

5-2015

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From Activism to Annoyance: Framing, Threat, and Public Tolerance toward Protest

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Government from
The College of William and Mary

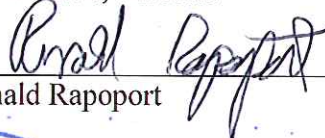
by

Samuel Edward Rolfe Dunham

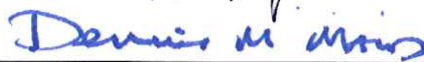
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May 5, 2015

From Activism to Annoyance

Framing, Threat, and Public Tolerance Toward Protest

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Abstract

Media representation of political protest has become increasingly dismissive and negative since the 1960s (Di Cicco 2010). News media frame protest using the protest paradigm, which highlights the spectacle of a protest instead of its goals (McLeod 2007; Dardis 2006). In the past few decades, however, the public has become *more* tolerant toward protest. This experiment investigates a potential micro-level mechanism through which the protest paradigm might increase tolerance toward protest by undermining its perceived effectiveness.

The study creates two treatments by manipulating the intensity of the protest paradigm frame in a *Washington Post* article about the Occupy Wall Street movement. Results from a Mechanical Turk experiment show limited support for the proposed mechanism. Respondents treated with the high-intensity frame article feel less threatened by the Occupy Wall Street protest and are more tolerant toward the protesters; however, these treatment effects do not extend to participants' evaluations of a hypothetical protest by either their most or least favored political group. The article treatment has no impact on participants' attitudes towards protest generally; asking participants to imagine a hypothetical protest by their least favored group, however, decreases their tolerance toward protest as a whole.

Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jaime Settle. Her own work has been an incredible inspiration to me, and I am so grateful to have had her support and guidance throughout writing this thesis. It has been an honor to work with her.

I would also like to thank my second and third readers, Dr. Ronald Rapoport and Dr. Dennis Manos, for their expertise, their guidance, and their encouragement of my love of research. I am very fortunate to have had the institutional and financial support of the William & Mary Government Department, the Social Science Research Methods Center, the Charles Center, and the John McGlennon Scholarship; without their backing this project would not have been possible. I am also grateful to Dr. Maurits van der Veen, Dr. Rui Pereira, Dr. Dennis Smith, and Dr. Amy Oakes for their advice and support as I developed my project. And my special thanks to my parents and to Lexi Silva, who never stopped offering me their encouragement throughout this past year.

Introduction

Media outlets use framing to dismiss, undermine, and misrepresent political protest. Political science, sociology, and communications literature term the common use of such frames the “protest paradigm” of news media. This paradigm represents protest as bothersome, unserious, and an illegitimate form of social expression (McLeod 2007; Di Cicco 2010; Dardis 2006). Longitudinal data suggest that such nuisance-based framing dominates media discussion of protest, and that media use of this framing paradigm has increased since the 1960s (Di Cicco 2010).

Nationally representative mass surveys, however, suggest that members of the public have become *more*, not less, tolerant of protest in the past few decades. Public tolerance toward anti-war protests, for instance, has steadily increased since the Vietnam era (Page & Shapiro 1992; Gallup 1993; Gallup 2003). Tolerance toward demonstrations and political speech by controversial groups has also risen: the public is more likely to tolerate controversial speech from socialists, Communists, atheists, and other such groups today than they were in the 1960s (Page & Shapiro 1992). Evidence from the General Social Survey also indicates a large increase in tolerance toward political protest generally in the past few decades. Only around 36.6% of GSS respondents in 1985 indicated that public demonstrations against the government should be “definitely allowed.” This proportion had jumped upward by 2006: 52.9% of respondents indicated that these demonstrations should definitely be allowed (General Social Survey, 1985 – 2006).

The contradictory trends of public tolerance and news coverage of protest seem striking, and the causal mechanisms driving this contradiction remain unclear. Public tolerance toward protest and representation of protest in the news media may be linked: the protest paradigm and

associated “nuisance coverage” may have had a *positive* impact on public tolerance toward protest. Alternately, the public might simply be more tolerant toward the types of groups that protest in the contemporary era than groups that protested in the past.

This study investigates the micro-level, psychological links between the protest paradigm and tolerance toward protest. It presents the results of a survey experiment exploring a possible tie between the protest paradigm and tolerance: threat perception. The protest paradigm might, by representing protest as an ineffective nuisance, *reduce* the perceived threat posed by demonstrations as a tool for political change without changing perceptions of the protest’s goals themselves.

The experimental design tests links between the protest paradigm, tolerance, and two types of threat. The first threat type, goal threat, measures respondents’ attitudes toward protest goals. The second threat type, strength threat, measures respondents’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the protest. These measures draw from work on threat and tolerance by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1993). The study treats subjects with either a news article highly characterized by the protest paradigm frame (a “high-intensity frame” article) or an article in which the protest paradigm is muted (a “low-intensity frame” article). Both treatment articles were based on an article about an Occupy Wall Street demonstration in the *Washington Post*. The study then tests the effects of this treatment in three different contexts. First, the study measures treatment effects on attitudes toward the protest depicted in the article. Then, the study incorporates a least-favored groups analysis, similar to that proposed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1993), by asking participants to evaluate a protest by either their most or their least favored political group. Lastly, the study measures respondents’ attitudes toward protest generally to test whether respondents retained the effects of the treatments.

The results from the article-specific section of the experiment conflict with the results from the sections incorporating least-favored groups analysis. Participants' responses support the proposed model when evaluating the Occupy Wall Street protest presented in the article. The protest paradigm has little impact on goal threat perceptions but has a significant impact on strength threat perceptions. Results from this section also strongly suggest that exposure to a high-intensity protest paradigm frame increases tolerance toward protest. When evaluating a hypothetical protest, however, attitudes toward the goals of the protesters overpower article-based treatment effects. The study finds no article treatment effects in the hypothetical section, finding instead that respondents across treatment groups respond much less tolerantly toward protests by groups they dislike. This result provides some support for an alternate mechanism whereby protest group *identity* (and respondents' threat reactions to their goals) impacts tolerance more than protest strength. Lastly, some effects from the hypothetical section of the experiment carry over into responses to generalized questions. Results suggest that respondents take mentally-available examples of protest into account when evaluating their tolerance toward protest generally.

Literature Review

Literature linking protest and news media emphasizes the power that media outlets hold over the public's perception of political protest. Modern protest tactics depend on the media to represent and disseminate their message (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993; Lipsky 1968; Oliver & Maney 2000; Smith et al. 2001; Oliver & Meyer 1999; Hall 2011). Protest movements depend on favorable presentation in the media, and the above literature finds that protesters often mold their message and methods to appeal to what they gauge as universal interests. Despite their radically

opposed viewpoints, both left- and right-wing protest movements appeal to patriotism, love of country, and favorable comparisons to US historical figures to forward their goals (Hall 2011).

Media outlets themselves, however, are not always amenable to protesters' causes. A large body of literature describes how news media often hamper the attempts of protesters to highlight or advance their own viewpoints (Gitlin 1980). Attention-getting strategies—designed to increase the likelihood of media reportage on a protest event—damage protest effectiveness when used by media outlets to characterize the protest as a whole (Gamson & Modigliani 1987; Shoemaker 1982; Shoemaker & Reese 1996). As Smith et al. (2001) explain, “Even when movement organizers succeed at obtaining the attention of mass media coverage, the reports represent the protest events in ways that neutralize or even undermine social movement agendas.” This neutralization and control is often accomplished through the use of framing techniques.

Framing Effects

Media outlets *frame* when they “process” details of events as they report on them, sorting their subjects into preconceived, commonly-understood categories. Unlike agenda-setting, which modifies the frequency at which certain issues and debates are reported upon (Price & Tewksbury 1997; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007), framing changes the representation of stories already chosen as worthy of coverage without altering or undermining their basic facts (Gitlin 1980; Chong & Druckman, 2007). Media frames instead adjust the *salience* of these facts by linking them with different problems or conflicts (Nelson et al. 1997; Nelson & Oxley 1999; Entman 1993). Individual consumers of media then integrate media frames into their own

characterizations of issues and debates; linkages between atomized facts help media consumers form narratives, opinions, and, indeed, conceptions of reality (Scheufele 1999; Entman 1993). Media frames help both news outlets and individuals make sense of what Edelman (1993) terms an “unstable social world.”

The media tend to use *issue* frames, instead of *equivalency* frames, when describing protest. Equivalency frames date back to the earliest conceptions of framing developed by Kahneman and Tversky (1983). Under this formulation, subjects respond to different explanations of specific facts because of the suggestions or impacts of words used in the different explanations. For instance, respondents receive a program more favorably when it is described as “saving” 200 out of 600 people than when it is stated that, under the program, 400 people will die. Issue frames apply more broadly than equivalency frames. In an issue frame, some actor (usually a media outlet or political interest) “defines and constructs a political issue” to guide subjects’ thinking about that issue (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson 1997). These frames themselves usually “carry evaluative content”; that is, the frames suggest some conclusion about the issue (for example, a policy or principle that should be applied in connection with the issue) as they define the issue itself (Slothuus 2008).

Empirical literature confirms the prevalence of media usage of issue frames to characterize a wide range of debates and issues. Literature mapping the coverage of international politics in the Cold War era, for instance, demonstrates that the media chose between presenting events in relation to the balance of power between the USSR and the US and framing the conflict as a humanitarian issue (Entman 1993). Another body of literature establishes connections between framing and affirmative action debates. Survey respondents in studies by Gamson and Modigliani (1987) and Arriola and Cole (2001) alternately frame affirmative action as a remedy,

a threat to political liberalism, or a clear example of “preferential treatment.” Other examples of empirical support for framing theory include alternate media frames of nuclear power (Entman & Rojecki 1993), terrorism (Altheide 1982; Nacos & Torres-Reyna 2005), and election campaigns (Iyengar 1994).

Experimental literature also confirms that media frames impact perceptions of issues within controlled settings. Nelson et al. (1997), for instance, investigate framing effects of television stories on a Ku Klux Klan protest. Subjects viewing media that framed the protest as a part of a free speech controversy proved much more likely to demonstrate tolerance towards the KKK marchers than subjects exposed to a story emphasizing threats to public order.

Experimental literature further explores framing effects and affirmative action: numerous studies find differences in attitudes toward affirmative action between groups exposed to differing media frames (Kinder & Sanders 1990; Fine 1992). A study by Kinder and Sanders, for instance, finds that framing affirmative action as either an unfair advantage or reverse discrimination impacts white opinion; it also changes the types of antecedents whites incorporate into the formation of their opinions (Kinder & Sanders 1996; 192).

The Protest Paradigm and Public Nuisance Paradigm Frames

A particular type of issue frame, called the protest paradigm, consistently appears in media reports of protest. Media devote less attention to the goals or ideologies behind the protest movement, instead casting the protest itself as the relevant issue in the story. Chan and Lee (1984) originally coined the plural term “protest paradigms” in a study describing how media outlets used framing to support or delegitimize Hong Kong protest groups. The currently best-

known conception of the protest paradigm, developed by Hertog and McLeod (1995), identify five characteristics of protest paradigm framing: the media represent demonstrations as circuses or carnivals, riots, confrontations, and—rarely—as debates. News reports more often characterize protests as unruly and unserious; lawless, confrontational, and unintellectual; unsupported by bystanders or statistics; and disapproved of by legitimate authority (McLeod 2007; Dardis 2006; McLeod & Detenber 1999; Ismail et al. 2009). These characterizations pull political protests from the realm of debate, instead framing them as forms of deviancy and criminal unrest (Ismail et al. 2009).

Content analysis studies suggest the pervasive use of the protest paradigm in media coverage of protest. Protest paradigm literature focuses on media representations of left-wing protest (Boykoff 2006; Hertog & McLeod 1995; Shoemaker 1984; Dardis 2006; Ismail et al. 2009), though some research connects the protest paradigm to coverage of right-wing movements, like the Tea Party, as well (Weaver & Scacco, 2013). Protest paradigm coverage appears in news reports about anti-Iraq War demonstrations (Dardis 2006), anarchist or other “deviant” left-wing protest marches (McLeod & Hertog 1992;

A complementary paradigm identified by Di Cicco (2010) attempts to differentiate the specific from the general. Di Cicco states that the media uses the protest paradigm to undermine specific protests; the public nuisance paradigm, however, undermines not only specific protests but protest as a whole. The public nuisance paradigm, Di Cicco states, applies to “news coverage of *the idea of protest itself*.” This paradigm deemphasizes the potential role protest plays as a legitimate or serious voicing of political views or grievances, instead characterizing it as an “irritation, a hindrance, something that interferes with daily life.” Though the distinction between the protest paradigm and the public nuisance paradigm appears somewhat unclear, Di Cicco

offers valuable criteria for evaluating the presence and intensity of protest-related paradigms by identifying three main delegitimizing tactics. By characterizing protests as *bothersome*, news outlets cast demonstrations as annoyances for the public and recreation for the protesters. Characterizing protests as *impotent* robs protest of legitimacy and perceived power to effect change. Representing protest as *unpatriotic* insinuates that protest as a whole actively harms the country. Combined, Di Cicco believes these characterizations undermine the public's perception of the utility and legitimacy of protest as a whole.

Counterintuitive Public Opinion Trends

The media regularly fit reports of protest within a protest paradigm, drawing on frames that delegitimize or undermine protest movements to characterize them as deviant. It follows that as the media has continued to frame protest negatively, public opinion and tolerance of protest as a whole would grow increasingly negative.

However, longitudinal data do not indicate a negative public opinion trend. Opinion polls suggest an opposite trend: public tolerance toward protest may have increased, not decreased, since the 1960s. The General Social Survey measures of public opinion toward the speech rights of groups typically associated with deviant protest (such as socialists and Communists) show that the public has become more, not less, tolerant of their speech (Marsden 2012; Page & Shapiro 1992). GSS data also shows a marked increase in tolerance specifically toward protest and mass demonstrations since 1985 (General Social Survey, 1985 – 2006). Although asked during different wars, Gallup polls also show the US public as more tolerant of contemporary anti-war

protests (such as the first and second Iraq War) than they were of Vietnam-era protests (Page & Shapiro 1992; Hall 2012).

The protest paradigm, however, is supposed to *undermine* political protest—not bolster support for it. Indeed, as McLeod (2007) states, the protest paradigm “generally disparages protesters and *hinders* their role as vital actors on the political stage [emphasis added].” If the protest paradigm truly damages public perception of protest, this counterintuitive shift in public opinion presents a puzzle to scholars of media and protest. That is, intuition suggests that this negative protest paradigm should negatively impact the public’s perception of protest, but the data suggest that the public’s tolerance toward protest remains *unchanged*—or perhaps has even *increased*. Though these data trends alone are *not* sufficient to conclude that public opinion of protest itself has improved—the public, for instance, could instead be more tolerant of the ideologies of modern protest groups—they do cloud conclusions typically drawn from the protest paradigm.

Public opinion volatility does not provide an adequate explanation for this disconnect. Some older theories of public opinion suggest that the public cannot be said to truly “hold” opinions due to the volatility of public opinion survey data (Almond 1960; Crozier, Huntington & Watanuki 1975); other researchers dismiss the conception of public opinion as incoherent or non-existent (Zaller 1992), point out flaws in research methods (Schuman, Presser, & Ludwig 1981) or redefine the very nature of public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1992). Thus public opinion shifts toward protest are likely not random; though, as stated previously, while the shifts *themselves* are not adequate to conclude that opinion toward protest itself has changed, they also cannot be dismissed categorically.

The experimental literature on the protest paradigm and public nuisance paradigm also cannot provide adequate solutions to this puzzle. While some studies measure subjects' attitudes toward specific protests after exposure to the protest paradigm, they remain inconclusive about how these attitudes carry over into general attitudes toward protest (Detenber et al. 2007; McLeod & Detenber 1999; McLeod 1995). McLeod and Detenber's 1999 experiment, for instance, could not form solid conclusions regarding the relationship between support for political protest and the framing of an anarchist demonstration during a television broadcast. A study conducted by Detenber et al. investigating television framing of protests related to abortion performed (2007) also fails to find a clear negative influence of the protest paradigm on opinion toward the expressive rights of protesters. In fact, though no relationship between frame intensity and tolerance proved statistically significant, results for subjects exposed to stories about pro-choice protesters indicated a slight *increase* in tolerance.

Threat and Media Effects

Introducing threat as an intervening variable between frame exposure and tolerance levels could help clarify the muddled relationship between the protest paradigm and public attitudes toward protest (Sullivan et al. 1993; Marcus et al. 1995). The protest and public nuisance paradigms—traditionally seen as delegitimizing and undermining both protests and public support for them—may actually *increase* public acceptance of political protest as a tactic. As protests are seen as less and less of a political threat because of their increasing delegitimization, the public may have become more willing to tolerate them. This hypothesis runs parallel to key studies performed by Sullivan et al. (1993) and seminal work by Stouffer (1955) in which

subjects' tolerance for certain movements (such as racist, Communist, or other disliked movements) depended heavily on how threatened they felt by the movements themselves.

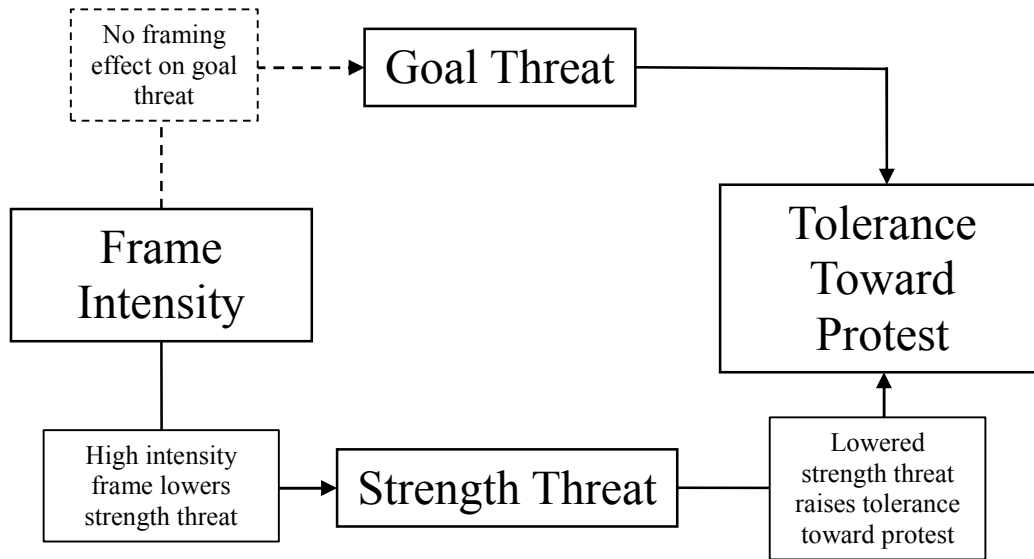
Sullivan et al. and Marcus et al. also make key distinctions between *types* of threat. Building off of a 1978 National Opinion Research Center survey, Sullivan et al. sort seven threat scales into two factors. The first of these factors “evaluates[s] the goals of the target groups,” asking respondents normative questions about group dangerousness, integrity, and violent intentions; the second factor measures the “strength or importance of these groups” (Sullivan et al. 1993, 188; Marcus et al. 1995, 102). Sullivan et al. also find that these two factors vary independently; the correlation coefficient between these “goal threat” and “strength threat” measures is -.04. That is, though grouped under the umbrella of “threat,” goal threat and strength threat are fundamentally different phenomena; a group can have normatively objectionable goals but have a low likelihood of implementing them.

This study aims to connect research investigating the protest paradigm, threat, and public tolerance toward protest. Protest paradigm literature cannot account for the marked increase in tolerance toward protest, and no clear empirical link as of yet uses threat perception to link media framing effects with increased protest tolerance. This study investigates potential connections between these bodies of literature by testing linkages between threat, framing, and tolerance on the micro-level.

Hypothesized Mechanism

The hypothesized mechanism proposes a micro-level link between the protest paradigm and public tolerance toward protest. An article with a more intense protest paradigm frame should negatively affect readers' perceptions of the strength of the protest movement (termed

“strength threat”). It should not, however, impact how threatened readers feel by the goals of the movement (termed “goal threat”). This heightened frame should increase tolerance toward protest by way of the lowered strength threat. The diagram below presents a schematic of this proposed mechanism.



Proposed Mechanism: Protest paradigm lowers strength threat; lowered strength threat increases tolerance toward political protest.

The study tests this proposed mechanism with three separate groups of post-test questions.

Treatment effects on attitudes toward article

The article-focused section of the experiment asks participants about their attitudes toward the Occupy Wall Street protest described in the treatment articles.

Hypothesis 1.1: The article treatment will have no statistically significant effect on goal threat scores.

Hypothesis 1.2: Respondents treated with a high-intensity frame article will have lower strength threat scores than respondents treated with a low-intensity frame article.

Hypothesis 1.3: Respondents treated with a high- intensity frame article will have higher tolerance scores than respondents treated with the low-intensity frame article.
Treatment effects on attitudes toward hypothetical protest

This section of the experiment measures the effect of the article treatments on respondents' attitudes toward a hypothetical protest. The study presents one treatment group with a hypothetical protest by their most favored group and asks the other treatment group about a hypothetical protest by their least favored group.

Hypothesis 2.1: The article treatment will have no statistically significant effect on goal threat scores.

Hypothesis 2.2: Respondents treated with a high-intensity frame article will have lower strength threat scores than respondents treated with a low-intensity frame article.

Hypothesis 2.3: Respondents treated with a high-intensity frame article will have higher tolerance scores than respondents treated with a low-intensity frame article.

Hypothesis 2.4: There will be positive interaction effects on tolerance between the high-intensity frame article treatment and the most favored group treatment.

Treatment effects on general attitudes toward protest

The last section of the experiment asks respondents about protest generally, testing whether either of the two treatments (article and movement) impact attitudes toward the phenomenon of protest itself—and whether interaction effects arise between the two treatments.

Hypothesis 3.1: The article treatment will have no statistically significant effect on goal threat scores.

Hypothesis 3.2: Respondents treated with a high-intensity frame article will have lower strength threat scores than respondents treated with a low-intensity frame article earlier in the study.

Hypothesis 3.3: Respondents treated with a high-intensity frame article earlier in the study will have higher tolerance scores than respondents treated with a low-intensity frame article earlier in the study.

Hypothesis 3.4: There will be positive interaction effects on tolerance between the high-intensity frame article treatment and the most favored group treatment.

Methods

This study includes both a lab experiment and an experiment conducted online through Amazon's Mechanical Turk service. Both phases of this experiment test the effects of a treatment article on respondents' attitudes toward political protest. The study heightens the intensity of protest paradigm frame in one treatment article and mutes the frame in the other article. The first portion of the study, involving a lab experiment, confirms that the high-intensity frame article aligns more closely with the protest paradigm than does the low-intensity frame article. The Mechanical Turk portion of the study tests the effects of the treatment articles on subjects' attitudes toward protest. It also tests the effects of describing a hypothetical protest by a political group favored or disfavored by the respondent.

The study derived the treatment articles from an article in the *Washington Post* covering a protest connected with Occupy Wall Street in 2012 (*Washington Post* 2012). The study selects this article because of its richness in statements that both align with and contradict the protest paradigm. The study codes each clause in the article using a coding method developed by Di Cicco (2010) to evaluate the presence of the public nuisance paradigm. Di Cicco's study sets out three clear coding criteria that align closely with the protest paradigm. Coding assigns a positive, negative, or neutral value to each clause corresponding to whether or not it depicts the protest as bothersome, impotent, or unpatriotic. Clauses aligning with the paradigm receive positive values; clauses depicting the protest as not bothersome, effective, or patriotic receive negative values.

The study removes clauses with negative values from the high-intensity frame treatment article and removes clauses with positive values from the low-intensity frame treatment article. The study also edits for continuity and coherence and includes some additional quotes (such as a closing quote from a bystander summarizing the article). Appendix 3 presents the full texts of each treatment article as well as the text from the original *Washington Post* article.

Lab Experiment

A laboratory-based manipulation check conducted from October to December in Fall 2014 tested the effects of the treatment article. The study recruited 162 undergraduate students at the College of William & Mary, a medium-sized, selective East-coast university in the United States. Subjects completed a pre-test before arriving at the lab. Upon arrival, subjects received an envelope containing one of three treatment articles. Two of the articles were manipulated with the coding method developed by Di Cicco described in the previous section; the third article presented the original text of the *Washington Post* article. After opening the envelope and reading the treatment articles, subjects completed a five to ten-minute survey questionnaire on a laptop provided by the lab.

The results of the lab experiment show that the treatment articles fit the criteria of the public nuisance and protest paradigms as outlined by Di Cicco (2010). The high-intensity protest paradigm frame article presented the protest as more bothersome and less effective than did the low-intensity frame article. Table 1 presents a summary of this check below. Respondents conveyed their agreement or disagreement with statements about the treatment article by indicating their response on a seven point Likert scale (with a low score indicating low

agreement). The question regarding effectiveness was originally phrased to ask about ineffectiveness; these responses have been flipped.

Table 1: Respondents' Agreement with Statements About Treatment Articles (1 to 7 Likert Scale)

	High Frame Mean	Low Frame Mean	P Value
Protest was Bothering	3.93 (0.27)	3.25 0.22	0.05
Protest was Effective	3.24 (0.23)	4.36 (0.21)	0.00
Protest was Unpatriotic	2.09 (0.19)	2.46 (0.19)	0.18
N	46	60	

Table 1: Manipulation Check Results. Each row represents a key aspect of media framing of political protest.

Mechanical Turk Experiment

In March 2015, the study tested the effects of two experimental treatments, including the treatment articles described above, on a subject pool recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service. Mechanical Turk (or “MTurk”) allows employers (or “requesters”) to contract out simple tasks to MTurk users (called “workers”) for a fixed payment per task. Quick recruitment of large, cheap recruitment samples makes it well-suited for survey research. Though Mechanical Turk cannot provide a truly random, representative sample, the diversity of potential subjects drawn from the pool of “MTurkers” who complete tasks through the site makes Mechanical Turk samples comparable, if not superior, to samples recruited on college campuses (Berinsky et al. 2012; Buhrmester et al. 2011).

For the first test, subjects read one of two articles depending on their treatment group. The experiment randomly assigned subjects to read either the high-intensity frame or low-intensity frame article. Of the respondents who successfully completed the survey, 504 respondents received a high-intensity protest paradigm frame article, and 441 respondents received a low-intensity protest paradigm frame article.¹

The second and third tests added a most and least-favored groups analysis similar to the analysis developed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1993).² After reading the treatment article and answering questions related to the article, the study described a hypothetical protest to the respondents. The description of this hypothetical protest explained that the protest would be very similar to the one about which they read but would involve a different protest group. The group involved was either the respondents' most favored protest movement or least favored protest movement as indicated in a previous section in the survey. The study randomly assigned subjects to receive text describing a hypothetical protest about their most or least favored group, sorting the participants into two "movement treatment" groups of 464 and 481 respondents who successfully completed the survey. Then, after this second test, the study asked participants about their attitudes toward protest generally—that is, their attitudes toward protest as a whole, as opposed to their attitudes toward the protest in the treatment article or the hypothetical demonstration described in the movement treatment.

The study included these additional tests to gauge how subjects would translate their opinions toward the Occupy Wall Street protest described in the treatment articles to broader

¹ The reasons for this imbalance in treatment group size are unclear; respondents who began the survey but either did not complete it or failed one of the two manipulation checks show a similar imbalance despite random assignment into treatment groups.

² Unlike studies that measure tolerance generally or toward one specific group (such as Communists), Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus measure a subject's tolerance toward a group indicated by the subject to be their least-favored group.

opinions about protest. The second test, which introduced the hypothetical protest to the participant, analyzed how participants translated their views about a specific protest (described in the article) to views about a different protest. The third test took this process one step further, untethering the questions from any concrete example of protest. Results from the manipulation check indicate that respondents might remain unwilling to change their general opinions of protest during the experiment, even if they do take frames into account when evaluating the specific protest which the article discusses. This unwillingness to change is consistent with older literature about the protest paradigm (see Detenber et al. 2007). By asking participants to imagine a protest similar to the one about which they read (but conducted by a group about which they had strong attitudes), the study prompted them to take a “generalizing leap” without requiring them to change their preconceived, calcified views towards protest as a whole. The additional test also attempted to identify whether interaction effects would occur between article treatment and subjects’ attitudes toward the group protesting.

Table 2 illustrates the two-by-two factorial design (article treatment by movement treatment) utilized in the experiment.

Table 2: Two-by-two Factorial Design With Treatment Group Size

		Protest Group Discussed in Hypothetical	
Frame Intensity of Treatment Article		High-Intensity Frame Most Favored Group N = 257	High-Intensity Frame Least Favored Group N = 247
		Low-Intensity Frame Most Favored Group N = 207	Low-Intensity Frame Least Favored Group N = 234

Table 2: 2x2 Factorial design and *N* for each treatment sub-group.

Measurement

The study began by collecting information about subjects' party affiliation, political involvement, and voter participation. The study then asked participants to select their most and least favorite political group or movement out of a list of ten groups.³ The study used these selections later when treating subjects with the presentation of a hypothetical protest scenario by either the subjects' most or least-favored groups. The study then used a simple manipulation check to weed out inattentive participants. Respondents who passed the first manipulation check provided more demographic and background data (like age, gender, income, and political ideology) before receiving either the high-intensity or low-intensity frame treatment article. After reading the article, the study provided another attention check to eliminate participants who did not read the treatment article.

The study then asked questions designed to test the links between the components of the proposed mechanism. The study adapted questions used in previous investigations of tolerance and threat.⁴ For each of the three sections of the survey (article-focused, hypothetical, and generalized), scales measured the three components of the proposed mechanism: goal threat perceptions, strength threat perceptions, and tolerance toward protest. Each of these scales was composed of subjects' responses to five separate items presenting statements about protest; subjects indicated their disagreement or agreement with these statements on a 1 to 7-point Likert

³ The study derived a list of ten groups from a list of groups developed by Marcus et al. (1995, 102) for least-favored groups analysis. This list was updated with data about relevant political groups from the General Social Survey (2006; 2012). Appendix 1 presents a complete list of the groups used in this study.

⁴ Work by McLeod and Detenber, two key contributors to the protest paradigm literature, provided the basis for questions related to tolerance (1999, 12). Questions measuring threat (and the distinctions between goal and strength measures of threat) were adapted from work by Marcus et al. and Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1995; 1993).

scale. Nine scales total and forty-five items total were therefore used in this study. Appendix 3 presents a complete copy of the questionnaire presented to the Mechanical Turk participants.

Summary Statistics

Some variation in demographic characteristics exists across treatment groups. Many more men participated in the survey than women; this gender makeup conflicts with previous studies suggesting that women make up a larger proportion of the MTurk worker population (Berinsky et al. 2012; Buhrmester et al. 2011). Respondents were young to middle age and over half of the respondents fell within the bottom two income brackets (\$20,000 a year and under and \$20,001 to \$40,001). Table A1.2 in Appendix 1 displays a full tabulation of relevant demographic variables. Respondents disliked racist and religious extremist groups and favored more left-leaning groups, like feminists and atheists, consistent with their low average conservatism score. Table A1.1 in Appendix 1 presents a full tabulation of respondents' most and least-favored groups choices. Regressions displayed in this experiment include the variables displayed in Table A1.2 in Appendix 1.

Results

This section presents the results from the Mechanical Turk experiment in three parts. First, the report displays the results from the first test measuring respondents' attitudes toward the protest depicted in the treatment articles (hereafter referred to as the "article protest"). Next, the report displays data measuring respondents' attitudes toward a hypothetical protest by the respondents' most or least favored groups. Lastly, the report discusses respondents' attitudes towards protests in general.

Attitudes Toward Occupy Wall Street Treatment Article

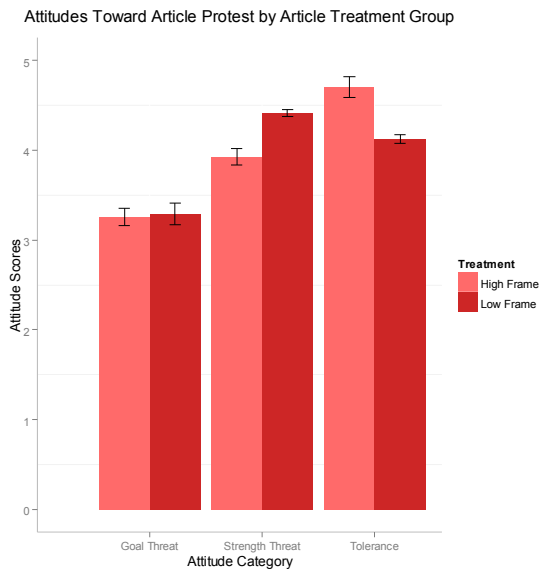


Figure 1: Graph of article treatment effects on means for each measure included in the proposed mechanism. Bar pairs 1 and 2 display the intervening variables measuring goal threat and strength threat; bar pair 3 displays the article treatment’s effect on tolerance. Whiskers display a 95% confidence interval.

The first group of scales measures respondents’ attitudes toward the specific protest mentioned in the treatment article. Hypothesis 1.1 predicted that there would be no significant difference in goal threat means between treatment groups—that respondents would find the goals of the Occupy Wall Street protest just as threatening after reading an article with a low-intensity frame as after reading an article of a high-intensity frame. The first row of Table 3 and the first pair of bars in Figure 1 show support for this hypothesis. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of goal threat between treatment groups when the questionnaire asked respondents about the article directly.

Data also support Hypothesis 1.2, that respondents in the high treatment group would have lower strength threat scores on average than their counterparts in the lower treatment group. The second row of Table 1 shows a significant treatment effect on strength threat. Respondents in the high-intensity frame treatment group believed the protest movement depicted was weaker

and had a lower likelihood of influencing discourse and political decision-making, causing a .48-point drop in the strength threat measure ($p < .01$).

Lastly, the data support Hypothesis 1.3: respondents treated with a low-intensity frame article are less tolerant toward the protest described in the article than respondents treated with a high-intensity frame article. Row three of Table 1 and the third bar pair of Figure 1 compare respondents' tolerance toward the protesters. The high-intensity frame article increased tolerance by about .58 points on the seven-point scale ($p < .01$).

Table 3: Article Treatment Effects on Attitudes Toward Occupy Wall Street Protest

	Treatment Group		Difference in Means	P Value
	High Frame Mean	Low Frame Mean		
Goal Threat	3.26 (0.05)	3.29 (0.06)	-0.03	0.72
Strength Threat	3.93 (0.05)	4.41 (0.02)	-0.48	0.00
Tolerance	4.71 (0.06)	4.12 (0.02)	0.58	0.00
N	495	439	934	

Table 3: Tests of means between article treatment groups displaying the effects of the article treatment on goal threat, strength threat, and tolerance scales.

In sum, data support each of the three hypotheses relating to participants' attitudes toward the Occupy Wall Street protest described in the treatment articles and support the strength of the proposed model. The significance of these results holds even when controlling for demographic variables (see multiple regressions in Tables A1.1, A1.2, and A1.3 in Appendix A).

Attitudes Toward Most and Least Favored Groups

Attitudes Toward Hypothetical Protest by Article Treatment Group

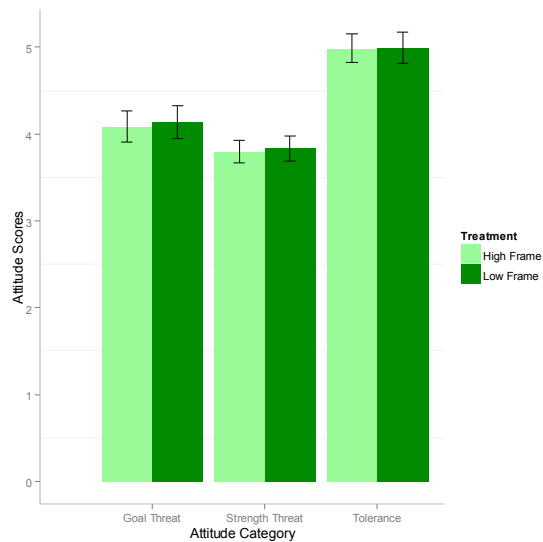


Figure 2: Graph of article treatment effects on means of attitudes toward hypothetical protest. Bar pairs 1 and 2 display the intervening variables measuring goal threat and strength threat; bar pair 3 displays article treatment effect on tolerance. Whiskers display 95% confidence intervals.

Interaction Effects Between Article and Most/Least Treatment on Hypothetical Tolerance

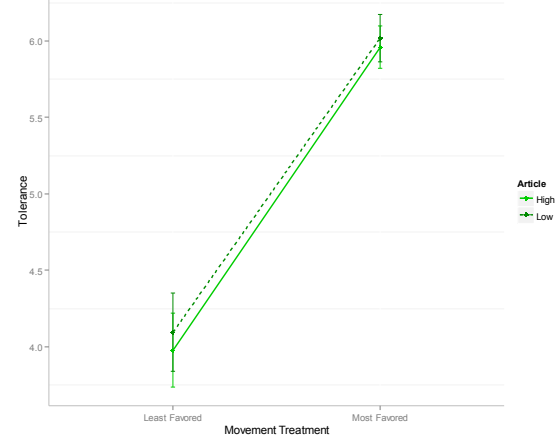


Figure 3: Graph of interaction effects between treatments on attitudes toward hypothetical protest. Lines represent article treatment groups. Whiskers display 95% confidence intervals.

This section uses a two-by-two factorial design, introducing the movement treatment alongside the article treatment (received through the article treatment in the previous section). The movement treatment asks respondents to consider a hypothetical protest by either their most or their least favored protest movement as indicated in a previous section of the survey; the questionnaire automatically pipes the names and identities of these groups into the question text.

The data support Hypothesis 2.1: the article treatment has no statistically significant effect on goal threat. However, subjects reading about their least favored group indicate they are much more threatened by the goals of the hypothetical protesters than do subjects reading about their most favored group. This alternate effect is large: there is a 3.28-point difference between the two movement treatment groups.

Table 4: Article Treatment Effects on Attitudes Toward a Hypothetical Protest

	Treatment Group		Diff. in Means	P Value
	High Frame Mean	Low Frame Mean		
Goal Threat	4.09 (0.09)	4.14 (0.09)	-0.05	0.69
Strength Threat	3.80 (0.06)	3.83 (0.07)	-0.04	0.72
Tolerance	4.99 (0.08)	4.99 (0.09)	0.00	0.97
N	501	440	941	

Table 4: Tests of means between article treatment groups displaying the effects of the article treatment on goal threat, strength threat, and tolerance scales.**Table 5: Movement Treatment Effects on Attitudes Toward a Hypothetical Protest**

	Treatment Group		Diff. in Means	P Value
	Most Favored Mean	Least Favored Mean		
Goal Threat	2.44 (0.05)	5.72 (0.05)	-3.28	0.00
Strength Threat	4.56 (0.06)	3.11 (0.06)	1.45	0.00
Tolerance	5.98 (0.05)	4.04 (0.09)	1.95	0.00
N	460	481	941	

Table 5: Tests of means between movement treatment groups displaying the effects of the movement treatment on goal threat, strength threat, and tolerance scales. Most Favored column displays means for subjects who considered a hypothetical protest by their most favored political group; Least Favored column displays means for subjects who considered a hypothetical protest by their least favored group.

The data do not support Hypothesis 2.2. The article treatment has no effect on strength threat, as is shown in Table 2 and the second bar pair of Figure 2. The estimated difference in strength threat scores between article treatment groups is actually lower than the differences estimated for goal threat scores (.04 and .05 respectively). As in the previous paragraph, the movement treatment has large effects on strength threat. Whether this movement treatment-based difference—suggesting that participants believe groups they dislike are weaker than groups they like—arises from a clear evaluation of group strength or solely based on “wishful thinking” remains unclear.

Table 6: Effect of Treatments on Goal Threat, Strength Threat, and Tolerance Toward Hypothetical Protest Controlling for 4 Demographic Variables

	Scales					
	Goal Threat		Strength Threat		Tolerance	
Intercept	5.53	***	2.55	***	4.49	***
	(0.18)		(0.20)		(0.24)	
High Article Frame	0.16		0.10		-0.09	
	(0.10)		(0.12)		(0.14)	
Most Favored Group	-3.22	***	1.63	***	1.96	***
	(0.11)		(0.12)		(0.15)	
High Intensity Frame x Most Favored Group	-0.13		-0.32	*	0.00	
	(0.15)		(0.17)		(0.20)	
Female	-0.01		0.41	***	-0.17	
	(0.08)		(0.09)		(0.10)	
Conservatism Score	0.05	**	-0.03		-0.24	***
	(0.02)		(0.03)		(0.03)	
Income	0.00		-0.02		0.03	
	(0.03)		(0.04)		(0.04)	
Age	-0.03		0.03		0.27	***
	(0.04)		(0.04)		(0.05)	
N	920		924		927	
R ²	0.68		0.26		0.32	

Note: P<.01 = ***, P< .05 = **, P<.1 = *

Table 6: Regression table showing effects of article treatment, movement treatment on goal threat, strength threat, tolerance toward a hypothetical protest. Treatments represented as dummy variables; also shows interaction effects.

The data also do not support Hypothesis 2.3. The study finds no significant article treatment effects on tolerance toward a hypothetical protest. Again, the study *does* find large differences in tolerance between participants considering a hypothetical by their most favored political movement and participants considering a hypothetical by their least favored political movement. Exposure to a least-favored group hypothetical corresponds with a 1.95 drop in tolerance score ($p<.01$). This effect is consistent when controlling for demographic variables and occurs in both low and high-frame-treated respondents, as indicated by Table 6. The study finds no interaction effects between the two treatments, and so Hypothesis 2.4 cannot be.

Generalized Attitudes Toward Protest

Generalized Attitudes Towards Protest by Article Treatment Group

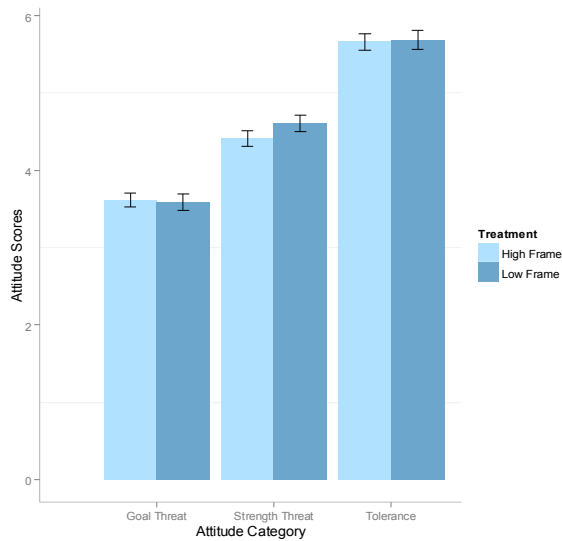


Figure 4: Graph of article treatment effects on means of attitudes toward hypothetical protest. Bar pairs 1 and 2 display the intervening variables measuring goal threat and strength threat; bar pair 3 displays article treatment effect on tolerance. Whiskers display 95% confidence intervals.

Interaction Effects Between Article and Most/Least Treatment on Generalized Tolerance

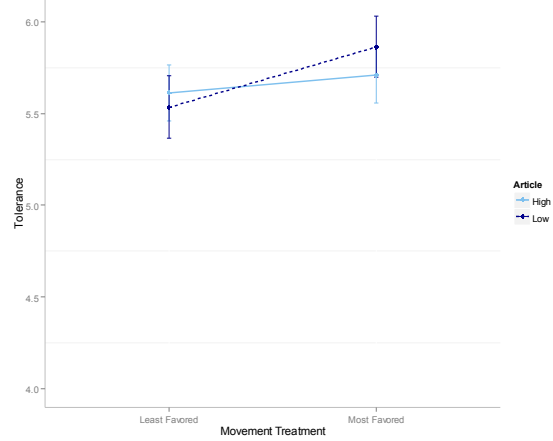


Figure 5: Graph of interaction effects between treatments on generalized attitudes toward protest. Lines represent article treatment groups. Whiskers display 95% confidence intervals. Note direction of interaction effect in most favored group treatment.

The data support Hypothesis 3.1. Tests of means find no significant article treatment effect on respondents' general attitudes toward protest goals. Interestingly, participants evaluate the goals of protesters as slightly—though significantly—more threatening if they considered a hypothetical about their least favored group earlier in the experiment ($p < 5\%$). Table 7 shows the roughly .16-point difference in goal threat scores between most and least favored treatment groups. Despite these relationships, perceived goal threat from protesters remains low regardless of treatment groups, hovering around 3.6 out of 7 points.

Table 7: Article Treatment Effects on Generalized Attitudes Toward Protest

	Treatment Group		Diff. in Means	P Value
	High Frame Mean	Low Frame Mean		
Goal Threat	3.62 (0.05)	3.59 (0.05)	0.03	0.65
Strength Threat	4.41 (0.05)	4.61 (0.05)	-0.20	0.01
Tolerance	5.66 (0.06)	5.69 (0.06)	-0.03	0.74
N	504	441		

Table 7: Tests of means between article treatment groups displaying the effects of the article treatment on goal threat, strength threat, and tolerance scales.**Table 8: Movement Treatment Effects on Generalized Attitudes Toward Protest**

	Treatment Group		Diff. in Means	P Value
	Most Favored Mean	Least Favored Mean		
Goal Threat	3.52 (0.05)	3.68 (0.05)	-0.16	0.02
Strength Threat	4.60 (0.05)	4.41 (0.05)	0.18	0.01
Tolerance	5.78 (0.06)	5.57 (0.06)	0.20	0.01
N	464	481	945	

Table 8: Tests of means between movement treatment groups displaying the effects of the movement treatment on goal threat, strength threat, and tolerance scales.

The data also support Hypothesis 3.2, as significant article treatment effects appear in responses to general questions about protest strength. Responses among the low treatment group are about .2 points higher than responses among the high treatment group—this difference, though small, suggests that some article treatment effects linger as respondents indicate their opinions toward protest as a whole. As with hypothetical strength threat, general strength threat seems to be higher among those exposed to a hypothetical scenario about their most favored group if they were also exposed to the low-treatment article. Movement treatment effects and article treatment effects are about the same size (-.2 and .18 respectively, $p < 5\%$).

Hypothesis 3.3 is not supported by the data. No significant article treatment effects on tolerance appear between high and low article treatment groups, as shown by Table 7. Table 9

confirms that the effect of the article treatment is not significantly different than zero. Therefore, the data confirm that the first two parts of the proposed mechanism extend to general opinions toward protest but do not actually impact tolerance toward protest. The movement treatment, however, does affect tolerance toward protest in general: tolerance dropped by about .2 points when respondents had previously considered a protest by a group they disliked ($p < .05$).

Table 9: Effect of Treatments and Demographic Variables on Generalized Attitudes Toward Protest

	Scales					
	Goal Threat		Strength Threat		Tolerance	
Intercept	2.82	***	4.63	***	6.41	***
	(0.16)		(0.17)		(0.19)	
High Article Frame	-0.02		-0.02		0.10	
	(0.09)		(0.10)		(0.11)	
Most Favored Group	-0.23	**	0.37	***	0.38	***
	(0.10)		(0.11)		(0.11)	
High Intensity Frame x Most Favored Group	0.08		-0.30	**	-0.26	
	(0.14)		(0.14)		(0.16)	
Female	0.11		0.34	***	-0.17	**
	(0.07)		(0.07)		(0.08)	
Conservatism Score	0.20	***	-0.16	***	-0.26	***
	(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)	
Income	0.03		-0.05	*	-0.01	
	(0.03)		(0.03)		(0.03)	
Age	-0.01		-0.02		0.10	**
	(0.03)		(0.04)		(0.04)	
N	927		926		927	
R ²	0.11		0.10		0.32	

Note: $P < .01 = ***$, $P < .05 = **$, $P < .1 = *$

Table 9: Regression table showing effects of article treatment, movement treatment on goal threat, strength threat, tolerance toward protest generally. Treatments represented as dummy variables; also shows interaction effects between treatments.

Lastly, the study finds no evidence in support of Hypothesis 3.4. The data suggest a *negative*, not positive, interaction effect on tolerance between the high article frame and the most favored group treatment. Figure 5 displays the direction of this effect. This relationship is almost significant at the 10% level—with a roughly .1005 p-value—but is not quite significant enough to fall below a .1 critical value. The study may have been too underpowered to detect the effect.

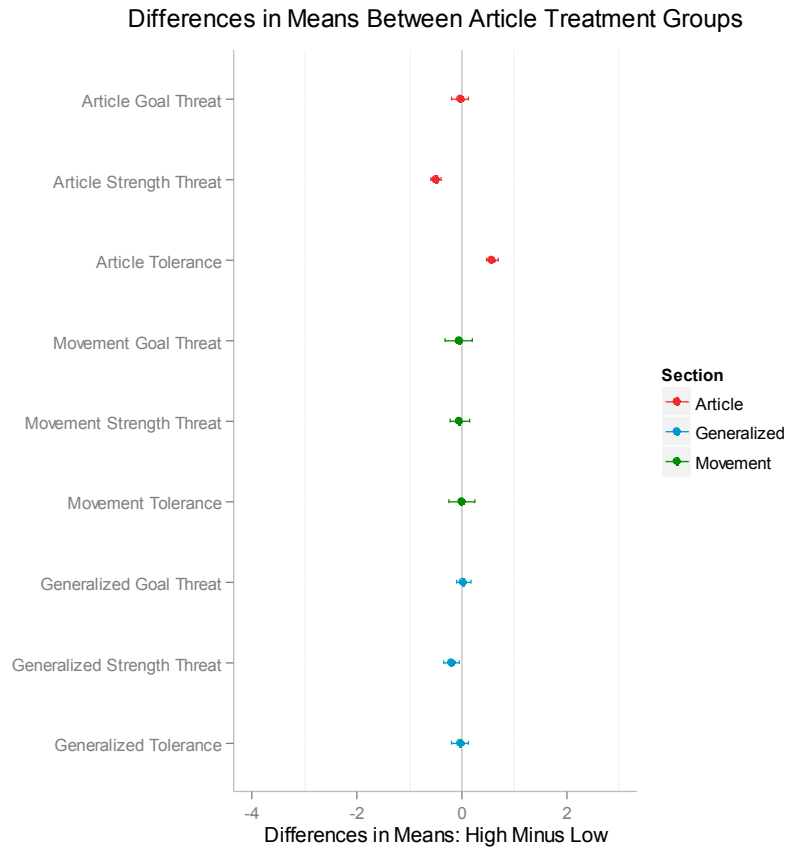


Figure 6: Differences in means between article treatment effect groups for all measures. Differences calculated as mean of high-intensity article treatment group minus mean of low-intensity article treatment group. Whiskers display 95% confidence intervals. Note significance of article treatment effects for the first three points displaying attitudes toward the protest described in the treatment article.

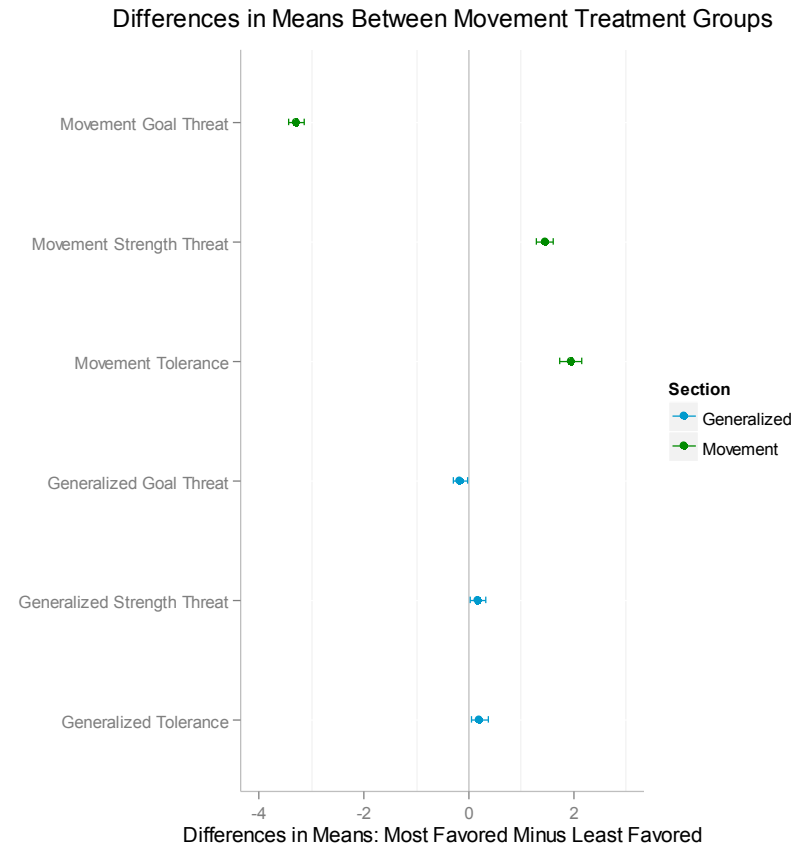


Figure 7: Differences in means between movement treatment effect groups for attitudes toward hypothetical protest, attitudes toward protest generally. Differences calculated as mean of most-favored group treatment group minus mean of least-favored group treatment group. Whiskers display 95% confidence intervals. Note large treatment effects on attitudes toward hypothetical protest, small carryover effects on attitudes toward protest generally.

Discussion

This study investigated a proposed micro-level mechanism through which exposure to the protest paradigm might increase, not decrease, tolerance toward protest. Respondents exposed to an article characterized by the protest paradigm—that is, an article treating protest as non-serious and ineffectual—might feel less threatened by the ability of protesters to enact controversial goals, even if their perception of those goals themselves did not change. This mechanism might link data suggesting an increase in tolerance toward protest over the past half century with the data suggesting an *increase* in tolerance toward protest in the last three decades. Increasing prevalence of the protest paradigm might have lowered the perceived threat presented by protests; this, in turn, might have increased tolerance toward protest.

The Mechanical Turk experiment provides mixed results. The first portion of the experiment, dealing with respondent attitudes toward the Occupy Wall Street protest described in the article, aligns closely with the hypothesized mechanism. The results of the second portion of the experiment, which asks respondents to imagine a protest by either a favored or disfavored group, does *not* align with the hypothesized mechanism; indeed, results support an alternate mechanism, tying shifts in protest tolerance with changes in the types of political or social *groups* using protest. Results from the third group of questions—concerning protest generally—also support these group-based changes, as respondents who imagine a protest by their least favored group show less tolerance toward protest when later asked about protest *generally*. The implications of these tests are discussed below.

Treatment Effects on Attitudes Toward Occupy Wall Street Protest

Results from the first group of questions support the hypothesized model. The support for the model—at least in this section—is robust both because of the clear impact of the treatments on tolerance as well as the differing levels of impact of the treatment on each of the two threat categories. The treatment did not impact goal threat: highlighting less-serious aspects of the protest did not affect how threatened respondents felt by the goals of the protesters. Respondents may have also already been familiar with the goals of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The treatment did, however, clearly affect strength threat; multiple regression analysis shows that treating respondents with a low-intensity frame article instead of a high-intensity frame article raised their strength threat responses by about half a point. Muting the protest paradigm by removing references to a “party-like feel” to the protest, focusing less on protesters’ costumes (such as “cardboard birthday cake[s]”), and describing the protest’s reception by bystanders all likely made the protest seem more effective to the survey respondents. These adjustments also did not seem to impact respondents’ perceptions of the goals of the protesters themselves. These results suggest articles employing the protest paradigm make protests seem less effective—and indeed, less politically relevant—to media consumers.

Respondents receiving a high frame also had *more* tolerant responses than those receiving a low frame. This result, while seemingly counterintuitive, supports the model hypothesized earlier in the study, especially when interpreted in conjunction with goal and strength threat responses. Respondents seemed more likely to tolerate a less “effective” protest, even if their perceptions of the goals of the protest itself did not change. These results flip many of the assumptions surrounding the protest paradigm on their heads; a more “negative” portrayal of a

protest may actually *increase* public tolerance toward the protest if it undermines the perceived effectiveness or seriousness of the protest. This result, of course, does not suggest that the protest paradigm has made political protest a *better* political tool; indeed, it suggests the opposite. It suggests that less-serious protests are more likely to be tolerated, if not directly supported, as they are seen as less of a threat to the status quo.

Treatment Effects on Attitudes Toward Hypothetical Protest

Results from the second and third sections of the experiment conflict with the first section and necessitate future research. Unlike the results gathered from the article-specific questions, the results gathered from the hypothetical and general question groups offer little support for the hypothesized mechanism. Indeed, treatment effects disappeared during the hypothetical portion of the experiment. Neither favorability group was impacted by the treatments. Large differences, however, exist *between* favorability groups. That is, respondents react less tolerantly toward hypothetical protests by groups they strongly dislike than groups they like, regardless of which article treatment they receive.

Work by Marcus et al. (1995), as well as related literature by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1993), may help explain the lack of treatment effects in the hypothetical section of the survey experiment. This study uses a measure of goal and strength threat similar to that developed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, though this work does not solely focus on tolerance toward protest—rather, it investigates mass tolerance toward a wide range of speech.

While experiments by Sullivan et al. and Marcus et al. do find correlations between threat and tolerance, they only find connections between tolerance and *goal* threat (1993, 188; 1995,

102). Marcus et al. state that goal threat—that is, how threatening the respondent finds the goals of the group themselves—weighs much more heavily in evaluations of general tolerance than does the strength or effectiveness of the group. Indeed, though Marcus et al. find clear links between goal threat and tolerance, they find nearly *no* link between strength threat and tolerance, leading them to conclude that strength threat is irrelevant to tolerance completely.

The hypothetical section of this experiment found a similar phenomenon. Respondents clearly displayed much more tolerance toward a hypothetical protest by a group they liked than a hypothetical protest by a group they did not like. Indeed, differences between goal threat posed by most and least favored groups are extreme: around a 3.28-point difference in evaluations of goal threat between most and least favored groups existed within both treatment groups. These differences carried over into the tolerance portion of the section, with roughly a 2 point difference in the mean tolerance measure between most and least favored group protest tolerance within each treatment group. The treatment groups themselves did not have any significant effect on tolerance. This result, coupled with the previous analyses by Marcus et al. (1995) and Sullivan et al. (1993) confirms the importance of goal threat over strength threat with regard to tolerance.

The article and hypothetical sections of the experiment, therefore, pose problems when interpreted together due to their conflicting results. The salience of each article may have simply faded from respondents' minds the further they continued into the survey, and exposure to controversial groups may have especially impacted participants' responses. Respondents' evaluations of their attitudes may have also changed after exposure to the hypothetical. That is, respondents' feelings regarding a protest by their most or least favored group may have been much more extreme than their feelings connected with protest efficacy as depicted in the article.

This disparity may have muted any framing effects remaining from the treatment. Respondents may have also evaluated each set of questions fundamentally differently. When dealing with specifics (i.e. a real protest about which they read) respondents may have taken into account more information and framing cues from the articles. When forced to rely on their own preconceptions about protest—whether through imagining a hypothetical or by accessing some general attitude toward protest—they might discount any information or impressions received from the article, as their feelings about the specific news story and their generalized attitudes toward protest may have occupied different mental “spaces” and thus have been accessed separately at different times over the course of the survey.

Treatment Effects on Generalized Attitudes Toward Protest

The third section of the experiment, asking respondents about their opinions toward protest generally, provides perhaps the most striking results. The article treatment had no carryover effect on responses on general questions. Movement treatment, however, did affect respondents’ general attitudes toward political protest. Respondents presented with a hypothetical concerning their least favored political movement earlier in the study were later less tolerant toward protest generally—even though no reference to any group was made in these general questions.

These results also indicate that perceptions of protest may be tied to the *types* of groups seen as typically using political protest as a tactic. (Boyle et al. 2005). As the types of groups typically associated with protest become less threatening (or, possibly, as threatening groups abandon protest as a tactic), tolerance toward protest may increase. The findings of Marcus et al.

(1995) and Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1993) discussed in the previous section partially explain this potential effect. The goals of protest groups—and the threat associated with those goals—factor much more strongly into tolerance than does the effectiveness of the groups themselves. This previous work cannot explain on its own, however, why negative or positive associations with a hypothetical protest carried out by a specific protest group might translate into negative associations with protest in general. Some other mechanism must be at play that spurs subjects to generalize and associate the specific with the general.

Adding Kahneman and Tversky's *availability heuristic* (1973) to the analysis helps explain the impact of the movement treatment on answers in the following section. Subjects employing the availability heuristic judge a phenomenon based on immediately cognitively accessible examples of the phenomenon. Participants in this experiment, therefore, might have made judgments about political protest based on the most readily accessible example of protest in their mind: the example the study had prompted them to imagine. Tied to this example were either extreme positive or negative attitudes (the same attitudes that caused the wide divergence between favorability groups in the hypothetical section). These attitudes then slipped into subjects' generalized responses as they accessed the most cognitively available example of protest.

These results might also be more closely related to the setup of the experiment than with any externally valid effects. General questions directly followed hypothetical questions in the survey design. The hypothetical portion of the test, therefore, might have been more prominent in the minds of respondents. The intensity of respondents' attitudes toward either their most or least favored groups might also have overridden any lingering effects of the article treatment. Any potential effect of the article might have been lost by the time the respondent reached the

last section of the survey. More investigation of the carryover effects identified by this experiment is needed; further research should distinguish quirks of the experimental design from actual shifts in tolerance due to goal threat and the availability heuristic.

Conclusion

This study investigates the links between media framing and tolerance toward protest. It tests a proposed connection between tolerance and media frames using a survey experiment. The results of the first section of the experiment, measuring attitudes toward the specific protest mentioned in the treatment article, conflict with the results from the next two sections. Subjects treated with an article in which the protest paradigm was apparent thought the protest was weaker; they also gave more tolerant responses, on average, than respondents in the other treatment group. After adding the second treatment, however, article treatment effects disappeared. These results indicate that subjects' tolerance toward protest depend on the *type* of protest they considered—that is, whether a protest is conducted by a group they like or a group they dislike. Even when questions made no reference to any specific protest, this movement treatment impacted subjects' responses.

Further research should be conducted investigating the conflicting results from the differing sections of the experiment. The protest paradigm may indeed only affect attitudes toward specific protests, and leave general attitudes toward protest unaffected. Opinions toward protest as a whole might stem more from the *types* of groups seen protesting, as opposed to the specific tactics of these groups—or the ways in which those tactics appear in the news media. Some research, such as a longitudinal study of print news by Boyle et al. (2005), suggests that the types of groups which protest have become less radical, while the ways in which the media

represent protest have remained the same. This trend aligns more closely with the results of the second half of the experiment, and suggests that the rise in tolerance toward protest depends more on a change in the types of groups which protest as opposed to the ways in which the media represent them. Further research should explore in more depth the potential interaction effects between protest group type and protest paradigm framing.

Research should also investigate the role of media *other* than print media in forming attitudes toward protests (and political movements more generally). This study focused on print media—other forms of media, like social and online media, have increased in popularity over the past decade. Survey data from the Pew Research Center indicate that around 48 percent of internet users now receive news from Facebook weekly, and 75 percent of internet users believe the internet keeps them better informed about national and international news (Mitchell et al. 2014; Purcell & Rainie 2014). While print news media may use the protest and public nuisance paradigms to frame protest, new forms of media may employ these frames less often. These media sources may also convey information to consumers differently than conventional news sources—both in presentation and in content—and so may impact opinion differently than do more traditional news outlets. Investigating how media *type* impacts tolerance may help explain variation in tolerance levels left unexplained by this study.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary Statistics

Table A1.1: Respondent Choices of Most and Least Favored Movements

Group Type	Most Favored		Least Favored	
	<i>N</i>	Percentage	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Christian fundamentalists	88	9.31	166	17.57
Pro-life activists	96	10.16	30	3.17
Far-left activists	75	7.94	36	3.81
White supremacists	2	0.21	346	36.61
Pro-choice activists	178	18.84	19	2.01
Muslim fundamentalists	3	0.32	185	19.58
Feminists	169	17.88	33	3.49
Atheists	258	27.30	46	4.87
Far-right activists	19	2.01	66	6.98
Anti-immigrant activists	52	5.50	18	1.90
No response	5	0.53	0	0

Table A1.1: Most and least favored political groups selection for Mechanical Turk sample. Second and fourth columns display absolute numbers in each category; third and fifth columns display percentages. Respondents favored atheists, feminists, and pro-choice activists, and disliked white supremacists, Muslim fundamentalists, and Christian fundamentalists.

Table A1.2: Summary Statistics for Demographic Variables (Within-Question Percentages)

	Treatment Group				Total
	High Article, Most Favored Group	High Article, Least Favored Group	Low Article, Most Favored Group	Low Article, Least Favored Group	
Gender					
Female	44.9	41.3	46.3	47.6	45.0
Income Bracket					
Less than \$20,000	18.7	21.5	21.7	20.2	20.5
\$20,001 to \$40,000	29.6	31.3	23.7	30.5	29.0
\$40,001 to \$65,000	26.8	24.0	21.7	25.8	24.7
\$65,001 to \$105,000	17.1	16.7	26.1	19.3	19.5
\$105,001 and above	7.8	6.5	6.8	4.3	6.4
Age Bracket					
18 to 29 years old	35.0	31.6	38.6	34.6	34.8
30 to 41 years old	35.0	41.7	38.2	41.0	38.9
42 to 53 years old	18.7	13.8	14.0	13.2	15.0
54 to 65 years old	10.5	11.7	8.2	9.8	10.2
66 years old or older	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.1
Conservatism Score					
Mean on 7-Point Scale (7 = Extremely Conservative)	3.327	3.335	3.317	3.145	3.281

Table A1.2: Summary statistics for Mechanical Turk sample. Columns indicate treatment subgroup. Statistics displayed as percentages except for conservatism score, which is displayed as a mean.

Appendix 2: Article Section Regressions

Table A2.1: Multiple Regression of Article Treatment Effect on Goal Threat with Treatment as Ordinal Variable (High = 0, Low = 1)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Intercept	3.2607	***	2.0786	***
	(0.0535)		(0.1593)	
Low Treatment	0.0284		0.0684	
	(0.0784)		(0.0699)	
Female			-0.0158	
			(0.0712)	
Conservative Score			0.3403	***
			(0.0212)	
Income Bracket			0.0833	***
			(0.0293)	
Age Bracket			-0.0705	**
			(0.0355)	
N	944		930	
R ²	0.000139		0.2302	

P<.01 = ***, P< .05 = **, P<.1 = *

Table A2.2: Multiple Regression of Article Treatment Effect on Strength Threat with Treatment as Ordinal Variable (High = 0, Low = 1)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Intercept	3.9272	***	4.3999	***
	(0.037)		(0.1223)	
Low Treatment	0.4837	***	0.4761	***
	(0.0542)		(0.0537)	
Female			-0.0569	
			(0.0547)	
Conservative Score			-0.098	***
			(0.0163)	
Income Bracket			-0.0167	
			(0.0224)	
Age Bracket			-0.0111	
			(0.0272)	
N	942		928	
R ²	0.07806		0.1164	

P<.01 = ***, P< .05 = **, P<.1 = *

Table A2.3: Multiple Regression of Article Treatment Effect on Tolerance Score with Treatment as Ordinal Variable (High = 0, Low = 1)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Intercept	4.706	***	5.172	***
	(0.045)		(0.1469)	
Low Treatment	-0.5836	***	-0.5943	***
	(0.0657)		(0.0645)	
Female			-0.0169	
			(0.0657)	
Conservative Score			-0.1484	***
			(0.0195)	
Income Bracket			-0.007	
			(0.027)	
Age Bracket			0.0335	
			(0.033)	
N	941		927	
R ²	0.0774		0.1321	

P<.01 = ***, P< .05 = **, P<.1 = *

Appendix 3: Survey Text

Mechanical Turk Full Survey Questionnaire

Question	Responses (Single Selection)
Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Democrat 2. Republican 3. Independent 4. Other party
<i>If Democrat:</i> Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong
<i>If Republican:</i> Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong 2. Not very strong
<i>If Neither Democrat nor Republican:</i> Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closer to Republican 2. Neither 3. Closer to Democrat
Are you registered to vote?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No
How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Always 2. Most of the time 3. About half the time 4. Some of the time 5. Never

Question	Responses (Multiple Selection)
Please indicate whether you did any of the following activities during the 2012 elections for any candidate or party: Check all that apply.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talked to any people to try to get them to vote for or against one of the parties or candidates 2. Went to any political meetings, rallies, or speeches in support of a particular candidate 3. Wore a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or yard 4. Did any other work for one of the parties or candidates 5. Contributed money to an individual candidate running for office 6. Contributed money to a political party 7. Contributed money to any other group that supported or opposed candidates
Please indicate whether you have done any of the following activities during the past 4 years: Check all that apply	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration 2. Attended a meeting of a town or city government or school board 3. Signed a petition on the Internet about a political or social issue 4. Given money to a religious organization 5. Given money to any other organization concerned with a political or social issue 6. Called a radio or TV show about a political issue 7. Written a letter to a newspaper or magazine about a political issue 8. Contacted or tried to contact a member of the U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representatives

Question	Most/Least Favored Groups Selection
<p>This next question will ask you to choose your MOST and LEAST favored groups out of a list of ten groups. Please only select one most favored group and one least favored group.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christian fundamentalists 2. Pro-life activists 3. Far-left activists 4. White supremacists 5. Pro-choice activists 6. Muslim fundamentalists 7. Feminists 8. Atheists 9. Far-right activists 10. Anti-immigrant activists

Question (Attention Check)	Responses
<p>When talking about the news media, we find that our survey subjects receive their news from a number of different sources. Please only select the fourth option. Selecting any other option will disqualify you from continuing with the survey.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newspapers 2. Radio 3. Cable News (CNN, Fox, MSNBC) 4. <i>News Blogs and Internet News</i> 5. Other television news (ABC, NBC, etc.) 6. Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

Question	Responses (Single Selection)
<p>In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which of the following statements best describes you in 2012?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I did not vote 2. I thought about voting in 2012, but didn't 3. I usually vote, but didn't this time 4. I am sure I voted 5. I was not old enough to vote in 2012, but am now eligible to vote 6. I was not eligible to vote in 2012, and am still not eligible to vote
<p>What is your race?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. White 2. Black or African American 3. American Indian or Alaskan Native 4. Asian 5. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 6. Hispanic or Latino 7. Other
<p>What is your gender?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female 3. Other
<p>What is your age range?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 18 - 29 years old 2. 30 - 41 years old 3. 42 - 53 years old 4. 54 - 65 years old 5. 66 years old or older
<p>We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extremely liberal 2. Liberal 3. Slightly liberal 4. Moderate; middle of the road 5. Slightly conservative 6. Conservative 7. Extremely conservative 8. Haven't thought much
<p>This question is about your family's total income in 2013, before taxes. This figure should include income from all sources, including salaries, wages, pensions,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than \$20,000 2. \$20,001 - \$40,000 3. \$40,001 - \$65,000

Social Security, dividends, interest and all other income. What was the total income of your family in 2013?	4. \$65,001 - \$105,000 5. \$105,001 and above
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[Participants are exposed to either the High or Low frame article. They are reminded that payment is not contingent upon answers to attitudinal questions, but failure to correctly answer factual questions (marked with an asterisk) will terminate the survey and forfeit payment. The text of each article can be read in Appendix A of this document]

Question (Attention Check)	Responses
Which of these landmarks was mentioned in the article?	1. City Hall 2. Chamber of Commerce 3. <i>New York Stock Exchange</i>

Question Description	Statements	Responses (1 to 7 Likert Scale)
These next statements will refer to the specific protest about which you read. Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	I found the protest bothersome.	1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	I think the protest could be effective.	
	I found the protest unpatriotic.	
These next statements will refer to the specific protest about which you read. Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	The protestors are peaceful.	1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	The protestors are dangerous.	
	The protestors are trustworthy.	
	The protestors are unpredictable.	
	The protestors are honest.	
Say members of the group about which you have just read plan to hold a similar protest in your town or city. Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	I would support allowing this group to hold a protest.	1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	I would support an ordinance restricting such protests.	
	I would defend the expressive rights of these protesters to a friend.	
	I would support the police in shutting down such a protest.	

	A representative from this protest group should be allowed to address a crowd.	
Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	This is a strong protest movement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	This is an unimportant protest movement.	
	This protest movement seems easy to ignore.	
	This protest movement seems likely to become popular.	
	This protest movement seems likely to accomplish its goals.	
These next few questions will not refer to the group about which you read. They will instead refer to members of a different group , [The name of either the participant's most or least favored group will appear here]. Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	[Group type] are peaceful.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	[Group type] are dangerous.	
	[Group type] are trustworthy.	
	[Group type] are unpredictable.	
	[Group type] are honest.	
Say that members of [the hypothetical organization name of the participant's most or least favored group appears here – a list of these names can be seen in Appendix 4 of this document], a [most/least favored group] group, planned to hold a demonstration similar to the one about which you read. Their behavior and tactics would be very similar to those of the protest group described in the article that you read. Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	This would be a strong protest movement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	This would be an unimportant protest movement.	
	[Group name] would be easy to ignore.	
	This protest movement would be likely to become popular.	
	[Group name] would be likely to accomplish its goals.	

Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	I would support allowing [group name] to hold a protest.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	I would support an ordinance restricting a protest by [group name].	
	I would defend the expressive rights of [group name] protesters to a friend.	
	I would support the police in shutting down such a protest by [group name].	
	A representative from [group name] should be allowed to address a crowd.	
These next questions will ask you about protest <i>generally</i> . Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following attitudes.	Protesters are peaceful.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	Protesters are dangerous.	
	Protesters are trustworthy.	
	Protesters are unpredictable.	
	Protesters are honest.	
Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	Protest movements are strong.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	Protest movements are unimportant.	
	Protest movements are easy to ignore.	
	Protest movements are likely to become popular.	
	Protest movements are likely to accomplish their goals.	
Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the following statements.	I support allowing groups to hold protests.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Neither Agree Nor Disagree 5. Slightly Agree 6. Moderately Agree 7. Strongly Agree
	I would support an ordinance restricting protest.	
	I would defend the expressive rights of protesters to a friend.	
	I support the police in shutting down	

	protests.	
	Representatives from protests should be allowed to address crowds.	

Question Description	Statements	Responses (1 to 7 Likert Scale)
Please select the option that best reflects your attitude toward the efficacy of the following political strategies.	Professional lobbying	1. Highly Ineffective
	Petitions	2. Moderately Ineffective
	Voting in a state or local election	3. Slightly Ineffective
	Contributing to a political campaign	4. Neither Effective Nor Ineffective
	Public protest	5. Slightly Effective
	Voting in a national election	6. Moderately Effective
		7. Highly Effective

End survey

Appendix 4: Article and Movement Treatments

Appendix 4a: Article Treatments

High-Intensity Frame Article

Anniversary brings smaller Occupy party

Hundreds of Occupy Wall Street protesters took to the streets in Lower Manhattan on Monday to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the populist social movement that has struggled for relevance in recent months.

A New York police spokesman said 181 protesters were arrested as they marched and chanted throughout the city's financial district and tried - and failed - to form a human blockade around the New York Stock Exchange. Most were charged with disorderly conduct.

Legba Carrefour, a D.C. activist in New York for the events, called the morning activity "underwhelming," citing the four mini-marches through the streets.

A party-like feel ruled the day, dubbed "S17 Resistance," as several hundred descended upon the concrete canyons of the financial epicenter where they had set up camp in New York's Zuccotti Park and demanded a reckoning for Wall Street's role in the country's financial crisis. The camp was cleared a month later. A smaller-than-expected group of protesters chanted their now famous rallying cry "We are the 99 Percent," sang "Happy Birthday," and scampered from intersection to intersection throughout the financial district. One woman even came dressed up as a cardboard birthday cake.

The New York City Police Department had a huge presence in the area, setting up checkpoints for financial workers that the Occupiers dressed up in suits tried to sneak through.

Adam Herschenfeld, 23, who was on his way to his first day of work at investment advisory firm Buckman, Buckman & Reid, shared his impression of the protests.

"This is my first day at work and the cops won't let me down on Wall Street without a pass. I had to call my boss to come get me," he said. "After seeing the costumes and the singing and dancing—if I wasn't trying to get to my job, I would be very entertained."

Low-Intensity Frame Article

Anniversary brings smaller Occupy protest

Hundreds of Occupy Wall Street protesters took to the streets in Lower Manhattan on Monday to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the populist social movement that changed the country's political discourse.

A New York police spokesman said 181 protesters were arrested as they marched and chanted throughout the city's financial district and tried to form a human blockade around the New York Stock Exchange. Most were charged with disorderly conduct.

Legba Carrefour, a D.C. activist in New York for the events, said that the protest caught fire later, with as many as four mini-marches through the streets.

Several hundred descended upon the concrete canyons of the financial epicenter where they had created such a firestorm last year by setting up camp in New York's Zuccotti Park and demanding a reckoning for Wall Street's role in the country's financial crisis. The camp was cleared a month later but not before the movement had spread to dozens of cities across the country, including the District. A group of protesters chanted their now famous rallying cry "We are the 99 Percent" and marched from intersection to intersection throughout the financial district.

The New York City Police Department had a presence in the area, setting up checkpoints for financial workers and protesters.

Ed Needham, a member of Occupy Wall Street's media relations and communications team, rejected the idea that Monday would be more of a feel-good reunion than a reigniting of passion that has died in recent months.

"I don't think there's much nostalgia at all," Needham said. "It's really revisiting the issues of debt and financial disparity that have propelled the social movement this far."

Adam Herschenfeld, 23, who was on his way to his first day of work at investment advisory firm Buckman, Buckman & Reid, had a similar impression of the protests.

"I remember the Occupy protests from last year, and I'm not surprised to see them back in action," he said. "If protests like these continue, I could see them really changing things in Washington."

Original Article

Anniversary brings smaller Occupy party

Hundreds of Occupy Wall Street protesters took to the streets in Lower Manhattan on Monday to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the populist social movement that changed the country's political discourse but has struggled for relevance in recent months.

A New York police spokesman said 181 protesters were arrested as they marched and chanted throughout the city's financial district and tried - and failed - to form a human blockade around the New York Stock Exchange. Most were charged with disorderly conduct.

Legba Carrefour, a D.C. activist in New York for the events, called the morning activity "underwhelming" but said that the protest caught fire later, with as many as four mini-marches through the streets.

A party-like feel ruled the day, dubbed "S17 Resistance," as several hundred descended upon the concrete canyons of the financial epicenter where they had created such a firestorm last year by setting up camp in New York's Zuccotti Park and demanding a reckoning for Wall Street's role in the country's financial crisis. The camp was cleared a month later but not before the movement had spread to dozens of cities across the country, including the District. A smaller-than-expected group of protesters chanted their now famous rallying cry "We are the 99 Percent," sang "Happy Birthday," and scampered from intersection to intersection throughout the financial district. One woman even came dressed up as a cardboard birthday cake.

The New York City Police Department had a huge presence in the area, setting up checkpoints for financial workers that the Occupiers dressed up in suits tried to sneak through.

Ed Needham, a member of Occupy Wall Street's media relations and communications team, rejected the idea that Monday would be more of a feel-good reunion than a reigniting of passion that has died in recent months, as camps were shuttered, ranks dwindled and the cause lost popular mainstream support.

"I don't think there's much nostalgia at all," Needham said. "It's really revisiting the issues of debt and financial disparity that have propelled the social movement this far."

Appendix 4b: Movement Treatments

Note: Each most/least favored group has a corresponding group name. These names are listed below.

Group Type	Group Name
Christian fundamentalists	Christian Nation
Pro-life activists	Right to Life
Far-left activists	People's Liberation
White supremacists	White Pride
Pro-choice activists	Right to Choose
Muslim fundamentalists	Hizb al Islam
Feminists	Women United
Atheists	Atheists United
Far-right activists	Constitutional Heritage Party
Anti-immigrant activists	Americans First

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