic factors for ongoing injustices and demand that governments take action, episodic coverage is considered to be detrimental to a movement's success, while thematic coverage is considered to be beneficial (Smith et al., 2001).

In this study two observations are made with regard to the thematic–episodic typology as just spelled out. First, the premise of Iyengar's study was that news items are either

episodic or thematic.[4] This study steps away from this simple dichotomy. This article deals with news content, not with the effects of exposure. Hence, human subjects do not need to be assigned to conditions. As such, a more fine-grained operationalization is employed, to better answer the question of how journalists shape reality in the news.

Second, this study considers episodic coverage to be too broadly defined to apply to protest reports. As Smith and colleagues (2001) remark: demonstrations exactly are events or episodes staged by movements to draw attention to a particular problem or theme. From this point of view, protest coverage would be episodic by definition. Therefore, a distinction is made between episodic-event coverage (with a focus on the details of the event) and episodic-exemplar coverage (with a focus on personal testimonies). Both types are acknowledged in the literature and result in different audience effects. Event-oriented coverage informs about the behavior of protestors. It communicates force and commitment or madness and mayhem, and likely affects the saliency of the reported protest. However, if news reports are excessively event-oriented, the issue will be underdeveloped and viewers will hardly make sense of the protestors' motivations (Detenber et al., 2007). Exemplars, on the other hand, are more of a stylistic device that journalists use (Daschmann & Brosius, 1999; Zillmann & Brosius, 2000). Exemplars present the audience with a micro-perspective on an issue. They work as attention commanders, make stories more vivid, and produce arousal (Lefevere, De Swert, & Walgrave, 2012). Exemplars do not tend to increase salience (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), yet they pull the audience toward a particular case, which results in individual-level explanations for social problems (Iyengar, 1991). In sum, this study takes three different types of coverage into account: (a) thematic, (b) episodic-event, and (b) episodic-exemplar coverage. Figure 1 presents the dependent variables of this study.

Hypotheses

The first question of this article is descriptive: Is protest coverage more episodic than thematic? Several studies have established the event focus of protest coverage (Boyle et al., 2004; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Smith et al., 2001).[5] This event focus can be understood from a gatekeeping perspective. Journalists have to meet daily deadlines and have a permanent lack of time. Finding appropriate sources and judging their trustworthiness (which is likely to result in thematic coverage) is far more time-intensive than simply covering the event itself. Also, the professional standard of objectivity plays a role. Protest events are opinionated, polarize, and beg for balanced coverage. Only the challengers are present at the event; those who are needed to make a balanced news item are not. Therefore, reporting the concrete actions on the spot is relatively safe—few interpretations need to be made, and the report appears to be "value-free"
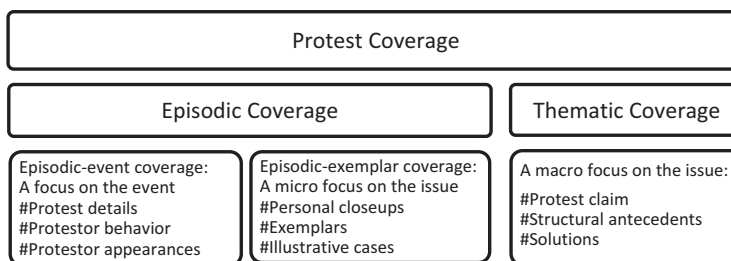

Figure 1. Three different types of protest coverage.

(McLeod & Hertog, 1998). In sum, this article expects television news coverage of protests to be, foremost, episodic-event-oriented.

> *H1*: Television news reports of protest events are primarily episodic-event-oriented.

In addition to a descriptive inquiry, this study also teases out the conditions under which journalists decide to cover protests in one way or another. I present four blocks of hypotheses based on distinct theoretical levels of gatekeeping theory to explain media description (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The first block relates to news value theory and takes event characteristics as a starting point. The second block is based on news routines and departs from the relationship between sources and journalists. The third block deals with the news format of a protest report. Editorial decisions are key here. The last block looks at media ownership as an influence on media content.

News Values

News value theory considers event characteristics and the degree to which they correspond with news factors as drivers of media coverage (Tresh, 2009). Besides a selection effect, news factors possess a distortion effect: elements that make the selection of an event more likely will be stressed in the resulting news report (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 71). Protests that are disruptive clearly match television news' fascination for conflict and spectacle. Following the distortion hypothesis, these events will result in news items that especially stress disruptive action. Smith and colleagues (2001), for instance, found coverage of protest events with violence, arrests, or counterdemonstrations to be more episodic.

> *H2*: Television news reports of protest events that are disruptive are more episodic-event-oriented.

The effect of turnout is expected to be similar. Large protests are exceptional and therefore newsworthy. Journalists will focus on this big-number fact and develop story-lines about the composition and mobilization of the crowd. Also, mass mobilizations bring inconveniences: how the march blocked traffic or annoyed local shopkeepers are likely storylines when demonstrations are large.

> *H3*: Television news reports of protest events that are large are more episodic-event-oriented.

News Routines

The second block of predictors ties in with news routine research and takes the day-to-day practicalities of news production into account. Tuchman (1973) defines news making as routinizing the unexpected. News is the result of a bureaucratized production process with fixed deadlines, newsbeats, and routine sources in order to deal with the unpredictability of the day. How sources try to facilitate the newsgathering process is key from a news routine perspective (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Gandy (1982, p. 8) speaks about "information subsidies" being carefully crafted messages that are ready-tailored to be picked up in the news cycle. By subsidizing and

controlling information, sources hope to gain leverage over journalists. Some sources are better at this than others. Organizations that have larger budgets, employ communication staff, develop ties with journalists, and know the media from within are far more likely to get covered (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Thrall, 2006). I expect that such insiders of the media game are also better positioned to get their message up front as they ease the difficult and time-intensive process of gathering issue information.

> *H4*: Television news reports of protest events staged by organizations with greater news-making capabilities are more thematically oriented.

News Format

News format characteristics refer to editorial decisions related to the composition of a newscast. I take two editorial decisions into account. The first is whether a protest event is a lead item. Lead items matter. Behr and Iyengar (1985) found them to be strong public agenda setters. Selection studies established that especially disruptive and large demonstrations open newscasts (Wouters, 2013). Therefore, the descriptions of lead news items are expected to be a consequence of this selection effect, leading to a more event-oriented focus in lead news items.

> *H5*: Television news reports of protest events that open a newscast are more episodic-event-oriented.

A second news format characteristic is whether a protest report has a follow-up item in the same newscast or not. This choice to reserve a larger time slot is an editorial decision. I expect protest reports that include a follow-up item to contain more exemplar coverage. With follow-up items, journalists are given the opportunity to present an issue from a different angle. After dealing with the demonstration in one item, the follow-up item may tackle the issue by means of a personal illustration. For example, after a march that criticizes the housing conditions of poor people, a follow-up item may zoom in on the particular housing conditions of a certain family. Because of the different nature of this information and the golden journalistic rule of consistency of place, time, and subject, protest reports with a follow-up item will be more exemplar-oriented.

> *H6*: Television news reports of protest events that include a follow-up item are more episodic-exemplar-oriented.

Media Ownership

The final level of influence is the organizational level. Journalists do not operate in a vacuum—they are socialized in a newsroom. Important in this regard is how the ownership structure influences how events are covered. Research holds that public broadcasters focus more on "hard" political and institutional news, while commercial stations have a more "soft" news approach. Their focus is more sensationalist, human-interest, and drama-oriented (Brants, 1998; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, & Legnante, 2012). Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) similarly hold that commercial media favor entertainment value over hard journalistic values. The literature on "infotainment" (Brants, 1998) sees personalization as a feature of commercialization as well.

By packaging an issue as a personal testimony, hard information is made more easily digestible. I therefore expect commercial stations to cover protests in both a more event- and exemplar-oriented fashion.

> *H7a*: Television news reports of protest events on a commercial station are more episodic-event-oriented than reports on public broadcasters.
>
> *H7b*: Television news reports of protest events on a commercial station are more episodic-exemplar-oriented than reports on public broadcasters.

Data and Methods

Two data sets are used. The first data set contains protest event data gathered from police archives of the police jurisdiction *Brussel Hoofdstad Elsene*. Brussels is the capital of both Belgium and Europe.[6] This context makes Brussels particularly attractive for demonstrators. The major methodological strength of the data set is that it presents media-independent information about protest characteristics. Previous studies have relied foremost on information in media reports to predict media descriptions and ran the risk of being tautological. The police archive data set is a census data set and contains 4,582 protest events (2003–2010). On average, more than one demonstration a day takes place in Brussels. Most of these events are small: 6 in 10 draw 100 people or fewer to the streets; 5% of all demonstrations account for 75% of all demonstrators. Half of the demonstrations are organized by asylum seekers and migrant organizations. The demonstration context in Brussels is generally peaceful; disruptions occur in 4% of the events. Information about the number of attendants, disruption, and the organizers of the event has been drawn from the police data set. See Wouters (2013) for more details about the police archive data-gathering process.

Data set two contains media data. The University of Antwerp hosts the Electronic News Archive (ENA), a continuous news-monitoring service that codes all 7-o'clock newscasts of the most important commercial (*vtm*) and public (*Eén*) broadcasters of Belgium.[7] News reports about protests were retrieved from the ENA and subjected to extensive secondary coding.[8] Of the 4,582 protests, 11% (497 events) made it into the news. Media selection is not random; in particular, demonstration size, disruption, and the strength of the sponsoring organization affect selection.[9] All items in the newscast on the day of the protest that referred to the action were included. In total, for 428 unique protest events video images were available, resulting in 564 protest reports (some events appeared on both the commercial and public station).[10] Coding was done by the author (master coder; 51% of all reports) and three trained MA students. Intercoder reliability tests indicated highly reliable coding, with an average Krippendorff's alpha of .82 (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). For more information about coder reliability, coding instructions, and coding examples, see the supplemental Appendix.

Dependent Variables

Thematic, episodic-event, and episodic-exemplar coverage have been measured by means of the time devoted to these coverage types in protest reports. Researchers have reported difficulties in systematically measuring episodic and thematic coverage when using scales (Smith et al., 2001, p. 1,420). Airtime has been used as a reliable and more detailed operationalization (Iyengar, 1991, p. 145). In practice, every second of every protest report was assigned to one of three mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. If the visual and spoken information conflicted, the audio information was coded, not the visual.[11] The dependent variables in this study are the proportions of one type of coverage in relation

to the total length of the protest report (coverage type in seconds/total item in seconds). Hence, the dependent variables are continuous and interrelated. In the results section these continuous proportional measures are used in the models. If relevant, the results of models with absolute dependent variables (total amount of seconds irrespective of item length) are referred to in the text.

Episodic-event coverage (Krippendorff's alpha: .81) was operationalized as attention to "particular" details of the protest event.[12] Information about the number of participants, protest location and itinerary, weather conditions, mobilization process, appearances and behavior of protestors, composition of the crowd, and incidental details of the demonstration, was coded as event coverage. *Episodic-exemplar coverage* (Krippendorff's alpha: .74), or a micro-perspective on the issue, was operationalized as information about the personal experience of someone regarding the issue at hand, such as a demonstrator in an anti-poverty march narrating how she ran aground in poverty and how she depends on social support. Not all interviews with protestors constituted exemplar coverage; only if someone narrated how the issue affected his or her personal life was coded as exemplar coverage. Finally, *thematic coverage* (Krippendorff's alpha: .90) is the attention to the issue or theme of the march. Thematic coverage deals with the claim of the protestors and offers background information about the issue that fueled the protest, such as, for example, a voice-over describing how one-third of the retired people in Belgium lives under the poverty line when reporting a poverty march.

Independent Variables

Demonstration size is the effective number of participants in the demonstration as counted by the police. Because of its negatively skewed distribution, this variable is log-transformed. The largest mediated demonstration contained 70,000 participants; it was staged by unions in October 2005 and dealt with retirement age. On February 15, 2003, 42,000 voices screamed "No blood for oil" in the streets of Brussels against the imminent war in Iraq. These large demonstrations are exceptions: 90% of all televised demonstrations had a maximum turnout of 5,000 participants. *Disruption* is a dummy variable that is coded 1 for cases involving arrests, violence (property damage; people wounded), or blockage of traffic. Seventeen percent of all demonstrations that made the screen were catalogued as disruptive in the police archive. *Media standing*, or an organization's news-making capability, is the natural log of the number of news items over the entire research period mentioning the main organizer of the march. This information was extracted from the ENA. Trade unions have the highest media standing in Belgium. *Lead items* (8% of the protest events) are items that open a newscast. The *follow-up* variable (14%) refers to whether a protest report included a follow-up item in the same newscast (1) or not (0). The *public broadcaster* variable is a dummy variable that is 1 if the report was aired by the public broadcaster (*Eén*) and 0 if the commercial station (*vtm*) aired it. Finally, I control for five issues: poverty and welfare protests (5% of all protest reports), foreign national protests (11.5%), asylum seeker protests (12.4%), employment protests (36%), and peace protests (7.1%). All protests dealing with other issues (e.g., environmental issues, student protests, women's rights) are grouped into an "other" category that is used as a reference group. Linear regressions are used to predict the proportion of coverage types (being continuous variable ranging from 0 to 1).[13] Standard descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics

Variable	Description	Data	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Obs
Thematic (prop.)	Proportion of report airtime spent on the issue (context, problem, solution, claim)	M	.58	.23	0	1	564
Episodic-event (prop.)	Proportion of report airtime spent on the event (noise, spectacle, incidents, numbers, . . .)	M	.35	.23	0	1	564
Episodic-exemplar (prop.)	Proportion of report airtime spent on personal testimonies (closeup, exemplar)	M	.07	.12	0	.69	564
Thematic (sec.)	Total airtime spent on the issue (context, problem, solution, claim)	M	55.98	53.37	0	455	564
Episodic-event (sec.)	Total airtime spent on the event (noise, spectacle, atmosphere, incidents, . . .)	M	35.49	49.61	0	539	564
Episodic-exemplar (sec.)	Total airtime spent on personal testimonies (closeup, exemplar)	M	10.23	2.02	0	149	564
Size	Number of effective demonstrators counted by the police, log transformed	P	6.01	2.03	1.099	11.16	555
Disruption	Turns 1 in case of arrests, violence (property damage, people wounded), or blockage of traffic	P	.18	.38	0	1	564
Media standing	Number of news items in News Archive mentioning staging organization, log transformed	P + M	2.49	3.15	0	7.28	564
Follow-up item	Turns 1 if the protest item has a follow-up item in the same newscast	M	.14	.34	0	1	564
Lead item	Turns 1 if the protest report includes the opening news item	M	.08	.27	0	1	564
Station	0 for commercial station (*vtm*); 1 for public broadcaster (*Eén*)	M	1.62	.49	1	2	564
Poverty and welfare	Issue typology based on description of demonstration issue in police archive data set	P	.05	.22	0	1	564
Foreign nationals	Issue typology based on description of demonstration issue in police archive data set	P	.12	.32	0	1	564

(*Continued*)

Table 1
(Continued)

Variable	Description	Data	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Obs
Asylum seekers	Issue typology based on description of demonstration issue in police archive data set	P	.12	.33	0	1	564
Employment	Issue typology based on description of demonstration issue in police archive data set	P	.36	.48	0	1	564
War	Issue typology based on description of demonstration issue in police archive data set	P	0.07	.26	0	1	564

Note. P = Police Archive Variable; M = Media Variable; P + M = combination of both data sets.

Table 2

Correlation coefficients

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Size	1										
2. Disruption	.11*	1									
3. Media standing	.20*	.02	1								
4. Follow-up item	.20*	.18*	.11**	1							
5. Lead item	.25*	.19*	.01	.39*	1						
6. Station	-.10**	-.09**	.03	.06	-.00	1					
7. Poverty and welfare	-.09**	-.11**	-.09**	-.04	-.07	.11	1				
8. Foreign nationals	.04	.08	-.26*	-.03	-.05	-.00	-.08	1			
9. Asylum seekers	-.13*	-.05	-.19*	-.06	-.01	.01	-.89**	-.14*	1		
10. Employment	.21*	.09	.56*	.14*	.06	-.02	-.17*	-.27*	-.28*	1	
11. War	.11**	.15*	-.12**	.10**	.10**	-.02	-.06	-.10**	-.10**	-.21*	1

*$p < .01$; **$p < .05$ (two-tailed).

485

Results

Descriptive Findings

Is protest coverage foremost event-oriented (H1)? On average, protest reports devote more time to thematic (58%) than episodic (42%) information. Episodic coverage predominantly deals with the event (35%) and far less with exemplars (7%). In two protest reports out of three (66%), the share of thematic airtime outweighs the share of episodic airtime. This tilt toward thematic coverage is not a trivial one: in 41% of all protest reports, the share of thematic coverage is at least double the proportion of episodic coverage. Figure 2 gives a visual cue about the distribution of thematic and episodic-event coverage. The x-axis indicates the proportion of a report that is devoted to the coverage types. The y-axis shows the percentage of all news reports that fall into these categories. Black bars indicate thematic coverage; white bars indicate episodic-event coverage. For example, 20% of all protest reports (y-axis) devote 30% of their airtime (x-axis) to episodic-event coverage (white bar). Clearly, the distribution of thematic coverage (black bars) is heavier (higher bars) at the end of the x-axis, indicating that more protest reports have a stronger thematic tilt. The opposite holds for episodic-event coverage.

    In sum, the evidence contrasts previous findings. Four reasons can be put forward for this divergent result. First, the finding could be due to a measurement effect (i.e., coding seconds instead of working with scales). It could be that media reports devote ample *time* to thematic coverage, yet that by another criterion of *emphasis* or *attention*, thematic coverage is less prominent. In concrete terms, a short bit of episodic information (information and images about disruption) could be more salient and sweep more lengthy thematic information away, especially when coders work with scales and have to make a single coding decision at the end of a news item. Coders who have to code seconds make many small decisions and may be less sensitive to such effects. Another measuring effect might have to do with the decision to code the voice-over of the report. Visuals were only coded if a voice-over was absent. Demonstration visuals are foremost episodic (they are shot on location). A fuller incorporation of visual information would most likely have increased the episodic share of the protest reports. However, most previous studies coded abstracts of
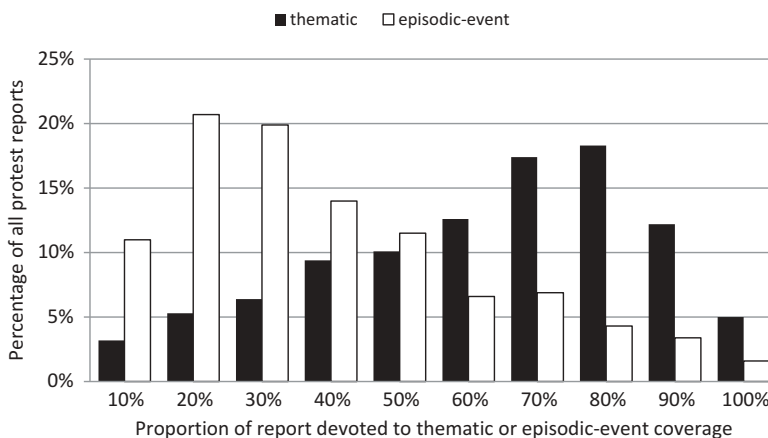

Figure 2. Distribution of attention to thematic or episodic-event coverage across protest reports (*N* = 564).

news reports and did not rely on visuals, making this reasoning unlikely to have caused the divergent result.

Second, the finding could stem from a medium effect. Previous research primarily investigated press coverage. Although press coverage generally is more thematic than television coverage (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), Smith and colleagues (2001) found the opposite to be true for protest coverage. Because of a more limited news hole, television may only select protests that relate to ongoing themes, and therefore, would cover protest events more thematically. A more mundane medium effect may be that television communicates visually and audibly simultaneously. Therefore, television more easily communicates episodic information without having to stress it explicitly in its voice-over.

Third, the divergent findings may stem from a selection effect. This study is one of the first to examine protest coverage across many protest items during a longer period of time. It may be the case that previous studies selected specific and not very representative cases.[14]

Fourth, and theoretically most interesting, the finding could be caused by a media and political system effect. Belgium has a strong public broadcaster and a strong civil society (Elchardus, Huyse, & Hooghe, 2001; Hooghe, De Swert, & Walgrave, 2007). Both contextual elements could explain why coverage of protests in Belgium is more thematic than episodic and, as such, goes against results found in an American context, characterized by a more market-based media system and weaker ties between state and civil society (Curran, Iyengar, Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lijphart, 1999).

Explanatory Findings

When are protest reports more episodic or thematic? Four blocks of predictors are distinguished, related to news values (event characteristics), news routines (facilitation of news production), the news format (editorial decisions), and media ownership (public versus commercial station). Controlling for the issue of the demonstration, three linear regressions are presented in Table 3. Figure 3 consists of 6 panels (A–F) and presents graphical evidence of effect size (predicted probability plots).

The first block of predictor variables deals with news values and departs from event characteristics. Hypothesis 2 held that coverage of disruptive protests would be more event-oriented. This hypothesis receives strong confirmation. If demonstrators misbehave, the proportion of event coverage increases and the proportion of thematic coverage decreases. With all other variables kept at their means the predicted probabilities show that, if a demonstration is not disruptive, 32% of a protest report will deal with event information. For disruptive demonstrations, this share increases to 47% of the report (Figure 3A). Disruption is the strongest predictor in both the thematic and episodic-event models, explaining 8% and 9% of the total variance, respectively. Previous studies have established disruption to be a key predictor of media selection and showed disruptive protest to result in longer news items (Barronco & Wisler, 1999; Wouters, 2013). It could therefore be that, by staging a disruptive protest, activists not only succeed in gaining attention, but also in gaining more thematic attention in absolute terms. This absolute thematic increase might then be washed away by a stronger increase in event-oriented attention. Analyzing the absolute dependent measures only partly confirms this reasoning. Disruptive protest items tend to be longer (+31 seconds). The amount of thematic airtime does not decrease significantly (−5 seconds), yet event-oriented airtime strongly increases (+34 seconds). In other words, disruptive protests do not wash the substantive message away, at least not in absolute terms.

Table 3

Linear regressions predicting the proportion of thematic, episodic-event, and episodic-exemplar coverage in protest reports on Belgian television news (N = 554)

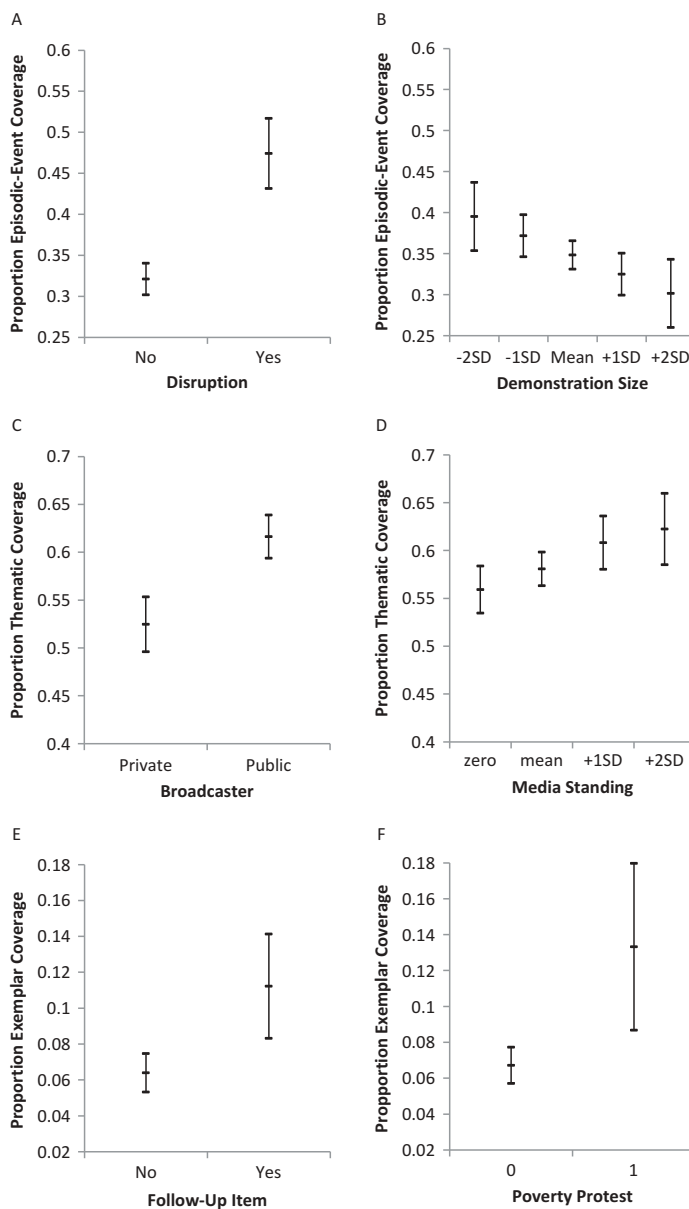|		Thematic			Episodic-event			Episodic-exemplar		
		Coef.	Std. err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. err.	Sig.
News values	Size	0.006	0.005	0.244	−0.012	0.005	0.015	0.006	0.003	0.029
	Disruption	−0.137	0.025	0.000	0.153	0.024	0.000	−0.016	0.014	0.251
News routines	Media standing	0.009	0.004	0.014	−0.006	0.003	0.065	−0.002	0.002	0.240
News format	Follow-up item	−0.057	0.029	0.051	0.008	0.028	0.769	0.048	0.016	0.003
	Lead item	−0.103	0.037	0.006	0.080	0.037	0.028	0.022	0.021	0.283
Media ownership	Public broadcaster	0.092	0.019	0.000	−0.073	0.018	0.000	−0.018	0.010	0.084
Issues	Poverty and welfare	0.018	0.044	0.684	−0.084	0.043	0.052	0.066	0.024	0.007
	Foreign nationals	−0.019	0.032	0.560	0.039	0.032	0.217	−0.020	0.018	0.258
	Asylum seekers	−0.037	0.031	0.228	0.020	0.030	0.509	0.017	0.017	0.319
	Employment	0.016	0.026	0.538	−0.008	0.025	0.746	−0.008	0.014	0.595
	War	−0.108	0.039	0.006	0.116	0.039	0.003	−0.008	0.022	0.702
	Constant	0.426	0.045	0.000	0.510	0.044	0.000	0.065	0.025	0.010
Adjusted R^2		0.175			0.165			0.044		

Figure 3. Predicted probabilities for episodic-event (A & B), thematic (C & D), and episodic-exemplar (E & F) coverage.

Disruption has no significant effect on exemplar coverage, although the direction is negative: if a demonstration runs out of control, journalists are probably less eager or face greater constraints in getting exemplars in front of the camera.

The second event characteristic is demonstration size. Large demonstrations were expected to lead to more episodic-event-oriented coverage (H3), yet H3 is not corroborated by the facts. In fact, larger demonstrations lead to less event-oriented reporting, have no significant effect on thematic coverage, but lead to a significant increase of exemplar

information. In sum, there is an effect of size on episodic coverage, but in a different way from what was expected. The predicted probabilities (Figure 3B) show that the largest demonstrations (+2 *SD* above the mean) have a significantly lower share of event coverage (30%) than demonstrations with a lower-than-average turnout (37% and 40% of episodic-event coverage for mean demonstration size minus one and minus two standard deviations, respectively). On the other hand, it appears that, if confronted with a large demonstration, journalists let the mass have its say. They interview many more rank-and-file protestors and construct a report that is more likely to present a bottom-up perspective on the issue.[15] Replacing the present numerical size variable with a categorical size variable shows that the effect is only significant for the largest demonstration size category (>5,000 participants). If demonstrations cross the 5,000-participant barrier, the share of episodic-exemplar coverage rises from 6% to 11% and the chance that at least some exemplar information is aired rises to 70%. In sum, especially for the largest demonstrations, protest coverage is more exemplar-oriented.

A second block of independent variables focuses on news routines. Some organizations have greater news-making capabilities than others. Hypothesis 4 posited that organizations with higher media standing would receive more thematic coverage. These organizations are "insiders" in the media game and are hence better positioned to provide the press with information subsidies, leading to more attention for the group's message and claims. The results confirm H4, although the effect size is small (Figure 3D). Reports on demonstrations by organizations with no media standing (55% thematic coverage overall) receive, on average, 7% less thematic coverage than organizations with the highest media standing (62%); only differences between these two extremes are significant. In a way, the mass media arena does not seem to constitute a level playing field; rather, it confirms the principle of cumulative inequality: those who have will get more (Wolfsfeld, 1997).

The third block of predictors deals with news format characteristics. Both Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6 can be maintained. First, lead items (H5) tend to be more event-oriented and less thematic. The share of episodic-event coverage increases from 34% to 42% for lead items. Lead-item status boosts event information, even on top of the disruption effect (previous studies have shown that especially disruptive protests are likely to open newscasts). Follow-up items also present an interesting dynamic: if protest reports include a follow-up item, the proportion of episodic-exemplar coverage increases, supporting H6. Figure 3E shows that exemplar coverage almost doubles in the case of a follow-up item: it increases from 6% to 11%, although the confidence interval in the case of a follow-up item is rather large. This finding suggests that, for protest coverage, personal closeups can indeed be considered to be a different kind of information more likely to appear in case of a follow-up item.

H7a and H7b dealt with the ownership structure of media outlets. It was argued that a commercial station, which is dependent on private revenues and viewer ratings, would cover protest actions more episodically, both in terms of event and exemplar orientation. The results show that, on top of event, messenger, and format characteristics, the mediator matters for how protests appear on television. In fact, the media ownership variable proves to be the second-most powerful explanatory variable of thematic and episodic-event-oriented coverage, with an increase in R^2 of 4%. In short, protest reports on the public broadcaster contain more substantial information, whereas protest reports on the private station focus more on the behavior and appearances of the protest participants. The predicted probabilities show that an average protest report on the commercial station has a 52% share of thematic coverage, whereas on the public broadcaster, the average protest report has a 62% share of thematic coverage (Figure 3C). H7a is confirmed.

H7b expected more episodic-exemplar coverage on the commercial station and cannot be supported. Although the sign goes in the expected direction, the difference in episodic-exemplar coverage between both stations is only very marginally significant ($p = .084$). In order to ensure that the impact of the station on information in protest reports is truly a matter of description (distortion) and not selection (the public broadcaster covers many more protest events compared to the commercial channel), the analysis was redone by only including protest events that were covered by both stations ($N = 272$). This analysis leads to the same conclusions and proves that the impact of the television station factor is robust.

Finally, the analysis also tested for differences in the findings across issues. Issues do not really increase the fit of the models and turn out to be insignificant in most of the cases. However, two elements need to be highlighted. First, protest reports dealing with poverty are more likely to include episodic-exemplar coverage (Figure 3F). Iyengar (1991, p. 47) also found that poverty was predominantly covered episodically (related welfare issues like unemployment and racial inequality were not). Apparently, something about the issue of poverty makes journalists use exemplars. Second, peace protests tend to get more event-oriented than substantial coverage, after controlling for event characteristics like size and disruption. A closer look at peace-related protests shows that they are Iraq War dominated, peaking in 2003. Most probably, protest events offered journalists a new perspective for covering the imminent Iraq War, resulting in protest reports that focused on the protest as being part of worldwide mobilizations, the composition of the march, and their colorfulness or atmosphere.

Conclusion and Discussion

In 1970, Amitai Etzioni argued that the efficacy of demonstrations as a mode of political expression became self-evident with the rise of television. The latter being fond of vivid pictures and the former seeking the "ear and eye of the country," the needs of both were considered to be intimately intertwined. However, research has found an important crack in what was thought to be a marriage made in heaven. Whereas activists hope to get their message across, protest paradigm research concluded that journalists pay more attention to the noise and spectacle of an event. In the words of Iyengar (1991), the coverage of a protest is *episodic*, not *thematic*. This article has put this idea to a systematic empirical test. It analyzed television news descriptions of protest events across a large number of events that differed in terms of issues, staging organizations, number of attendants, and degree of conflict. It used an innovative research design by relying both on media and media-independent data, and developed a nuanced and precise measure of both episodic (event- and exemplar-oriented) and thematic coverage.

Contrary to earlier findings, television coverage of protests was found to be more thematic than episodic. Most information in protest reports deals with the issue, not with the event itself. Journalists quite frequently use personal closeups as a storytelling technique (one protest report in three), but exemplars do not dominate if airtime is taken into account. Protest coverage is likely already sufficiently vivid, making exemplars less needed to attract and keep viewers' attention.

Besides *measurement* (time versus other measures of emphasis; visuals) and *medium* (television versus newspaper) arguments, this divergent finding can be a consequence of *selection*: previous research has often focused on single (radical) movements or protest events. This study explicitly aimed for a more representative and generalizable set of protest events. Finally, two context-related factors can explain the divergent finding as well. First, most previous results were established in the U.S. context, which is known

for having a more market-driven media system. This study was conducted in a media system with a strong public broadcaster (Curran et al., 2009; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The fact that the commercial station covers protests in a more episodic-event-oriented fashion strengthens this explanatory mechanism. Second, there could also be a time factor at work. The studies that established the episodic nature of protest coverage scrutinized examples from the late 1960s (Gitlin, 1980, on anti-Vietnam War protests) and 1970s (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, on the anti-nuclear movement). Meanwhile, protests have "normalized," albeit more in Europe than in the United States (Caren, Ghoshal, & Ribas, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001). An increasing number of people, from more diverse segments of society, report in national surveys to have participated in protests and regard it to be a legitimate form of political expression. In such a context, the claims of protestors cannot simply be ignored or distorted by audience-dependent mass media. Future research could compare the description of protest across media systems and time periods to get to the heart of this matter.

The main thrust of this article was to put the conditionality of the protest paradigm to a robust test. The results show that more disruptive protests result in more episodic-event coverage. Demonstration size had an unexpected effect. Large demonstrations do not result in more event-centered coverage. Instead, journalists tend to sample participants in large demonstrations, report the "gut feeling" of the mass, and create more exemplar-oriented reports. Also, the news-making capability of protest organizers matters. Protests staged by strong sponsors with high media standing are more thematic. Also for protests—the weapon of last resort for the weak—media coverage seems to follow the principle of cumulative inequality (Danielian & Page, 1994; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

Besides event and organizer characteristics, newsroom dynamics matter. Lead items focus more on the event, while follow-up items tend to include a higher proportion of exemplar coverage. Finally, the public broadcaster under study reported more on the issue than on the details of the event. The mediator matters, as the public broadcasting service reports more substantively about protests than its commercial competitor. In sum, contrary to what previous research suggested, the results of this study indicate that the protest paradigm is not a fixed template. There is substantial variation in how protests are described in the media arena, and this variation can be explained by looking at aspects of news values, news routines, news formats, and media ownership. As empirical evidence accumulates, one could expect that speaking of protest coverage in terms of "the" protest paradigm will become less acute.

As noted in the introduction, both social movement scholars and students of (political) communication have studied the relationship between protests and mass media. Strikingly, both fields have done so in relative isolation. As research on social movements is increasingly focusing on the political impact of protests (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010), the relationship between protests and media—and more specifically, the agenda-setting perspective and terminology—is gaining importance in the social movement field (McAdam & Su, 2002; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012). This means that the time has come for more intensive collaboration and cross-fertilization between social movement and media studies.

One possible line of inquiry and collaboration between both research fields could be situated in media effect research. A promising avenue for future research would be to investigate how different types of audiences react to protest news reports that vary in their thematic and episodic nature. It could be that, in order to get public opinion on their side, social movements are best served by thematic accounts of protest events. Authorities, on the other hand, can be supposed to be readily familiar with the different stances and positions on a particular issue, and find a description of the attendants to be a crucial determinant

in whether or not they react to a protest (Lohmann, 1993). If authorities only react to a protest *if* and *as* presented in the media arena (Koopmans, 2004), the circumstances and the consequences of this *if* and *as* deserve closer investigation.

Acknowledgments

Supplemental Material

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the publisher's Web site at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2014.958257.

Notes

1. Although police archives do not necessarily present researchers with perfect pictures of the real world, at least the data are media-independent. Only by means of media-independent data can one make safe predictions about the content of the coverage without risking tautological explanations.

2. Belgium is a linguistically segregated, federal country. Dutch- and French-speaking people form two communities, each with its own media landscape. When I speak of Belgium in this article, I actually refer to the largest community, which is the Dutch-speaking community that comprises 60% of the population.

3. Such a script or narrative is not uniquely related to protest coverage. See, for instance, Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) on local TV news coverage of crime.

4. Of course, news items are rarely that black-and-white. Yet, Iyengar (1991, pp. 145–146) shows that in the United States, most TV news items are clearly tilted in one direction or the other.

5. These studies make use of very different measuring techniques. Some authors use newspaper snippets that illustrate the event-oriented nature of protest coverage. Others use (several) dummy variables, or three-, five-, or seven-point scales to tap coverage type.

6. The fact that Brussels is also the capital of Europe might make it a special case. Analyses show that demonstrations aimed at European Union (EU) political institutions are less likely to make it into Belgian television news compared to domestic protests. About one demonstration in four in Brussels is aimed at the EU, but most of these protests are small, and do not make news. Running ahead on our argument, the target of the protest action (EU versus domestic institutions) does not significantly affect media description. Once the media gates are passed, the target becomes irrelevant for media description (episodic versus thematic) of the protest event.

7. The ENA is funded by the Flemish Minister of Media. All issues, actors, and countries mentioned in the news items have been coded (together with item rank order, length, station, and day of broadcasting), resulting in an easily searchable database of news content. For more information about the archive, visit www.steunpuntmedia.be.

8. The full codebook is available upon request; codebook instructions for the dependent variables, a coding example, and information on coder reliability calculation can be found in the supplemental Appendix.

9. For a detailed analysis of media selection making use of this police archive data set, see Wouters (2013).

10. For 69 of the 497 protest events in the ENA dataset, no video material could be retrieved (because of lost or damaged video files stored on DVDs, hard disks, or online servers). An up-close investigation shows no particular bias for the retrieval of protest image files. The author thanks Julie De Smedt, coordinator of the archive, for assistance in collecting the news imagery.

11. Most of the images of protest reports were shot at protest locations and consist of a continuous stream of images dealing with the protest actions (demonstrators walking, cheering, whistling).

Thus, visuals in demonstrations are foremost episodic-event oriented. However, they mostly serve as background for a voice-over and do not explicitly draw attention. If visuals explicitly draw attention, the voice-over also tends to pay attention, and the coverage would be coded as episodic-event.

12. The Krippendorff alpha for dependent variables is a ratio variable measure, as it is measured at the level of a second.

13. A dependent variable that is a proportion requires a generalized linear model (GLM). Using GLM, results were exactly the same as with standard simple regression. I report the latter as coefficients can be more easily interpreted. Using separate logistic regression models with dummy dependent variables, and a multinominal model with a three-category nominal dependent variable, all produced similar results, indicating that the evidence is robust.

14. McLeod and colleagues, the founding fathers of the protest paradigm, particularly studied coverage of radical and anarchist marches.

15. The actors in the protest items were also coded. A regression analysis with the number of speaking demonstrators as a dependent variable showed that the larger a demonstration, the more protestors are directly quoted.

References

Amenta, E., Caren, N., Chiarello, E., & Su, Y. (2010). The political consequences of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *36*, 287–307.

Andrews, K. T., & Caren, N. (2010). Making the news: Movement organizations, media attention, and the public agenda. *American Sociological Review*, *75*(6), 841–866.

Barranco, J., & Wisler, D. (1999). Validity and systematicity of newspaper data in event analysis. *European Sociological Review*, *15*(3), 301–322.

Behr, R. L., & Iyengar, S. (1985). Television news, real-world cues, and changes in the public agenda. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *49*(1), 38–57.

Boyle, M., McCluskey, M., Devanathan, N., Stein, S., & McLeod, D. (2004). The influence of level of deviance and protest type on coverage of social protest in Wisconsin from 1960 to 1999. *Mass Communication and Society*, *7*(1), 43–60.

Boyle, M., McLeod, D., & Armstrong, C. (2012). Adherence to the protest paradigm: The influence of protest goals and tactics on news coverage in U.S. and international newspapers. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *17*(2), 127–144.

Brants, K. (1998). Who's afraid of infotainment? *European Journal of Communication*, *13*(3), 315–335.

Caren, N., Ghoshal, R. A., & Ribas, V. (2011). A social movement generation: Cohort and period trends in protest attendance and petition signing. *American Sociological Review*, *76*(1), 125–151.

Chan, J. M., & Lee, C.-C. (1984). Journalistic "paradigms" of civil protests: A case study in Hong Kong. In A. Arno & W. Dissanayake (Eds.), *The news media in national and international conflict*: Boulder, CO: Westview.

Curran, J., Iyengar, S., Lund, A. B., & Salovaara-Moring, I. (2009). Media system, public knowledge and democracy: A comparative study. *European Journal of Communication*, *24*(5), 5–26.

Danielian, L., & Page, B. (1994). The heavenly chorus: Interest group voices on TV news. *American Journal of Political Science*, *38*(4), 1056–1078.

Dardis, F. (2006). Military accord, media discord: A cross-national comparison of UK vs. US press coverage of Iraq War protest. *The International Communication Gazette*, *68*(5/6), 409–426.

Daschmann, G., & Brosius, H.-B. (1999). Can a single incident create an issue? Exemplars in German television magazine shows. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *76*(1), 35–51.

della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (1999). Forms, repertoires and cycles of protest. In D. della Porta & M. Diani (Eds.), *Social movements: An introduction* (pp. 165–192). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Detenber, B., Gotlieb, M., McLeod, D., & Malinkina, O. (2007). Frame intensity effects of television news stories about a high-visibility protest issue. *Mass Communication and Society*, *10*(4), 439–460.

Elchardus, M., Huyse, L., & Hooghe, M. (2001). *Het Maatschappelijk Middenveld in Vlaanderen* [Civil society in Flanders]. Brussels, Belgium: VUBPress.

Etzioni, A. (1970). *Demonstrating democracy*. New York, NY: Gordon and Breach.

Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. H. (1965). The structure of foreign news. The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research*, *2*(1), 64–90.

Gamson, W., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *18*, 373–393.

Gamson, W., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, *95*(1), 1–37.

Gamson, W., & Wolfsfeld, G. (1993). Movements and media as interacting systems. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *528*, 114–125.

Gandy, O. (1982). *Beyond agenda setting: Information subsidies and public policy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pub. Co.

Gilliam, F., & Iyengar, S. (2000). Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. *American Journal of Political Science*, *44*(3), 560–573.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hayes, A. F., & Krippendorff, K. (2007). Answering the call for a standard reliability measure for coding data. *Communication Methods and Mmeasures*, *1*(1), 77–89.

Hocke, P. (1998). Determining the selection bias in local and national newspaper reports on protest events. In D. Rucht, R. Koopmans, & F. Neidhardt (Eds.), *Acts of dissent*. Berlin, Germany: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.

Hooghe, M., De Swert, K., & Walgrave, S. (2007). *De Kwaliteit van het Nieuws. Kwaliteitsindicatoren voor televisienieuws* [Quality of the news: Quality indicators of television news]. Leuven, Belgium: Acco.

Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Koopmans, R. (2004). Movements and media: Selection processes and evolutionary dynamics in the public sphere. *Theory and Society*, *33*(3–4), 367–391.

Lefevere, J., De Swert, K., & Walgrave, S. (2012). Effects of popular exemplars in television news. *Communication Research*, *39*(1), 103–119.

Lijphart, A. (1999). *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*. New Haven, CT; London, England: Yale University Press.

Lipsky, M. (1968). Protest as a political resource. *The American Political Science Review*, *62*(4), 1144–1158.

Lohmann, S. (1993). A signaling model of informative and manipulative political action. *The American Political Science Review*, *87*(2), 319–333.

McAdam, D., & Su, Y. (2002). The war at home: Antiwar protests and Congressional voting, 1965 to 1973. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(5), 696–721.

McCarthy, J., McPhail, C., & Smith, J. (1996). Images of protest: Dimensions of selection bias in media coverage of Washington demonstrations, 1982 and 1991. *American Sociological Review*, *61*(3), 478–499.

McLeod, D. (2007). News coverage and social protest: How the media's protest paradigm exacerbates social conflict. *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, *2007*(1), 185–194.

McLeod, D., & Detenber, B. (1999). Framing effects of television news coverage of social protest. *Journal of Communication*, *49*(3), 3–23.

McLeod, D., & Hertog, J. (1992). The manufacture of "public opinion" by reporters: Informal cues for public perceptions of protest groups. *Discourse & Society*, *3*(3), 259–275.

McLeod, D., & Hertog, J. (1998). Social control, social change and the mass media's role in the regulation of protest groups. In D. Demers & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Mass media, social control, and social change: A macrosocial perspective* (pp. 305–330). Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

Nelson, T. E., Clawson, R. A., & Oxley, Z. M. (1997). Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance. *American Political Science Review*, *91*(3), 567–583.

Oliver, P., & Maney, G. (2000). Political processes and local newspaper coverage of protest events: From selection bias to triadic interactions. *American Journal of Sociology*, *106*(2), 463–505.

Reinemann, C., Stanyer, J., Scherr, S., & Legnante, G. (2012). Hard and soft news: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism*, *13*(2), 221–239.

Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2000). Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news. *Journal of Communication*, *50*(2), 93–109.

Shoemaker, P., & Reese, S. (1996). *Mediating the message. Theories of influence on mass media content*. New York, NY: Longman.

Smith, J., McCarthy, J., McPhail, C., & Augustyn, B. (2001). From protest to agenda building: Description bias in media coverage of protest events in Washington, DC. *Social Forces*, *79*(4), 3.

Thrall, T. (2006). The myth of the outside strategy: Mass media news coverage of interest groups. *Political Communication*, *23*(4), 407–420.

Tresh, A. (2009). Politicians in the media: Determinants of legislators' presence and prominence in Swiss newspapers. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *14*(1), 67–90.

Tuchman, G. (1973). Making news by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected. *American Journal of Sociology*, *79*(1), 110–131.

Van Aelst, P., & Walgrave, S. (2001). Who is that (wo)man in the street? From the normalisation of protest to the normalisation of the protester. *European Journal of Political Research*, *39*(4), 461–486.

Walgrave, S., & Vliegenthart, R. (2012). The complex agenda-setting power of protest. Demonstrations, media, parliament, government, and legislation in Belgium, 1993–2000. *Mobilization*, *17*(2), 129–156.

Weaver, D., & Scacco, J. (2013). Revisiting the protest paradigm: The Tea Party as filtered through prime-time cable news. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *18*(1), 61–84.

Wolfsfeld, G. (1997). *Media and political conflict: News from the Middle East*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wouters, R. (2013). From the street to the screen: Characteristics of protest events as determinants of television news coverage. *Mobilization: An International Journal*, *18*(1), 83–104.

Zillmann, D., & Brosius, H.-B. (2000). *Exemplification in communication: The influence of case reports on the perceptions of issues*. London, England: Routledge.