

Gaining Attention Yet Communicating Little?

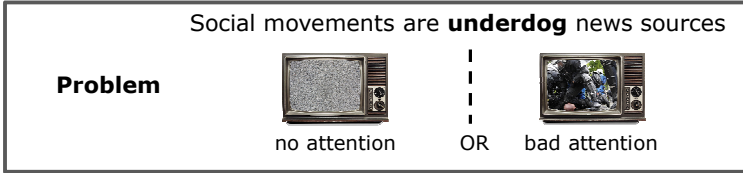
On Episodic and Thematic Coverage of Protest Events in Belgian Television News

Starting point

Social Movements need media attention:

- Validation
- Mobilization
- Scope Enlargement

Media attention is a matter of **life and death**.



Literature

Protest Paradigm: McLeod & Hertog (1998)

Conditionality?

- Implicit template for protest coverage
- deligitimize, marginalize & criminalize
- **emphasis action > issue**

Iyengar: *Is Anyone Responsible?* (1991)

Applicable to protest?

- Thematic: issue context, trends
- Episodic: **particular case, close-up** → dominant
- responsibility attribution: episodic = individualistic



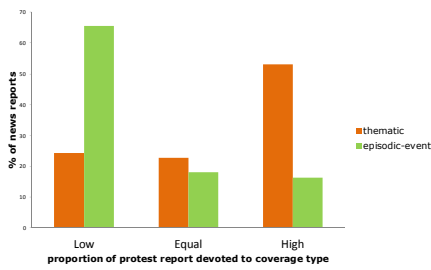
Research Questions

RQ1: Which coverage type dominates? (*descriptive*)

RQ2: Which factors drive these coverage types? (*explanatory*)

- Public and Commercial channel
- Belgium (Non-US context)

RQ1: Descriptive Results



- **Contrary to expectations, thematic dominance (58%)**
- Episodic coverage foremost event (35%), not exemplar (7%)

- More frequently thematic tilts (66% of protest reports)
- Thematic tilts more severe: 17% all reports with thematic% > 80%

Soundbite Conclusion

"Protest coverage is foremost thematic. This is especially so for peaceful protest events staged by organizers with high media standing that get aired on the public station"

Ask me...

- About the explanatory mechanisms:
 - why is coverage more episodic in the US?
 - why do bigger protests lead to more exemplar coverage?
- About measuring coverage types using airtime
- About the added value of police archive data
- About intercoder reliability
- ...

Research Design

- Media-independent data
- **police archives**
- **second-by-second** content analysis
- N = 554 (2003-2010);
- census dataset!



RQ2: Explanatory Results

Table: Linear Regression predicting proportion of coverage type (N=554)

		Thematic	Event	Exemplar
News Values	Protest Size		-	+
	Protest Disruptive	-	+	
News Routines	Media Standing	+		
News Format	Follow-up item			+
	Lead item	-	+	
Media Ownership	Public Broadcaster	+	-	
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Higher share of ...

... **thematic coverage** if public broadcaster and organizer with media standing

... **event coverage** if disruptive protest aired on commercial channel and lead item of newscast

... **exemplar coverage** if big protest and follow-up item

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