

Towards ‘new emotional movements’?

A comparative exploration into a specific movement type

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INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 1996, more than 300,000 people took to the Brussels’ streets in a protest rally called the ‘White March’, thus generating the largest mobilization in the history of Belgium. The demonstrators stood up against a series of horrifying kidnappings, sexual abuses and murders of girls by one man, Marc Dutroux, and against the supposed incompetence of judiciary and police in handling these events. Gradually and alongside with the White March, a new ‘White Movement’ developed. The movement and its mobilizations were in many respects at odds with what main stream social movement theory would expect. It challenged especially the rational assumptions on which current movement theory is based. The lack of clear-cut demands, the mobilizing force of emotions and identification, and the complete absence of organizational resources and organized networks were only some of the White Movement’s features that seemed to be opposing current social movement theory (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998a). In this contribution we try to get beyond the

idiosyncrasies of the Belgian White Movement and explore whether other events in other countries inspired similar social movements. Jennings (1999: 1) calls for more research about ‘pain and loss events’ and the political responses to it because ‘responses to pain and loss events occupy a prominent place in the domains of public opinions and issue activism’. Jennings even claims that harm-related political activism ‘has some unique properties’. Hence, the question that guides this contribution is straightforward: is the Belgian case exceptional, merely a product of peculiar circumstances; simply the outcome of a highly specific local context created by eccentric conditions? Or is it, in contrast, exemplifying a certain distinct *type* of movement, a kind of movement with a recurring pattern of features that we preliminary might baptise ‘new emotional movements’?

Our approach is not only comparative, it is explorative as well. We do not have precise hypotheses, nor do we test a firm theory about these ‘new emotional movements’. Yet we will discard or validate the typicality of the characteristics of the White Movement by confronting it with three new cases and as such ‘test’ our preliminary concept. Apart from the Belgian White Movement, we will examine the Snowdrop Campaign in the UK, the Million Mom March in de US and the Movement against Senseless Violence in the Netherlands. All four cases were triggered by brutal, non-war and non-political violent acts resulting in deaths of

private persons that have provoked mass mobilization. The aggressive triggering events were random violence: it is patternless — it can happen to anyone — and it is pointless — it happens for no reason at all (Best 1999: 10). Some have called these events ‘focusing events’ (Kingdon 1984; Birkland 1998), ‘circumstantial reactors’ (Cobb and Elder 1972), or ‘pain and loss events’ (Jennings 1990). In all cases the mobilization following the violence was substantial and massive. It engendered significant societal debate and provoked political consequences. If these movements share the same peculiar characteristics at odds with dominant movement theory, our claim that a distinct movement type is at stake is underpinned, and these movements might be considered as prototypes of a specific kind of mobilization and social movements surfacing in the Western world. Yet if these other movements, in contrast, do not share (any of) the features of the White Movement, we must rule out the Belgian case as an anomaly, a unique creation of particular circumstances.

Following our twofold selection criterion of violence and subsequent reactive collective action, our enquiry can be specified: our question is not *why* such violent events bring a movement about. Therefore the sampling logic should be different and should compare violent acts leading to mobilization with violent acts not leading to mobilization. But our quest is rather *how* does such a movement provoked by random

violence looks? What are these movements' characteristics and can we discern a recurring pattern in their features?

The selection of the three cases is not only based on theoretical grounds. Since 'new emotional movements' appear to be ephemeral phenomena (see below), with an explosive start but an as abrupt end often after only a few months, and because they have attracted only modest scholarly attention, the available secondary evidence is limited. Although we lack some crucial facts about the selected cases too, these four movements appear to be, at the moment, the best documented comparative cases availableⁱ. Drawing upon scientific literature, newspaper articles, and non scientific books written by participants, we tried to gather as much secondary evidence as possible.

The first part of this article goes into the Dutroux-case and the White Movement in Belgium. It succinctly sketches its course and extracts six seemingly crucial features of the White Movement each of them challenging classic social movement theory and, as such, we draw the rough lines of a preliminary concept of 'new emotional movements'. Second, presenting their basic facts and figures the three test cases are introduced. Next the six features are scrutinised for the test cases. Some features are rejected while others are retained and pass the test. Fourth we try to make sense of

the remaining features and explain how they interact and can be considered as a type. Finally we put our results in perspective and discuss the outcome of our enquiry.

THE BELGIAN WHITE MOVEMENT: CONSTRUCTING A PRELIMINARY MOVEMENT TYPE

In the late summer of 1996 a man called Marc Dutroux was arrested in the surroundings of the town of Charleroi. He confessed the kidnapping of six young girls. Two girls were recovered alive from a hidden cellar at Dutroux' house. For the four others all help came too late. Initially, the popular anger was aimed towards Dutroux himself, the ruthless child murderer. Soon however, the judiciary system came under fire as being incompetent and having grossly neglected the victims. When, on Monday 14 October 1996, examining and successful magistrate Connerotte was taken off the Dutroux-inquiry by the Belgian Supreme Court for being biased, hell broke loose. An anarchy-like, pre-revolutionary atmosphere hit Belgium: wildcat strikes, violent street protests and the occupation of crossroads occurred throughout the country; public transport came to a halt and courts of justice were smeared with spaghetti. Within four days, about 500.000 people hit the streets (Walgrave & Rihoux 1997). These vehement displays of anger contrasted sharply with the White March that took place at the end of that week in the streets of Brussels on Sunday, October 20 1996. The White March, organised by the victims' parents, became the biggest

Belgian demonstration ever; one in thirty Belgians engaged in it. It was exceptionally quiet and calm, without banners, pamphlets or slogans disturbing the white serenity and with the victims' parents doing the honors. After the White March, the street protest came to a temporary halt. But only a few months later the parents appealed to the Belgian citizens for the formation of White Committees in order to keep the ideas of the White March alive, and to continue the action. By June 1997, there would be 124 White Committees nationwide. They managed to stage more than 100 small and local white marches all over the country with approximately 100.000 participants (Walgrave and Rihoux 1997). Yet the tide was turning, and the White Movement was losing societal and political attention. Exactly one year after the White March, some 8.000 people gathered before the Neufchâteau courthouse in a remembrance/reminder march. The last large convulsion of the movement occurred on 15 February 1998 when still 30.000 people took to the streets in what was called the Second White March. The movement petered out, and became merely being dormant, without any political meaning or media-attention (Walgrave & Manssens, 2000).

During its short life, the movement displayed some peculiar characteristics that appear to be at odds with dominant social movement theory. Six features especially characterized the White Movement: (1) victimhood and emotions; (2) no clear-cut

demands; (3) organisational weakness; (4) support from mass media; (5) elite endorsement; and (6) internal heterogeneity (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998; Rihoux & Walgrave 2000).

(1) Although still a point of discussion among movement students (Rucht 1998; Staggenborg 1999), classic resource mobilization theory emphasizes available resources, the presence of not personally involved issue entrepreneurs and professionalization as crucial elements in movement formation (McCarthy & Zald 1973; 1987). Yet, in line with contemporary growth of the victim's significance in many sections of society - in politics (Furedi 2000), law (Boutellier 1993) as well as in the media (Fritz & Altheide 1987; Best 1990; 1999) - social movement scholars more recently started to describe movements organized by personally involved victims. A Californian woman starts Mothers Against Drunk Driving after the traffic death of her daughter and, nation-wide, victims found local chapters and take up leadership positions in the young movement (Weed 1990; McCarthy and Wolfson 1996); AIDS patients organize to affect medical research and treatment of the disease (Jennings 1990); breast cancer activists stand up for their rights (Jennings 1990), as do the disabled and chronically ill (Duyvendak and Nederland 2003)... The Belgian White Movement displayed the same peculiar victim-centred mobilization. The victimhood of the little girls and the identification process it engendered was crucial for setting up

the White March and the subsequent development of the movement. It were the victims' parents who organized the march in person and launched the movement; no issue entrepreneurs intervened. Through their long mediatized search for their children, the parents had grown to be public figures, and their private grief had pervaded the public sphere (Walgrave & Stouthuysen, 1998). The loss of their children rendered them public and political legitimacy, and gave them the right to speak out. The authenticity of their suffering endowed them with a moral authority, a victim's 'charisma' and expertise, that was undisputable and their appeal was met with the greatest respect by public, media and politicians, especially because their murdered children were obviously innocent and did not ask for the risk but carried out perfect normal activities (Furedi 1996; 1997; 1998; 2000; Weed 1990). In a certain sense the murdered children were 'ideal victims' (Christie 1986). Tarrow (1998: 36) emphasized the mobilization potential of victim identification before:

It may be surprising to think of death as a source of collective action. But it is the reaction of the living – especially to violent death – that is the source of protest, rather than death itself. Death has the power to trigger violent emotions and brings people together with little in common but their grief and their solidarity. It provides legitimate occasions for public gatherings and is one

of the few occasions on which officials will hesitate to charge into a crowd or ban public assemblies.

This is exactly what happened. The victims not only took the initiative and became the undisputed leaders of the movement, it was foremost their victimhood that appealed to supporters and boosted participation. Survey evidence of demonstrators and White Committee members (see appendix) shows that people identified strongly with the victims and their relatives. The extreme overrepresentation of people with children among the movement's demonstrators and militants was just one indicator of this identification process (Walgrave & Rihoux 1997).

Identification with the victims lead to a twofold emotional outcome: compassion and fear. Jennings (1990) identifies the same activism-engendering emotions as a reaction to pain and loss events. On the one hand, feelings of compassion and solidarity, the desire to pay a tribute to the victims, were most mentioned by demonstrators and militants as reason to engage in the White Movement. The victims were considered as martyrs, as modern saints, and were referred to as close relatives. On the other hand, people were afraid because of their own children. They engaged because of the harrowing idea that the same horror could happen to them and their own children as well. A lot of participants wanted the marches to be a signal that similar events should be prevented to ever happen again; the Dutroux-events should not have happened in

vain (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998). People took the streets for their *own* children which gave sense and meaning to their grief. As such compassion and fear, both based on the identification with the victims, were complementary. Yet we would expect them to have pushed the movement in opposite directions. If compassion prevailed, the movement would have turned into an *identity* movement, just a self-support group, without external goals or instrumental strategies. Movement gatherings would be merely Durkheimian rituals, with people meeting, sharing emotions and strengthening group ties. It was the fear that gave the movement its external drive, that turned it into an *instrumental* movement with political and societal goals, and with the ambition to bring about structural changes so that such events would never happen again. During its short life, the White Movement continuously balanced between those two movement types, between identity and instrumentality, and its undecidedness contributed to its downfall (Duyvendak & Giugni 1995; Walgrave 2001). To state it somewhat oddly, it was the *emotion* of fear that gave the protest a *rational* and goal-oriented character, and that rendered the White March the status of a protest rally and not merely of a mourning cortege.

The White Movement's story demonstrates that rationality and emotions are not contradictory. Emotions have long been discarded by social movement scholars, but recently we witnessed a catch-up operation (Amizande & Mcadam 2001). Both rationality and emotions can be found in all mobilizations (Jasper 1995; 1997;

Goodwin et al. 2001; Hooghe & Deneckere 2002) and as Jasper (1995: 109) puts it “... *most emotions are part of rational action, not opposed to it*”. Hence we do *not* claim that ‘new emotional movements’ are novel and unique in this respect, or that they are more emotional than other movements. Yet what might be innovating is the central role of the victims in these movements, the strong identification process it triggers, and the personal, intimate and private feelings grounded in personal life (children) that turned into politically significant mobilizations (Walgrave & Stouthuysen 1998).

(2) The clear expression of unambiguous goals is commonly considered to be a prerequisite for successful mobilization and movement formation (Gamson 1975; 1990; Snow et al. 1986; Klandermans 1984; 1997). Yet, at the White March not one slogan, pamphlet or banner disturbed the white tranquillity. Normally, social movements make claims, put forward specific demands, but the white protesters did not. On the contrary, it was Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene receiving the parents in his official residence the day of the White March who created the movement’s unofficial aims by promising specific policy measures. Rucht (1998:46) found similar non-goal oriented examples in the 50s in Germany, but these cases were rare: ‘Only on few occasions, do we find other forms of mass protest, such as a march carrying torches (*Fackelzug*) or a silent march (*Schweigemarsch*) with no speeches or chanted slogans’.

The absence of clear-cut demands was the explicit wish of the victims' parents, who had called for a 'white' and hence colourless demonstration. In the newspapers, their appeal was amplified and the parents were granted a forum to voice their no-demands stance and to repeat their 'only for our children'-mantra. (Walgrave & Manssens 2000). Most marchers' driving force of compassion corresponded with the absence of public movement aims. A considerable part of the participants did express political goals when asked in our survey — to stand up against paedophilia, to demand a reform of the judiciary or a reform of the entire Belgian political system – but they respected the parents' wish (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998: 318). The absence of established movement organisations as well (see below) could account for the 'claimlessness' of the movement: existing organisations did not impose their goals and claims to the young movement.

Initially its no-claims stance was certainly a gain for the movement. Driven by emotions people simply did not need goals to be motivated and the movement itself was the message. Later on, the movement got into deep water precisely because it made no clear claims and anyone could attribute his personal claims to the movement.

(3) In the 80s social movement scholars reached as good as a consensus that organization is a prerequisite for (mass) mobilization: rational actors engage in

instrumental action through formal organizations to secure resources and foster mobilization (Buechler 1995: 441; McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1987). Again the White Movement defeated the theoretical expectations. Although established, well-structured and well-developed organizations focussing on paedophilia, child kidnapping and child abuse existed in Belgium at the time — the Relief Fund for Missing and Kidnapped Children (1991) and Marc and Corinne (1992)(Rihoux & Walgrave 1998) — these organisations did *not* seize the opportunity to set up a mobilization of their own occupying their field of action and preventing the alongside development of new movements. The same applies to the classic movement organisations, labour unions and political parties, which have always dominated the Belgian streets (Van Aelst & Walgrave 1999; 2001; Norris et al. 2003). These actors did not turn on their mighty mobilization machinery nor did they incite their members to participate. For the White March not even a transitory or temporary association was set up by the parents.

The remarkable complete absence of organizational support was due to the parents who would not let existing organizations take over their issue. They considered the White Movement as their own personal movement, based on their own grief for the loss of their own children. It was their personal property not to be recuperated by any group or party. When the existing child-protection organisations, after a while, tried to get their share from the immense societal attention and dared to challenge the

parent's issue ownership, the parents fought a bitter battle with these established organizations.

Co-optable networks of people with common experiences and/or people most integrated in the social tissue can be considered as a first mobilization alternative for formal organisations (Freeman 1983; 1999). Yet even this soft organization substitute was lacking in the white case. The demonstrators were not more integrated in society than the average Belgian citizen, they were even less active in associations, and we registered a smaller amount of union and party memberships (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998). McAdam's (1988) micromobilization contexts could be regarded as a second alternative to formal organizations: recruitment through informal networks in small and scattered cultural and political associations. But our survey data challenge this stand-in too: over 80 per cent of the marchers stated that their most important recruitment channel were the media (see below); 10 per cent pointed to family, friends or colleagues as primary recruiters, an even less formal level of recruitment than micromobilization contexts (McCarthy 1996). Demonstrators recruited through the typical recruitment channels were very few. Barely 10 per cent of the demonstrators were mobilized in an organisational manner. Only 5 per cent of them walked along with co-members of an organization, 60 per cent came with their family and 19 per cent with friends or colleagues. Comparable evidence for other Belgian demonstrations in the same period reported elsewhere (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998;

Walgrave & Manssens 2000; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Norris et al. 2003) show that these figures lay way below the usual situation in which organizations play a much more central role.

Common recruitment theories fell short, maybe because they focus too much on cognitive, and too little on moral and emotional recruitment dynamics on the personal level (Jasper 1997; 1999; Goodwin et al. 2001). Absence of organizations might be compensated by intense emotions. Jasper (1997: 1999) introduced the useful notion of ‘moral shock’. These shocks result from information or events — usually public events, unexpected and highly publicized — that raise such a sense of outrage that people become inclined toward political action irrespective of whether they are part of a mobilizable network or not. They engage in an *active* search for protest possibilities and are not just inertly waiting for an action opportunity, which is the normal situation. Elsewhere, we developed a similar argument, drawing on Klandermans’ well-known distinction, stating that an extreme degree of consensus mobilization might spill over to an automatic and quasi spontaneous action mobilisation (Walgrave & Manssens, 2000). In generating this spill over and inflicting moral shock, mass media play a crucial role.

(4) The interaction between media and social movements captured a sizeable amount of scholarly attention (Gamson 1992; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Gamson 1995;

Gitlin 1980; Molotch 1978; Van Zoonen 1992). Yet the actual mobilizing force of the media is all but central to these accounts. Except for some cases (Juhem 1999), the mobilizing potential of the mass media is not thought of very highly (Gamson 1992; Klandermans and Goslinga 1996; McQuail 1993: 381). Klandermans (1997) states that mass media are able to create a favourable mobilization climate (consensus mobilization), but that they fall short of persuasive communication (action mobilization). Yet for the White Movement the mass media were undisputedly a decisive ally. Jennings (1999) asserts that mass media play a crucial role in moulding the political response to pain and loss events because they make people vicariously, yet indirectly, experience the events and because the public's hunger for pain and loss stories is insatiable. Indeed, the media made the White March by giving it their unqualified support and substituting the role normally played by pre-existing organizations and recruitment networks. We elaborated this point at length before (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998; Walgrave and Manssens 2000) so here we can suffice by summarizing the argument (see annex for technical information).

The Belgian press can be accounted not only for amplification of the issue and for consensus mobilization, but even for action mobilization: the actual incitement and exhortation to participate. The news coverage of the Dutroux-case was massive and ubiquitous (one third of all news during more than three months); all media drew upon the same master frame, continuously stressing the estrangement between 'the

people' and 'the system', while generalising the feelings of anger and definitely choosing the sides of the protest; and the media implicitly (by stressing the historic character of the protest and lowering all possible practical participation barriers) and explicitly incited the public to take part in the protest gatherings (by adding posters announcing the march and organizing their own supporting protest events).

Although real causality between media coverage and mobilization cannot be proved definitively (McPhail and McCarthy 200-: 11), 'new emotional movements' might have a different relationship with the media than other movements. While other movements are challenged by the media and must struggle to get their message across, 'new emotional movements' might, in contrast, be surfing on the media waves, (temporarily) receiving full media back up.

(5) Initially the White Movement was not approached negatively by the political establishment, on the contrary. In spite of the popular political dissatisfaction embodied in the movement vehemently criticizing political authorities, it faced no repression but rather facilitation and support. Probably the popular anger was spread that widely and fierce that politicians decided to back up the movement to avoid 'a revolutionary polarization' (Tarrow 1998: 149). Also the claimlessness and the absence of any political colour in the movement permitting no political force to capitalize upon the white anger, made it easier for the political elites to support it.

The nation's king Albert called upon the people to engage in the White March. All parties without exception said they endorsed the march and its (non)aims. Minister of Internal Affairs Johan Vande Lanotte recognized the victim's parents as the official organizers of the White March and received them several times to discuss the march's organization. Minister of Justice Stefaan Declerck visited the parents in their home and promised his support to do all he could to prevent such dramas in the future. On the day of the White March, Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene personally proposed several policy measures, among which a sweeping depoliticization of the Belgian judiciary, and promised their quick implementation (and he kept his promise). Dehaene even admitted that the Belgian government had been too preoccupied with the implementation of the EU's Maastricht-norm and had neglected important societal problems (Walgrave & Rihoux 1997). So initially, the White Movement seemed more of a consensus movement than a conflict movement. Reforms in justice and politics in general were generally acclaimed and seemed valence issues on which everyone could agree. During the first few months no opposing views, no offensive or even dissenting remarks were uttered by any politician regarding the White March.

(6) Typically, the traditional variables of gender, age and level of education are still the most important demographic predictors for protest participation (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Norris 2002; Crozat 1998; Dalton 1996). Higher educated, male and

young till mid-aged are more prone to participate in protest. Although the discriminating force of these classic SES-variables might be gradually withering, it remains largely unchallenged that protest participation is a matter of specific groups taking to the streets. Because protest is staged by organizations defending the interests of specific groups there are hardly well documented examples of protest events or movements that seem to have managed to gather a more or less representative cross-section of the population. Yet, once again, the White Movement confronts the classic notions of mobilization and participation. White Movement participants were a striking cross-section of the Belgian population. Usually, unless for union protests within sectors with a dominant female staff, demonstrations in Belgium are a men's affair (Smits 1984). Appealing to women and men both groups were equally represented in the second White March. In terms of age too the participants were remarkably close to the population's age pyramid with the 30-49 and the 50-59 categories slightly overrepresented and the +60 group underrepresented (Walgrave and Rihoux 1998). Concerning educational level too, the second White March was fairly representative combining an amazing large amount of people who only finished lower secondary school, but still less than in the population at large, with a merely small overpresence of the hyper-educated so often dominant among new social movement supporters. Multivariate analyses showed that the second White March, in comparison with some other major Belgian demonstrations and demonstration issues

in the last years, was indeed far most heterogeneous (Van Aelst & Walgrave 2001; Norris et al. 2003; Decoster et al. 2002).

Although militancy in a social movement is even more socially biased than demonstration activism (Verba et al. 1993: 306), the same striking heterogeneity went for the movement's militants, the members of the White Committees. They counted more women, even in the highest positions within the committees, defying the traditional idea of diminishing female presence the higher up the organization's hierarchy (Lovenduski 1986), a phenomenon that is even found in organizations with high female representation like new social movements (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990). In terms of age and educational level White militants were even more representative of the Belgian population.

THREE TEST CASES: THE PRELIMINARY MOVEMENT TYPE TO THE TEST

Having derived six characterizing and challenging features from the Belgian case and, as such, having constructed a preliminary movement type, we need to confront this one-case typification with similar cases. Do these traits hold true for similar events, movements and mobilizations, or are they, on the contrary, to be considered as individual and idiosyncratic, merely the result of the specificity of the Belgian case and its circumstances? That is the question we tackle in this section. After briefly

portraying our three test cases we carefully check point by point whether the six features hold for the Snowdrop Appeal in the UK, the Million Mom March in the US and the Movement against Senseless Violence in the Netherlands. Note again that this is an explorative endeavour, only including three cases and with unavoidable lacunae in the available evidence. Especially the evidence concerning the Snowdrop Appeal is limited.

Three cases in a nutshell

In the early morning of 13 March 1996, Thomas Hamilton strode composedly into the gymnasium of Dunblane Primary School in Scotland, armed with several legally acquired semi-automatic weapons. Within just three minutes, he shot and killed sixteen five and six years old infants as well as their teacher, and wounded another ten toddlers and three teachers. After having released 105 rounds of fire, he turned the gun at himself, thus ending the massacre with a total body-count of eighteen. In the immediate aftermath of this incident, the Snowdrop Appeal was brought into existence, to advocate a total ban on handguns. It was set up as a petition by Anne Pearson, a friend of one of the families, and she would soon be joined by several others. The Snowdrop Campaign ultimately gathered 705.000 signatures. In less than

two years time, its demands had been converted into a law which ultimately came into force in January 1998 (Scraton 1999; Thomson et al. 1998).

On 20 April 1999, at lunchtime, two teenaged boys entered their Denver high school, armed with several semi-automatic shotguns and pistols along with numerous explosive devices. In their walk through Columbine High School, they killed 13 students and 1 teacher and injured another 23 people, before ultimately taking their own lives. This event, which took place in Littleton, an affluent suburb of Denver, had been the seventh and most lethal school-shooting in eighteen months. In sum, these seven had resulted in 31 deaths and 63 injuries. Exactly one month after the Columbine-incident, on 20 May, another teenager wounded six people, using a rifle and a pistol, at his Georgia high school. And on 10 August, a white racist opened fire in a Jewish day-care center at Granada Hills, Los Angeles injuring three toddlers and two adults (Goss 2002). Shocked by seeing reports on these last events on television on August 10, Donna-Dees Thomases, housewife and mother of two infants, decided to dedicate herself to a reform of the United States Gun Laws, and planned to organize a demonstration. She put up a website, and named her initiative the Million Mom March. Soon, about 500 mothers would have joined her in the initiative. Eventually, on 14 May 2000, Mother's Day, several hundreds of thousands, most of

them women, engaged in the first Million Mom March in Washington and in 73 other cities and towns around the country (Boyle 2000; Goss 2002).

Leeuwarden, The Netherlands. Early on Saturday morning 13 September 1997, Meindert Tjoelker and his girlfriend Jennifer were walking home after a night out, when they noticed four troublemakers wanting to throw a bicycle in the river. Tjoelker shouts 'Is that really necessary?' to which the four crossed the footbridge and made a vicious attack. Tjoelker fell on the ground and got kicked on the head. Few hours later he died in the hospital. Within a few days a solidarity movement saw the light: people laid flowers, and candles and children's drawings were put on the place where Tjoelker was killed. A national minute of silence was held, and a remembrance march was attended by several thousands of sympathizers. One year earlier, on 17 August 1996, Joes Kloppenburg got killed in very similar incident when he tried to intervene in a fight between four hoodlums and an innocent bystander. Kloppenburg shouted 'Do you really have to do that?' and the foursome started venting its anger towards him. Kloppenburg got kicked unconscious by his attackers, lapsed in a coma and died a few hours later. A few days after the incident, a 'Platform against Violence' was founded and a remembrance march was held. Both Tjoelker and Kloppenburg became the epitomes of the Movement against Senseless Violence with several local chapters and two national organizations (Boutellier 2000; Vasterman 1998). The

movement was further fuelled by subsequent similar events in the following years each time boosting mobilization. On 10 January 10 1999, two teenaged girls, Marianne Roza and Froukje Schuitmaker, were killed when leaving a dance-club in Gorinchem by three men who were shooting haphazardly at the discotheque's door after they had been thrown out. A week later a remembrance vigil was attended by some 30,000 sympathizers, holding torches and white roses, broadcasted live on national television. And in Vlaardingen, some twenty-thousand people took to the streets one week after the death of Daniël van Cotthem, who was attacked and murdered for no apparent reason on 7 January 2000, when he was walking his girlfriend to the station (Boutellier 2000; Vasterman 2000). In sum 22 different marches between 1997 and 2000 were counted of which seven had a national character and with 75,000 to 100,000 participants (Boutellier 2000).

Victimhood and Emotions

Victimhood was a core feature of the White Movement. Victims were the central actors in the movement and controlled it entirely. Victim identification translating itself in two emotions, compassion and fear, was the main mobilizing mechanism. Both distinct emotions were constructive for the movement: compassion fuelled the

movement's internal cohesiveness and identity, while fear rendered it an external goal.

Was victimhood paramount in the three test cases as well?

The Snowdrop Appeal was not set up by (relatives of) the victims in person but by a friend of one of their families, Anne Pearston. Originally it was to be anonymous and, out of respect, deliberately not associated with the victims and their relatives. Soon however, the connection with the Dunblane victims would be made: several Dunblane families signed the petition, and Mick North, the father of the murdered Sophie, appeared at the launch of the Appeal and engaged fully in the subsequent lobbying campaign. 'Subsequent to the launch and its support by a number of the families of the victims, the Snowdrop Appeal, in the eyes of the public and the media, became organically linked with the tragedy of Dunblane' (Thomson, Stancich and Dickson 1998: 330). North himself (1999) speaks of Dunblane as being a 'public private tragedy', meaning that the private grief of the parents had grown into a public issue. The Dunblane children's parents had become public figures, with a privileged status in public debate. In a review on North's book, Hume and Cowley (2000) assert that in the Dunblane days, people were celebrated not for their achievements, but for the amount of their suffering.

‘Nowadays, it seems that the loss of a loved one can automatically gain you the kind of moral authority that politicians crave.... With the endorsement of victim’s relatives, campaigns... for a ban on handguns, can assume the force of a moral imperative. The message is that to challenge views espoused by these relatives is to disrespect the memory of their loved ones, almost to dance on their graves’ (Hume and Cowley 2000).

The Dunblane victims did play an important role in the Snowdrop Appeal but their role was different. They did not take the lead of the movement; it was not their personal movement. Yet their sympathy and public support boosted the movement and made its success. Although we lack the necessary survey evidence to confirm it, most likely similar identification mechanisms were responsible for the movement’s broad support and lead to the typical mix of compassion and fear. British sociologist Frank Furedi (1996; 1997; 1998; 2000) argued that Dunblane and the subsequent campaign was an example of what he called a ‘culture of fear’. The tragic Dunblane deaths were quickly transformed into a cause and the surviving relatives thereby express the hope that their loved ones had not died in vain (Furedi 1998). The fact that the movement turned out to focus its efforts on the instrumental claim of gun control (see below) suggests that fear might indeed have been the dominant reaction.

Donna Dees-Thomases, the founder of the Million Mom March, declared about her setting-up this initiative: ‘When I started it, I didn’t know the difference between the Brady Bill and the Brady Bunch.... It’s just a matter of instinct. Mothers that want to protect their children. It’s very primitive’ (Dees-Thomases 2000). Her identifying with the victims’ parents, and the idea that similar events could occur to her own children one day, led her to initiating the Million Mom March. Although, like in the Snowdrop Appeal, initially no Columbine victims were involved in Dees-Thomases’ initiative, they would soon come to support it publicly. From the beginning, eleven victims or surviving relatives of gun violence were active in the movement on a national level; dozens of testimonies appeared on the website, and at the march, ‘bereaved mothers talked about the loss of their children’ (Goss 2001b: 11). The linkage with surviving relatives and their personal suffering and grief rendered legitimacy to Dees-Thomases’ initiative. Goss (2001b), who carried out a thorough study of the Million Mom March based on survey research among participants, substantiated that identification mechanism were at work and that recruitment for the Million Mom March and sustained follow-up activism were primarily based on what she calls the ‘maternalist frame’ of concern for children’s safety. ‘The rash of mass shootings in “safe places” made everybody a potential victim. And the maternalist rhetoric, sounding universal themes of child protection, made every mother (or parent) a potential part of the solution, at least for a day’ (Goss 2001a: 30). Also Brooks et al. (2000) describe the

nation's reaction to the Columbine killings as 'a mixture of empathy for the community, grief for the victims, and a desperate fear for the safety of their children'. As in Dunblane, victims played an important role although not a leading but only a supportive one. Identification mechanisms did their part and the movement was built on emotions of compassion and fear. Just like in Dunblane the movement went for similar instrumental goals, namely stricter gun laws (see below) suggesting that fear was the dominant feeling.

Victims played a key role in the set up of the Movement against Senseless Violence in The Netherlands. Boutellier (2000) counted thirteen active movement branches among which at least seven were founded by people who were victims themselves or friends or relatives of victims. Jan Kloppenburg, father of Joes, for example, set up the *Stichting Kappen Nou!* while de *Stichting Groningen Veilig* was founded by Jaap Ruijter de Wildt, the father of the murdered girl Anne. *Gorcum Tegen Geweld* was set up by Marijn Krol, the brother of a girl who stood next to Froukje Schuitmaker and Marianne Roza when they were killed at the discotheque. The victims and their relatives were met with great respect by the population and by the national media. In a strikingly exact articulation of Furedi's (2000) notion of the 'victim expert', Froukje Schuitmakers' brother, who was also engaged in the movement, stated: 'In the end, I have to tell my story and journalists will listen. After all, who dares to argue with a

victim'(Luyendijk 2000). Most of the twenty marches staged by the movement were organized by family or friends of the victims or by people who were directly involved in the violence. In *all* cases, deliberation with, or involvement of the victims' family had taken place (Boutellier 2000). Victimhood clearly rendered legitimacy to the movement and the identification with the grief and suffering of the surviving relatives was an asset to its marches. Beunders (2002: 173) characterizes Meindert Tjoelker as the 'ideal' victim, implicitly conveying the message that he was easy to identify with. 'Within a day, the image of a saint had been created, and the bereavement was surrounded with tragic coincidences that accentuated the drama and his being a hero once more. He was a "friendly man who did his civic duty"'. Tjoelker was killed when he returned from his 'stag night' and his burial took place on the day he would have got married. His tragedy could have happened to anyone. One of the two most common attributes ascribed to the silent marches by the media was 'compassion'. Also 'expressing one's grief, 'mourning', 'contemplation' and other emotional references were frequently stated by the Dutch media (Boutellier 2000).

To conclude, in all cases victims played an important role. The Dutch case is most similar to the original Belgian case with victims taking the initiative and personally leading the movement. The British and American cases look alike too, with victims supporting and endorsing the movement full heartedly and legitimizing the claims of

the movement, yet not adopting personal leadership in the movement. As far as we can observe based on incomplete evidence, in all cases identification with the victims was paramount to getting the message across and drive people to action. In all cases we noticed the presence of the two emotions involved: fear and compassion. In the well-documented American case fear seemed to have dominated, while in the original Belgian case compassion appeared to be most central.

No Clear-cut demands

The Belgian case was characterized by an absence of clear cut political demands (hence the (non-)colour white). It was the parents' explicit wish not to voice claims which corresponded with most participants' basic compassionate motivation. The absence of claim-imposing pre-existing movement organizations contributed to the political colourlessness of the White Movement. What about the three test cases? Did these movements go to war without clear aims?

In terms of the Snowdrop Appeal the answer is a clear no. Although it was set up 'almost exclusively as a moral appeal' (Thomson et al. 1998: 333) like the White March, the Snowdrop Appeal aimed at obtaining one very clear-cut demand: a total ban on handguns. The fact that the movement completely disappeared when this ban

eventually became law underpins the instrumentality of the movement. Thomson and colleagues (1998: 341) underscore the instrumentality argument when they contend: 'Pearston's ability to combine highly rational arguments with emotional appeals moved many potential supporters. The tragedy itself was never used as a tool to gain an emotional reaction; it served merely to draw the empathy of supporters.'(Thomson et al. 1998: 341)

The American case is not supportive for the non-demands feature either. The Million Mom March was formally set up as a very precise appeal for stricter gun laws by demanding the making of trigger locks on all handguns mandatory and by demanding a national system of registration and licensing for all handgun owners. This corresponds with the dominant fear frame found among the participants. People took to the streets in the first place not to mourn for the deceased, but to prevent such things from ever happening again and hence, for their own children's safety.

Again, it is the Dutch case that proves to be most similar to the Belgian case. The silent marches in the Netherlands were far less instrumentally oriented (Duits 2002). Silence was the means of expression, and was only supplemented by the light of burning torches and photographs of the victims. In Rucht's (1998: 46) words, it were perfect examples of a 'Schweigemarsch' or a 'Fackelzug'. As in Belgium, the Dutch

demonstrators did not utter political claims nor voiced clear demands. Bouttellier (2000) has examined all relevant press accounts between July 1997 and July 2000 of these silent marches and hardly ever found political claims attributed to the demonstrators. The most claim-like expressions the media used to describe the marches were 'raising consciousness,' 'appealing to values,' 'respect' and 'tolerance'. Only at the national march and in a much later stage of the movement some timid demands were made towards the Minister of Justice. Hence the media considered these marches as being in a sense apolitical gatherings.

Our cases seem to be divided in two types. On the one hand the more instrumental oriented movements in the US and the UK uttering precise external claims, and on the other hand more internally oriented identity movements in Belgium and The Netherlands. It is obvious that the lack of clear-cut demands cannot be withheld as a distinctive feature for these movements in general.

Organizational weakness

The organizational weakness of the White Movement was striking. Although established movement-like organizations on the child-abuse topic existed, the parent deemed it as their private endeavour to set up the White March without any

organizational support. Only after the White March a new and informal network of White committees was founded. The movement did not rely on co-optable networks either -participants were less associationally engaged than the average Belgian- nor do we have any cues of formal micromobilization contexts being supportive for mobilization. How about the three test cases?

‘A key feature of the Appeal in its early stages was its apolitical nature. None of the group had been political in the past and their knowledge of the British political system and political lobbying was minimal. This was a genuine local community group that grew beyond the intentions of its founders.’(Thomson et al. 1998: 329)

The initial idea to set up the Snowdrop Appeal originated in discussions between Ann Pearston and a member of her yoga class. Although it did make use of the resources of some existing organizations not linked with the issue at stake (like the Scottish Schools Boards) to copy and distribute the petition, the Snowdrop Appeal itself lacked any formal organization. Pearston became head of the campaign, only because of her meanwhile well-known media-profile. Later the movement got official backing from Labour and organizational support broadened. When its goals were reached and tough gun legislation was voted, the movement disbanded.

The Million Mom March took off quite similarly. It was conceived by a mother of two infants having no organizational experience whatsoever, who started simply by putting up a website. In no time some 500 women heard about it through newspaper and television stories (see below), not through organizational networks, and set up own chapters throughout the country. Every two to four weeks the local group met in a small gathering. According to Goss' (2001b: 11) surveys these moms without any organization experience 'focused primarily on gaining organizational endorsements for the march, securing sponsorship for buses, distributing fliers and posters about the march, and generating local television and newspaper stories'. Well-known and skilled gun-control advocate groups like the Brady Campaign already existed, but they did not interfere with the initiative. Although the participants were more civically active than the average American, which contrasts with the less active Belgian participant, 72% of them 'had never done anything at any point in the past in the field of gun control activity or gun violence'(Goss 2001b). The participants were new to the field and were not recruited via traditional organizational recruitment channels:

'Given the socio-demographic and political profile of these women, one would expect that their participation in the gun control march came about as a result of organizational involvements and personal recruitment. Surprisingly, the data

do not support that conclusion. Fewer than 20 per cent of marchers had heard about the march through an organization, such as a church, gun-control lobby, school or voluntary association. Although all the major liberal-leaning women's groups endorsed the march, they did not appear to be the major mobilizers of participants: only 3 per cent of the marchers had heard about the march through a membership association' (Goss 2002: 58).

Immediately after the march, the organizers announced that they would move from a march to a movement and established two formal social movement organizations: one for education and providing services to victims, the identity part of the movement, another as a political lobbying group, the instrumental part. The formalization of the movement had little success and a second Million Mom March was an absolute disappointment with a turnout of hardly 200 protesters. This led the Million Mom March to merge with the since 1974 existing Brady Campaign in the new Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, on 1 October 1 2001.

Nearly all the different local foundations within the Movement against Senseless Violence were set up by the families or friends of the victims, or by closely involved people having the consent of the family concerned (see above). These spontaneous local organizational forms organized the silent marches wholly independent from

other organizations. After a while they all associated within the *Landelijke Overleg Veiligheid en Respect*, a national umbrella organization founded under the impulse of Joes Kloppenburg's father. It would never really get off the ground: all local foundations had different views on its functioning (Luyendijk 2000). None of the foundations remained active for a long time, except for one better-structured organization, the *Stichting tegen Zinloos Geweld*, which, exceptionally, had not been founded by victims or their friends. Its website (www.zinloosgeweld.nl) is continuously being updated, and the ladybug-symbol (a sort of anti-violence merchandize-mascot) is known by half of the Dutch population (Luyendijk 2000).

In all four cases the level of organization was relatively low. First, focusing events like extreme violence are considered to offer opportunities for *existing* movements and movement entrepreneurs to stage mass demonstrations and to revitalise an existing movements' issues. Yet, in all four cases under study, this is not what happened. Although anti-violence or anti-gun movement organisations pre-existed in all countries, *new* organizations came into being only after the dramatic events had occurred, just as Jasper (1997) states when he goes into the consequences of moral panics. Second, these new organizations were highly informal and they were solely meant to endorse the mobilization or to sustain it. Third, all organizations were built up by everyday citizens who lacked organizational experience, and no existing

organizations on the relevant field of action appeared to have been in any way supportive of their development or actions. Fourth, we lack micro participant level evidence on the organizational background of the British and Dutch cases, but the recruitment channels of at least the Million Mom March supporters looked similar to the Belgian White March.

Support from Mass Media

The White March and the White movement were heavily supported by the Belgian media. Not only did the media spend loads of attention to the movement and its issues, all framed the case in a similar fashion hence generating consensus mobilization, and all media, implicitly or explicitly, mobilized for action. Did the media also abandon their role of neutral reporters in the other cases?

The ‘Dunblane Massacre’ was initially framed as the juxtaposition of ‘evil’, ‘demon’ and ‘hell’ versus ‘angels’ and ‘heaven’ (Furedi 1998; Jorgenson-Earp and Lanzilotti 1998; Scraton 1999; Jemphrey and Berrington 2000). The news coverage of the event was loaded with emotionally appealing terms and expressions. ‘The involvement of so many young children, from one school and from one small, clearly defined neighbourhood, was an important influence leading to a more compassionate press

response than is usual for an event of such magnitude' (Jemphrey and Berrington 2000: 477). For many journalists, the event asked for 'different rules of engagement', which resulted in exceptional levels of constraint towards the bereaved, the survivors and the community. Kate Adie, one of BBC's most respected news reporters, was criticized for being too 'forensic', too objective, rational and scientific in her reports on the events in Dunblane, and for talking too little about the 'emotional kind of mawkish effusion that the media managers at BBC News wanted around that story' (Hume, 1998). Hume referred to the Dunblane reporting an example of 'the journalism of attachment'. Soon after displaying compassion with the victims, the media's focus would shift towards the issue of gun control and the Snowdrop Appeal. 'The media adoption of the Appeal, and the subsequent campaign by the Sunday Mail, Sun and Sunday Times amongst other newspapers, ensured that Snowdrop grew from its original intentions' (Thomson et al. 1998: 330). The media clearly took sides with the gun control advocates and some media effectively appealed to the people to take action. When the conclusion of the Conservative-dominated House of Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs report on the possession of handguns, that implied that a ban on handguns was not necessary, was unofficially made public in August 1996, the tabloid *The Sun* printed the telephone numbers of the Conservative members of the Committee, suggesting to their readers to call them to protest against their conclusion. In the fifty-minutes *Panorama* program on BBC

television, the parents of several victims, who criticized the Select Committee, were interviewed (Thomson et al. 1998). *The Sunday Mail* even launched its own petition for a total ban on handguns which was signed by some 450.000 people. Thomson and colleagues (1998: 343) conclude: ‘the emotion generated by the horror of the Dunblane Massacre and the simplicity of the Snowdrop Campaign led the media to throw their support behind the campaigners and the Dunblane parents’.

The Columbine High School shooting was the third-most closely followed news story in the US in the 1990s ensuring that the public’s attention was certainly drawn (Goss 2001a). Goss’ media-analysis points out that the Columbine shootings spectacularly boosted media’s attention for gun control issues and that the coverage remained on a higher level for more than a year after the facts. Amplification of the issue by the media was assured while the true firearms crime rate and gun murder rate had dropped to reach a low not seen since the 1960s. In the Columbine period the people’s salience of the gun control issue rose substantially and, although also school-associated violent deaths decreased, the portion of Americans who believed that the occurring of shootings in their neighbourhood school was likely, rose from 49% to 70% (Brooks et al. 2000). Goss convincingly shows that the school shootings drove the US media to reframe the gun control issue to a child protection issue and that important media indeed came to champion this kind of consensus mobilization

during the 1990s. Concerning action mobilization, we do not dispose of systematic empirical evidence, but several examples from different media suggest an active support for the Million Mom March. *The Washington Post*, among others, systematically started to give information on the Million Mom March months before it actually took place and the newspaper elaborated on the March's reason of existence and its goals. Goss' survey among demonstrators at the Million Mom March underscores the importance of the media in the actual mobilization for the event. Organizational recruitment number was very low (see above) but 'by contrast well over half (56 %) had heard about the march only through newspapers or television' (Goss, 2002: 58). This figure is strikingly similar to what we found in our Belgian case and confirms the media's role in action mobilization.

Analyzing the five most important newspapers in the Netherlands, Vasterman showed that the murders that triggered the collective action, and the Movement against Senseless Violence itself, received ample media attention. All newspapers spent about 19% of all their coverage to the events and their consequences, adding up to 1,100 different articles (Vasterman 2001). The first event, the murder of Meindert Tjoelker, its remembrance march and its derived notion of senseless violence, managed to dominate media coverage for weeks and even months (Vasterman 1998). Yet media attention grew even further with every new event and gradually the events

were predominantly framed as senseless violence. The media, according to Vasterman (2001), engaged in creating a consensus on the fact that senseless violence was an increasing problem since they reported much more similar violent (current as well as past) incidents just after than just before the three focussing events took place. The Dutch media also engaged in action mobilization. Vasterman (2000; 2001) and Halberstadt (1999), focussing on the Gorinchem case, established that the media effectively participated in the action mobilization for the silent march commemorating Marianne Roza and Froukje Schuitmaker. From Monday until Saturday 16, the week between the killings of and the silent march, 111 articles were found on these events in the five newspapers. Just as in Belgium, the coverage was emotionally appealing and stressed the general character of the outrage and indignation. The day preceding the Gorinchem silent march, the newspapers anticipated a huge turnout with titles shouting ‘*Massive remembrance Gorinchem drama*’ or ‘*Gorinchem awaits invasion for silent march*’ thereby lowering barriers for mobilization substantially. Not only the turnout would be large, but the march was clearly expected to be a national event:

‘Also the preparations for the march are covered substantially, for example on television. The Council of Churches appeals church councils to toll the bells, Radio 3 falls silent for one minute, streetcars, buses and subways in Rotterdam

and Amsterdam will come to a halt. On behalf of the cabinet, minister Korthals (Justice) and his colleague Van Boxtel (urban policy), who lives in Gorinchem, will take part. This announcement accentuates the national importance of the commemorative rally' (Luyendijck, 2000).

Halberstadt (1999) interviewed Arno Reekers, editor in chief of *De Telegraaf* who describes Gorinchem as a media hype:

'The media have mobilized public opinion. It was meaningless, tragic for the victims, incomprehensible and thus horrible. That receives media attention and thus the attention of the public, and so there is more media attention... It was on the front page, so people think it is important and walk in a White March.'

Overlooking our four cases it is obvious that media could in all of them be considered as an ally to the movement. Media attention was massive, it was extremely sympathetic to the victims and the movement they started/supported. Media seem to have, unanimously, imposed certain frames trying to make sense of the horrible events. Although we lack reliable individual level data for the British and the Dutch case, for all cases we have some proof of active action mobilization by the media, urging the public to participate.

Elite Endorsement

The Belgian White Movement had traits of a consensus movement. All political parties agreed with its (vague) claims and endorsed the movement publicly. A whole series of political functionaries hastened themselves with receiving the parents in their offices and expressing their sympathy for their cause. Did we see similar things happening in the three other cases?

Immediately after the Dunblane killings then prime minister conservative John Major and Labour opposition leader Tony Blair visited the site where the tragedy had occurred. Queen Elizabeth and Princess Anne brought a nosegay in the nursery colors of pink, white and yellow (Jorgensen-Earp and Lanzilotti 1998). However as the gun control issue and the Snowdrop Appeal found their way into the public sphere and on the political agenda, the issue got politically divided, with Labour being in favour of a ban on handguns and the Conservatives being far more reluctant of gun control. The Appeal still received large elite support but the support was divided along partisan lines. It was Martin O'Neil, Pearston's Labour MP, who gave her advice on how to set up a parliamentary petition. Pearston, who personally always had been a Conservative voter, was invited to a Labour conference, and after she had

made an emotionally appealing speech, she compromised with the Labour party to call up to the public to vote Labour, in exchange for the guarantee of a total ban of handguns if Labour would be in government. After the Labour landslide, fourteen Dunblane parents were welcomed at Downing Street 10, the official residence of the new Prime Minister Tony Blair. Labour kept its promises, and a law banning handguns came into force on 26 January 1997 (Thomson et al. 1998). Soon afterwards, the movement would disband.

Gun control has always been a Democrat issue in the US, and pro-gun lobbies have found a steady ally with the Republican Party. Thus, logically, the initiative for the Million Mom March was looked upon with aversion by the latter, but was given an extraordinary warm welcome by the first. The Million Mom March was preceded by a smaller morning rally on the lawn of the White House, hosted by president Bill Clinton and first lady Hilary Clinton. Both stood for the initiative:

‘Well, the Supreme court says there’s a constitutional right to travel,’ Clinton said ‘but we license car owners, and we register cars, and we have speed limits, and we have child safety restraint laws, and we have seat belt laws... When’s the last time you heard somebody stand up and give a speech about the eminent evils of car control?’ The first lady said that mothers ‘don’t want

flowers or jewellery, we don't want a nice car or a nice meal as much as we want our congress to do the right thing to protect our children.'(Wallace 2000)

After a meeting with the march's organizers, Bill Clinton, having watering eyes from hearing the stories of parents who had lost a child through gun violence, could not come to more than the following: 'I am frustrated and sad, because I don't want more children to die' (Esn 2000). Later, he would state that the gun lobby 'is no match for America's moms' and that 'if moms stick with it, they will succeed' (Knutson 2000). At the march itself the president addressed the people on video screens, the first lady and Tipper Gore appeared on stage, along with other Democrats: governors, representatives and congressmen (Pollit 2000). Next to politicians, also actresses, singers and TV-stars took the stage. Just as had been the case in the UK there was ample elite support for the cause of the movement in the US, but it was partisan and not as general as in Belgium.

The Movement against Senseless Violence gained ample elite-support, comparable to the White Movement in Belgium. Two ministers walked along in the Gorinchem march and in fourteen of the twenty marches that were examined by Boutellier (2000), authorities participated conspicuously, mostly mayors and city councillors. In four of them, authorities (generally the mayor) even played an explicit role in the

organization of the march. Since the marchers were not manifestly criticizing the political institutions nor a certain policy or absence of it, but engaged in a pursuit of a mentality change or proper concern and relief for the victims, it was easy for the authorities to support the non-controversial cause: ‘... government and civilians seemed to find one another in the joint rejection of violence’ (Bouttellier 2000). The most clear-cut example of elite-facilitation can be found in the founding of a *Landelijke Platform tegen Geweld op Straat* on 4 February 1999 by the Dutch Departments of Internal Affairs and Justice. Its goals were advising the government, to push back violence on the streets, and to stimulate societal discussion on the topic, by informing the public on street violence through brochures and a website.

Elite support is a recursive characteristic in all four cases. With regard to the UK and the US case, however, we should speak of an alliance between social movement organizations and *certain* political parties with a close collaboration on very specific issues. In Belgium and The Netherlands elite support was ubiquitous, stretching out over as good as all political actors.

Internal heterogeneity

The participants in the White March(es) as well as the members of the White Movement in Belgium were strikingly diverse. The White Movement succeeded in mobilizing an almost representative sample of the Belgian population. Does the same apply to the other cases? This important question is difficult to answer since we lack any empirical evidence for two testcases.

In terms of the Snowdrop Appeal, we simply lack any clue about the internal diversity of the movement. Thomson et al. (1998: 338-339) assert that it mobilized ‘a wider cross-section of the population’, and that ‘Snowdrop’s aims did not simply represent a small and highly vocal proportion of society, but rather that gun control was of great concern to the public as a whole.’ But they do not underpin that contention with empirical evidence.

Again Goss performed extensive research among participants of the Million Mom March and the movement that was created afterwards. Goss’ findings do not support the heterogeneity feature. First of all, 84% of the surveyed marchers were women (Goss 2002). This is easily explained by the organizers’ direct and sole appeal to women and especially mothers mirrored in the name of the event and the gender of the organizers. The organisers, in a sense, explicitly did not *want* a diverse crowd on

the streets but deliberately concentrated their efforts on a very specific group in society: women and mothers. Also gun control's shift from a crime control to a child safety issue contributed to the female overrepresentation, while traditionally men have been more involved in gun control activism than women: 'As gun violence came to involve people (teenage children) and places (schools) over which mothers have practical and moral authority, they acquired a legitimate place at the table in gun-policy debates' (Goss 2002: 56-57). Second, the participants of the Million Mom March were clearly middle-aged (40-59), more highly educated, more affluent and more civically active than the average American (woman), and more than half of the participants came from affluent suburban areas (Goss 2001b). In short: the profile of the marchers fits the appearance of feminist activists (Goss 2002) but not at all that of the extreme diverse white protesters in Belgium. The militants of the Million Mom March movement, those who remained active after the big event in Washington, were not significantly different from the marchers. How could this upper-middle class profile of the American protesters be explained? The 'triggering' school-shootings happened in white, affluent suburban neighbourhoods. 'Violence in minority communities has not received the amount of coverage that the same incident gets if it occurs in affluent white neighbourhoods' (Maeroff 2000). Burns and Crawford (2000: 147) assert as well that the Americans' fear of school shootings has 'extended beyond the poor, inner-city neighbourhoods, reaching affluent suburbs, towns and rural

areas'. Specific victims breed specific identification mechanisms. If fear and not compassion was the driving emotion behind this movement, as we argued above, it makes sense that people living in the same kind of neighbourhoods felt most threatened by this (for them: new) kind of danger.

With regard to the Movement against Senseless Violence, indications on the socio-economic profile of the demonstrators are lacking entirely. The founding members of the different foundations all had very different professional profiles - a train conductor, a student, a gravedigger, a lawyer – but that hardly suffices to claim that this was a heterogeneous movement.

So we end up with two contradicting cases: the Belgian White Movement with high diversity, and the American Million Mom March with much less internal diversity. For the two remaining cases we lack elementary evidence. Consequently, we cannot really settle the matter of heterogeneity and have to leave the case open awaiting more evidence from other cases.

TOWARDS AN ENHANCED MOVEMENT TYPE

Table 1 contains a summary of our findings concerning the four cases and the six features.

Table 1: Summary of comparative findings

	White Movement	Snowdrop Appeal	Million Mom March	Movement against Senseless Violence
Victimhood and emotions	++	+	+	++
no clear-cut demands	++	-	-	++
Organizational weakness	++	+	+	+
Support from mass media	++	++	++	++
Elite endorsement	++	+	+	++
Internal heterogeneity	++	?	-	?

Checking the six initial characteristics challenging mainstream social movement theory, it immediately shows that some of them hold while others did not pass the test. The absence of clear-cut demands must be rejected as a common feature. Both the Million Mom March in the US and the Snowdrop Appeal in the UK voiced very specific and unambiguous gun control demands. Internal heterogeneity cannot be rejected nor confirmed yet because we lack evidence, but the non-diversity of the Million Mom March seriously questions its typicality. The other four features do hold the track. (1) These movements are based on victim's activism, identification mechanisms and emotions of fear and compassion. Not in all four movements victims played an identical role - sometimes they led the movement themselves, sometimes they publicly supported the movement - but victimhood and victim identification appeared to be a necessary precondition for mobilization because it rendered legitimacy and public voice to the movements. It seems that fear and compassion were the dominant and the motivating emotions in all cases, with more emphasis on compassion in the Dutch and the Belgian case and more on fear in the US and the UK. (2) Although none of the three testcases came near to the Belgian astonishingly low organization level, all the movements are very loosely and informally organized. In all cases inexperienced people, be it victims or family/friends/sympathisers, founded new movement organizations although

established movement organizations working around the issue did exist in most cases. In all cases mobilizations were generated without relying on formal mobilization structures and in all cases more formal organizations were set up only after the major mobilization. (3) All movements got ample support from the mass media. The media clearly sided with the movements and boosted their mobilization by giving enormous attention to the issue, framing the issue in a favourable way and even actively inciting people to take part in the staged action; yet we lack evidence whether, in the American case, this was true for 'the' media or just for 'some' media. (4) The movements were publicly supported by elite groups who took up their cause, adopted their (non)claim and endorsed their mobilization. In two cases, Belgium and The Netherlands, the movement was a consensus movement with all elites from all leanings competing to be the movement's best friend, while in the Anglo-Saxon cases elite support was clearly partisan and divided along established party lines.

Do these four features make any sense? Can we consider them to constitute a kind of movement *type*? Are these features associated? A type would mean that these features are consistent and tend to be present or absent in the same cases because they are mutually determining each other. That would explain as well why these four features are recurring in every case. The triggering device of victimhood has a direct bearing on all other features. Appealing to universal feelings of sympathy, compassion,

solidarity and people's own fear, it might account for the (non-validated) heterogeneity of the support. Since victimhood has to be met with respect also political elites are all too eager to capitalize on them. The 'culture of fear' (Furedi 1997; Altheide and Michalowski 1999) is shaped by the media – if it bleeds it leads – that smell an interesting story, simply because innocent victims sell. A flywheel-mechanism of an auto-reinforcing media frenzy starts up: huge coverage leads to more demand for (background) information and a larger amount of media consumers leads to more media coverage, hoping to serve the public's information hunger (Vasterman 2000). Mass media, being the people's allies, pressurize political elites who cannot but support the movement (at least rhetorically), to show compassion and to express their care for the issue. If not, stories on their emotional deficit and political and moral incompetence will be peddled in the media (Furedi 2000; Walgrave & Stouthuysen 1998).

A part of the type-like logic of 'new emotional movements' is their consequential temporality. They are ephemeral phenomena. None of the movements under study is still active at present. They disbanded (UK), merged with a stronger existing movement organisation (US), or simple withered and disappeared from the societal scene although still mutely and marginally existing (Belgium and The Netherlands). The, for now, validated features all carry the seeds of the movement's destruction in

them. Emotions tend to be short-lived and numbed. Massive mobilizations function as emotional discharges but leave the movement short-breathed and devoid of stamina. The organizational deficit gets its revenge and, lacking basic organizational structures and procedures, the movement simply crumbles away. Mass media support is transitory too, because the media soon get bored with the story (and its leading characters), simply lose interest and, following the logic of Downs' (1972) issue attention cycle, turn to something new. Political support as well tends to be short-lived exactly because soon the movement appears to be not able to maintain pressure and to uphold high mobilization levels.

Turning our eyes to the four movements, it appears that, within the broad new emotional movement category characterized by the four features, we might have to do with two different tracks of development. The Belgian and the Dutch case are strikingly alike, the UK and US case are very similar too. 'New emotional movements' reacting on random violence can take two forms which we might coin as an identity and an instrumental variant. In the first type, the victims themselves are the movement's leaders, compassion is the main emotion, no clear claims are made and, as a consequence, elite support is as good as general. These internally oriented movements are a quasi perfect example of an identity movement. In the second type not the victims themselves play the leading role but friends or just sympathizers; here,

the driving force is fear leading to precise claim-making to prevent these things from happening again and, as a consequence, elite support is partisan since the issue at stake is controversial. These latter movements are obviously externally oriented and pre-eminently instrumental. Some movements change course during their life and try to shift from one type to another. The case of the Belgian White Movement attempting to shift from the identity variant to the instrumental variant shows that it is not easy to make the switch to the other type. Being caught between identity and instrumentality the White Committees finally tried to adopt precise claims and to put forward policy goals. Yet it was too late. The momentum had gone. The movement became marginalized exactly because politics and public did not accept a more political and claiming strategy for the movement (Walgrave & Rihoux 1998; Walgrave 2000).

What determines which track will be followed when mobilization occurs as a reaction to random violence? We believe that the victims themselves are the clue. Jennings (1999) too, asserts that it is the 'state of mind' of the harm-related persons that determines whether activism will take place or not. We believe, indeed, that is the initial reaction of the victims, retreat in mourning or stand-up in action, which largely determines what follows. Victimization can cause reactions that discourage active responses (helplessness, exhaustion, being overwhelmed) yet it 'can trigger emotional

and cognitive responses that provide incentives and motivations for mobilization' (Jennings, 1999: 10). The moral shock of the events and their conspicuous victimhood gives them, temporarily, a tremendous symbolic power and they can decide to use it or not to. If they opt to not exercise their power themselves, the available mobilization vacuum could be filled with acquainted amateur issue entrepreneurs mobilizing on behalf of the victims and in consultation with them. Another possibility, of course, is that the mobilization vacuum is filled by professional issue entrepreneurs capitalizing upon the events and the victimhood to get support for their established claims voiced by their well-developed movement organizations. The more victims themselves control and steer the movement, the more compassion-driven and identity-oriented the movement is. The more victims give way to other mobilizers, the more fear becomes the central mobilizing emotion, and the more instrumentally oriented the mobilizations will be. That the victim's behaviour appears to be crucial does not mean that their response is purely a matter of individual taste and personality. Victim reactions could be moulded by the event itself or by the way they have been treated by public actors. For example, whether or not the violence is primarily a matter of guns and weapons or not, the randomness of the event, the length of the event (prolonged disappearance or sudden shock), the empathy and respect with which they are approached by police and the judiciary, can all be factors that systematically affect victim's responses. Also the social background of the victims

might play a role, as Weed (1990: 469) showed in his study of Mothers Against Drunk Driving activists. Victim-activists were socially integrated, rather resourceful citizens, active in community organizations even before their victimhood and the movement ‘tends to be run by activists who have been victimised rather than by victims who have become activists’. Hence, if the victim is the clue, we absolutely need more research on the victim’s reactions on random violence and the circumstances under which they decide to step up and act or not.

CONCLUSION

After coming at the end of our quest, we want to put our findings in perspective. Our intention was to ground the plausibility of the existence of something like ‘new emotional movements’. We are well aware of the fact that our findings are tentative and exploratory. Perhaps the term ‘new emotional movement’ itself is flawed and tends to cause more confusion than that it clarifies the phenomenon we want to describe. Yet we pondered about lots of other names but it was the best tag that came to our mind while carrying out this research. Our claim is *not* that these kinds of movements are new, in the sense that they did not exist before at all, but merely that they are different and specific and that they follow a very specific and peculiar logic often contradicting mainstream expectations. Although we do not want to proudly

proclaim the discovery of yet another new kind of movement, we do strongly think that victimhood and all emotions that it causes through identification processes might have become a much more powerful mobilizer than before (Walgrave & Stouthuysen 1998). Consequently we do believe that the occurrence of these movements in Western democracies is far more frequent than it was 25 years ago. We definitely need more comparative cases to underpin our preliminary movement type further including more different events, political cultures, polities and eras. Some of the rejected features might turn out to be recurring after all, while some of the validated characteristics might be challenged by other cases. Finally, while we confined ourselves here to describing the features of the movements that came into being after random violence, we definitely need more research explaining the sheer existence of these movements and investigating under what precise circumstances random violence leads to mobilization and the foundation of these movements. This might help as well to shed more light on the newness of these movements by examining whether these specific circumstances are more present than they used to be.

APPENDIX 1: DATA AND METHODS CONCERNING THE BELGIAN WHITE MOVEMENT

We dispose of three sources of survey data about the Belgian White Movement. First surveys were carried out during 11 local white marches following the great White

March of 20 October 1996. In sum, 864 participants were surveyed between March and June 1997. Making the projection to the White March is admissible, because of the fact that the themes around which these little marches were organized were very much akin to those of the big White March: the same goes for the 'look and feel' of the marches. For more methodological details see Walgrave & Rihoux (1997). Second, we covered the second White March in February 1998, having 30.000 participants. The number of surveyed people was relatively small. Third, we surveyed 164 White Movement militants based in a whole range of local chapters of the movement.

In terms of the Belgian media analysis, the news coverage, editorials and letters to the editor of the five most important Belgian newspapers were examined, from 16 August, the day after the liberation of two girls, until 31 October 1996. It concerned *De Standaard*, *De Morgen*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Gazet van Antwerpen*. In sum, 329 copies were scrutinized, encoded and examined, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The fortnight preceding the finding of the two girls (1-15 August 1996), was taken as a reference-period. For more details see: Walgrave & Manssens (2000). Quantitative research has also been performed on the news coverage by the Flemish public and commercial broadcasting channels. Verstraeten (1997: 90) for example asserts that both channels twice devoted their entire evening newscast to the Dutroux-case, and Baeyens (1997) demonstrated that the public and the commercial

broadcasting channels devoted respectively 55 % and 63 % of their coverage to the case in the first three weeks after the outbreak of the case. More than one in six Belgians followed Julie and Melissa's funerals broadcasted live on public television (Billiet 1997).

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ⁱ We considered a whole range of other cases with roughly the same violent events triggering mass mobilization. In late November 2000, almost a million Spaniards, alongside with politicians from all political parties, took to the streets in Barcelona, after the popular minister Ernest Luch had been murdered by ETA-activists. Three years before, tens of thousands of people, all holding white hands, had hit the street after the murder of politician Miguel Angel Blanco, in the ¡Basta ya! ('Enough is enough') protests. In September 1999, after the slaughter of thousands of people in East-Timor, a fortnight of 'civic participation, solidarity and action towards the defense of human rights' was organized in Portugal. Traditional and new mass media supported the events, whereby people wore white clothing, white flags, and painted murals and symbolically threw flowers into rivers (Cardoso, 2002: 1). After a tragic helicopter-crash resulting into the death of 73 Israeli soldiers, four mothers of combat soldiers set up 'Four Mothers', a protest movement calling for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories in Lebanon. A year later, some 600 activist had gathered about 15.000 signatures (Lemish and Barzel, 2000: 164). In Columbia, October 24 1999, eleven million people took to the streets to protest against the ongoing civil war. The protest was triggered by the murder of a popular TV-star. People were dressed in white and green, the colors of innocence and hope (Delputte, 1999). In the night of Tuesday to Wednesday March 27 2002, at the town hall of Nanterre, France, Richard Durn killed 8 municipal counselors, and wounded another twenty of them. A few days later, some 15.000 people gathered, among which several leading national politicians; the victim's relatives took a prominent place at the local stadium, all holding a white rose. On April 26, 2002, the Gutenberg Gymnasium (high school) in Erfurt, Germany, was scourged by a deadly rampage. A 19 year old student shot and killed 17 people. A few days later, 100.000 people, most carrying a light-yellow rose, gathered to commemorate the victims, together with all the nation's leading politicians. The recent murder of the immensely popular Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn towards the evening of May 6, 2002, also provoked the familiar reactions: pictures, candles, photographs, texts and many other things were solemnly laid down in front of Fortuyn's house. And several tens of thousands engaged in different spontaneous silent marches; the silent holding of pictures and torches was only

occasionally interspersed with the chanting of the song “You’ll never Walk Alone”. In the beginning of 1999 in France, ‘Stop La Violence’ (Stop the violence) was founded by the friends and relatives of a young man who got killed when trying to break up a fight. In no time, a network of 40 antennas would be established throughout France. Immediately, media and elite support was manifold. A first mobilization was organized in Paris, which attracted several thousands of youngsters, and national media and political elites were present in force (Cooper, 2000). On December 6, 1989, a misogynist shot and killed fourteen women and wounded another thirteen people at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Canada. Silent marches were held throughout the country, and Heidi Rathjen, a friend of the victims who herself had lived through the killings started a petition, which would give straight cause to a law-reform. Together with university professor Wendy Cukier, she would found the Coalition for Gun Control, which would successfully engage in the pursuit for stricter gun laws.(Rosenberg and Simon, 2000)