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Framing Protest: News Coverage of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street Movements

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Framing Protest: News Coverage of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street Movements

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Abstract

In regards to contemporary, American political movements, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movement have both generated quite a bit of news coverage. In this thesis I examine what type of coverage each movement receive, determine how coverage differs across the two movements, and propose an explanation for the differences. There is an extensive sociological literature on news media, both in terms of institutional practices and media products. For the purpose of this project, the literature on media framing of protest movements is especially important. Drawing on a framework which employs McLeod and Hertog's protest paradigm, Boykoff's frames of dissent, and Iyengar's distinction between episodic and thematic framing, this study uses a content analysis to discern if frames used by *The New York Times* and *USA Today* -when covering the Tea Party and Occupy movement- differ, and if so, how. The findings show that, overall, the Occupy movement receive less favorable coverage in that Occupy protesters are more likely to be represented as deviant in some way, whereas Tea Party activists are more likely to be represented as having credible political demands. These differences, I argue, are due to the Tea Party's less threatening concerns to the capitalist system. These findings are helpful in understanding how media outlets which claim neutrality and objectivity still end up reinforcing the status quo by marginalizing movements that challenges the foundation upon which modern capitalist democracies are built.

1. Introduction

The recent NATO conference in Chicago afforded me the opportunity to converse with activists belonging to the Occupy Movement. A handful of twenty to forty-something, primarily male, blue-collar type activists/protestors were perched in Grant Park, primed politically, ready to explain why they were there to anyone with a willing ear. Dozens of police officers, armed with riot gear, were looming around the outnumbered activists; the officers, seen laughing and joking amongst themselves, acted as if the Occupiers need not be taken seriously. Occupiers, on their end, were heavily concerned about what the police were doing, what would occur, and what should be done in response. Meanwhile, curious, tourist-minded pedestrians gaped or glanced at the activists while strolling or driving past.

My attention gravitated towards an Occupier who stood out from the others given that he had many piercings on his face, possessed a tattoo decorating his cheek bone, and was actively engaged with those who passed by him. This Occupier told me a story of the day before, when he and other Occupiers had gone to Rahm Emanuel's home. A photographer from the Chicago Tribune had come to the occupation, at the behest of the editor, to take only pictures, not to talk to the Occupiers. This photographer snapped away at the proud, tattooed Occupier, who was content and happy with himself to be representing the Occupy Movement in the mainstream press.

When I later examined video footage of the occupation of Emanuel's home and the events leading up to it, I learned that the crowd was diverse in terms of gender but was skewed toward a greater number of young people. There were hundreds if not thousands marching in the streets. They chanted various slogans, including "1, 2, 3, fuck the bourgeoisie" and "we say

fight back” (youtube: NSFW: Occupy Chicago Anti-NATO March to Rahm’s House). These protestors expressed concerns about both social class inequality and local Chicago politics. The video also shows that the police were present and that a police van had been marked with an anarchy sign and the phrase, “Pigs on Wheels.”

Contrast this with a Tax Day Tea Party event in 2010 in Washington D.C. (Youtube: Tax Day Tea Party 2010). Shown with the Washington Monument/National Mall in the background, Tea Partiers number in the thousands. Though limited by what the videographer targeted visually, police are not seen in any of the frames. Males and females, young and old, all seem to be represented; however, age-wise, the protestors are mostly middle-aged and older. These protestors dot Washington’s landscape with chants for freedom and various issues they care about.

Individuals interviewed on the video footage talk of the inception of “Obamacare,” of heavy and unfair taxation, of tyranny, socialism, freedom and liberty; of the fear of a redistribution of wealth; of needing to eliminate regulations, government oversight via regulatory agencies, as well as extinguishing governmental programs; of the myth of global warming; along with future legislation needed, what to do with illegal aliens, their fondness for FOX news, as well as concerns over the omnipresent liberal media.

The world is complex thus people seek information via the mainstream media. People continually “scan the environment, including mass media, for cues to public opinion on various social and political issues” (McLeod and Hertog 1992: 262). Gamson (1984) states the mass media is the primary verifier for many claims about the world. This can be extended to how social movements –including the Tea Party and the Occupy Movement – are represented in

media coverage. Thus, how a movement is thought of will be largely dependent on how protest efforts are framed due to our physical and emotional disconnection from these movements and our tendency of “scan[ning] the environment” for public opinion via the mainstream media (McLeod and Hertog 1992: 262).

The sociological literature describes many different ways that movements are represented in the media. Movements can be framed and shaped by public officials who usually have a stake in the issues and arrangements that movements bring forth. Protest groups can be framed as deviants, as freaks, or as ignorant; they can also be described as violent and disruptive (McLeod and Hertog 1999; Boykoff 2006); or it could be none or some of the aforementioned. Along with these depictions of protest events, the activities of social movements are either shown as episodic (each incident as a separate news event) or thematic (placing the movement and its goals in a larger sociohistorical context) (Iyengar 1991).

Episodic and thematic framing shape the attribution process in such a way that beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behavior are all being effected: episodic news spotlights events while thematic coverage presents more background; episodic coverage elicits individualistic attributions whereas thematic coverage is more likely to evoke societal attributions (Iyengar 1991).

In this thesis I examine media framing of two different protest movements – the Occupy movement and the Tea Party movement - in two mainstream newspaper outlets, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. To my knowledge, news coverage of the Tea Party and the Occupy Movement has not been examined and compared in the sociological literature in terms of how they are framed.

In order to understand the differences in coverage, if any, of these two movements, I make use of McLeod and Hertog's protest paradigm, Boykoff's frames of dissent, and Iyengar's distinction between episodic and thematic framing. These are all useful concepts for understanding the newspaper coverage of these seedling social movements.

Based on previous research of protest movements, I anticipate that media coverage will diverge between the Tea Party and the Occupy Movement. I hypothesize that coverage of the Tea Party will be more favorable than that of the Occupy Movement. This framing in turn will shape the general population's/media consumer's ideas about each movement—benefitting one movement as being seen as more legitimate while the other is rendered less so.

In what follows, I first discuss the characteristics of the mainstream media. Various scholars have shown the general makeup of this institution. I will also examine framing as a concept relevant to the dispersal of media messages. Then, I will discuss more in depth the theoretical considerations of this thesis. Finally, I will introduce my own study of newspaper coverage of the Tea Party and Occupy Movement. *The New York Times* and *USA Today* are both national papers with large readerships that presumably exert great influence on various segments of the population. I focus on early coverage of each movement due to the importance of initial impressions for subsequent interpretations and evaluations of the activities and goals of protest movements. I examine news coverage only—not op-ed and editorial pieces—that report on each movement. This analysis will show that news articles about these two movements were divergently shaped by the frames under consideration: one (the Tea Party) is framed as more legitimate than the other (the Occupy Movement).

2. Literature Review

In the first part of the literature review, I describe attributes found within the mainstream news including its values, focus, and characteristics of protest coverage. This mostly earlier literature then leads to the concept of framing which is followed by the theoretical considerations for the thesis. I will then introduce my own study.

MAINSTREAM NEWS VALUES

The mainstream news has been examined by many scholars throughout the years - values, focus, and characteristics of news being focal points. When it comes to the mainstream news, what values does this institution disseminate to the general population? The mainstream media is first and foremost a commercial enterprise which is profit oriented (Brown and Wilkes 2012). Gitlin (1980) and Gans (1979) state that news mostly focuses on individuals and not on a group of people thus a personalization of news is the norm. The news media values include altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, individualism and rational self-interest, moderation, social order, and national leadership, thus a gravitation toward abstract liberalism and the state (Gans 1979: 42). Shoemaker and Reese (1991) add competitiveness, materialism, private ownership, pursuit of profit, free markets, and the Protestant work ethic to this list of values found within the mainstream news.

The mainstream news aligns with, values, and supports “the social order of public, business and professional, upper middle-class, middle aged, and white male sectors of society” (Gans 1979: 61); what one could possibly consider the elite (Gitlin 1980). The mainstream news value novelty, drama, and freshness (Boykoff 2006) along with oddity, sexuality, controversy, conflict, and danger (McLeod and Hertog 1995). Finally, though not possible to achieve, the

news value objectivity which attempts value exclusion (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980), therefore factuality and impartiality (Westerstahl 1983), while answering who, what, when, and where.

Focus of Mainstream Media

The literature examined focuses much on what the mainstream media highlights when reporting “news.” In a general sense, mainstream news often concentrates on people, not groups (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980; Shoemaker and Reese 1991); pays most attention to elites and elite institutions (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980); spotlights leaders and regular sources (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986; Tuchman 1978); conflict versus consensus; and a fact that advances a story, not one that explains it (Gitlin 1980). Thus, news often provides the names of those examined, details the event highlighted, and produces a description of the setting; however, news doesn’t oftentimes highlight systematic reasons for the phenomena under examination such as spotlighting classism, poverty, or a transitional capitalistic economy.

To the mainstream news, news is often framed as a crime story with a victim and villain or protagonist and antagonist (Gitlin 1980). Mainstream news targets violence and the unusual, events not issues (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986; McLeod and Hertog 1992; Tuchman 1978; Shoemaker and Reese 1991). They also focus on the courts and the activities of authorities (Davenport 2010). Therefore, in regards to news coverage of protest groups/movements, values and focus might conflict with what some protest movements have to offer: they are a group, not an individual; are typically not elite, are sometimes leaderless and aren’t part of the establishment; create political disorder not social order; and are predominantly aiming to explain and affect issues versus being the focal point of the story (Gitlin 1980).

When protest movements are the center of attention of mainstream news, it is often in relation to violence, arrests, and inner conflict within a movement (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986; Gitlin 1980). Previous research has found that the news focus is often on what officials have to say about the protest thus the spotlight is on questions of legality of actions versus morality of issues (McLeod and Hertog 1992). Besides the aforementioned, what characteristics are found in coverage of protest events or movements?

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEWS ON PROTEST

Much of the literature on media coverage of protest movements has gravitated toward examining the characteristics found in the news coverage of various protests. Gans (1979) found that protest stories/news contained action, pace, and completeness. Brown and Wilkes (2012) found that images of protest oftentimes depict challengers as marginal, weak, and emotional. Protest coverage often contains warfare metaphors, and sometimes portrays protesters as antagonistic (Brasted 2005). Other scholars have found that issues are often trivialized and oversimplified, and also that news distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate protest groups (Gitlin 1977). News print of social protest is often in the form of an inverted pyramid with summaries and overviews neglected. Facts are dictated chronologically by level of importance; thus its “easy to see the trees but not the forest” (Gamson 1984: 56).

McLeod and Detenber compare mainstream news to a guard dog which protects the “status quo” via “maintaining order and protecting the system against potential internal and external threats” (McLeod and Detenber 1999: 5). This is done by the mainstream press via the aforementioned values and focus, including in its portrayal, or non-portrayal of various movements. The guard dog media oftentimes takes a “hostile stance toward the threat posed

by social protest”; thus protest coverage is often presented from the perspective of those which possess the dominant values (McLeod and Detenber 1999: 5). Therefore, what is covered much of the time in regards to protest by mainstream media is “deviance,” which lessens the impact of protesters’ “contributions and effectiveness,” insulates the elites, and defuses “the threat” (McLeod and Detenber 1999: 5).

The values and focus of the mainstream press are addressed in the literature through examinations of what bundles of information are exactly presented via news. The literature I highlight below contains theoretical concepts which capitalize on the ideas of framing.

Framing

Framing is the “process of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making 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” (Brown and Wilkes 2012: 225). Entman states frames typically “diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe”; thus, frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (Entman 1993: 52). Gitlin suggests that frames are “composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters;” therefore, frames fashion the world “beyond [our] direct experience” as natural and as part of our “common sense” (Gitlin 1980: 6). In essence, frames are “largely unspoken and unacknowledged” and “organize the world” for both journalists who report and for the news consuming public (Gitlin 1980: 7).

Scholars who have utilized the concept of framing in examinations of mainstream media have enhanced our understanding of media coverage of social movements/protest. Given that media organizations rely on efficiency in order to perform, framing is unavoidable (Gitlin 1980).

This is due to humans' -along with various institutions'- need for schemas of interpretation which make sense of the world while at the same time being mental heuristics that allow us to save time and energy (Goffman 1974; Fiske and Taylor 1991).

With these "schemas of interpretation," values and norms are encased in frames which "organize the world" while encouraging "the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner" (Gitlin 1980: 7; Kuypers 2009) Thus, the media define the limits of all competing definitions of reality of protest (Shoemaker and Reese 1991; Gitlin 1980) by determining "what is selected, what is excluded, [and] what is emphasized" (Gamson 1984: 80).

Various theorists (Gerbner 1972; Enzensberger 1974; Milliband 1969) argue that media frames limit "which public issues are debated, and so narrow the available political alternatives" (Tuchman 1978: 180). The media frames most commonly used also hide the "socioeconomic structure" and "avoid structural linkages between events"; thus news framing "prevents the realization of the Enlightenment model of free speech and public governance by preventing the ascertainment of truths" by limiting ideas, including our conceptualization of protest movements (Tuchman 1978: 180).

Literature on news framing of social protest shows that "where multiple parties and claims" are stated, the media gives some accounts greater credence than others: usually officials are given greater credibility than protest challengers (Brown and Wilkes 2012: 226). The prevalent frames found in coverage of protest movements "emphasize violence, criminality, and deviance" (Smith et al. 2001: 1403) along with trivialization, polarization, internal dissension, marginalization, disparagement by numbers and disparagement of a movement's effectiveness (Gitlin 2003).

The concept of framing and the findings of studies examining the values, focus, and characteristics of protest coverage that define mainstream news have led to three theoretical conceptualizations of the framing of protest: the protest paradigm, frames of dissent, and the episodic/thematic framing of news. The first concept found in the literature which utilizes framing of protest coverage is the “protest paradigm.”

Protest Paradigm

Chan and Lee (1984) have been given credit for coining the concept “protest paradigm.” Chan and Lee posit that the “practices of newspapers across the full political spectrum are conditioned by different sets of ‘paradigms’” (187). Similar to Gitlin’s (1980) ideas on framing (what exists, what happens, what matters), Chan and Lee use Kuhn’s conceptualization of paradigm: a “world view” which directs our attention to that which is of “concern,” which shows where one should look (and where one shouldn’t look), while highlighting what one should discover (187).

One of the first to elaborate in greater detail on the concept is McLeod and Hertog (1999) when illustrating the mechanisms of social control in media coverage of social protest. McLeod and Hertog conceptualize the protest paradigm as a “routinized pattern or implicit template for the coverage of social protest” (311). McLeod and Hertog argue that the greater the perception of extremism of the protest groups’ ideology and behavior, the greater the likelihood of “social control messages” via the frames found in the protest paradigm (305). These would include various frames described below.

Brown and Wilkes state that the protest paradigm is a pattern of reporting which ends up marginalizing protesters and legitimating authority (Brown and Wilkes 2012: 223). These

authors suggest that the protest paradigm is linked to “the routines of news collection” (time pressure + only general knowledge possessed by reporter = relying on authorities) and to the fact that the mainstream press is a profit oriented, commercial enterprise; thus, stories correlate with the protest paradigm due to being framed as “episodic, dramatic, and novel” (224). McCluskey et al. (2009), McLeod (2001), and McLeod and Detenber argue that the protest paradigm is a force of social control which protects “power and authority of political and business institutions” via coverage that highlights “noise, performance, and conflict” rather than the “reasons for the protests” (McLeod and Detenber 1999: 355).

The protest paradigm can be traced to four more general tendencies of mainstream news reporting: (1) the narrative structure, (2) reliance on official sources, (3) invocation of public opinion, and (4) deviance frame.

Narrating a Protest Story

Protest coverage via the mainstream press often follows a predictable narrative form. As I discussed above, the media favor novelty and drama, controversy, and conflict (Boykoff 2006; McLeod and Hertog 1995). Thus, news coverage of social protest often fits a narrative structure which emphasizes internal and external dissension against competing forces with “dramatic (preferably melodramatic) conflict” (Gitlin 1980: 90, 193). In fact, in order to highlight dissension, much news also gives attention to right wing opposition when covering left wing movements in order to establish conflict, drama, and “balance” (259).

Journalists often use combat metaphors, focus on specific actors around which stories can be written, and use opposites as a way to convey “objective” information which doesn’t require too much effort, resources, or time by the journalist –thus journalists can “parachute”

into any situation and already have some understanding of the protest (Davenport 2010: 58).

Therefore, all a journalist has to do is identify the type of event, “apply the labels of ‘authorities’ and ‘challengers’” to the actors, and decide which actor is “good” and which actor is “evil” (Davenport 2010: 58). This in turn protects the journalist who can claim objectivity by letting “both sides” speak (59).

Social protest is often cast as a battle between protesters and police “rather than as an intellectual debate between the protesters and their chosen target” (Brasted 2005: 5; McLeod and Hertog 1992). When violence is present, protesters are more likely to be portrayed as violators and police as “victims of [that] violence” (Brasted 2005: 5). Emphasis in the narrative frame is on social disorder, and coverage is of particular protest events rather than the issues that give rise to protest (Brasted 2005), with action and violence equaling a greater amount of drama (McLeod 1995).

Reliance on Official Sources

Given that the mainstream press values social order and leadership (Gans 1979), aligns with the status quo (Tuchman 1978; McLeod and Hertog 1999), and pays most attention to elites and elite institutions (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980), it is not surprising that the protest paradigm would also include a reliance on official sources. Gitlin (1980), McLeod and Hertog (1995), and Shoemaker and Reese (1991) posit that protest coverage relies heavily on statements by government officials and other authorities.

Along these lines, Kapsis (1970) found that news reports of riots draw heavily on police accounts. Sigal (1973) confirms the prominence of official sources in his study of *The Washington Post* and *New York Times*; over three-fourths of news sources were government

officials. Davenport concludes that more authority-oriented papers cover the actions of authorities “more frequently and in greater detail relative to dissident actors” when compared to more dissident-oriented papers (Davenport 2010: 181). McLeod and Hertog (1992) found that even when the focus of news is on law-breaking, official sources such as the police are given much more space in news accounts than law breakers. Davenport (2010) theorizes that the reliance on authorities is due to the authorities “hav[ing] an advantage over challengers” in regards to their “capacity to understand and convey what took place” (63). This frame supports the status quo by allowing the sources of the information to define the angle of the story (Brasted 2005).

Invocation of Public Opinion

Public opinion is one of the “prime forces of social control embedded within news coverage” (McLeod and Hertog 1999: 315). Studies have shown that people’s attitudes and behaviors can be affected by their perceptions of public opinion (McLeod and Hertog 1999). Use of public opinion in coverage of social protest includes opinion polls, statements made by sources which characterize public sentiment, depictions of norms and law violations which highlight consensus, and comments by bystanders (315). Bystanders and public opinion oftentimes serve as a social cue/ thermometer, gauging whether a movement is favored or disfavored by the majority (McLeod and Hertog 1999). Thus, those disfavored in the public eye will be endowed with public perceptions of being an “isolated minority” (McLeod and Detenber 1999: 17).

When assessing public opinion, people often turn to the mass media (McLeod and Hertog 1999). McLeod and Detenber, for example, found that “respondents’ judgments were

being affected by the level of status quo support in the stimulus story” (McLeod and Detenber 1999: 17). Those participants stimulated by high status quo stories (i.e. favoring elite frames at expense of protest friendly frames) “estimated public support for the protesters to be about half the estimates” of those in the opposite, low status quo group (17). Thus, as I alluded to above, assumptions about public opinion can shape what people consider normal as well as deviant. The deviance frame is the final frame examined in regards to the protest paradigm.

A Focus on Deviance

According to the literature, there are a number of ways to fashion a protest movement to appear deviant. Given that the mainstream media values novelty, freshness (Boykoff 2006), oddity, and conflict (McLeod and Hertog 1995), mainstream coverage of social protest often gravitates toward “performers who are deviant –that is unrepresentative of the values, opinions, passions, and practices of the larger society” (Gitlin 1980: 152). The more deviant the event, the more prominently the protest event will be covered (Shoemaker and Reese 1991; Davenport 2010). Thus, norm violations (behavior, language, appearance) are of major concern for the mainstream press when covering social protest (McLeod and Hertog 1999; McLeod 1995).

Legal violations and criminality also can portray a protest movement as being deviant (Brasted 2005; McLeod and Hertog 1999). Brasted (2005) finds, in the context of violent clashes between police and protesters, that protesters are typically framed as deviant perpetrators while the police are the victims. When the focus of a news story is on law breaking, the police often become the central character (McLeod and Hertog 1995). This satisfies the mainstream press’s hunger for drama, conflict, and danger.

The mainstream press can enhance the perception of deviance of a protest movement by undercounting movement events (Gitlin 1980; McLeod and Hertog 1999) and by over-reporting violence that occurred and damage caused (Cohen 1981). Once a movement is labeled deviant, the media cast off any hint of neutrality: ideas are ridiculed, movements are stereotyped and viewed as less favorable (Shoemaker and Reese 1991; Shoemaker 1984), and the movement and its adherents are deemed illegitimate and becomes marginalized (Brasted 2005).

Frames of Dissent

A second conceptual consideration of this thesis concentrates on Boykoff's (2006) frames of dissent. Boykoff finds that five frames dominate media coverage of protest events: freak frame, ignorance frame, violence frame, disruption frame, and amalgam of grievance frame. According to Boykoff, these frames "emerge from the interactive relationship between" a movement and the media, "which is bracketed by journalistic norms and values, and results in a dialectic of escalation" where protesters feel the need to radicalize if they wish for press coverage (201).

Freak and Ignorance Frame

There is considerable overlap between the protest paradigm and frames of dissent. The freak frame and the emphasis on deviance, for example, both highlight the difference between mainstream and nonmainstream values, beliefs, opinions, and actions. The freak frame often portrays protesters as ridiculous, bizarre, dangerous and out of step (Boykoff 2006). Age is also sometimes used to describe protesters in outsider terms; this is so especially with young people who are often described as naïve, having to "one day grow up and understand the way things

really are” (Boykoff 2006: 216). Boykoff states that the freak frame is often generalized to the entire movement (2006) with trivialization being the end result (McLeod 1995).

Besides being portrayed as freaks, out of step and bizarre, protesters are often shown as “ignorant or uninformed” (Boykoff 2006: 218). Boykoff finds that a modest 19% of the protest news he examined relied on an ignorance frame to describe protesters (218). This frame can also be generalized to the entire movement with disparaging results to the public perception of a movement’s legitimacy (Gitlin 1980).

Violence Frame

Boykoff (2006) found violence to be the predominant frame of protest coverage. Even when there was no violence reported, “the [violence] frame remained in place as journalists remarked on the lack of destruction, the absence of violence, or the potential for violence” (211). Approximately 50% of the newspaper reports examined possessed the violence frame (212). Gitlin (1980), McLeod and Hertog (1999), and Davenport (2010), similarly, found that violence is oftentimes emphasized in news depictions of protest events. A vocabulary of war can also be applied to protesters. Protesters are sometimes compared to a “guerilla army” in possession of “Molotov cocktails and smoke grenades” (Boykoff 2006: 212).

Boykoff (2006) finds that anarchists in particular are a magnet for the violence frame, and Brasted (2005) finds that violence by police is often not questioned. Others have found that peaceful protesters are often ignored (McLeod 1995), and that it is precisely a protest movement’s violence potential that is the criterion by which the news media determines the news worthiness of social protest (Murdock 1981). Similarly, Cohen (1980) highlights how newspapers would overdramatize violence by a minority protesting amongst a peaceful

majority of protestors. The focus on violence in coverage of protest events, according to McLeod, serves to transfer the intended opposition target from the state, for example, to the police (McLeod 1995). McLeod states this is significant because those who challenge government policy are assumed to be guided by political motives while those who challenge the police are considered criminal.

Disruption Frame

In Boykoff's study (2006), a disruption frame also appeared regularly and "often dovetailed with the violence frame" (214). This frame operates at two levels: disruption of meetings of important bureaucrats/organizations and the disruption of everyday life for people who are merely trying to live life as law abiding and non protesting folks (214). This frame portrays protesters as disrupting business, preventing important meetings, hindering people's work and livelihoods, or even causing great pain to those being disrupted (214).

Amalgam of Grievance Frame

The final frame incorporated into Boykoff's frames of dissent is the amalgam of grievance frame. When protest coverage uses this frame, protesters are "accused of fighting for too many disparate issues" with no "clear message" (Boykoff 2006: 220). Thus, protesters are portrayed as overwhelmed with little direction as to why they are protesting as a group: that is, participants are described as pursuing their own separate causes or agendas. Boykoff states this frame can be "broken down further" into media portrayals which are value-neutral, positive or negative in regards to the amalgam of grievances (221). Suffice it to say, most news coverage examined by Boykoff that contained the amalgam frame was not positively spun (6.5% versus 47% negative) (221).

Reports can also highlight the diversity in a protest group, thus suggesting that too many voices undermine the development of a clear message or goal. Boykoff found that the Global Justice Movement was often compared negatively to the Vietnam War protests a few decades earlier: modern protesters appear utterly confused with all the disparate issues they protest while Vietnam protesters, in comparison, are described as concise and coherent in their demands (end the war) (222).

The Episodic/Thematic Framing of News

The final conceptual consideration for this research focuses on framing which is either episodic or thematic in nature.

Episodic Framing

The literature examined on news coverage of social protest also touches upon episodic/thematic framing. Episodic framing “takes the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances” (Iyengar 1991: 14). Coverage could include stories on an “individual welfare mother,” “terrorist bombing,” or protest event (Smith et al. 2001: 1404). As I have already mentioned, news prefers events over issues. Thus, episodic events are a major focus of news which, in various ways, affects the coverage of social protest (Gitlin 1980). Episodic coverage frames social protest “in a way that personalizes, de-contextualizes” and oftentimes dramatizes protest (Smith et al. 2001: 1404). This type of framing suggests “individual responsibility rather than social systemic causes of a problem” due to the focus on “concrete instances” and not on background or the surrounding circumstances to the event (1404). By “emphasizing the drama of a protest event rather than the substance of

protester critiques,” a “shallow understanding” is encouraged while “critical engagement” is discouraged (1404).

Similarly, Kielbowicz and Scherer (1986) find it is easier for journalists to cover events than more complex issues (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986). Tuchman (1978) argues that the tempo of the news, with new and different stories every day, mandates an emphasis on events, not issues. Because events are treated as discrete and embedded in a web of facticity, news as a whole is presented indexically, divorced from the context of their production.

Episodic framing affects what attributions of groups are made in news coverage of protest events or movements. Attribution theory posits that “people typically exaggerate the role of individuals’ motives and intentions and simultaneously discount the role of contextual factors when attributing responsibility for individuals’ actions” (Iyengar 1991: 33). This fundamental attribution error is much more likely with episodic framing of protest; episodic frames lead consumers away from systemic and more complex explanations of the problems protesters wish to address (Smith et al. 2001).

Episodic framing has been discovered to elicit lower levels of societal causal attribution and it causes higher levels of punitive causal attribution directed at the individual than at the structure of society (Iyengar 1991: 2). Iyengar also found that individualistic explanations for protest events are prevalent with episodic framing (Iyengar 1991). Exposure to episodic news is shown to make viewers “less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problem and also less likely to hold them responsible for alleviating it”; this is so because the connections between social problems and political decision-making are obscured, thus serving to insulate power (2). Episodic framing also correlates with pro-establishment sentiment: the

existing power structure is maintained due to individualistic attribution formation (Iyengar 1991; Smith et al. 1991). Thus, attribution of responsibility is “critical to the exercise of civic control” (Iyengar 1991: 3).

Boykoff (2006) found that news coverage of protest activities rarely focuses on issues and ideas. News recounts events but does not provide much background (Brasted 2005). Smith et al. (2001) found that news reports “represent protest events in ways” which neutralize or undermine movement agendas (1398). Fewer than a quarter of the news reports they examined were thematic (1404), and then only in relation to less threatening issues (1406). Thematic framing is the next and final concept relevant to the way news coverage portrays social movements that I discuss.

Thematic Framing

According to Iyengar (1991), thematic framing, in contrast to episodic framing, “places public issues in some more general or abstract context and takes the form of a ‘takeout,’ or ‘backgrounder,’ report directed at general outcomes or conditions” (14). The “essential difference between episodic and thematic framing” is that episodic framing highlights “concrete events that illustrate issues” while thematic framing “presents collective or general evidence” which may bear on general social conditions or on matters of public policy (Iyengar 1991: 14).

Thematic news coverage is found to have low levels of individual causal attribution formation and exposure to thematic coverage can override previous attributions (Iyengar 1991). Thematic coverage is more likely to favor demonstrators than is episodic coverage (Smith et al. 1991). When coverage is thematic, individuals assign responsibility to societal

factors and they hold the government accountable to a greater degree than when coverage is episodic (Iyengar 1990).

Finally, news coverage “frequently fails to focus on the issues and ideas” of a movement (Boykoff 2006: 203). Smith et al. (1991) found that protests events which focus on economic issues are less likely than some other protest activities to be covered in thematic terms, with the result that reporting ends up favoring the authorities and the economic status quo. Iyengar also found that policy preferences, assessments of police behavior, and evaluations of public institutions are all influenced by attributions of causal and treatment responsibility in news coverage of protests. Thus, when coverage is thematic rather than episodic, citizens are more likely to make societal attributions for issues and also to become politicized (Iyengar 1990).

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of this thesis is twofold; first, to examine newspaper media coverage of two social movements (Tea Party movement and Occupy movement) and discern if the frames used by reporters still correspond with previous findings of protest activities; second, to compare coverage of these two movements to see if it is different and, if so, to determine how. In short, does media coverage of the left-leaning and right-leaning movements employ the frames discussed above in the same way? Or does coverage of the two movements differ?

This study is unique in that it examines media coverage of two contemporary protest movements, one on the left and one on the right: previous academic literature examining media coverage of social protest has tended to spotlight protest events –not media coverage of movements. This thesis also contributes to our understanding of protest news coverage by its use of Iyengar’s theoretical formulations of episodic and thematic coverage. Various scholars

have used Iyengar's ideas but have not incorporated them into studies of news coverage of social protest. Thus, this study is of value to our understanding of how modern movements in America are portrayed and whether opposing movements receive equal treatment in the news.

4. Movements examined

Tea Party

Formation

The Encyclopedia Britannica states that the Tea Party movement is a "conservative populist social and political movement" which formed in 2009

(<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1673405/Tea-Party-movement>). Two-thousand

and nine was a year in which a Democrat president enacted various initiatives and programs which incensed various segments of the American population and triggered the formation of

the Tea Party. Firstly, there was a Stimulus Package; ([http://www.cbsnews.com/2300-](http://www.cbsnews.com/2300-500146_162-5992825-9.html?tag=page;next)

[500146_162-5992825-9.html?tag=page;next](http://www.cbsnews.com/2300-500146_162-5992825-9.html?tag=page;next)); secondly, the rescue of the American auto-industry

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automotive_industry_crisis_of_2008%E2%80%932010#United St](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automotive_industry_crisis_of_2008%E2%80%932010#United_States)

[ates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automotive_industry_crisis_of_2008%E2%80%932010#United_States)); thirdly, the overhaul of the health care system ([http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-](http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h3200/show)

[h3200/show](http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h3200/show)); and, finally, the initiatives taken to help home owners in response to the

mortgage crisis (http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/housing/2009-03-04-housing-rescue-plan_N.htm).

According to some observers, the Tea Party started on February 19, 2009, when CNBC's SquawkBox interviewed Rick Santelli who, as a former Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) trader and executive, was upset over the Obama administration's Homeowners Affordability

and Stability Plan mentioned above. In what followed, Santelli had what some say was a Howard Beale (Network) moment for right-leaning capitalists. Santelli blamed the government for “promoting bad behavior” and subsidizing “losers mortgages” possessed by homeowners who were merely “drink[ing] the water” versus “carry[ing] the water” (<http://www.rightpundits.com/?p=2921>).

He asked if President Obama was listening, if moving “from the individual to the collective” was wise given Cuba’s plight. The adoption of these types of programs, according to Santelli, would have founding Americans such as “Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin roll[ing] over in their graves” (<http://www.rightpundits.com/?p=2921>). Then Santelli suggested that there should be a new Tea Party formed: any or all “capitalists that want to show up at Lake Michigan” would be welcome (<http://video.cnbc.com/gallery/?video=1039849853>). From this point, “Tea Party chapters began to appear around the United States,” endorsed by conservative pundits in the media, and embraced by various segments on the right (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1673405/Tea-Party-movement>).

Platform

Some of the core goals of the Tea Party include: eliminating excessive taxes, eradicating the national debt, wiping out deficit spending, protecting free markets, abiding by the constitution, promoting civic responsibility, and reducing the size of government (<http://www.teaparty-platform.com/>).

According to the Tea Party, open marketplaces with unhindered competition enhancing products and services are a key to a thriving economy. There should also be a reduction in the number of people employed by both the national and local governments. Too many

bureaucrats equates to a bloated government which is wasteful and inefficient. Thus, less government equals greater freedom and liberty, according to the Tea Party platform (<http://www.teaparty-platform.com/>).

Occupy Movement

Formation

The second movement examined in my thesis is Occupy Wall Street. This movement states it's a "people-powered movement" which is "fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations" (<http://occupywallst.org/about/>).

In June 2011, members of Adbusters (a publishing, anti-consumer, pro-environment organization) blogged to all culture jammers, "anarchists, politicians, rabble rousers and do gooders" to form an American Tahrir (<https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/2011/june.html>); Adbusters printed posters which had a ballerina on top of a bull stating, "What is our one demand?" with the answer to the rhetorical question, "Occupy Wall Street September 17th, Bring Tent." (http://inventorspot.com/articles/top_20_occupy_wall_street_posters_motivates_20000_camp_out_downt). On September 17th, Occupy Wall Street attempted to occupy 1 Chase Plaza, the site of the "charging bull," but was deterred by police. Occupy Wall Street ended up in Zuccotti Park, where it stayed continuously for two months. During that time, the movement also rapidly spread to many locales around the country, pronouncing among other things, "We are the 99%."

Platform

When looking at specifics, members of Occupy Wall Street who marched to D.C. last year came to the consensus that: Congress should reinstate Glass-Steagall (Act created during the Great Depression separating commercial and investment banking), should prosecute those who were part of the 2008 financial crisis, should reverse the effects of Citizens United, must pass the Buffett rule (raises tax rate for individuals making more than a million dollars to 30%), along with revamping the SEC, eliminate the influence of lobbyists in politics, halt the revolving door found between public and private sectors found for many in Washington, eliminate personhood status for corporations, and re-establish the public airwaves in order to give equal time -for free- to all political candidates (<http://occupywallst.org/forum/detailed-list-of-demands-overview-of-tactics-for-d/>).

Occupy Wall Street considers reinstituting Glass-Steagall as a device to once again separate investment banking firms from commercial banks which accept deposits. Thus, banks would be unable to gamble depositors' money in risky investments. They also posit that a Buffett rule would begin to redistribute surplus value from the wealthy –corporate and private- to the lower percentiles. Occupiers wish to sever ties between lobbyists and politicians and want to see an end to the cozy relationship found between regulating agencies and regulators and the industries they are attempting to regulate.

The Occupy Movement also considers the 14th amendment not applicable to a corporation thus corporations shouldn't be considered individual persons. When corporations are given individual rights, "members" of corporations face no personal liability for harmful acts committed by that corporation. As a legal person, corporations can experience "perpetual life

and the accumulation, distribution and taxation of assets” therefore corporations can be immortal while accumulating wealth over many lifetimes (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112714052>). This can create great advantage with little in the way of accountability to local communities such as that found in original corporate charters. Occupy Wall Street also posits that having public airwaves will democratize the political process in such a way that all political candidates -from all parties- would have an equal voice, compared to present when those with the resources to spend millions on political ads have clear advantages when it comes to being noticed and heard by the voting populace.

5. My Study

The objective of this research is to investigate coverage in the mainstream newspaper press of modern social protest movements and to see whether protest coverage differs across the two movements under consideration. Newspaper articles about both the Tea Party movement and the Occupy Wall Street movement were selected from two major newspapers: *The New York Times* and *USA Today*.

Essential to this project is the identification of the frames used in newspaper coverage of the modern protest movements mentioned above. It is also necessary to examine the similarities and differences between coverage of the Occupy movement and the Tea Party movement.

It must be stated that though these movements differ ideologically, they both share commonalities worth noting. Both are groups which are relatively leaderless. Most of the members of these movements aren't from elite circles and are not part of the political

establishment, per se. On the contrary, they are groups which are attempting to influence political elites, and they do so in part at least with similar tactics, including staging public protest events.

Hypothesis

The major hypothesis for this project is that the Tea Party will receive more favorable news coverage than the Occupy movement. I also hypothesize that the Occupy movement is more likely to be framed in such a way that fits the parameters of the concepts of protest paradigm, frames of dissent and episodic framing. I predict the Tea Party will not be framed to the same degree within the confines of the protest paradigm and frames of dissent concepts and also will be framed more thematically than episodically. I argue that these differences are due to the Tea Party's "less threatening" concerns to the capitalist system versus Occupy Wall Street's (Smith et al. 2001).

I posit this is the case given our knowledge of the mainstream media and protest coverage. Gans (1979) states that news corporations value responsible capitalism and individualism, while Shoemaker and Reese (1991) find that competitiveness, materialism, private ownership, pursuit of profit, free markets, and a Protestant work ethic are highly regarded in the media. The mainstream press also aligns with the business and professional class (Gans 1979) while hiding the socioeconomic structure (Tuchman 1978). Protest movements also have a greater chance of favorable coverage if their concerns and values coincide with elites (Gitlin 1980).

The New York Times and *USA Today* are controlled/owned by the Ochs-Sulzberger family and the Gannett Company, respectively. Therefore, both publicly owned papers heavily rely on

the economic system for advertising dollars, investors, news, circulation, and profit; thus their needs are largely counter to the Occupy Wall Street movement which aims to rein in the economic system.

Methods

The primary data for this study are newspaper articles covering the Tea Party and Occupy Movement. The articles were coded in terms of the frames used to describe the movements, and these frames were analyzed qualitatively through a comparative content analysis. For this analysis I selected non op-ed/editorial news articles which focused on the two movements under study. Coverage of these two movements was selected through a search of articles from the chosen sources: *The New York Times* and *USA Today*.

Selection of Newspapers

The decision to select news stories from two newspapers was made in an effort to compare coverage in two national newspapers. In order to account for the development of particular protest events in various localities it would have been better to use smaller and more local papers, but since the focus is on more general framing of the movements I conclude that the national papers were a better choice.

The New York Times has been called the paper of historical record (Gamson 1984; Davenport 2010) along with the agenda setter for other media (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986). The readership of *The New York Times* is 52% male, has a median age of 49 and an average income of \$100,000, and possesses a readership of 65%, 40%, and 12% for college educated, professional/managerial, and C-Suite/Top Management (<http://nytmarketing.whsites.net/mediakit/newspaper>). The figures for *The New York Times*

online viewership could not be found. Thus, *The New York Times* is circulated amongst an older, influential, financially established, educated, and decision-oriented segment of the population who oftentimes are the agenda setters and rule makers for the rest of the population.

The other newspaper sampled, *USA Today*, could be considered a paper geared to the masses. It is the widest circulated paper in the US. The readership is 69% male, with a median age of 50, income of \$91,000, along with 78% having gone to college or more

(http://www.usatoday.com/marketing/media_kit/pressroom/audience.html). However, the figures for audience share favor females to a greater degree (49%), younger people (median of 30), less wealthy (\$47,500), and the renter class (49%) when consuming *USA Today* online.

Thus, *USA Today* is a national paper, mass circulated, which is largely read by a wide swath of the national population –when including both online and printed news.

Selection of Sample

To identify articles involving Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party I used LexisNexis, an online newspaper archive. Using “Tea Party” and “Occupy Wall Street” as key words for both *The New York Times* and *USA Today* (source titles) gave me approximately 300 to 500 news articles mentioning both movements. Particular articles were selected for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I didn’t wish to use op-ed or editorial pieces. I wanted to use only articles designated as “news” (thus a claim of objectivity) and not subjective opinion from oftentimes unaffiliated writers or commentators. For the most part the general population knows this is opinion and takes that into consideration when forming attributions about unknown movements. However, “news” claims to be objective, fact based and not driven by values (Gans 1979), thus the mainstream media claims factuality and impartiality (Westerstahl 1983).

Second, I decided to use new articles which were written in the earliest of stages of protest; when the movements were fledgling protests receiving their first taste of publicity. I thought this was pertinent given the dynamics of primacy effects and early impressions. Scholars have demonstrated that the news “presented early in a sequence [will have] more influence on final judgments than information presented late” (Tetlock 1983: 286). Thus, I chose the first seven news articles from each sample source (*New York Times*, *USA Today*) for both movements (Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street) for a sample total of twenty-eight. In regards to *The New York Times* articles, these were from both national and local sections of the paper. These samples were spread out over a couple of months for the Occupy movement and nearly a year for the Tea Party.

Thirdly, I chose articles whose main focus was reporting on my subjects and not just mentioning the movements in passing. Various articles from both papers would mention one of the movements but mainly be devoting reporting space to some other corresponding subject matter such as a Congressional campaign or a report on national policy. In order to be part of this study’s sample, the news articles had to have the movements as the primary subject matter, covering anything from a protest gathering to the movements biography to just a general report on some aspect of the movements themselves.

Finally, time period was a consideration since both movements were formed at varying instances. The Tea Party first was reported on in mid-April, 2009, while the Occupy movement began receiving press in September, 2011. However, these years are close to one another with both movements presently existing simultaneously. The sample sources haven’t changed in any

substantial way during this period, either. Therefore, time of reporting for each movement is not a factor effecting validity or reliability of the sample.

6. Analysis

For this analysis, I have used 28 news articles which were produced primordially –during formation of the movements under study. For the Tea Party, these dates ranged from April 2009 to March 2010 while the Occupy Movement’s coverage was between September 2011 and October 2011. These non op-ed/editorial news pieces were coded using the frames contained within this study’s theoretical considerations: the protest paradigm, frames of dissent, and episodic/thematic framing.

When examining the frequencies/percentages of the frames used for each movement - combining both samples (*The New York Times*, *USA Today*), Table 1 shows the Tea Party coverage was 100% narrative and 100% thematic; 71% of articles focused on disruption and 71% relying on official sources. Much less frequent were references to public opinion (36%), violence (21%), freaks (14%), deviance (14%), and ignorance (7%). Also, 14% of articles contained aspects of episodic framing.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Tea Party Coverage via Frames examined

Tea Party	New York Times	USA Today	Total and Percentage
Protest Paradigm			
Narrative Structure	7	7	14 (100%)
Reliance on Official Sources	6	4	10 (71%)
Invocation of Public Opinion	2	3	5 (36%)
Deviance	2	0	2 (14%)
Frames of Dissent			
Violence	2	1	3 (21%)
Disruption	5	5	10 (71%)
Freak	1	1	2 (14%)
Ignorance	0	1	1 (7%)
Amalgam of Grievances	0	0	0 (0%)
Episodic/Thematic Framing			
Episodic	1	1	2 (14%)
Thematic	7	7	14 (100%)

The distribution of the Occupy Movement (Table 2) also relied on a narrative (100%) and official sources (57%), but otherwise was described in term of deviance (86%), public opinion (71%), disruption (64%), freak frame (64%), and the amalgam of grievances frame (50%). 64% were thematic while 50% were episodic (not mutually exclusive due to some stories containing aspects of both). There was also a fairly large share of references to violence (43%) and ignorance (43%) in depictions of the Occupy Movement. Table 3 compares both movements in regards to frames utilized by both sample sources.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Occupy Movement coverage via Frames examined

Occupy Movement	New York Times	USA Today	Total and Percentage
Protest Paradigm			
Narrative Structure	7	7	14 (100%)
Reliance on Official Sources	5	3	8 (57%)
Invocation of Public Opinion	6	4	10 (71%)
Deviance	7	5	12 (86%)
Frames of Dissent			
Violence	3	3	6 (43%)
Disruption	5	4	9 (64%)
Freak	5	4	9 (64%)
Ignorance	4	2	6 (43%)
Amalgam of Grievances	3	4	7 (50%)
Episodic/Thematic Framing			
Episodic	4	3	7 (50%)
Thematic	4	5	9 (64%)

Table 3: Distribution and Percentages comparing frames used in Tea Party and Occupy Movement coverage

Totals and Percentages	Tea Party	Occupy Movement
Protest Paradigm		
Narrative Structure	14 (100%)	14 (100%)
Reliance on Official Sources	10 (71%)	8 (57%)
Invocation of Public Opinion	5 (36%)	10 (71%)
Deviance	2 (14%)	12 (86%)
Frames of Dissent		
Violence	3 (21%)	6 (43%)
Disruption	10 (71%)	9 (64%)
Freak	2 (14%)	9 (64%)
Ignorance	1 (7%)	6 (43%)
Amalgam of Grievances	0 (0%)	7 (50%)
Episodic/Thematic Framing		
Episodic	2 (14%)	7 (50%)
Thematic	14 (100%)	9 (64%)

Protest Paradigm

Narrative Frame

It is not surprising that coverage of both movements is organized as narrative given the media's need for drama, conflict, pace, and action. However, these narratives did differ between movements.

For the Tea Party, the drama and conflict was centered on the taxpayer and the government. An article titled, "Tax revolt a recipe for tea parties; Nationwide protests over government spending, bailouts planned for April 15" (Dorell, *USA Today*, April 13, 2009) was one example. This article opened with a wife/protestor articulating her and her husband's plight as former business owners, affected by the recession, and now having lost their home. They heard Rick Santelli's "on-air rant" for a tax revolt and became incensed due to the federal "mortgage bailout scheme," and hence provided a narrative of taxpayer versus government.

Other articles too relied on this theme of taxpayer versus government. A *New York Times* article reported that Senator Arlen Specter and Rep. Lloyd Doggett "were heckled and booed" as they talked to constituents (Herszenhorn and Stolberg, *The New York Times*, August 4, 2009). A *USA Today* piece spoke of the "first steps" of two protestors who took their displeasure "to [a] congressional town hall meeting on health care" with one taxpayer quoted as saying, "I'm tired of the government stealing from me" (Kiely and Fritze, *USA Today*, August 20, 2009). Another article highlighted "bitter divisions" between taxpayer and government where members of Congress were "shouted down, hanged in effigy and taunted by crowds" (Urbina, *The New York Times*, August 8, 2009).

The narrative guiding coverage of the Occupy Movement differed from Tea Party news stories. Instead of taxpayers versus the government, reports on the Occupy movement revolved around the Occupy movement versus the financial system generally and Wall Street specifically. For example, a *USA Today* article stated that “the protest is built around a core grievance: that most Americans are suffering from big financial institutions’ practices and from Wall Street’s political influence in Washington. ‘We are the 99%!’ the protestors cry –not the 1% that controls between one-fifth and one-quarter of the nation’s wealth” (Hampson, *USA Today*, October 11, 2011). Similarly, a *New York Times* piece opened with a protestor stating, “I think a good deal of the bankers should be in jail” while another activist quoted thought Wall Street is “responsible for the mess we’re in” (Sorkin, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2011).

There was also an emphasis on internal dissension within the protest movement itself. As an example, the first article written by *The New York Times* regarding Occupy Wall Street called the movement “fractured.” The author described some who want no “government action,” a few who wish for an end to “corporate personhood,” yet others protesting against “the death penalty, the drug war, the environment,” and even one activist who was opposed to the combustion engine (Bellafante, *The New York Times*, September 25, 2011).

There were also narratives which emphasized dramatic conflict, action, and which cast the Occupy protests as merely a battle between protestors and the police. The first *USA Today* article detailing Occupy Wall Street had the title, “Wall St. rallies are new brand of tourism; Arrests drive interest in anti-greed protests.” This news piece described how a visitor from London became curious due to “more than 700 marchers on the Brooklyn Bridge” being arrested (Bly, *USA Today*, October 4, 2011).

Likewise, a *New York Times* article titled, “Demonstrations Test Police Trained for Bigger Threats” focused on police action against the movement; with police believing the protesters were “a visible example of lawlessness akin to that which resulted in destruction and violence at other anticapitalist demonstrations,” including the WTO protest in Seattle 1999. The article was full of action directed at the marchers via the police, including the need for “crowd control,” marchers being “corralled,” police “forcibly” arresting protestors, and “pepper spray” being used “on four women who were on the sidewalk, behind the orange netting.” Thus, the predominant narrative discovered in the articles examined consisted of Occupy Wall Street versus the police (Goldstein, *The New York Times*, September 27, 2011).

Reliance on Official Sources

Reporters of both movements relied on official sources to describe the movements and/or the issues at stake. This is for several different reasons, as discussed above, including considerations of what information news organizations deem efficient, reliable, and pertinent (Davenport 2010: 63).

For Tea Party coverage, official sources showed up in some capacity in 71% of the articles to elucidate a particular aspect of the movement. But in no case were police officers quoted; not even when violence was mentioned. However, there were a plethora of quotes from other official sources, including government officials (e.g., Representative Doggett, Senator John Thune), members of various institutions and organizations (e.g., Heritage Foundation, Americans for Tax Reform), and leading organizers of various protest groups (e.g., Freedom Works, Americans for Prosperity).

As examples, a *USA Today* article which addressed the protests occurring at Town Hall meetings against healthcare reform, quoted former House Republican leader Dick Armey. He stated that the anger from protestors was “spontaneous” and that this hostility needed to be channeled “into a nationwide movement” (Kiely and Fritze, *USA Today*, August 20, 2009). RNC leader, Michael Steele, was quoted in several articles stating the Tea Party is “a revelatory moment” (Zernike, *The New York Times*, January 15, 2010) while the “head of a coalition of Tea Party brethren known as 9/12 groups” was quoted as saying, “Let it be known that we will not be used by any party or candidate!” (Zernike, *The New York Times*, January 23, 2010). Thus, what I found in much of the sample of Tea Party articles was a reliance on official sources over average, non-authoritative members of the Tea Party.

For Occupy Wall Street, only 57% of the sample contained quotes from official sources (includes statements by government officials and other authorities/experts): including academics (e.g., Cornell West, Michael Kazin), leading members of various institutions (e.g., NYCLU, AFL-CIO), as well as lead organizers of the Occupy movement itself. One noticeable difference in coverage of the two movements is that only stories about the Occupy movement contained quotes from or references to police sources – in some cases the police provided only arrest statistics and in other cases more detailed accounts of a protest event including facts about the arrests, events leading to the arrests, along with ideas about who the protesters were.

A *New York Times* article titled, “Demonstrations Test Police Trained for Bigger Threats” (Goldstein, *The New York Times*, September 27, 2011) was a prime example of news which relies on authorities to describe a protest movement/event. This was the second article

covering the Occupy movement found from *The New York Times* and it completely relied on official sources with no protestors interviewed even as the author attempted to describe the Occupy movement. The police labeled the protestors “anti-capitalists” while grouping them with protest mobilizations which turned violent (G20 Summit, London, 2009; WTO, Seattle, 1999).

Possible abuse by the police via pepper spray on four women was reported with only the official sources (police) quoted. Police were permitted to define the perspective of the story as one in which they were present to protect the population from “riots.” The police also executed arrests due to the fact that protesters had no permit and were “obstructing traffic.” Thus, in the end, the Occupy movement was unable to define the situation or be favorably represented at a critical time of protest mobilization. Out of the 14 articles examined, 6 mentioned the perspective of law enforcement.

Other official sources used to provide insight on Occupy Wall Street included academics and leaders of various institutions. As examples, Larry Sabato of the University of Virginia was interviewed in a *USA Today* article (Jansen, *USA Today*, October 17, 2011) about what Occupy Wall Street had to do in order to provide “political effect.” Sabato states that “the easier part is protesting” and if Occupy Wall Street wishes to make “a difference in an election season,” they must get into the “nitty-gritty of politics, day in and day out.” In another *USA Today* article titled, “Anti-Wall Street protests face question: Now what?; To have lasting impact, movement must mature” (Hampson, *USA Today*, October 11, 2011), the author interviews members of various institutions, including, Hugh Hogan of North Star Fund who states the Occupy Movement is “not yet a movement,” Terry Madonna, director of the Franklin and Marshall

College Poll, who posits the movement risks “being co-opted, or hijacked,” and the communications director of a McCain campaign who states that “the difference between an angry mob and a movement is a goal,” thus Occupy Wall Street must have “something to say” if they wish to be something other than “an angry mob.”

Invocation of Public Opinion

Public opinion was invoked in 36% of the Tea Party articles and 71% of the Occupy articles. Bystanders, opinion polls, an invocation of social norms, along with some sort of general statement describing consensus were all used in various instances for one or both of the movements. These modes of shaping perceptions act as social cues as to what is favored or disfavored (McLeod and Hertog 1992).

In regards to coverage of the Tea Party movement, five out of the fourteen articles referred to public opinion in some way. Reports of public opinion in Tea Party coverage were highly favorable to the Tea Party. A *USA Today* article incorporated an opinion poll which showed that the Tea Party protests “have grabbed the attention of the independent voters who tend to decide elections. By a margin of 2 to 1, independents said the town hall meetings have made them more sympathetic to Obama’s critics” (Kiely and Fritze, *USA Today*, August 20, 2009). Another article stated, “In some recent polls, a hypothetical Tea Party wins more support than Democrats or Republicans” (Zernike, *The New York Times*, January 15, 2010).

In contrast, public opinion references in articles about the Occupy movement were more likely to be unfavorable to the Occupy movement. At the closing of a *New York Times* article, a trader of the NY Stock Exchange who, we are told, is “a decade or so older than many of the protestors,” stated, “Look at these kids, sitting here with their Apple computers. Apple,

one of the biggest monopolies in the world. It trades at \$400 a share. Do they even know that?" (Bellafante, *The New York Times*, September 25, 2011). A *USA Today* piece also had a bystander at the end who observed "They're not very specific in their demands, are they?" (Bly, *USA Today*, October 4, 2011).

These opinions from bystanders do not make the movement seem competent nor does use of academics and other experts, even though they may otherwise be sympathetic to the movement. A *USA Today* (Hampson, *USA Today*, October 11, 2011) article said, "Political analysts, operatives, activists and historians generally agree that Occupy Wall Street must mature or wither" while a *New York Times* (Eckholm and Williams, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2011) piece had a sociologist quoted as saying the movement must have leaders and "clear demands." These academic "bystanders" gave no evidence –whether true or false- as to why this is so but nonetheless push the movement toward some form of "mature" state with a hierarchal structure –all in the first month of formation. This push for a mature state by academic bystanders was not evident in the Tea Party articles.

Deviance

The deviance frame was used sparingly for Tea Party coverage. Only 14% (2 of 14) of the Tea Party articles referred to protesters as deviant in some way, whereas the vast majority of Occupy Wall Street articles did so (86%, or 12 of 14).

In regards to coverage of the Tea Party, the articles examined didn't center on deviant events nor place a spotlight on the most outlandish protesters. There was also generally no coverage of legal violations or criminality and norm violations (behavior, language, appearance). One of the only exceptions here was in a *New York Times* article titled, "Health

Plan Opponents Make Their Voices Heard” in which members of the Tea Party were described as taking their struggles to the Town Hall meetings for healthcare (Herszenhorn and Stolberg, *The New York Times*, August 4, 2009). In this article, norm violations (behavior) were alluded to with members of Congress decrying actions by the Tea Party which were “over the line.” Representative Doggett claimed he was “ambushed,” thus prevented from answering -among other things- a father and son who wished to know about “applying to one of the military academies.” This was “over the line” according to the Congressman. This was one of only two instance of deviance found amongst the articles examined.

Articles about the Occupy Wall Street protests contained many more negative depictions of protesters and/or the tactics they used. I found that 86% (12 of 14) of the articles incorporated the deviance frame in one form or another. The depictions include protestors dressed as Wall Street zombies (norm violation of appearance) with some having pillow fights (norm violation of behavior)(Hampson, *USA Today*, October 11, 2011); protestors sitting on “blankets playing the guitar, or bongo drums, or meditating” (focus on performers who are deviant and do not represent the values, passions, and practices of the larger society) (Eckholm and Williams, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2011); and protestors conducting “mock interviews with a cardboard television camera” with the Fox News logo plastered on the side (focus on performers who are deviant and do not represent the practices of the larger society) (Sorkin, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2011).

In the sample articles, protester behavior and appearance were both portrayed as deviant. As an example, behavior and appearance norms were broken when a “half-naked woman,” “default ambassador” to the movement, was dancing in Zuccotti Park (Bellafante, *The*

New York Times, September 25, 2011). Finally, criminality and covering raucous/deviant events were also all utilized when employing the deviance frame. Several articles mentioned that some of the protestors marched without permits while other protestors occupied, unlawfully, a Senate office building (Bacon, *USA Today*, October 12, 2011). The same *USA Today* article reported only on events which ended in arrests due to deviant acts, thus a focus on deviant events –versus covering a more peaceful protest event or gathering.

Frames of Dissent

Violence Frame

Overall, 21% (3) of Tea Party articles made references to violence compared to 43% of the Occupy Wall Street articles. The Tea Party articles which referred to violence were all about the healthcare town hall meetings where politicians faced off with the Tea Party. A *New York Times* article stated, “noisy demonstrations have led to fistfights, arrests and hospitalizations” in “several cities” while a “forum held by Democratic lawmakers” in Tampa “descended into violence” (Urbina, *The New York Times*, August 8, 2009).

At the end of another article the reporter discussed the installation of metal detectors in the county courthouse of Honesdale, Pennsylvania in order to “handle security” and also mentioned that police protection had been requested by some unnamed politicians (Kiely and Fritze, *USA Today*, August 20, 2009). However, the use of the violence frame didn’t precede a protestor versus police frame as McLeod (1995) found. Therefore, violence in the Tea Party sample was not paired with a mention of the police.

About twice as many articles (6 of 14) about the Occupy movement made reference to violence, but in only one case did coverage refer to violence orchestrated by the protestors. A

USA Today article (Jansen, October 17, 2011) associated the Occupy movement with other protests occurring in places such as London, Toronto, Mexico City and Rome –all protesting “abuses by banks and corporations.” This piece stated, “In Rome, protestors broke away from the main demonstration, smashing shop and bank windows, and burning cars. Mayor Gianni Alemanno estimated the damage to city property at \$1.4 million.”

A few articles (2) referenced the Occupy protesters’ potential for violence, whereas others (4) reported on violence by the police. A *New York Times* article (Goldstein, September 27, 2011) described how “a deputy [used] pepper spray on four women who were on the sidewalk, behind the orange netting” while a *USA Today* piece (Beehner, October 13, 2011) stated there was a “heavy-handed response” from the NYPD, directed at Occupy Wall Street.

The potential for violence of Occupy Wall Street protesters was another method of introducing the violence frame into news stories. As an example, a *New York Times* piece (Sorkin, October 4, 2011) had the reporter fielding questions from a concerned CEO who wished to know if Occupy Wall Street was a “big deal,” whether they and others should “be worried about all of this,” and if there was a “safety problem” they should be cognizant of. The reporter who had gone to the Occupy camp in Zuccotti Park posing as tourist, concluded that “at least not yet” is there a worry; however, the message from Occupy Wall Street “is a warning shot about the kind of civil unrest that may emerge” in the near future. To highlight this fact, the reporter zoned in on a group of protestors who were watching an online video of an interview of Rosanne Barr. A “straight faced” Ms. Barr stated, “I am in favor of the return of the guillotine,” of having guilty bankers pay back losses, along with introducing “re-education camps.” The reporter described the protestors watching as “quite amused.” Thus, Occupy Wall

Street possessed the potential for violence evidenced in Rome and witnessed with Zuccotti Park's Occupiers' sinister sense of humor.

Disruption Frame

Disruption is a common theme in protest coverage. In my sample, 71% (10 of 14) of Tea Party articles referred to a disruption frame and 64% (9 of 14) of Occupy Wall Street articles did so. A disruption of meetings and disruption of the lives of everyday people were present along with a disruption of the status quo. However, the disruption theme was not the same across the movements.

Coverage of Tea Party disruption initially dealt with interference during Town Hall meetings on healthcare. As an example, a *USA Today* (Kiely and Fritze, August 20, 2009) piece titled, "'Listen to us': Inside August's roiling town halls" talked of a "phenomenon" in which members of the Tea Party infiltrated the town-halls and supplied "riveting reality TV." Representatives Carney and Taylor –leading organized, public town halls at separate locations in Pennsylvania and Mississippi- were reported as being unable to avoid the "inevitable confrontations" about to occur when meeting with constituents. Representative Taylor's town-hall meeting was then documented as being disrupted by a "restive" audience member who yelled, "Listen to us. Health care! Health care! Health care!"

Another article (Urbina, *The New York Times*, August 8, 2009) talked of "bitter divisions" which have "exploded" with shout-downs and taunts by protestors toward the town-hall speakers. Sean Hannity –a conservative talk show host on FOX- was quoted as asking the traffic on his website to "become a part of the mob;" while the Tea Party Patriots –branch of the Tea

Party- urged others “to be disruptive.” The Patriots told their members to “stand up and shout” and “get him off his prepared script and agenda.”

Tea Party coverage also included references to disruption that interfered with the political system. As a prime example, a *New York Times* piece (Zernike, January 15, 2010) talked of a Tea Party which was “trying to take over the establishment, ground up.” The disruption of the status quo had members “signing up to be Republican precinct leaders;” leaders who happened to vote for party executives who in turn “endorse political candidates, approve platforms and decide where the party” budgets its funds. Over time, these endorsements, the shaping of political platforms, and budgetary maneuvers were anticipated to render districts with “like-minded members in Republican Party committees.” The article stated the “defining experience” viewed as a “victory” by many Tea Party activists was the reported instance of disruption which drove the Republican candidate of the 23rd Congressional District of New York to drop out of the congressional election and endorse the opposing Democrat –who won. Some were calling these new types of disruptive conservative candidates, “Teapublicans” (Zernike, *New York Times*, January 15, 2010).

For the Occupy movement, 64% of the articles sampled included the disruption frame. This was a slightly lower proportion than for Tea Party articles. More importantly, however, the way newspapers wrote of disruption differed for the two movements. In contrast to the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street coverage was more likely to highlight disruption to the lives of everyday people. As examples, a *New York Times* article (Baker and Moynihan, October 2, 2011) reported that protestors “took over the Brooklyn-bound roadway and impeded vehicle traffic,” while activists at Broadway and Wall Street “rushed barriers” and spilled “into the street” thus

creating a “disturbance” (Greenhouse and Buckley, *The New York Times*, October 6, 2011).

Finally, there were reports of Occupy members in New York disrupting the status quo by holding a “Millionaire’s March,” which involved “paying visits” to the homes of the members of the 1%, and, in Washington, Occupiers disrupting the official goings on in a “Senate office building” (Bacon, *USA Today*, October 12, 2011).

Ignorance and Freak Frames

The ignorance and freak frames were sparsely used in regards to the Tea Party movement coverage. Thus, I have combined the findings for these two frames. Seven percent (1 of 14) and 14% (2 of 14) of the articles sampled used the ignorance and freak frames, respectively. Regarding the Occupy movement, 43% of the articles incorporated the ignorance frame while 64% included the freak frame. Stories that depict protestors as uninformed, ridiculous, bizarre, dangerous, or out-of-step were much more common in Occupy Wall Street articles than Tea Party articles. This was done by highlighting their youth and/or bizarre appearance of protesters, or presenting their ideologies, values, and goals as out of step.

For the Tea Party sample, I found only one article which highlighted some form of ignorance. A news piece titled, “Tea Party activists take aim, but many miss target” was written to counter claims detailed by the Tea Party (Bellafante, *USA Today*, February 5, 2010); this in turn made the Tea Party movement seem uninformed. The article pointed out that “big government” isn’t as big as the Tea Party thinks “by historical standards;” “spending outside of healthcare” as a percentage of the economy counters Tea Party claims and will be lower –not larger- in the near future even when compared to Reagan’s presidency; and taxes, which the Tea Party posits are too high, are actually at its lowest level since 1950. These points painted a

picture of a movement which was “barking up the wrong tree” and was unprepared for “productive solutions.”

In regards to the freak frame and Tea Party coverage, only 2 of 14 sampled used this frame. Never in the sample was the Tea Party framed as ridiculous or bizarre. Nor did the coverage focus negatively on age or values. However, articles about the Tea Party occasionally portrayed protesters as out-of-step in regards to providing productive solutions to America’s problems. In one article, the Tea Party was described as being in need of “demanding that the two parties work together” instead of in opposition, with “ideological food fights” causing the “Tea Partiers [to] look trivial” to the outside world. Either the Tea Party protesters channel “their anger toward more productive solutions,” or the “spending machine will keep churning” according to this coverage (Bellafante, *USA Today*, February 5, 2010). This caused the Tea Party to seem out-of-step with the country’s needs. Appearance was also mentioned in the first Tea Party article (Robbins, *The New York Times*, April 16, 2009); protestors were described as having “tea bags” on their eyeglasses, displaying tea pots on their umbrellas, and wearing “colonial garb.”

For the Occupy movement, the ignorance and freak frames were much more prevalent. Six of fourteen articles used the ignorance frame in portraying the Occupy movement as ignorant, uninformed, and/or ineffective. As examples, a *New York Times* piece (Sorkin, October 4, 2011) had the author asking an Occupy protestor, who happened to be for “a more fair tax regime,” whether they were for the “Buffett Rule” which taxes millionaires at a higher percentage of their income. The protestor stated, “I really can’t comment because I haven’t heard of him.” For someone who pronounces a platform of instituting a more equitable tax

policy, to not know about the “Buffett Rule” suggests ignorance. A second example of the ignorance frame was found in an article titled, “Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim” (Bellafante, *The New York Times*, September 25, 2011). In it, the reporter disparaged the movement’s effectiveness by characterizing the Occupy Wall Street’s political platform as “impossible to decipher.” Thus, as part of a movement the protesters were represented as unclear, even ignorant, about what they were protesting against.

In regards to the freak frame and its incorporation into Occupy Wall Street coverage, 9 of 14 used this frame in various forms. This included portraying protestors as ridiculous, bizarre, and dangerous while also highlighting age and appearance. One article described protesters with “face painting” who sat in “drum circles” (Bly, *USA Today*, October 4, 2011); another referred to members named “Hero” and “Germ” (Kleinfield and Buckley, *The New York Times*, October 1, 2011); and yet another described the protesters as fully capable of rioting, thus invoking a potential for danger (Goldstein, *The New York Times*, September 27, 2011).

Age and appearance were showcased in the sample as well. Young people are thought of as being idealistically naïve thus the mentioning of the protesters’ age serves to undermine their message and/or credibility. As examples, a *New York Times* piece (Eckholm and Williams, October 4, 2011) talked of anarchists joining “younger people” on multiple fronts. The author quoted various protestors with their ages (21-24 years old) positioned next to their names.

Zeroing in on appearances which are not mainstream is a final way of incorporating the freak frame into coverage of protest. For the Occupy movement, there were numerous instances of unusual attire being mentioned. A “half-naked woman” in Zuccotti Park (Bellafante, *The New York Times*, September 25, 2011); a “bicycle messenger with a head

shaved except for a long braid” (Kleinfeld and Buckley, *The New York Times*, October 1, 2011); and a veteran with a “tie-dyed T-shirt and peace symbol pendant” (Bly, *USA Today*, October 4, 2011) were all examples of the freak frame being incorporated via noting appearance.

Amalgam of Grievances Frame

The final frame incorporated from Boykoff’s frames of dissent is the amalgam of grievances frame. The frame accuses protestors of fighting “too many disparate issues” with “no clear message” (Boykoff 2006: 220). In my sample, none of the Tea Party articles utilized the amalgam of grievances frame while 50% (7 of 14) of the news covering the Occupy movement used it.

For Tea Party coverage, although multiple issues were mentioned in various pieces there was never a suggestion that the movement had too many battlefronts or that its goals were undermined by too many issues. In general terms, articles early in the sample focused on tax and spend, followed by health care, with the Tea Party versus the establishment dominating the latter parts of the articles examined. When there was mention of disparate issues, it was stated matter-of-factly with no recognition of the amalgam or a connecting of the dots.

As examples, a *USA Today* article (Kiely and Fritze, August 20, 2009) talked of two protestors who became politically active for different reasons: for one it was the “\$700 billion bank bailout” that motivated protest while for another it was the proposal to subsidize “people who bought homes ‘totally beyond their means’.” Instead of protesting these issues, they wind up in “town-hall meetings on health care” which has nothing to do with a bank bailout or subsidies for homeowners. In another article, the reporter called the Tea Party diverse; concerned about “the economy, bailouts, and increasing government involvement in health

care;" with "militia members" carrying guns, while rallying against the federal reserve, and standing next to "stay-at-home" moms who feel strongly about the "federal stimulus package" (Zernike, *The New York Times*, January 15, 2010). There was no recognition of an amalgam of issues and this differed from Occupy Wall Street coverage.

For Occupy Wall Street, from the first sentence in the first article which labels Occupy Wall Street "fractured" (Bellafante, *The New York Times*, September 25, 2011) to one of the last (Sorkin, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2011) which admits it may be true that "the protestors have a myriad of grievances with no particular agenda," the Occupy Wall Street sample had a much greater likelihood of possessing a frame pronouncing an amalgam of grievances.

A few examples would include a *USA Today* article (Hampson, October 11, 2011) which had a section titled, "What's the agenda? Is there one?" in which it was announced that Occupy Wall Street's "scope [is] broad," grievances are wide-ranging, with "one goal" needed for progress. Another case (Beehner, *USA Today*, October 13, 2011) stated Occupy Wall Street lacked a "unifying message." Occupy Wall Street was then contrasted with the Egyptian protestors found in Tahrir Square: stating you could ask 10 different protestors in Tahrir Square why they were protesting and "get 10 different answers," however, there was one "overarching goal –regime change." This, according to the author, differed from "the lack of a unifying message" espoused by the Occupy movement.

Finally, the sample backs these claims by reporting a wide range of movement grievances. A *New York Times* piece (Bellafante, September 25, 2011) talked of protestors who "were fighting the legal doctrine of corporate personhood" while others were concerned with "the death penalty, the drug war, [and] the environment." Thus, with so many grievances there

was no clear message and little “cohesion.” Therefore, the articles pointed to the amalgam of grievances present with the Occupy movement and were very capable of connecting the dots; however, reporters did not do the same for coverage of the Tea Party.

Episodic/Thematic Framing

Episodic Framing

The final element of media coverage of relevance to this study is episodic and thematic framing. For the Tea Party articles, only 14% were episodic in nature while 50% of Occupy Wall Street’s news coverage possessed episodic characteristics. Episodic news coverage takes “the form of a case study or event-oriented report” which “personalizes” and “de-contextualizes” protest (Iyengar 1991: 14; Smith et al. 2001: 1404). Hence, this form doesn’t provide a great amount of background nor much social context related to more macro phenomenon such as economic inequality, racial stratification, or globalization/transitional economy. The result is that episodic coverage obscures the connection between social problems and politics with primarily individualistic explanations.

For the Tea Party, 2 of 14 articles were coded as episodic, with both of these possessing aspects that were both episodic and thematic. For example, in the first article which incorporated episodic framing, the event covered was a Conservative Policy Action Conference (CPAC) hosted for conservatives such as Tea Party members. This *USA Today* piece (Page, February 19, 2010) didn’t provide much background leading up to the event nor did it provide much context as to why the Tea Party and other conservatives were up in arms.

It focused on the “speeches by [various] GOP presidential contenders” without supplying background as to what the Tea Party was and why its members had organized in the

first place. This article also depicted public issues (i.e., discontent with President Obama's policies) with one case study or event (CPAC conference) while de-contextualizing how the movement was formed and where it had been before the CPAC event.

In contrast, far more examples of episodic framing were found in the Occupy movement's news coverage. In the sample examined, 7 of 14 stories contained episodic coverage with two possessing both episodic and thematic coverage. The articles with only episodic framing share certain characteristics including focusing only on a single dramatic event while giving no context or background. As examples, a *New York Times* article (Baker and Moynihan, October 2, 2011) depicted a concrete event with protestors attempting "to cross the Brooklyn Bridge." There was practically no background provided, no talking of general trends which were going on in America, nor discussions of the issues and ideas. There was also no context as to why Occupy Wall Street was present nor statements of general conditions and outcomes provided. The article focused on a single event (a march at Brooklyn Bridge) and emphasized the dramatic features of that event (arrests, police interaction). Thus, this piece obscured the connection between social problems and the actions of political leaders.

Similarly, a *USA Today* piece (Bacon, October 12, 2011) narrowed in on one event: a "Millionaires March" which went "past [the] homes of some of the nation's wealthiest executives." No background was given as to why the Occupy movement was protesting. General trends such as the disparities between rich and poor weren't examined nor were issues and ideas (i.e., social class, redistribution of wealth) discussed. There also was no context given as to why Occupy Wall Street was present. However, drama was emphasized. The article does not describe what led up to the march and why it was occurring. There was only an account of

protestors marching without a permit, of some protestors “demonstrating inside a Senate office building,” and of other protesters that “ignored warnings to move from a downtown green space.” In this article as in the last, because of the episodic framing, there was little to no discussion of the claims made by the protesters that there is a connection between social problems and the actions of the powerful.

Thematic Framing

The final frame examined for this research is thematic framing. This frame presents background, collective or general evidence and outcomes, which is abstract and impersonal, while being focused on issues. Thematic frames may also bear on general trends (i.e., poverty level, foreclosure rates, unemployment rate) or on matters of public policy (i.e., repealing of Glass-Steagall Act, CHIP, TARP). For the Tea Party, 100% of the cases possessed thematic framing while 64% of Occupy Wall Street’s were.

The Tea Party sample consisted of thematic stories which for the most part favored the protestors in helping them explain their cause and reasons for protest. This was so for various reasons. For one, many stories in the sample provided background which assisted the audience in gaining a grasp on what the movement consisted of and what it stood for. For example, a *USA Today* article (Dorell, April 13, 2009) talked of Rick Santelli’s statement of how “it was time for a new Tea Party.” The piece stated that these “remarks spread quickly through email and websites” and that “organized parties soon popped up in Atlanta, Denver, and St. Louis” among other locales. This was thought to be a “possible reprise of the tax revolt of the 1970s and ‘80s” according to a pundit. Thus, background announced the circumstances and events which lead to this protesting phenomenon.

The presentation of general evidence and outcomes -which is impersonal and/or abstract- is a second property found in the sample which spurs thematic framing. A *USA Today* piece (Kiely, February 5, 2010) traced the steps of the national Tea Party's maturation. The article provided impersonal, generalized evidence of the reach and scope of the movement: "3200 websites containing the words 'tea party' have been registered with Go Daddy;" five organizations using the name "Tea Party" have formed PACs with the FEC; while in Tennessee, Texas, and Florida various incarnations of the Tea Party have taken part in "family feuds" due to variance in ideas. Thus, the Tea Party movement quickly turned into a "delicate task ahead for Republicans who want to tame a tiger that so far has refused to be led."

Thirdly, thematic framing spotlights issues and ideas which may bear on general trends and matters of public policy. Most of the articles examined placed the Tea Party's issues and ideas at the forefront. A good portion also pertained to general trends or matters of public policy. As examples, a *New York Times* piece (Hulse, January 21, 2010) narrowed in on the idea of how a Republican "can win even in territory that had been considered out of reach." This was possible due to the "growing mood of public resentment." Another article (Stone, *USA Today*, September 8, 2009) talked of issues regarding healthcare, taxes on energy, and "bailing out homeowners and auto companies." On these and other issues of public policy, the Tea Party activists proclaimed that "government goes to those who show up."

For Occupy Wall Street, 9 of 14 articles used a thematic frame. Similar to the coverage found for the Tea Party, background was given, general evidence and outcomes that were impersonal/abstract were presented, along with issues and ideas stated which present general trends and matters of public policy.

In regards to background, a *USA Today* piece (Hampson, October 11, 2011) talked of a “vague suggestion in AdBusters” (magazine) of occupying Wall Street due to banker malfeasance. This was inspired by the Arab Spring and the need to “counter the Tea Party” which in turn led to the Occupy movement “spread[ing] across the nation:” “enabled by social media” such as Twitter and Facebook. Thus, a very basic background was provided which articulated the circumstances and events that lead to the Occupy movement being formed and able to progress.

General evidence and outcomes which were impersonal or abstract were also present in the sample examined. A *New York Times* article (Eckholm and Williams, October 4, 2011) stated the Occupy movement had “protestors camped out in Los Angeles near City Hall, assembled before the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago and marching through downtown Boston to rally against corporate greed, unemployment and the role of financial institutions in the economic crisis.” This was evidence of general and impersonal discontent of abstract entities; with, in one instance, an outcome of mass “arrests of hundreds” in New York City.

Lastly, cases in the sample also incorporated issues and ideas that presented general trends and matters of public policy. As an example, a *USA Today* piece (Leger, October 7, 2011) told of some protestors who embraced the ideas to “Abolish the Fed” and to not waste money “fighting wars in which we don’t belong.” This article wrote of protestors who were concerned with the issue of political representation due to a general trend of “money” dictating “politics.” Public policy which led to “regulatory failures” was in need of new, yet tried, ideas including greater regulatory oversight.

7. Summary and Discussion

In this thesis, I examine media framing of two disparate protest movements –Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street- in two mainstream newspaper outlets, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. For the Tea Party, all the articles examined used a narrative structure complete with drama and conflict, controversy, and use of “opposites.” Seventy-one percent of the articles relied on official sources while the reporting of public opinion (36%) and framing the protest and/or protesters in terms of deviance (7%) were rare. Police were not interviewed, but government officials, members of institutions, and leading organizers all gave their “two cents” when commenting on the Tea Party. Public opinion, when invoked, favored the Tea Party while deviance was rarely mentioned even if oddity, norm violations, and criminality were present.

In regards to Boykoff’s frames of dissent and Tea Party coverage, only the disruption frame (71%) was prevalent while the violence (21%), freak (14%), ignorance (7%), and amalgam of grievance (0%) frames were used sparingly. The Tea Party was shown to be a disruption to the political status quo and politicians reportedly feared for their safety in various instances, but there was little reporting of violence or the threat of violence. Though there were differences which could have been mentioned to highlight freak or ignorance frames (i.e., reporting of Tea Partiers who dressed in colonial garb and spoke vehemently about the constitution or interviewing Tea Partiers who did not have all their facts straight), a negligible amount of variance was contrasted between Tea Party protestors and the general population. Also, Tea Party protestors were rarely framed as ridiculous, bizarre, or out-of-step and with too many grievances.

Coverage of the Tea Party was overwhelmingly thematic (100%), with only two articles (14%) also displaying episodic characteristics. Thus, background was given, which presented general context or conditions, while bearing on social conditions and matters relevant to the public (i.e., public policy). The reporting of the Tea Party did not rely heavily on discrete individuals or events, nor on protest activity taken out of context. Therefore, Tea Party coverage by both *The New York Times* and *USA Today* took the shape of a narrative unfolding, backed by official sources, and void of much negativity. The Tea Party was presented with context and background, thus making it easier for readers to “see the forest and not just the trees” when making judgments and evaluations about the Tea Party.

For the Occupy movement, a narrative presentation was the norm with all articles possessing characteristics such as drama, conflict, action, and controversy. Unlike the Tea Party, numerous articles highlighted the conflict between “authorities” and “challengers,” especially the Occupy movement’s battles with the police. There was also internal dissension reported amidst the movement due to the numerous and varying concerns voiced by the Occupy Wall Street protestors interviewed. Articles on the Occupy movement relied on official sources over half the time (57%) and invoked public opinion and deviance in the majority of the cases (71% and 86%). Reports receiving information from the police were contrasted with the deviance presented, and public opinion, reported as mainly critical, was used to lambast protestors by making them seem foolish, out of touch, or freakish.

In regards to Boykoff’s frames of dissent, Occupy Wall Street coverage included violence (43%), disruption (64%), freak (64%), ignorance (43%), and amalgam of grievances (50%). Articles referenced the destruction caused by similar protest groups (G20 Summit, London,

2009; WTO, Seattle, 1999) and of the potential for violence found within Occupy Wall Street, but also reported on the surprising lack of violence displayed thus far by the movement. The Occupy Wall Street protest was framed as a disruption to both the economic status quo and to everyday people's lives.

Occupy Wall Street protesters were framed as being ignorant, freakish, and as having too many grievances. In various instances the Occupy movement was shown as uninformed and ineffective. Occupy Wall Street coverage highlighted various protestors who didn't fit the mould of a typical, mainstream American: protestors named "Hero" and "Germ," occupiers with face painting, and still others who were half-naked or wearing peace symbol pendants. Half the articles examined also claimed Occupy Wall Street had an amalgam of grievances including but not limited to fighting corporate personhood, the drug war, environmental degradation, and Wall Street malfeasance.

Coverage of the Occupy movement for the most part relied on a thematic presentation (64%). However, half the articles relied on episodic framing with two of those incorporating aspects of both. Thus, many articles presented background, detailed general conditions and context, and spoke of social conditions and matters of public policy. But a handful of articles focused on single events with no background: such as lone reports of protestors crossing the Brooklyn Bridge, and reports of a protest action referred to as a "Millionaires March," held in an affluent neighborhood. Taken in total, Occupy Wall Street coverage gave a narrative of the Occupy movement which was laden with official sources and public opinion which critiqued, or even worse, chastised the movement.

My hypotheses are: 1) the Occupy movement is more likely to be framed in such a way that fits the parameters of the concepts of protest paradigm, frames of dissent and episodic framing. 2) I predict the Tea Party will not be framed to the same degree within the confines of the protest paradigm and frames of dissent and will be framed more thematically than episodically. Thus, 3) I hypothesize the Tea Party will receive more favorable news coverage than the Occupy movement.

The findings of this thesis substantiate the hypotheses under examination. I find the Tea Party received more favorable news coverage than the Occupy movement. This is due to the findings from hypotheses one and two. A deviant and potentially violent group, comprised of disruptive, ignorant freaks, and having an inordinate amount of grievances (and defined as such by public opinion and various authorities), is no match for a movement which is supported by official sources, and is framed as lacking deviance, violence, ignorance, or too many grievances.

As was discussed, the Tea Party's platform includes: eliminating excessive taxes, eradicating the national debt, protecting free markets, abiding by the constitution, promoting civic responsibility, and reducing the size of government. By contrast, the Occupy movement wishes to reinstate Glass-Steagall, prosecute those responsible for the 2008 financial crisis, reverse Citizens United, pass the Buffett rule, revamp the SEC, eliminate the influence of lobbyists, halt the revolving door found between the public and private sectors, end personhood for corporations, and reestablish the public airwaves.

These idealistically contrary movements vie for the attention of the profit-oriented, corporate media which values rational self-interest, social order, national leadership, competitiveness, materialism, private ownership, a pursuit of profits, free markets, and the

Protestant work ethic. Gitlin (1977) states that news distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate protest groups, and Tuchman (1978) argues that the media frames most commonly used hide the socioeconomic structure and avoid structural linkages between events. I argue that a movement such as the capitalist-friendly Tea Party has a greater chance of receiving positive press and being deemed legitimate, than an oppositional movement like Occupy Wall Street which directly implicates the economic system.

Both the Tea Party and the corporations which own the mainstream media would generally agree that eliminating “excessive” taxes is a good thing, promoting free markets is a key to progress, encouraging civic responsibility should be a priority, and reducing the deficit is best for all involved. The Tea Party wouldn’t oppose the idea of rational self-interest, social order, national leadership, competitiveness, materialism, private ownership, a pursuit of profits, or the Protestant work ethic.

Contrasted with Occupy Wall Street, the publicly owned, corporate media –and its advertisers- wouldn’t necessarily concur that a reinstatement of Glass-Steagall is the best course of action; a reversal of Citizens United is favored over a plutocratic political system; prosecution of past economic misgivings from 2008 is productive to the present; the Buffett Rule is the fair thing to do; a revamping of the SEC is the policing which is needed; the elimination of lobbying, the halting of the revolving door between the public and private sectors, and the end of corporate personhood are the keys to a more democratic society; nor would they agree in the need to reestablish the public airwaves.

Many in Occupy Wall Street would question concepts such as rational self-interest, social order, competitiveness, materialism, private ownership, free markets, and the pursuit of

profit. Thus, I argue –as Gitlin argued- the mainstream media will distinguish between legitimate (Tea Party) and illegitimate (Occupy movement) movements. The Tea Party is rendered more legitimate given the shared values/ideology mentioned while the Occupy movement will be welcomed by a “guard dog” media which is intent on maintaining order and protecting the hierarchal capitalistic system in which it is rooted. The Occupy movement is a threat given the platform mentioned above.

It’s no surprise that the coverage of the Occupy Wall Street protest was more episodic in nature than Tea Party coverage. Smith et al. (2001) finds that news reports are more thematic in relation to less threatening issues. Thus, fifty percent of the Occupy movement’s coverage was episodic while only fourteen percent of the Tea Party’s coverage was episodic. As Iyengar discussed, when attributing responsibility for protestors’ actions (including sit-ins to full scale riots), episodic framing of protest movements is conducive to creating an environment where media consumers make a fundamental attribution error, by which individual motives and intentions are exaggerated, while the role of contextual factors are discounted.

Thus, media consumers are steered away from systemic and more complex interpretations of social phenomena, and instead obsess over individualistic explanations for that which is reported. This, in turn, elicits lower levels of societal causal attribution while causing higher levels of punitive causal attribution. Therefore, fault is directed at the individual and not the structure of society. This makes viewers less likely to blame politicians for the problems and lessens the chance of the populace holding Washington accountable to find a solution. This protects the existing power structure and creates civic control with people blaming people versus people blaming the system.

Hence, given that the media frames most commonly used hide the socioeconomic structure (Tuchman 1978), it's safe to assume the Occupy movement will possess a greater amount of coverage which doesn't permit the movement to air its core grievances which are geared toward questioning the capitalist system. On the contrary, superficialities such as appearance and age will be topics of discussion, odd behavior and deviance will be spotlighted, while the showing of ignorance and violence will be par for the course. Thus, deviant naked people, who babble about everything under the sky, while battling the police will be more likely to be highlighted in coverage of challengers like the Occupy movement, than with a movement such as the Tea Party which is capitalist-oriented.

In regards to the media consuming citizen, episodic framing has been found to affect the beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behavior media consumers have toward social movements. If a movement is framed episodically, those influenced by the information will develop policy preferences, assessments of police, and evaluations of public institutions which are superficial and favor the status quo or existing power structure (Iyengar 1991; Boykoff 2006; Smith et al. 2001). Thus, episodic framing will shape a media consumers' worldview into one where what exists, what happens, and what matters is quite different from what the protest movement expresses or articulates. In the end, episodic framing diverts attention away from societal responsibility, insulates incumbent politicians, and makes media consumers less tolerant of dissent (Iyengar 1991). This is why a portion in this country views the Occupy movement as a bunch of self-deprecating slackers, who are blaming the wrong people (i.e., corporations), and who have no place in the political discussion due to their faulty worldview.

Tuchman (1978: 184) states that news has failed as a “mirror of reality:” this mirror, more comparable to a mirror in a funhouse (Gitlin 1980), prevents the ascertainment of truths by limiting access to ideas, thus the Enlightenment model of free speech and public governance is thwarted (Tuchman 1978: 180). When comparing two modern movements in two mainstream newspapers, the truth about the protest movements was shaped by the frames utilized in the newspaper reports. One movement, Occupy Wall Street, was reported in a way which highlighted the movement as deviant and ignorant, potentially violent, with too many grievances while the Tea Party was framed more thematically and less as violent deviants who were abnormal, ignorant, and with too many grievances.

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Appendix A: Tea Party Articles

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