FRAMING FERGUSON: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ST. LOUIS NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE FERGUSON PROTESTS

By

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Introduction

The killing of black teenager Michael Brown by white police officer Darren Wilson in August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked a nationwide protest movement calling for justice, reform and recognition of police violence against blacks. Though the protests took place all over the country, their locus was in Ferguson, a mostly-black suburb of St. Louis that found itself thrust into the media spotlight.

How the media frames its coverage of protests can define the perception and outcome of those protests (Brasted, 2005). Framing can also marginalize those that challenge the status quo (Tuchman, 1978; Gitlin, 1980) and support those that align with it (Gitlin, 1980; Boyle, et al., 2004). The protest paradigm (Chan and Lee, 1984) is a set of techniques by which media outlets cast protests as marginal and illegitimate.

To find out if and how the protest paradigm was applied in Ferguson coverage, this study examines how St. Louis news outlets framed the protests there. Using a content analysis based on the elements of the protest paradigm, this study looks at news stories about the protests published online by three publications — the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio and the St. Louis American — to determine whether their framing of the protests legitimized or delegitimized them. The study analyzes news stories published during two distinct time periods: immediately after the

killing in August and immediately after the grand jury decision in November, allowing for a measurement of change over time.

The three publications were chosen because they each occupy a distinct niche in the St. Louis news market. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch is the region's major newspaper, with a daily circulation of 252,000 (Echo Media) and an average monthly online audience of more than 2 million unique visitors (St. Louis Post-Dispatch). The St. Louis American is geared towards an African-American audience, and is the largest weekly newspaper in the state (St. Louis American). The St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio, whose newsrooms merged in 2013, is a non-profit operation focused on in-depth coverage of local issues (St. Louis Public Radio). This study focuses solely on content published online and does not take into account print or broadcast coverage of the events. Other mediums could be included in a future study.

The researcher hypothesized that the more mainstream Post-Dispatch would be more likely to employ the protest paradigm in its coverage, while the niche publications would be more likely to use frames that legitimize the protests by giving a voice to the protesters themselves and focusing on the issues and goals of the protests.

Framing theory

Framing is one of the most prominent and growing theories in mass communication studies (D'Angelo, 2002). In fact, since the beginning of the 21st century, it has been the most frequently-used theory in top mass communication journals (Bryant and Miron, 2004). Framing has been described and defined in a multitude of ways, and applied widely across disciplines (Entman, 1993). Some scholars have embraced its fragmented definition, suggesting that it is impossible to imagine a "definitive" framing

study (Reese, 2010, p. 17) and instead attempting to show how it can be applied in a variety of ways (D'Angelo, 2002). Others have tried to synthesize the many strands into a single paradigm (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). This review of prominent framing literature will focus on how framing has been defined as it relates to journalism specifically.

The framing practices of journalists are particularly important because of journalism's prominent position in the "information landscape" (Watkins, 2001, p. 83). Journalists use frames to organize, emphasize and give meaning to information. Erving Goffman was one of the first scholars to develop the theory of framing more than 40 years ago (Borah, 2011). According to him, people use frames to understand and assign meaning to events and occurrences that would otherwise be meaningless. These frames help us understand the "guided doings" of other people — those events that are the result of willful human action. Frames should help us answer the question "what is it that's going on here?" (Goffman, 1974). After Goffman, Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) were some of the first to make the explicit connection between framing and news production. Tuchman (1978) says frames have the power to transform "nonrecognizable happenings or amorphous talk into a discernible event" which is then turned into a news story (p. 192). She uses the example of an exchange of dialogue between two people that is meaningless until more information is provided. Gitlin (1980) says that framing allows journalists to "process large amounts of information quickly and routinely" and to package it for delivery to audiences through a process of selection, emphasis and exclusion (p. 7).

While Tuchman says frames are "unspoken and unacknowledged," Entman (1993), in his attempt to synthesize a single definition of framing, puts the act of framing squarely in the journalist's corner: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). He submits that even while following the rules for objective reporting, journalists can "convey a dominant framing of the news text that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation" (p. 56).

Gamson (1989) appears to agree, saying that a frame selects certain facts while ignoring others. Tankard (2001) focuses on the power of framing to subtly define the terms of debate without the audience being aware of it. He compares framing to a magician's sleight of hand, where "attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point" (p. 97). Tuchman offers the metaphor of a window. The audience's view of an issue through the window, built by the journalist "…depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard" (p. 1). But while some scholars believe that framing helps to define and even promote certain opinions, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) add that more than one opinion can be contained within a frame, and frames "should not be confused with positions for or against some policy measure" (p. 4).

The study of framing can be split into two broad perspectives: Constructionist and constructivist (Van Gorp, 2010). Constructionists believe that news texts are systems of

elements that are meaningful in and of themselves, while constructivists believe that the meaning of a text is revealed in the interaction between the text and the reader. Reese (2010) draws a similar distinction between the "what" and the "how" of frames — the "what" being the content of the frame such as keywords, linguistic structures and metaphors, and the "how" being the specific effects of and reasons for using different frames. According to Gamson (1989), whose approach is firmly constructionist, a story's frame manifests itself via metaphors, catchphrases and other rhetorical devices arising from the discourse (p. 158). Tankard (2001) also takes a constructionist perspective with his "list of frames" approach, in which researchers identify and define a list of frames in the subject at hand. These frames can be identified using mechanisms in the text such as headlines, subheads, leads, logos and photographs, among others. On the other hand, Pan & Kosicki (1993) take a constructivist approach in attempting to bridge the gap between news production and audience consumption using framing analysis. Scheufele (1999) also proposed a model that conceptualized framing as a process and focused on frame-building, frame-setting and the relationship between audiences and journalists.

Literature review: Framing protests

The study of how journalists frame protests arose in the late 1960s (Brasted, 2005) when the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement and others began receiving significant news coverage. One analysis found that 10 percent of CBS news coverage in 1967 and 1971 focused on protests (Gans, 1979).

The study of how the media frames protests is important because it can have an affect on how protests are perceived, how they develop and, in turn, how successful they are (Brasted, 2005). For example, Tuchman showed how papers framed coverage of the

women's movement in one of two ways: as soft news that stressed the movement's novelty over its timeliness, or as hard news that portrayed the women as deviants and "ridiculous bra burners" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 136).

The way media frames protests is dually important because many scholars have argued that frames tend to marginalize their efforts while reinforcing the status quo (Tuchman, 1978; Gitlin, 1980). The more closely the values of a movement mirror those of the status quo, the more likely they are to become part of the dominant media frame (Gitlin, 1980). For example, the concerns of environmentalist groups like the Sierra Club became institutionalized in the form of agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, while the issues of more radical environmentalist groups were ignored (Gitlin, 1980). Conversely, the more a movement's ideology clashes with the status quo, the more coverage tends to cast the movement as violent, deviant and ineffective (McLeod and Hertog, 1998).

The protest paradigm

News stories about protests tend to marginalize them by focusing on the protesters' appearance rather than their issues, emphasizing violence over social criticism, pitting protestors against police and downplaying their overall effectiveness (McLeod and Detenber, 1999). These media techniques make up the "protest paradigm."

Developed by Chan and Lee (1984) in their framing analysis of the Jubilee School Affair, the paradigm is a particular worldview that tells journalists how to construct stories by informing them "where to look (and where not to look)" (p. 187). Numerous studies have used the protest paradigm to analyze frames (Brasted, 2005; McLeod and Detenber, 1999; Chan and Lee, 1984; Glasgow Media Group, 1985).

Chan and Lee (1984) used the protest paradigm to analyze how Chinese newspapers across the political spectrum covered the Jubilee School events. Their content analysis, which tested for the presence or absence of numerous thematic statements in articles about the event, found that newspaper coverage of the protests split along party lines. Rightist papers were more likely to suggest that the protests were the result of an outside Communist conspiracy, while leftist papers showed more support for the protesters. Centrist papers had a more moderate and diverse outlook.

The paradigm can be broken down into the following characteristics, or "mechanisms":

- Frames/narratives
- Reliance on official sources and official definitions
- Invocation of public opinion
- Delegitimization, marginalization and demonization of protesters (Mcleod and Detenber, 1999).

The protest paradigm frames protests as a battle between protesters and police rather than an issues-based debate between the protesters and their target (McLeod and Detenber, 1999). The narrative focuses on violence and casts the protesters as deviants or criminals while police are portrayed as trying to restore social order (Brasted, 2005). Brasted's analysis of newspaper stories in the Chicago Tribune and the New York Times about the protests during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago found that a majority of articles employed the protest paradigm to frame stories. She concluded that the Chicago Tribune repeatedly framed police as protecting the public and maintaining order, that the protests were portrayed as social disorder, and that mostly official sources

were used. The New York Times was more critical of police and featured a few stories told from the perspective of protesters. The protest paradigm narrative may also include police being framed as victims without mention of protesters injured by police. For instance, a Glasgow Media Group analysis of the women's peace camp protests at Greenham Common air force base in Great Britain found that media downplayed police violence, but focused intensely on a rare instance of policemen being injured by the women (Glasgow University Media Group, 1985).

The stories also show a reliance on official sources and are told from the perspective of power-holders, further reinforcing the status quo (McLeod and Detenber, 1999). In general, journalists often rely heavily on "official" sources, giving those sources an inordinate amount of control over the content and timing of news (Sigal, 1973). Citizen sources, on the other hand, are used much less frequently (Hallin, 1993).

The protests paradigm makes use of public opinion polls, social norms and the opinions of bystanders to communicate the deviance of the protesters and cast them as an isolated minority. In an analysis of three TV news stories of anarchist protests, McLeod and Detenber found that coverage focused on norm violations including unusual dress and hairstyles, public spitting, smashing a TV set, burning money and burning a U.S. flag (McLeod and Detenber, 1999).

For mostly practical reasons, protests stories tend to focus on the actions themselves rather than the issues behind them. Covering issues means journalists have to make decisions about the legitimacy and presentation of different viewpoints (McLeod and Hertog, 1992), while events are concrete and lend themselves easily to the journalistic routines of reporting who, what, why, where, when and how (Tuchman, 1978). Also, the

actions of movements themselves make good news copy because they provide drama, conflict and action (Brasted, 2005).

Chan and Lee and others have shown that news outlets tend to frame protests differently depending on the outlets' own ideology. An analysis of TV news coverage of the Tea Party movement found that left-leaning outlets such as MSNBC were more likely to portray Tea Party members as idiots, the movement as fractured and their opinions as fake. Meanwhile, right-leaning stations like Fox used far fewer marginalizing techniques and served as a "guard dog" of the Tea Party against other channels (Weaver and Scacco). News sources also frame protests differently depending on the extent to which the protest deviates from the status quo. An analysis of hundreds of protest stories in a cross-section of Wisconsin newspapers found that coverage of radical protests was more critical and less likely to use protesters as sources. Conversely, papers gave more support to protests that sought to maintain the status quo (Boyle, et. al, 2004).

Based on knowledge of the three news outlets being analyzed and preliminary research on the subject, the researcher hypothesizes the following:

H1: The St. Louis Post Dispatch will be more likely to use frames that marginalize protests in its coverage.

H2: The St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio and the St. Louis American will be more likely to use frames that legitimize protests in its coverage.

H3: Overall, the frames will shift from marginalizing protests after the killing to legitimizing protests after the grand jury decision.

Methodology: Content analysis

Early research on framing was a subjective process that typically took the form of a single researcher identifying the frames in a given media text. Content analysis provides

a more empirical and replicable alternative to the arbitrary approach of those early studies (Tankard, 2001). That does not change the fact that frames are essentially abstract variables, which makes them difficult to study objectively, even through content analysis (Matthes and Kohring, 2008). Because of the intrinsic preconceptions and biases of coders, some level of subjectivity in content analysis is unavoidable (Van Gorp, 2010). Even the act of naming frames to code is inherently subjective (Tankard, 2001). Additionally, news stories have a multitude of senders and receivers, and can be understood differently by different people (Gamson, 1989). This gives rise to a multitude of potential meanings, not all of which can be captured using content analysis. However, from the constructionist perspective that frames manifest themselves in observable units such as metaphors and catchphrases (Gamson, 1989), content analysis can be used to reliably code those frames (Van Gorp, 2010).

Numerous scholars have recommended content analysis approaches that are empirical, reliable and valid. Pan and Kosicki (1993) focused on identifying frames by using the selection, placement and structure of specific words and sentences in a text. In Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) "media packages" approach, researchers use language from pamphlets and advocacy group materials to identify symbolic devices that characterize discourse around a given topic, such as nuclear power. In Tankard's (2001) "list of frames" approach, researchers code texts using a list of pre-determined frames defined by keywords and catchphrases found in media content. Rather than coding for an entire frame, Matthes and Kohring (2008) saw frames as patterns in a text, made up of clusters of elements. They recommended coding for these discrete elements and running a computerized cluster analysis to reveal the frame.

Of the approaches described above, Tankard's (2001) approach is perhaps the most applicable to my research. Existing literature is used to determine a list of explicit, mutually exclusive frames for the subject at hand. Researchers then develop keywords, catchphrases or other devices from media content that can be used to identify each frame. These frames and identifiers are readily available in the body of protest paradigm research that supports my study, and a cursory reading of the articles I plan to analyze will allow me to come up with identifiers unique to the Ferguson protests. Using multiple coders allows reliability to be measured, limiting subjectivity in the coding process, and the results are replicable.

Tankard and others who have used the "list of frames" approach (Hendrickson, 1994; Maher, 1995) have achieved higher inter-coder reliability by narrowing the list of frames to two or three, while also acknowledging that stories might incorporate elements of more than one frame. For instance, in an analysis of stories about abortion, Tankard collapsed the original list of five frames into two — generally favorable to abortion and generally unfavorable.

This study is a content analysis of stories published online by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the St. Louis American and the St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio in the time period between August 9 and August 16, 2014 and November 24 and December 1, 2014. Fourteen stories published by each outlet were coded for analysis. The content of the stories was direct coverage of protests following the killing of Brown and protests following the grand jury decision on November 24 not to indict Wilson.

For the purposes of this study, a protest story is defined as explicit news coverage of a protest or the actions of protestors. The stories analyzed were identified using an

advanced Google search of the website of each news organization. The advanced search looked for any of the following keywords in stories published on those websites: "Ferguson," "protest," "protests," "protestors." The time period of August 9 to August 16 was chosen because Brown was killed on August 9 and protests took place throughout the week that followed. The time period of November 24 to December 1 was chosen because the grand jury announced its decision on November 24. Protests occurred that day and in the days after. Taken together, the time frames represented a large enough window from which to find 14 stories published by each outlet. The two time frames also allowed the researcher to track how coverage evolved over time or changed after the grand jury announced its decision not to indict.

The list of frames is based on the protest paradigm described by Chan and Lee (1984) and the mechanisms described by McLeod and Detenber. McLeod and Hertog (1998) recommend a set of twelve frames that can be found in stories within the protest paradigm, grouped into three general categories: Marginalizing frames, mixed frames and sympathetic frames. For a list of frames approach Tankard (2001) recommends not using a "mixed" frame because it can be a way for coders to avoid making tough coding decisions and doesn't provide much information about what frame is being used. For the purposes of my study, two of Mcleod and Hertog's (1998) general framing categories were adopted as frames: Marginalizing and legitimizing, to see whether the newspapers used the protest paradigm to marginalize protesters, or broke away from it in a way that sympathized with or legitimized the protests. Each frame is defined as follows:

Marginalizing: This frame delegitimizes the protests by focusing on protesters' violence, destruction and deviance from social norms. It uses more official sources, fewer

protest sources, and uses bystanders to illustrate the deviance of the protestors. It may also focus on low turnouts to disparage protesters, or put quotation marks around protest activities as a way to interject commentary.

Legitimizing: This frame legitimizes the protests by including more protest sources, focusing on violence or aggression by law enforcement and emphasizing the issues behind the protests.

In order to test intercoder reliability, the researcher and a University of Missouri graduate student coded five articles (approximately 10 percent of the total sample) selected from those published by the Baltimore Sun between April 18 and April 25 about protests following the death of Freddie Gray in police custody. These events were analogous to the ones in Ferguson, and the codebook could be applied in the same way without having to sacrifice any of the articles identified for the study of St. Louis publications.

The coders achieved a percent agreement of 80 percent and a Krippendorf's Alpha of 0.7. Though the Krippendorf's Alpha was lower than the researcher's goal of 0.8, the researcher determined it was adequate, taking into account the strong percentage agreement and the small sample size of the reliability test.

Results

A total of 42 stories were coded from across three St. Louis news organizations — the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis American and St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio. Fourteen stories were coded from each publication. For each story, the date of publication, headline and number of words were recorded along with information about variables related to the protest paradigm. The variables are sources, narrative structure,

narrative elements, public opinion and bystanders. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the results of each coding category. Results shown include aggregate numbers from across all three publications as well as numbers from within individual publications for the sake of comparison.

Sources

Descriptive analysis was used to determine whether the majority of sources across all three publications were protesters, officials, or some other combination. A source was defined as anyone who says something in the story, either quoted or paraphrased. Official sources were those speaking on behalf of an institution or agency, while protest sources were those speaking on behalf of the protesters or victims. Any source that did not meet one of those two requirements was counted as "other." Hypotheses predicted that the Post-Dispatch would be more likely to marginalize protesters, while the American and Beacon would be more likely to legitimize them. Thus, it was expected that the Post-Dispatch would rely more on official sources than protest sources, and the other two outlets would do the opposite.

The results show that of the 42 stories coded, 22 of them (52.4 percent) included more protest sources than official sources. Nine (21.4 percent) included some other combination of sources, and six (14.3 percent) included more official sources than protest sources. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of sources found across all three publications.

Fig. 1: Frequencies of sources

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More official sources than protest sources	6	14.3	14.3	14.3
	More protest sources than official sources	22	52.4	52.4	66.7
	Number of official sources and protest sources was equal	5	11.9	11.9	78.6
	Some other combination of sources	9	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	100.0	

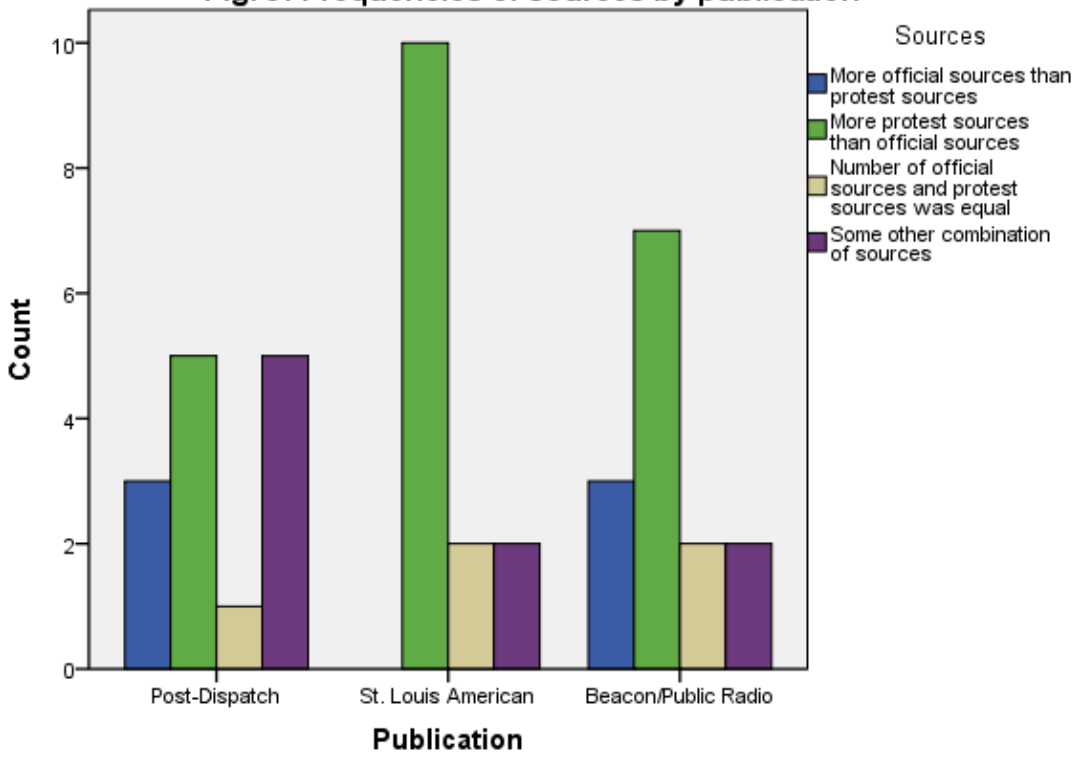
The next analysis was done to compare among publications whether the majority of sources were protesters, officials or some other combination. All three publications — the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio and the St. Louis American — tended to include more protest sources than official sources in general. Thus, in terms of sourcing, all three of the outlets exhibited legitimization of protesters by including more protest sources than officials. The hypothesis that the Post-Dispatch would marginalize protesters in the area of sourcing is rejected, and the hypothesis that the Beacon and American would legitimize protesters in that area is accepted.

The St. Louis American had the most protest sources of any publication. Of the 14 stories coded from the American, 10 (71.4 percent) had more protest sources than official sources. None of the American's stories included more official sources than protest sources. These results are also shown in a cross tab (Figure 2) and bar chart (Figure 3).

Fig. 2: Frequencies of sources by publication

			Sources				Total
			More official sources than protest sources	More protest sources than official sources	Number of official sources and protest sources was equal	Some other combination of sources	
Publication	Post-Dispatch	Count	3	5	1	5	14
		% within Publication	21.4%	35.7%	7.1%	35.7%	100.0%
		% within Sources	50.0%	22.7%	20.0%	55.6%	33.3%
		% of Total	7.1%	11.9%	2.4%	11.9%	33.3%
	St. Louis American	Count	0	10	2	2	14
		% within Publication	0.0%	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within Sources	0.0%	45.5%	40.0%	22.2%	33.3%
		% of Total	0.0%	23.8%	4.8%	4.8%	33.3%
	Beacon/Public Radio	Count	3	7	2	2	14
		% within Publication	21.4%	50.0%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within Sources	50.0%	31.8%	40.0%	22.2%	33.3%
		% of Total	7.1%	16.7%	4.8%	4.8%	33.3%
Total		Count	6	22	5	9	42
		% within Publication	14.3%	52.4%	11.9%	21.4%	100.0%
		% within Sources	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	14.3%	52.4%	11.9%	21.4%	100.0%

Fig. 3: Frequencies of sources by publication



Narrative structure

Descriptive analysis was used to determine how often different narrative structures were used across all three publications. Narrative structure was defined as the main theme of the story, as established in the lead, nut graf and/or repeatedly throughout the story. Coders had six narrative structures to choose from: violence or illegal activity by protesters; non-violent action or movement by protesters; violence or illegal activity by law enforcement; a conflict between protesters and law enforcement; dissension or division between protesters; or the issues or goals of protesters. If the story did not fit into any of these narrative structures, they were coded as "other." Based on the hypothesis that the Post-Dispatch would marginalize protesters, it was expected that the Post-Dispatch would used frames that highlighted a conflict between law enforcement and protesters, violence by protesters or dissension among protesters. The hypothesis that the American and Beacon would legitimize protesters predicted that those outlets would use frames that focused on peaceful action by protesters, violence by law enforcement or the goals and issues of the protesters.

Of the 42 stories coded, the most common narrative structure was a conflict between protesters and law enforcement. Thirteen of the 42 stories (31 percent) fell into that category. The second most common narrative structure was non-violent action or movement by protesters, which comprised 10 stories (23.8 percent) of the total. The three other categories — violence or illegal activity by protesters, violence and illegal activity by law enforcement and the issues or goals of protesters — occurred at about the same rate. Eight stories, or 19 percent, fell into the "other" category. These results are also shown in a cross tab (Figure 4).

Fig. 4: Frequencies of narrative structure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Violence or illegal activity by protesters	3	7.0	7.1	7.1
	Non-violent action or movement by protesters	10	23.3	23.8	31.0
	Violence or illegal activity by law enforcement	4	9.3	9.5	40.5
	A conflict between protesters and law enforcement	13	30.2	31.0	71.4
	The issues or goals of protesters	4	9.3	9.5	81.0
	Other	8	18.6	19.0	100.0
	Total	42	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		43	100.0		

Next, descriptive analysis was used to determine how often different narrative structures were used by each publication. In this category, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the St. Louis Beacon/Public Radio are nearly identical. Of the 14 stories coded for the Post-Dispatch, seven focused on a conflict between protesters and law enforcement. Of the 14 coded for the Beacon, six focused on a conflict between protesters and law enforcement. Thus, the hypothesis that the Post-Dispatch would marginalize protesters in the area of narrative framing is accepted, while the hypothesis that the Beacon would legitimize protesters in that area is rejected.

Conversely, of the 14 stories coded for the St. Louis American, none employed that narrative structure. The St. Louis American was the only one of the three news organizations to employ the "violence or illegal activity by law enforcement" narrative

structure in the stories coded. That narrative structure was used in four of the 14 (28.6 percent) American stories coded. Of the stories coded, none of the publications devoted a significant amount of attention to the issues or goals of the protesters. The hypothesis that the American would legitimize protesters in the area of narrative structure is accepted. These results are shown as a cross tab (Figure 5).

Fig. 5: Frequencies of narrative structure by publication

Count

		Narr_struct					
		Violence or illegal activity by protesters	Non-violent action or movement by protesters	Violence or illegal activity by law enforcement	A conflict between protesters and law enforcement	The issues or goals of protesters	Other
Publication	Post-Dispatch	1	3	0	7	1	2
	St. Louis American	1	4	4	0	2	3
	Beacon/Public Radio	1	3	0	6	1	3
Total		3	10	4	13	4	8

Narrative elements

Descriptive analysis was used to determine how often different narrative elements appeared in each publication. Narrative elements were defined as subjects that appear in the story, but that do not necessarily comprise the main theme of the story. Because news stories are complex and can include a number of interwoven topics and subtopics, the narrative elements were coded for to determine to what extent certain narrative elements were present in addition to the overarching narrative structure. The set of narrative elements are the same as the categories for narrative structure. It was predicted that the Post-Dispatch's coverage would include more elements that marginalize protesters; the American and Beacon would include more elements that legitimized them.

Stories coded from the Beacon and Post-Dispatch included violence by protesters nine and 10 times, respectively. Stories coded from the American included it six times. Overall, violence by protesters was an element of 25 (59.5 percent) of the 42 stories coded.

Peaceful action by protesters showed up in nearly every story coded from the Post-Dispatch and the Beacon. It appeared in eight stories coded from the American. It showed up in 33 (78.6 percent) of the 42 stories coded.

Violence or illegal activity by law enforcement showed up in about half (47.6 percent) of the 42 stories coded. The St. Louis American led the way, with nine (64.3 percent) of the 14 stories coded including violence or illegal activity by law enforcement.

A majority of the 42 stories coded (64.3 percent) included conflict between protesters and law enforcement. Of the 14 stories coded from the Beacon, 10 of them, or 71.4 percent, included this element. The Post-Dispatch and the American were close behind with nine and eight coded stories, respectively, that included this element.

The appearance of dissension between protesters was negligible across all publications, showing up in a total of four (9.5 percent) of 42 stories coded.

Issues or goals of the protesters showed up in a total of 25 (59.5 percent) of 42 stories coded. About half of the Post-Dispatch and Beacon stories coded included this element, while 71.4 percent of American stories coded included it.

Of the 42 stories coded, 17 included an element that could not be categorized under any of the above elements ("other"). The Post-Dispatch did so most frequently, with eight (57.1 percent) of the 14 stories coded including some "other" element.
The above results are shown as cross tabs (Figures 6-12).

The Post-Dispatch and Beacon tended to include more marginalizing elements than legitimizing ones, while the American included more legitimizing elements. The hypothesis that the Post-Dispatch would use more marginalizing elements is accepted; the hypothesis that the Beacon would use more legitimizing elements is rejected; and the the hypothesis that the American would use more legitimizing elements is accepted.

Fig. 6: Frequencies of violence by protesters by publication

Count

		Prot_viol		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	10	4	14
	St. Louis American	6	8	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	9	5	14
Total		25	17	42

Fig. 7: Frequencies of peaceful action by protesters by publication

Count

		Prot_peace		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	13	1	14
	St. Louis American	8	6	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	12	2	14
Total		33	9	42

Fig. 8: Frequencies of violence by law enforcement by publication

Count

		Law_viol		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	5	9	14
	St. Louis American	9	5	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	6	8	14
Total		20	22	42

Fig. 9: Frequency of conflict between protesters and law enforcement by publication

Count

		Conflict		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	9	5	14
	St. Louis American	8	6	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	10	4	14
Total		27	15	42

Fig. 10: Frequencies of dissension between protesters by publication

Count

		Dissension		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	2	12	14
	St. Louis American	1	13	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	1	13	14
Total		4	38	42

Fig. 11: Frequencies of issues/goals of protesters by publication

Count

		Issues		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	8	6	14
	St. Louis American	10	4	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	7	7	14
Total		25	17	42

Fig. 12: Frequencies of other narrative elements by publication

Count

		Other		
		Yes	No	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	8	6	14
	St. Louis American	3	11	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	6	8	14
Total		17	25	42

Public opinion

Descriptive analysis was used to determine how often public opinion was invoked across all publications. Public opinion was defined as elements of the story that depict protesters as an isolated minority. Those include opinion polls, arrest counts, violation of social norms and symbolic use of bystanders. Hypotheses predicted that the Post-Dispatch would marginalize protesters by invoking public opinion more often, while the American and Beacon would legitimize the protesters by invoking public opinion less frequently. Of the 42 stories coded, 27 (64.3 percent) invoked public opinion in some manner. Those results are shown as a cross tab (Figure 13).

Fig. 13: Frequencies of invoking public opinion

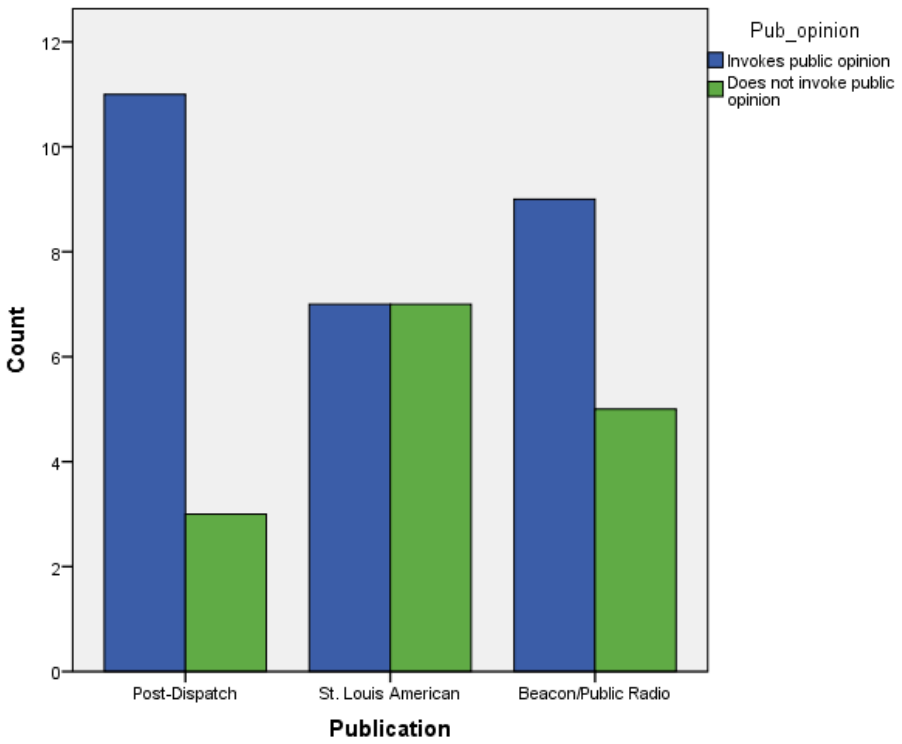
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Invokes public opinion	27	62.8	64.3	64.3
	Does not invoke public opinion	15	34.9	35.7	100.0
	Total	42	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		43	100.0		

Descriptive analysis was used to compare how often the three publications invoked publication. The Post-Dispatch invoked public opinion most often, with 11 of the 14 stories coded (78.6 percent) including some invocation of public opinion. Nine (64.3 percent) of the Beacon stories coded invoked public opinion. Seven (50 percent) of the American stories coded invoked public opinion. Thus, the hypothesis that the Post-Dispatch would marginalize protesters by invoking public opinion more frequently is accepted. The results are shown as a cross tab (Figure 14) and bar chart (Figure 15).

Fig. 14: Frequencies of invoking public opinion by publication

			Pub_opinion		
			Invokes public opinion	Does not invoke public opinion	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	Count	11	3	14
		% within Publication	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%
		% within Pub_opinion	40.7%	20.0%	33.3%
		% of Total	26.2%	7.1%	33.3%
	St. Louis American	Count	7	7	14
		% within Publication	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Pub_opinion	25.9%	46.7%	33.3%
		% of Total	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%
	Beacon/Public Radio	Count	9	5	14
		% within Publication	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
		% within Pub_opinion	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
		% of Total	21.4%	11.9%	33.3%
Total		Count	27	15	42
		% within Publication	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
		% within Pub_opinion	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%

Fig. 15: Frequencies of invoking public opinion by publication



Bystanders

Descriptive analysis was used to show how bystanders were used in stories across all three publications. Bystanders were defined as people in the story not involved in the protests that were quoted and/or described. Coders were asked to determine whether bystanders in the story supported the protests, opposed the protests, were indifferent, or some combination of those. Based on the hypothesis that the Post-Dispatch would be more likely to marginalize protesters, it was expected that it would include more bystanders that opposed the protests. The hypothesis that the American and Beacon would be more likely to marginalize protesters predicted that those outlets would include more bystanders that supported the protests.

Most stories did not include bystanders. Bystander support and opposition was fairly balanced among the 15 stories in which bystanders did appear. Five (11.9 percent) of those stories included bystanders that supported the protests; four (9.5 percent) included bystanders that opposed the protests. Another four included a mix of bystanders that supported and opposed the protests. The results are shown as a cross tab (Figure 16).

Fig. 16: Frequencies of bystanders

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Support protests	5	11.6	11.9	11.9
	Oppose protests	4	9.3	9.5	21.4
	Are indifferent	2	4.7	4.8	26.2
	Both support and opposition included	4	9.3	9.5	35.7
	Bystanders not included	27	62.8	64.3	100.0
	Total	42	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.3		
Total		43	100.0		

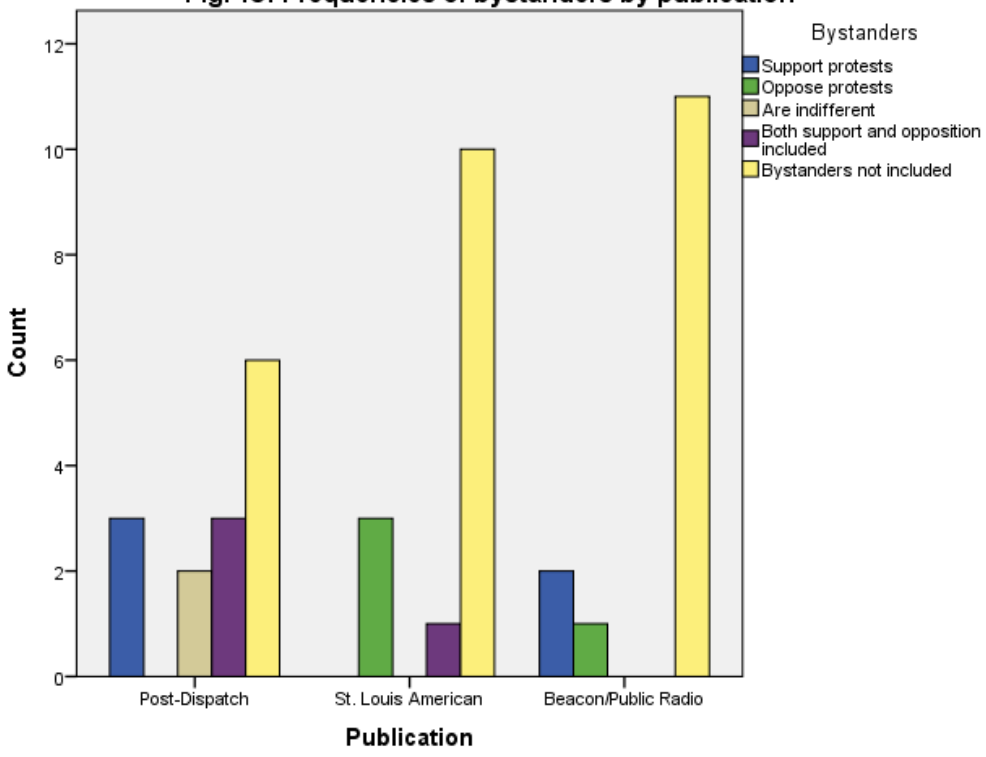
Descriptive analysis was also used to compare how bystanders were used between publications. The Post-Dispatch included the most bystanders, with eight of the 14 stories coded including them. However, support and opposition was evenly split among those eight instances. Of the 14 stories coded from the American, four (28.5 percent) included bystanders. In three of those stories, bystanders opposed the protests. Thus, the hypotheses that the Post-Dispatch would marginalize protesters in the area of bystanders is rejected. The hypothesis that the American and Beacon would legitimize protesters in the area of bystanders cannot be reliably rejected or accepted because the appearance of

bystanders in both outlets was low. Results are shown as a cross tab (Figure 17) and bar chart (Figure 18).

Fig. 17: Frequencies of bystanders by publication

			Bystanders					
			Support protests	Oppose protests	Are indifferent	Both support and opposition included	Bystanders not included	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	Count	3	0	2	3	6	14
		% within Publication	21.4%	0.0%	14.3%	21.4%	42.9%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	60.0%	0.0%	100.0%	75.0%	22.2%	33.3%
		% of Total	7.1%	0.0%	4.8%	7.1%	14.3%	33.3%
	St. Louis American	Count	0	3	0	1	10	14
		% within Publication	0.0%	21.4%	0.0%	7.1%	71.4%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%	37.0%	33.3%
		% of Total	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	2.4%	23.8%	33.3%
	Beacon/Public Radio	Count	2	1	0	0	11	14
		% within Publication	14.3%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	78.6%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	40.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.7%	33.3%
		% of Total	4.8%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	26.2%	33.3%
Total		Count	5	4	2	4	27	42
		% within Publication	11.9%	9.5%	4.8%	9.5%	64.3%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	11.9%	9.5%	4.8%	9.5%	64.3%	100.0%

Fig. 18: Frequencies of bystanders by publication



Difference in time periods

Descriptive analysis was used to determine if coverage changed between the two time periods being studied — immediately after the killing in August 2014 and immediately after the grand jury decision in November 2014. The analysis was used to show how coverage compared in three key areas — sourcing, narrative structure and public opinion. The researcher hypothesized that the coverage would shift from marginalizing immediately after the killing to legitimizing immediately after the grand jury decision.

In the weeks after the grand jury decision, protest sources were heard from more than in the weeks after the shooting. In the weeks after the shooting, publications relied more on official sources or some other combination of sources. But overall, protest sources were relied on the most during both time periods.

Just after the killing, the publications employed a wide range of narrative structures. The most common narrative structure during this period was "other" — utilized in seven of the 21 stories coded. After the grand jury decision, narrative structures settled primarily into one of two categories: non-violent action or movement by protesters and a conflict between protesters and law enforcement. Narrative structures defined as "other" dropped off significantly during this period — from seven after the killing to one after the grand jury decision.

The invocation of public opinion increased significantly in stories published after the grand jury decision. Nearly every story published during that time period invoked public opinion, while just eight stories published after the shooting invoked public opinion.

The use of bystanders increased significantly after the grand jury decision. After the shooting, only three stories included bystanders. After the grand jury decision, 12 stories included bystanders.

Thus, the hypothesis that the coverage would shift from marginalizing to legitimizing is rejected. The results are shown as a cross tabs (Figures 19-21).

Fig. 19: Sourcing frequencies before and after shooting

			Sources				
			More official sources than protest sources	More protest sources than official sources	Number of official sources and protest sources was equal	Some other combination of sources	Total
Before_After	Published in weeks after shooting	Count	4	9	2	6	21
		% within Before_After	19.0%	42.9%	9.5%	28.6%	100.0%
		% within Sources	66.7%	40.9%	40.0%	66.7%	50.0%
		% of Total	9.5%	21.4%	4.8%	14.3%	50.0%
	Published in weeks after grand jury	Count	2	13	3	3	21
		% within Before_After	9.5%	61.9%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within Sources	33.3%	59.1%	60.0%	33.3%	50.0%
		% of Total	4.8%	31.0%	7.1%	7.1%	50.0%
Total		Count	6	22	5	9	42
		% within Before_After	14.3%	52.4%	11.9%	21.4%	100.0%
		% within Sources	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	14.3%	52.4%	11.9%	21.4%	100.0%

Fig. 20: Narrative structure frequencies before and after shooting

			Narr_struct						
			Violence or illegal activity by protesters	Non-violent action or movement by protesters	Violence or illegal activity by law enforcement	A conflict between protesters and law enforcement	The issues or goals of protesters	Other	Total
Before_After	Published in weeks after shooting	Count	2	3	3	4	2	7	21
		% within Before_After	9.5%	14.3%	14.3%	19.0%	9.5%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Narr_struct	66.7%	30.0%	75.0%	30.8%	50.0%	87.5%	50.0%
	Published in weeks after grand jury	Count	1	7	1	9	2	1	21
		% within Before_After	4.8%	33.3%	4.8%	42.9%	9.5%	4.8%	100.0%
		% within Narr_struct	33.3%	70.0%	25.0%	69.2%	50.0%	12.5%	50.0%
Total		Count	3	10	4	13	4	8	42
		% within Before_After	7.1%	23.8%	9.5%	31.0%	9.5%	19.0%	100.0%
		% within Narr_struct	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 21: Invocation of public opinion frequencies before and after shooting

Count

		Pub_opinion		
		Invokes public opinion	Does not invoke public opinion	Total
Before_After	Published in weeks after shooting	8	13	2
	Published in weeks after grand jury	19	2	2
Total		27	15	4

Fig. 22: Frequencies of bystanders before and after shooting

			Bystanders					
			Support protests	Oppose protests	Are indifferent	Both support and opposition included	Bystanders not included	Total
Before_After	Published in weeks after shooting	Count	1	0	0	2	18	21
		% within Before_After	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	85.7%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	66.7%	50.0%
	Published in weeks after grand jury	Count	4	4	2	2	9	21
		% within Before_After	19.0%	19.0%	9.5%	9.5%	42.9%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	80.0%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	33.3%	50.0%
Total		Count	5	4	2	4	27	42
		% within Before_After	11.9%	9.5%	4.8%	9.5%	64.3%	100.0%
		% within Bystanders	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Conclusion

This study sought to determine whether and to what extent three St. Louis news outlets employed the protest paradigm in their coverage of the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, following the killing of Michael Brown by a police officer.

The protest paradigm is composed of a number of framing techniques that tend to marginalize protesters by relying on official sources, focusing on protesters' violence or violation of social norms and pitting them in a battle against police. A content analysis of 42 stories published across the three publications after the killing gathered data about four elements of the protest paradigm:

- Sources
- Narrative frame or structure
- Invocation of public opinion
- Symbolic use of bystanders

A hypothesis based on prior research and knowledge of the three outlets predicted that the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which has the largest audience of the three, would be more likely to marginalize the protests in its coverage. A second hypothesis predicted that the St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio and the St. Louis American, which focus on in-depth coverage of community issues and African-American issues, respectively, would be more likely to legitimize the protests. A final hypothesis predicted that coverage in general would shift from marginalizing the protests after the killing to legitimizing them after the grand jury decision.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

The Post-Dispatch, the largest and most mainstream publication examined, displayed a balance of legitimizing and marginalizing framing in coverage that comprised the broadest range of subject matter of the three publications.

The Dispatch was balanced in its sourcing habits, with stories split fairly evenly between majority protesters, majority officials and some other combination of sources. Overall, it relied on protesters slightly more often than officials. Therefore, it cannot be concluded from this analysis that the Post-Dispatch marginalized the protests from a sourcing perspective in the stories coded. Rather, the sourcing pattern suggests an attempt for balanced and objective coverage that seeks perspectives from multiple parties.

When it came to narrative structures, the Post-Dispatch focused on conflict and violence more than the other publications. Half of the stories coded used the "conflict between protesters and law enforcement" narrative structure, while three stories focused on peaceful action by protesters and only one focused on the issues or goals of the protesters. Again, this pattern suggests balanced, objective coverage that doesn't focus especially on one side of the story or delve too deeply into the issues. By framing the protests as a conflict, the Post-Dispatch positions itself as a disinterested third party recording the events as a linear, blow-by-blow narrative.

Though the overall narrative of the Post-Dispatch stories was often one of conflict, the results from the "narrative elements" analysis show a wide range of other topics nested within those narratives. Nearly every Post-Dispatch story made some mention of peaceful or non-violent action by protesters, and more than half of the stories included some deeper issues or goals behind the protesters' actions. In addition, more

than half of the Post-Dispatch's stories included some "other" element, the most of any publication — a further indication of the breadth of the Post-Dispatch's coverage.

The Post-Dispatch's stories tended to be longer than its counterparts, another measure of the breadth of its coverage, and several were structured as "roundups" of the events of the day, which amounted to a hodge-podge of narrative elements. Of the 14 stories coded from the Post-Dispatch, five were very long — more than 2,000 words. Figure 23 shows a cross tabulation of word counts by publication.

Fig. 23: Word count by publication

Count

		Wordcount						
		100-299 words	300-499 words	500-699 words	700-899 words	900-1,999 words	2,000 words or more	Total
Publication	Post-Dispatch	2	0	3	1	3	5	14
	St. Louis American	0	2	2	4	6	0	14
	Beacon/Public Radio	0	1	6	2	4	1	14
Total		2	3	11	7	13	6	42

Among the narrative elements employed by the Post-Dispatch, invocation of public opinion stood out. Eleven of the 14 stories coded included an invocation of public opinion, the most of any of the three publications. More than half of the Post-Dispatch stories coded included bystanders, though none of them included bystanders that only opposed the protests.

In conclusion, the data from the 14 Post-Dispatch stories coded illustrates an attempt at a fair and balanced approach that does not focus too much attention on one party or another. Sourcing is split nearly down the middle and narrative frames present the protests as a conflict between protesters and officials, with the protesters and the issues themselves receiving less attention. However, the Post-Dispatch tended towards longer stories and "roundups" that covered a wide range of narrative elements in supplement to the overall conflict frames. This is not necessarily surprising considering

that the Post-Dispatch has the widest audience of the three outlets studied, and therefore may have more of an incentive to produce balanced coverage. Also, as the largest of the three news organizations, the Post-Dispatch has more resources that allow it to produce longer stories that cover a range of events and topics.

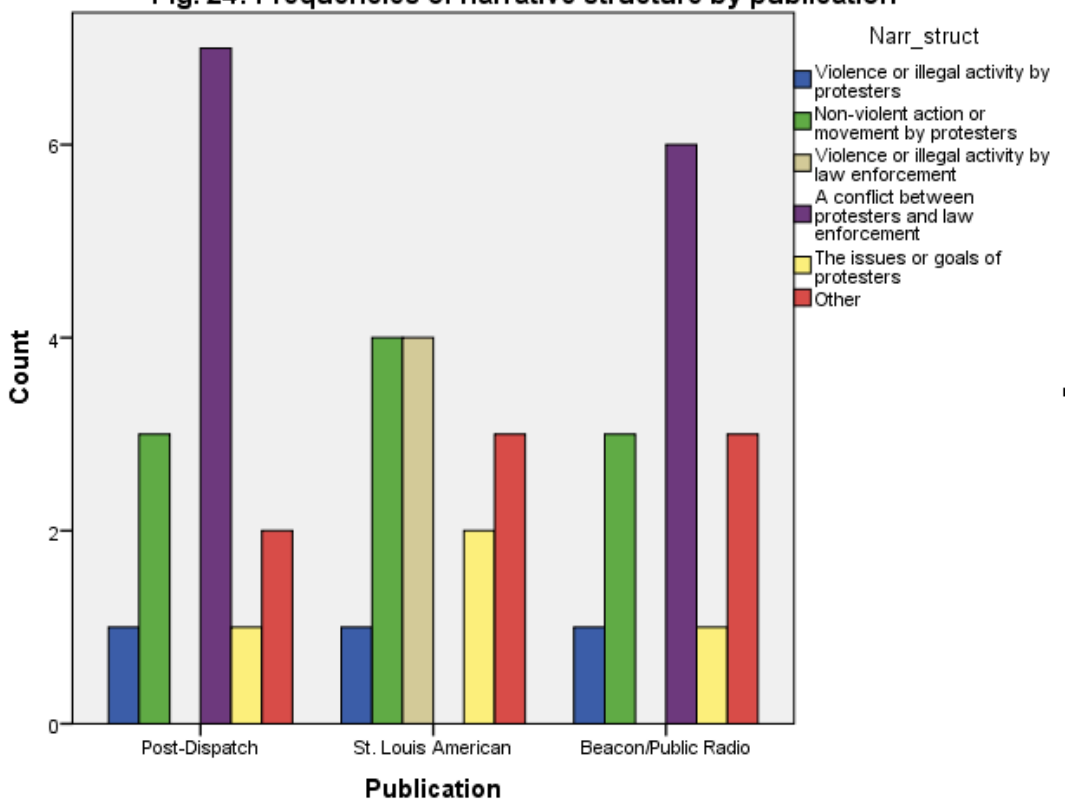
The St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio

The Beacon's coverage broke along many of the same lines as the Post-Dispatch, and did not employ the framing techniques that might be expected of an organization supposedly devoted to in-depth coverage of community issues.

In half of the stories coded, the Beacon used more protest sources than official. The other half was split between more official sources, an equal number of protesters and officials, and some other combination of sources. Thus, in terms of sourcing, the Beacon tended to give protesters more of a voice than officials.

The Beacon's use of narrative structure in the stories coded was nearly identical to the Post-Dispatch's. Like the Post-Dispatch, a conflict between protesters and law enforcement was the most common frame employed in the stories coded from the Beacon. It was used in six of the 14 stories. The similarities between the two publications are evident in a bar chart (Figure 24).

Fig. 24: Frequencies of narrative structure by publication



The Beacon mirrored the Post-Dispatch closely in terms of narrative elements as well. A majority of its stories included peaceful action by protesters alongside violence. Half of its stories touched on the issues and goals of the protesters. The Beacon invoked public opinion in nine of the 14 stories coded. Only three of its stories included bystanders, and in two of those, bystanders supported the protests.

Overall, the Beacon's coverage was more similar to the Post-Dispatch than it was to the American. It most resembled the protest paradigm in the area of narrative structure, where it often framed stories as conflicts between police and protesters. But it did not delve into the goals of the protesters to the extent that might be expected from an organization devoted to in-depth coverage of local issues. For instance, only one story coded from the Beacon used a narrative structure focused on issues or goals of the

protesters. And the issues or goals of the protesters appeared at all in only half of the Beacon's stories — the fewest of any of the three publications. The Beacon states on its website that it intends to "delve deeply into critical issues, always striving to place these issues into an historic and factual context, and sharing insight from across our diverse community." But the data shows that the Beacon did not frame many stories as issue-based, and in fact, touched on deeper issues the least of any of the three publications.

Thus, in the stories coded, the Beacon's coverage did not align with its stated mission. Instead, its framing more closely mirrored the mainstream Post-Dispatch. Based on these results, the hypothesis that the St. Louis Beacon would be more likely to legitimize the protests in its coverage is rejected.

St. Louis American

The St. Louis American was the clear outlier among the three publications in the areas of sourcing, narrative structure and narrative elements. Its framing techniques were more sympathetic towards protesters and critical of law enforcement.

The American relied very frequently on protesters as sources, with 10 of the 14 stories coded including more protest sources than officials. None of its stories included more officials than protest sources. Thus, in the category of sourcing, the American demonstrated a clear break from the protest paradigm and legitimized the protests.

The American most clearly distinguished itself from the other, more mainstream publications in its narrative structures, where it was frequently critical of law enforcement and refrained from pitting protesters and police against one another. The American was also the only publication to employ the violence or illegal activity by law enforcement narrative structure in any of the stories coded. Four of the 14 stories coded

from the American used that structure. Within the American stories coded, it was the most common narrative structure along with non-violent action or movement by protesters. Even more notable is that none of the American stories coded employed the conflict between protesters and law enforcement narrative structure — the most common structure utilized by the Post-Dispatch and the Beacon in the stories coded. The American's coverage was actively sympathetic towards protesters and critical towards law enforcement.

The American also did not include violence by protesters as often as the other two publications. Violence by protesters appeared in six of the 14 stories coded. The American also touched on the issues and goals of protesters the most of any publication, in 10 of the 14 stories coded, though only two (14.3 percent) of its stories were devoted primarily to protester issues and goals.

The American was also the least likely of the three publications to invoke public opinion, doing so in half of the 14 stories coded. Curiously, of the four American stories that included bystanders, the bystanders opposed the protest in three of them, which contradicts the publication's overall tendency to legitimize.

The American is a traditionally African-American newspaper with a black audience, and the protests were focused intensely on the injustices perpetrated against black people by law enforcement. The results support research by Chan and Lee; Weaver and Scacco; and Boyle, et. Al; that has shown that a news outlet's ideology affects how protests are framed. In this instance, the American's demographic and ideology mirrored that of the protesters in that it seemingly sided with them by portraying protesters as victims and police as aggressors. That framing contrasts the Post-Dispatch and Beacon's

use of the conflict narrative structure, which frames protesters and police as co-aggressors.

The American legitimized the protests in nearly every aspect of its coverage by giving protesters a voice more often than other publications, by being critical of law enforcement and by focusing on peaceful action by protesters rather than conflict or violence. The coverage represents a direct break from the protest paradigm in that it offers support to protesters and is critical of the status quo. The only area where the American reflected the protest paradigm was in its use of bystanders. Though only three stories included bystanders that opposed the protests, it is an area that could warrant further exploration in a larger sample. The hypothesis that the American would be more likely to legitimize the protests is accepted.

Shift in coverage over time

The results show that there are significant differences in coverage across all publications in the stories coded from just after the killing and just after the grand jury decision.

The stories published after the grand jury decision include more aspects of the protest paradigm than those published just after the shooting. For instance, the stories published after the grand jury decision invoked public opinion and relied on bystanders more often, and were also more likely to structure the story around a conflict between protesters and law enforcement, all of which are elements of the protest paradigm.

However, it is difficult to know whether this is a function of a shift in the philosophy behind the coverage or whether the coverage changes because of a difference in the events themselves. For example, just after the shooting, each publication published

at least one story about community cleanup efforts, which fell into the "other" category. Each publication also published at least one story that focused mainly on the details of the shooting itself soon after it happened. These also were classified as "other." Therefore, the hypothesis that coverage changed from marginalizing to legitimizing cannot be reliably accepted or rejected, though it does suggest that framing and the protest paradigm are not static and all-encompassing — the actual parameters of the story do matter.

Discussion

Examining how the media covers protests has become more relevant as movements calling for racial equality are increasingly part of the national conversation. This study exposed framing patterns in protest coverage that have been supported by previous research. It presents fertile ground for further study by revealing a distinction between coverage by the mainstream St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the niche St. Louis American, and exposing shortcomings in the St. Louis Beacon/St. Louis Public Radio's delivery of issue-based coverage.

All three outlets could be studied individually via qualitative analysis to learn about the philosophies and circumstances that led to different coverage decisions. While this content analysis has provided a general overview of the nature of the outlets' coverage, a qualitative look at each could illuminate why the coverage was the way it was. For instance, the content analysis has identified an apparent failure by the St. Louis Beacon to produce in-depth, issues-based material about the protests. Speaking with editors and reporters about the coverage could illuminate the challenges facing organizations like the Beacon that seek that kind of in-depth, slow news approach.

Future research would benefit from an expanded *N* and a more robust and precise codebook. This study was limited in size and scope, which at times made it difficult to reach definitive conclusions about the nature of these outlets' coverage. A larger study would allow for further exploration of some of the distinctions that appeared here between mainstream and niche publications. It would also permit deeper study in areas that raised questions but offered few sound conclusions, such as the change in coverage over time and the use of bystanders of opposition by the American.

The 42 articles coded are only a slice of the coverage produced about a single event. The killing of Michael Brown and the protests that followed are but one example of similar events that have occurred across the country in recent years, including protests after black men were killed by police in Baltimore, Milwaukee and New York City. An expanded body of coverage that takes into account other outlets and other protests is recommended to provide more robust data, especially in areas where this study found results that were inconclusive because there was not enough data. By studying similar events that happened in the past, future research could explore whether coverage has changed and if there have been any discernible trends over time.

In addition to a greater volume of coverage, coverage from outlets with a wide range of audiences and ideologies is recommended to determine the extent to which audience and ideology shapes coverage. In addition, coverage on other platforms such as print, broadcast and social media was beyond the scope of this research. But because those platforms are subject to unique limitations, and serve unique audiences, they are also worthy of study.

Another challenge for this study was creating a reliable codebook. Though revisions resulted in a codebook that was relatively reliable, it was also less precise than the original version in the areas of sourcing, narrative elements and public opinion. More detailed information in those areas could have provided greater insight into the framing techniques of the three publications. For instance, a more nuanced code book could have shown which publications were more likely to report numbers of arrests or the precise numbers of official and protest sources in each story, resulting in richer data. In the future, an intercoder reliability test with more coders and a larger sample size is recommended to be able to test the strength of an expanded codebook.

Related to the issue of the codebook is the number of stories in this study that did not fall into the established coding categories and were therefore coded as "other." In the narrative structures category, stories coded as "other" made up nearly 19 percent of the 42 stories coded. In the narrative elements category, a total of 17 stories included some "other" element. Obviously, it would be more useful for these "others" to be identified and used to create a richer picture of the coverage. At the same time, it exposes one of the weaknesses of content analysis, which is that news coverage is complex and fluid, and does not always fit neatly into a set of predetermined categories. One option would be to get rid of the "other" category completely, forcing coders to choose the most appropriate existing category. But that could result in imprecise data. Another option would be to expand the categories to include more options.

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