

The Interdependency of Mass Media and Social Movements

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the interaction between social movements and the mass media. It explains why and how this relationship can be seen as one of mutual dependency. Social movements need mass media attention to amplify their claims; the media attend to movements because they create newsworthy events. We take stock of the research that has been done and focus on various elements of this relationship. Following a classic political communication process approach, we first discuss the causes for media to devote attention to social movements and their events. Next, we focus on the content of this coverage and how it is analyzed by social movement scholars. Finally, we look at the various consequences of media coverage for social movements, in terms of mobilization, reaching political change and obtaining favorable public opinion.

Authors' bio

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Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the large literature on social movements and the mass media. While mass media are of course an important player all kinds of other communication channels – especially new media and the internet – are relevant for social movements as well. They are discussed in other chapters in this handbook (cfr. chapters Bennett and Bimber). There is a large amount of theoretical and empirical work on the relationship and interaction between social movements and the mass media. Remarkably enough, one does not find many of those publications in the journals and book volumes scholars interested in political communication turn to. Research about social movements is mainly generated by sociologists and much of the research on movements and media is found in sociological journals and books. Maybe as a consequence, there is little knowledge in the field of political communication about the relevant work movement scholars conduct, apart from maybe some of the work by people such as Bill Gamson and Todd Gitlin. The lack of integration of both fields is especially striking, since a lot of the questions that are addressed in the specialized social movement literature are very similar. Movement scholars are interested in media selection processes to understand when, why and how social movements and their protest events make it

into the news. They conduct large-scale content analyses to map and describe the coverage of movements, their issues and their actions. And increasingly, they look at movement outcomes and investigate how media content might affect their successes in terms of mobilization and the achievement of political goals. At least partly, students of social movements use a similar terminology as political communication scholars. For example, *framing* is one of the key concepts in the research relating to movements and their communication techniques. It has the same roots as framing in political communication and it is used by social movements scholars in ways that are comparable to its use in political communication.

The main difference between the two realms is that the object of study differs. While political communication scholars are mostly interested in the institutional, organized and 'routine' side of politics and their focus is on political parties, politicians and elections, movement scholars focus on the non-institutional, the non-organized and contentious side of politics. This has important implications in terms of the power balance between the media and the political actors that are studied. Because of the fact that politicians have a clear institutional power base — due to representation in parliament, participation in government and other democratic institutions — they almost automatically carry a certain relevance for journalists. In contrast, social movements, almost by definition, do *not* have an institutional power base and, consequently, have to struggle harder for attention for their events, issues and claims. They have to 'demonstrate' in different ways — by staging events, mobilizing publics and public opinion or by making valid claims — that they are newsworthy. We will show that social movements have less access to the mass media than institutional political actors but that they, at the same time, are more dependent on the mass media to get their message across. Despite this important difference between the political communication of social movements and of, for example,

political parties, we believe that research into the interaction between movements and media is highly relevant for political communication in general; many of the dynamics described in this chapter have their equivalents in the research into relations between media and institutional political actors.

We begin by discussing the relation between movements and media and why this relationship can be seen as one of mutual dependency. After that, we look into detail to the research that has been done on various elements of this relationship. We adopt a classic political communication process approach and discuss *causes* of media coverage of social movements and the protest they stage, the *content* of media coverage of movements/protest, and the various *consequences* of media coverage for social movements/protest.

Why social movements need mass media (and vice versa)

One of the first scholars to analyze the importance of the mass media for social movements was Todd Gitlin. In his seminal book ‘The Whole World is Watching’ (1980), he describes the interaction between mass media and the U.S. New Left movement in the sixties. Gitlin documents how the media and their framing of the movement initially helped it to gain broader support. However, the requirements for movement events to have characteristics that make them newsworthy — such as drama, conflict and personalization — made the movements’ main leaders increasingly focus on media strategies. Intensive coverage of internal struggles and anomalies within the movement ultimately resulted in erosion of its public support. Gitlin’s study clearly demonstrates the problematic nature of the relationship between movements and media: on the one hand, movements need media more than other political actors to mobilize potential supporters, gain public support for their claims and, ultimately, political change (‘send my message’). On the other hand, mass

media need movements since they stage newsworthy events, they ‘make news’ (‘make my news’). But the interests of movement actors and journalists most often do not coincide. As movements are interested in getting their message out their aim is to direct the media’s (and the public’s) attention to an issue, journalists often do not focus on the problem or issue the movement is signaling, but rather consider other things newsworthy. They are, for example, more interested in covering the violent characteristics of contentious confrontations, the internal conflicts in the movement, or personal details about movement leaders. In many ways, the interaction between movements and media resemble that between politicians and journalists.

However, due to the non-institutional position of social movements the relationship between movements and the media is inherently more asymmetrical than the interaction between politicians and the media. News media prefer to rely on sources with a political power base — these sources provide the ‘official’ story — and will usually take these political elite views as the starting point of their coverage (Gamson 1992; Gamson et al. 1992; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Gans 1980; Bennett 1990). Movements have to fight to get attention and when they get covered, it is far from certain that the news takes over their frame or interpretation of the issue (Smith et al. 2001). While the movements’ position vis-à-vis the media is disadvantageous and getting favorable coverage is in many instances an uphill struggle, it is of crucial importance. Compared to political parties movements very often have a weak membership base and little other communication means — though it can be argued that the latter has changed due to the rise of new media and the internet (see chapter Bimber). Hence, in order to target their audiences movements need the mass media more than any other political actor. Moreover, the only real means of influencing policies most social movements have — apart from those movements that have become political ‘insiders’ or that have the power to disrupt social and political life —

is playing on public opinion. Movements essentially mobilize the public, or at least their constituents, to show to the power holders that large numbers of people do not agree and want change (or no change). Without public support social movements are powerless and their actions toothless. It is, amongst other means, via the mass media that movements can reach out to both potential protest participants and to the public at large (Gamson 2004). Institutional political actors such as political parties do not need the media so much as they can enact policies even without public support.

Some even argue that the entire interaction between social movements and political authorities takes place not as real-life encounters, but rather through claims made in the mass media. Rather than in real-life encounters, social movements interact with the authorities via the media: authorities learn about the movements and their protest via the media while the movements learn about political opportunities through media coverage of the actions (or absence thereof) of targeted political elites (Koopmans 2004).

Since media coverage is so crucial for social movements, students of social movements have studied quite extensively what strategies movements employ to get into the media. Dieter Rucht, for example, describes the media strategies of social movements since the 1960s and distinguishes four different strategies: abstention (no attempts to get in the media), attack (critique on mass media), adaptation (exploitation of mass media rules), and alternatives (create own movement media) (Rucht 2004). This chapter mainly deals with adaptation strategies, which can be argued to be for many movements the most important ones.

The extensive literature on movements and the media documents that movement scholars deal with very similar questions as political communication scholars dealing with parties, parliaments and governments do. First, they focus on the direct movement-media interaction and look at the strategies movements and

their leaders use to obtain media coverage and get into the news. Second, they look at the content of movements' claims and especially of the protest events they stage and how these are covered in the mass media. And third, they look at the possible consequences of media coverage — on support for the movement (mobilization), on politicians and policy makers, and on public opinion (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993).

Getting into the news

Scholars in political communication need little introduction in the mechanisms that determine why certain events/actors get coverage while others do not. News values, the gatekeeping function of the mass media, and fierce competition over the limited available space in the media (Hilgartner & Bosk 1988) are a daily reality for social movements. Every day, hundreds of messages are sent by all kinds of movements in the hope that they will be picked up by journalists and editors (Koopmans 2004). What then, determines the successful penetration of movement messages in the media?

One of the most often employed tools for movements is the organization of protest activities. Considerable research has dealt with determining the characteristics of protest events that result in media coverage. Studies have focused on the possible selection bias of media coverage of protest events — looking at the question what determines whether or not an issue makes it into the news — and on the potential description bias — what information about the event is (erroneously) reported.

Research into *selection* bias has identified four factors that explain why some events are covered and others not (Earl et al. 2004; Oliver & Maney 2000). These factors are *event* characteristics, *news agency* characteristics, *issue* characteristics, and *time* characteristics. Regarding the first, scholars find that events that are staged

in proximity of a news outlet's main office are likely to receive more attention in that outlet (McCarthy et al. 1996; Mueller 1997). Furthermore, also the size of the event is of importance: higher protest turnout results in more coverage (Oliver & Myers 1999). Additionally, intensity, violence, the presence of police, counter-demonstrations and the social movement organization that organizes the event are all factors that affect the quantity of coverage (Myers & Caniglia 2004; Barranco & Wisler 1999; Oliver & Maney 2000). Second, news agency characteristics, such as news routines in both the production process (Gamson 1992) and among reporters (Oliver & Myers 1999) affect the likelihood that the event is covered. For example, events that are planned in such a way that journalists can write about it before the newspaper's daily deadline, that are not staged simultaneously with other events and that are communicated well in advance to journalists are more likely to receive coverage (Ryan 1991; Oliver & Myers 1999). Third, issue type matters: events on issues that receive more media attention in general and are higher on the issue attention cycle (Downs 1972) are more likely to be covered (McCarthy et al. 1996). Also events that deal with issues that are simultaneously discussed by politicians and legislators are more likely to be covered (Oliver & Maney 2000). Rucht and Verhulst (2010), for example, show that the anti-war protests in 2003 were comparatively more covered in countries in which the government officially opposed war (German and Belgium) compared to countries where the government supported war (UK, US, Spain, Italy). Finally, time matters as well: the day on which the event is staged affects the likelihood of coverage: monday events are more likely to be covered (Oliver & Maney 2000; Myers & Caniglia 2004) and, in the US, protest is less likely to be covered when the legislator is in session (Oliver & Maney 2000).

Description bias received way less scholarly attention than selection bias.

Smith and colleagues (2001) established that media outlets make quite some

mistakes in reporting about the 'hard' facts of demonstrations — though newspapers are more accurate than television broadcasts — and focus mainly on the disruptive strategies movements use instead of on their claims.

Remarkably, many students of social movements see the selection and description bias not as phenomena that have to be studied in their own right but rather as data problems. Instead of taking the variation in coverage as an starting point to theorize about the relationships between protest and mass media, the main question that drives most investigations is how useful media data, especially newspaper data, are to serve as an 'objective' measure for the occurrence and characteristics of protest events (see among others the discussions in Earl et al. 2004; McCarthy et al. 2008; Ortiz et al. 2005; Strawn 2008). Large scale content analyses, mainly of newspaper coverage, are regularly carried out (early examples include Tarrow 1989; Tilly 1978; more recent ones are Rucht et al. 1999; Rucht & Verhulst 2010; Soule & Earl 2005). Methodological discussions relating to protest events analysis resolve around the earlier mentioned selection and description bias, as well as sampling of newspapers and days to get a representative picture of movement activity (Koopmans & Rucht 2002). The resulting data on protest have been used in many groundbreaking studies, especially those that focus on political opportunity structures, one of the classical theories in the study of social movements (some of the most well-known examples include Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam 1982). The result of this predominant focus on media as source of information on protest events is fairly little theorizing about the mechanisms that affect the biased selection and description of protest events. Noteworthy exceptions in this respect are the studies of Oliver and Maney (2000) and Oliver and Myers (1999), who relate their findings to existing theories with regard to news holes, journalistic practices and selection mechanisms referring elaborately to the journalism and political communication literature.

Only a few studies look beyond the coverage of protest events and discuss the coverage of social movement *organizations* and their issues. An interesting example is the study by Amenta and colleagues (2009) who content analyzed a century of *New York Times* coverage of U.S. social movements and try to explain why social movement organizations receive attention. The authors find that disruptive strategies and resource mobilization contribute to frequent appearance. Also when there have been recent policy changes that favor a social movement's constituency, the result is more media attention for the movement.

In sum, many of the findings relating to the question when movements and their activities receive media coverage are entirely in line with theories that discuss the gatekeeping function of journalists, news values and news routines. Movements and their events have a hard time getting passed the news gates (many events do not get any coverage at all), they need to score high on the news values to get coverage (e.g. disruptiveness, numbers, violence...), and they need to tap into the news routines of the news makers (e.g. easy access, close to media headquarter, announced beforehand...) to increase the chance of being covered. These rules of the 'media game' are clearly important for social movements, probably even more so than for political actors with an institutional power base and with better access to the public. Additionally, movements' opportunities to get into the media are often constrained and sometimes facilitated by the external political and institutional context in which the movement operates. Even when a movement follows the exact 'recipe' to get media coverage by staging a 'mediagenic' event, external political circumstances still affects its chances of being successful (e.g. political attention cycle, legislator in session, counter-mobilization...). Hence, movements must not only take into account the rules of the media game as such, but also the larger political context and the potential reactions of adversaries.

Social movements in the news

Fewer studies than the ones tackling movements' access to the mass media focus on *how* social movements, their protests and the issues they put forward are covered in the mass media. In general, ideas and research regarding *framing* are well established in this area. Students rely considerably on to the earlier mentioned work by Gitlin (1980) and Gamson (1992), as well as on David Snow and Robert Benford, whose work on framing tasks (Snow & Benford 1988) and frame alignment (Snow et al. 1986) has been very influential. Their itemization of frames in a diagnostic (what is the problem and who is responsible?), prognostic (what is the solution and who needs to take care of it?) and motivational (a call for collective action) aspect has been widely considered as a useful starting point to analyze media coverage (for example Rohlinger 2002; Rohlinger 2006; Snow et al. 2007).

When investigating media framing of social movements and their issues, studies have looked at strategies employed by movements to receive coverage in line with their frames and at the political context that contributes to this. Rohlinger (2002), for example, looks at several pro-life and pro-choice organizations in the U.S. abortion debate. She finds that media strategies of movement organization, such as the use of frames that resonate with wider societal debates, as well as establishing an organizational structure that fosters an efficient interaction with journalists, contribute to media framing that is in line with the framing of the organization. Furthermore, she finds that movement organizations adjust their media strategies depending upon the political context: in a favorable political context where access to the political elite exists, organizations choose deliberately to stay silent in order not to start any public discussions and thus maximize political gains. In less favorable times

when they are denied access to politics, organizations seek the media and choose to work with allies (Rohlinger 2006).

Another example of a study looking into the impact of social movements on media's issue framing is the research by Terkildsen and colleagues (1998). Based on a content analysis of, again, the abortion debate coverage in the major US media outlets during the 1960s and 1970s, they show that media coverage often takes over frames that had been initiated by the pro- and anti-abortion groups; most media frames could be traced back to at least one interest group within the larger pro- or anti-abortion movement. The authors claim that the media may sometimes 'invent' frames but that most of the time the terms of the debate are set by organizations that strategically produce issue frames. The study, however, also stresses the autonomous role of the media by selectively and repetitively opening its gates for specific groups. Also, as the conflict and the issue matures, the media start playing a gradually more active role and are more reluctant to embrace movement frames.

An example of work that addresses a similar question, but focuses specifically at protest events is the study of Smith and colleagues on the coverage of protest events in Washington DC in 1982 and 1991. They conclude that when movements get attention because of their protest events "... the reports represent the protest events in ways that neutralize or even undermine social movement agendas" (Smith et al. 2001: 1398). Smith c.s. find that protest event coverage tends to focus on the drama of the event and the details of the event itself (e.g. violence, arrests...) and movements seem to fail to draw attention to the issue they mobilize for. In political communication terms: mass media tend to frame protest 'episodically' while movements' aims would be most served by a 'thematic' framing (Iyengar & Kinder 1987). This work supports earlier work by McLeod and Hertog (1992) that shows that

protest is often subtly described by reporters as being deviant highlighting the divide between protesters and the public.

In contrast, Rucht and Verhulst's (2010) case study of how the demonstrations against the war on Iraq on February 15 2003 were covered in 8 countries points out that movements do not always have to complain about the media coverage they get. They write: "The February 15 demonstrations received a newspaper coverage of which most organizers only can dream of: protests were said not only to be the largest ever seen, but in addition, attracted ordinary people from all parts of the country and all layers of society". The newspapers gave ample of attention to the slogans, claims and frames of the protesters and highlighted their arguments against war on Iraq.

In line with the earlier mentioned study of Gitlin, Liesbet van Zoonen's (1992) study of the relation between the Dutch women movement and the media demonstrates that news media tend to exaggerate differences and conflicts within the movement and focus on the feminist side of the movement, which does not work in its advantage. However, she argues that even in a situation where the dominant media frame differs considerable from the movement frame, social movements have opportunities to express their ideas and opinions in the mass media.

Other authors have made similar arguments that, even when media framing may not be directly supportive for the movement, getting in the news creates in any case occasions to express a movement's views and fosters responses by other political actors. Theoretically and methodologically, this idea has been elaborated by Koopmans and Statham (1999) who developed a method of media content analysis, which they labeled 'political claims analysis', examining the claims that social movements and other political actors make through violent acts, protest, public statements etc. In later work, Koopmans (2004) theoretically develops the idea of 'discursive opportunities' for groups that put forward claims and challenge political

elites. Through these discursive opportunities — essentially windows of increased media coverage for movements, their issues and claims — movements get access to the news. Such a temporary opening of the media gates is related to the legitimacy of the movement's claim (the extent to which other actors respond supportive to the message) and its resonance (the number of responses of other actors).

The study of media coverage of social movements resembles in many ways the classic political communication studies of, for example, election campaign coverage. There is an interest in visibility of actors and their issues and in the frames they manage (or not) to get across in the media. The available research emphasizes the role of movements' own activities in getting the message across (agency), as well as the political context (structure) that influences the way movements and their issues are presented in the news. Movements can be successful in gaining favorable coverage, they can generate frames of the contentious issue that are picked up in the media, but the media do tend to be tough to convince as journalists are often more interested in the personal and conflictual peculiarities of the movement than in its message. Movements must take advantage of discursive opportunities that are not in their own hands but depend on the way other actors react to their claims generating a temporary cycle of news attention.

Consequences of news

Following the influential article by Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993), consequences of media coverage of social movements and protest can be roughly classified in three categories. First, media can have an impact on the direct sympathizers and exert an influence on a wide variety of actual forms of participation of these people — ranging from joining protest activities to making financial donations. This can be labeled the *mobilizing* function of the mass media. Second,

media coverage legitimizes the existence of the movement and its claims, making it a relevant actor for those holding political power. In that way, media coverage is a requirement for movements to affect politicians, policy makers, and the political agenda and decision-making processes. Gamson and Wolfsfeld label this the *validation* function of the media. The third purpose for which movements need media coverage is *scope enlargement*. If the movement is successful in getting its claims and demands in the media, it draws attention to the conflict from actors that were not previously involved and can function as an ally. The main relevant actor might well be the general public (Gamson 2004). A favorable opinion from an involved public is one of the key legitimizing sources for the movements' claims and a powerful tool to exert political influence. In this section, we will consecutively deal with mass media's role in movements' *mobilization*, with how mass media can be instrumental for movements to help them reach their *political* goals, and with how mass media coverage can create a favorable *public* opinion towards movements and/or their issues.

Mass media and mobilization

The mobilizing function mass media have has been demonstrated in several studies, looking at a wide range of coverage characteristics and protest activities. In their study of the spread of anti-immigrant violence in Germany, Koopmans and Olzak (2004) demonstrate that the previously mentioned discursive opportunity structure matters: visibility of claims by radical-right actors and anti-immigrant claims by other actors foster violent behavior against asylum seekers and other immigrants, while anti-radical right statements decrease the occurrence of violent events. In a similar vein, Vliegenthart and colleagues (2005) demonstrate that the visibility of Dutch environmental organizations in newspapers contribute to increases

in their membership figures. Smith (1999) found that more than one fourth of the members of *Friends of the Earth* became member after viewing media coverage of this environmental movement organization.

Several recent studies have conceptualized the mobilizing role of media within a *diffusion* framework (Soule 2004): by considering the mass media an indirect tie between sender and receiver, the coverage of (successes of) certain protest tactics might result in an adoption of those tactics by groups elsewhere, which is called a diffusion process. Myers (2000), for example, focuses on the distribution of media outlets across U.S. cities in the period 1964-'71. He demonstrates that riots that take place in cities that have their own network affiliated television station are more likely to diffuse than riots that take place in cities that do not have such a television channel. Very similarly but in a different context, Braun and Vliegenthart (2009) show that media attention for fan violence in the four weeks preceding a soccer match in the Dutch competition increases the chance that fan sides will get involved in collective violent behavior (see also Braun & Vliegenthart 2008). Andrews and Biggs (2006), finally, focus on the spread of the 'sit-in' as a protest tactic among the U.S. equal rights movement in the sixties. Using circulation figures of newspapers, they demonstrate that also in this case, media can be considered as an important transmitter of information about protest events taking place at different locations.

Another perspective on the potential mobilizing role of the mass media focuses on the idea of 'collective identity' and how mass media may contribute to establishing such an identity. In fact, social movement scholars agree that for people to take action together they must have a kind of 'we'-feeling, a distinct feeling of belonging together (often opposed to a 'them'). Such a collective identity can be constructed. Studies have investigated to what extent and how mass media coverage may contribute to creating such a 'collective identity frame' (Gamson 1995). An example of such a study

is the work by Roscigno and Danaher (2001) who investigated the textile workers' insurgency in the South of the US in 1929-1934. Internet nor television existing, and with hardly any organizations in the form of unions, the textile workers collective identity that led to strikes was co-produced by the advent of local radio stations that played songs about working in the textile mills featuring textile workers.

Also when it comes to investigating the mobilizing role of media coverage, scholars of social movements have relied on the framing theory. The theoretical argument has been made by Gamson (1995) who states that all three 'collective action frames' — sets of beliefs that inspire and nurture collective action — are strongly affected by media coverage. Media coverage can nurture the feeling of injustice and fuel the preparedness of taking action by, for example, dramatizing and personalizing responsibility for the grievance. Media can spur the feeling of agency by, sometimes, depicting citizens that can alter the conditions and terms of their daily lives. Media can contribute to feelings of collective identity by describing the aggrieved groups as unitary and by defining clear adversaries.

Cooper (2002) investigated peace protest in Germany and compared several waves of peace protest. She finds that the size of these protest waves is associated with the interpretative frames of the issue in the German media: when mass media and movements concur in their framing of the (peace) issue, mobilization is facilitated and the protest wave is larger. But media framing can not only contribute but also thwart a movement's mobilization efforts. Entman and Rojecki (1993) investigated the media framing of the US anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s. They show that the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine* provided unfavorable coverage of the nuclear freeze movement (focusing on the emotionality of its appeals, the absence of expertise, the non-political nature of its demands, the impotency of its actions, the disunity in the movement etc.). As a consequence, although supported by the

majority of citizens, mobilization remained limited. What the media did according to Entman & Rojecki, was not eroding the support for the issue of the movement — support remained fairly stable over time — but rather discouraging people from participating in the movement by creating the impression that they adhered to a minority point of view and that their potential efforts would be in vain.

Most studies deal with how mass media, through their ‘normal’ and non-partisan coverage, unintentionally contribute to the turnout social movements can realize. Increased mobilization is considered as a side-product of routine coverage. Yet, sometimes, under specific circumstances, mass media seem to willingly mobilize in support of a (weakly organized) movement. Walgrave and Manssens (2005) analyze the case of the White March in Belgium, the biggest collective action event ever happening in that country, and show how the newspapers not only amplified the triggering events that sparked the mobilization (child kidnappings and murders) but that they also, and apparently deliberately, mobilized people to participate in the march. They referred extensively to the White March as a ‘solution’ to their anger, they stressed that there would be no violence, they printed posters that announced the march and they stated beforehand that the march would be a big success. Arguably, such an active mobilizing role of the media is exceptional and remains confined to instances where there are no strong movement organizations that can mobilize themselves, where there is no countermovement, and where the issue is a valence issue. These circumstances are not that exceptional, however. Research on the Million Mom March in the US, the marches of the Movement Against Senseless Violence in the Netherlands, and the Anti-Gun movement in the UK — all mobilizations in reaction to random violence — has led to similar observations of active media mobilization (Walgrave & Verhulst 2006).

Although the media do most of the time not act as directly mobilizing agencies, they are often indirectly instrumental in spreading the information that a protest event is planned. Mobilization is often described as the link between supply and demand of protest. Aggrieved people search for a way to let their voices be heard (demand), movement organizations stage protest events (supply) (Klandermans 2004). Bringing demand and supply together requires communication and information. Depending on the context, many potential participants receive the mobilizing word via the mass media. Several studies based on protest surveys, direct surveys with people demonstrating, have shown that many of the participants got informed about the upcoming event via the mass media (Walgrave & Klandermans 2010; Walgrave & Verhulst 2009).

Mass media and political elites

Mass media coverage may not only be advantageous (or disadvantageous) for mobilization but it may also have a direct impact on political elites and on how they respond to the protest. In terms of political elites' direct reaction to the protest itself, Giugni and Wisier (1999) examined protest policing and media coverage of protest events in Switzerland. Their results suggest that mass media coverage works against repression. When protest gets a lot of media attention — it is 'under the spotlights' — authorities are less willing to resort to repression against the events as violence may create adversarial attitudes among the population (and further reinforce the movement's support).

In a broader perspective, these results can be connected to a larger theme in the social movements literature regarding the action repertoire of social movements. Especially the work by Charles Tilly has proved to be very influential in this regard. In one of his last books Tilly (2006) elaborates the notion of so-called 'WUNC'-displays.

WUNC is an acronym referring to the typical traits of collective action by social movements: collective action should display 'Worthiness', 'Unity', 'Numbers', and 'Commitment'. Implicitly, Tilly suggests that the more 'WUNC' a collective action is, the more it will impress the power holders and the larger the chance that it will result in political change (or in preserving the status quo). It is clear that political elites, most of the time, do not directly observe collective action; but learn about it primarily via mass media coverage. This implies that the more a collective action event is described by journalists as consisting of many worthy, united and committed participants, the more the event will impress power holders and the larger the chance that they will act accordingly. In this sense, the picture sketched by the mass media of the protest has potentially large effects for their effectiveness. It is no coincidence, then, that movement spokespersons, journalists and police, after an event, often engage in verbal battles about the numbers of people that showed up (McPhail & McCarthy 2004).

There are few studies that try to measure directly to what extent media coverage of movements, their issues and their protest events affect political elites and the policies they enact. An exception is a recent study by Walgrave and Vliegthart (2009) who show that mass media act as an intermediary actor. In a study in Belgium 1993-2000, they assess the agenda-setting power of protest: when people demonstrate, does the issue they turn to the streets for receive more attention in parliament and government in the subsequent period? Their results support the idea that media coverage matters for protest effectiveness. Protest has a direct effect on the political agenda but the media largely act as an intermediary: protest is often picked up by the media leading to an increase of attention to the issue; this, in turn, leads to substantial effects on the parliamentary and governmental agendas. Earlier work by Costain and Majstorovic (1994) pointed in a similar direction. They argue

that the movement's rights movement legislative successes were the consequence of a congruent effect of movement activities and media coverage (and public opinion).

Mass media and Public opinion

Can social movements, via the mass media, impact public opinion? Many studies in the broad realm of political communication have claimed that media frames have an effect on the audience and may change what people think about particular issues (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007). The same most likely applies to the frames social movements want to communicate to the public. When movements manage to get their frames in the news, it is likely that (parts of) the public will develop attitudes that are favorable to the movement's issue. In a previous section, we showed that movements sometimes are successful and can inject new ideas and frames into the public debate and the media. So, one can assume that movements may sometimes reach and affect the public via the media. But studies directly investigating this triadic relationship are rare.

An exception is a study by Terkildsen and Schnell (1997). They examined how mass media outlets in the US from the 1960s onwards framed the feminist struggle. The five frames they discerned in real media coverage were then embedded in an experiment to see whether these 'real' frames had an impact on the public. They found that these frames indeed had a substantial impact on the subjects. Most frames generated a significant negative or positive impact on the saliency and direction of subjects' attitudes regarding women's rights. The study thus shows that when movements' issues are framed in a certain way in the media, that this framing affects public opinion in favor or against the movement.

Specifically related to protest coverage McLeod (1995) found that how protest is covered affects how people perceive protest. Experimental subjects were shown two

slightly different TV stories of the same protest event. These differences in framing and focus of coverage led to significant differences in subjects' perceptions of the protesters and their legitimacy. In a follow-up study McLeod and Detenber (1999) set up a similar experiment on news coverage of anarchist protests. They suggest that differences in coverage not only lead to differences in identification with the protesters, but more generally to more/less support for the right of people to protest and to different levels of support for the issue at stake. In short, framing of protest in the media leads to more or less support for the status quo.

From a much more general perspective, Gamson (1995) has convincingly argued that movements need mass media discourse in order to be able to connect with public opinion. Gamson not only states that movements can reach the audience *via* the mass media but that a shared understanding created by the media is a precondition to reach, via the media or not via the media, the audience. Media coverage, not specifically on social movements but in general, creates a kind of common understanding and knowledge that can be used by social movements to mobilize. Media provide the common background and make sure the public and movements speak the same language and refer to the same events. In short, social movements draw on available media discourse to create 'collective action frames' that are a necessary precondition to turn parts of the public into participants.

Wrapping up the section on the consequences of media coverage for social movements, we can state that research is well developed especially when it comes to mobilization. Ample research has convincingly shown that media coverage has a positive effect on mobilization for protest and recruitment in movement organizations. The mechanisms are diverse and range from diffusion processes over information dissemination to direct and deliberate mobilization by the media. Far fewer studies have investigated the direct effects of movement or protest coverage on

political elites and their policies. The available studies suggest that media coverage also affects the political outcomes of social movements: media act as an intermediary conveying the protest to political elites who perceive movements only in their mediatized form. Finally, a few experimental studies established that the way protests are covered in the news has considerable effects on the perception of the staging movement, on its legitimacy and on the support for the movement's issue.

Conclusion

We set this chapter off by contending that mass media are of crucial importance for social movements. Even more than any other political actor, movements are highly dependent on media coverage to reach their constituency, to turn bystanders into potential participants and to convey their message to the protest targets. After reviewing the research literature, it is obvious that our initial claim is warranted by the facts; media are key for movements. One could even state that it is difficult to imagine that social movements would exist without the mass media (we would in any case not be aware of their existence).

A second observation is that social movement scholars are dealing extensively with the mass media. The research field is vast and quickly expanding. We could only review a part of this exhaustive literature here. The largest stream in the movements and media literature, deals with mass media as a source of information about movements and their events. Apart from that, by far most work has been focusing on how and under what circumstances social movements get access to the news. We know quite well why some movements get coverage while the public remains oblivious concerning others. That work is entirely in line with mainstream communication research on news values and news routines. Another substantial body of studies examines the effects of media coverage on mobilization. Some fields of

research have developed to a much lesser extent. Concurring with the relatively poor performance of social movement scholarship when it comes to assessing the political impact social movements have, we know relatively little whether and how coverage of social movements affects their political outcomes. We have every reason to expect that media are an important interface relaying protest with political elites but we hardly have studies that scrutinize this relationship empirically. This probably is where movement and media studies can still make most progress.

Finally, the most remarkable conclusion is the ‘splendid isolation’ of students of social movements dealing with media on the one hand and the mainstream political communication scholarship on the other. Both communities deal with largely similar questions — how do political actors get into news, how are they covered, and with what effect? — they do so relying on similar theoretical approaches — framing, gatekeeping, diffusion... — and they even draw on identical methods — content analyses, case studies, experimental designs... — but they do not seem to be really on speaking terms. We hope this chapter increases the awareness among students of political communication that there is an entire community of like-minded scholars tackling very similar questions that may be worthwhile to turn to.

Key terms for indexing

Social movements, protest, framing, mass media, coverage, diffusion, mobilization, protest events, agenda-setting, gatekeeping, news selection, description bias, media access, media power, issues, political elites, public opinion, news values, news routines, protest event analysis, discursive opportunity structure, experimental research, collective identity, repression.

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