

**ARTICLE**

# From bias to coverage: What explains how news organizations treat social movements

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**Abstract**

Why do newspapers cover social movement actors, and why is this coverage sometimes favorable? Early scholarship saw the news media mainly as a source of data on collective action, and sought to ascertain its biases, but scholarship has increasingly focused directly on why movements gain coverage, especially coverage that can advance their goals. To understand why and how newspapers cover movement actors, we start with the insight that movements rely on the news media for many reasons, but their coverage is largely in the control of news institutions. In this review, we focus on perspectives that specify 3-way interactions between the characteristics of newspapers, social movement actors, and the social and political contexts, but we begin with how news media institutions are organized. We conclude with suggestions for future research that take advantage of the digital revolution of the last generation.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Social movement organizations and actors seek to gain mainstream mass news media coverage for many reasons: to alert the mass public to their causes (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002), to broadcast their understandings of issues and preferred means of redress (Ferree et al., 2002; Gamson, 2004; Ryan, 1991), to lend themselves legitimacy (Koopmans, 2004), to win support (Andrews & Biggs, 2006; Banerjee, 2013; Berry, 1999; Vliegenthart, Oegema, & Klandermans, 2005), and to influence the political agenda (Soule & King, 2006; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012). Movement actors also seek to promote positive images of groups they seek to represent (Bernstein, 2002) and gain the sympathy of mass audiences, governmental actors, and others with the ability to address their issues (Gamson, 2004; Lipsky, 1968). And so whether the coverage is favorable to movements also matters (Amenta, Gardner, Tierney, Yerena, & Elliott, 2012b; Ferree et al., 2002; Gitlin, 1980; Iyengar, 1991; McCarthy, McPhail, & Smith, 1996; Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, & Boguslaw, 2001).

Since the work of Charles Tilly (e.g., 1978), scholars have used newspaper coverage to provide data on the amounts and types of collective action engaged in by movements. The Dynamics of Collective Action (DoCA) project extensively and systematically coded the *New York Times* to locate nearly 24,000 protest events from 1960 to 1995

(Soule et al., n.d.), with analogues in some European countries (see Biggs, 2016). Work based on the DoCA project provides much of what we know about U.S. protest and how it has been portrayed in the U.S. newspaper of record. Related scholarship has focused on whether newspaper accounts provided valid data on the events and claims of movements or whether these reports suffered from selection or description “biases.” (Snyder & Kelly, 1977; see reviews in Earl, Martin, McCarthy, & Soule, 2004 and Ortiz, Myers, Walls, & Diaz, 2005). John McCarthy and colleagues (e.g., McCarthy et al., 1996; Smith et al., 2001) and Pamela Oliver and colleagues (e.g., Oliver & Maney, 2000; Oliver & Myers, 1999) have importantly addressed how newspapers select collective action events for coverage.

Following William Gamson and colleagues (e.g., Gamson, 1990; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Ferree et al., 2002; Gamson, 2004), a second stream of research directly addresses causal questions about the amount and quality of newspaper coverage of movements and their causes. After all, news organizations' missions are not to provide data for scholars of movements but to provide what they understand as “news.” Regardless of the quality of the data newspapers provide, coverage matters to movement actors, their causes, and constituents. Seeking to advance this line of research, the Political Organizations in the News (PONs) project (Amenta, Caren, & Stobaugh, 2012a) captures the population of articles on more than 1,500 national movement organizations in four national newspapers across the century, including about one million articles, to address questions about the determinants of the newspaper coverage of movements. This project has resulted in findings regarding why movements receive extensive coverage when they do, why some organizations within movements receive extensive coverage rather than others, and why individual organizations receive favorable coverage when they do.

Although the mainstream mass news coverage of movements is a potential cultural consequence of them (Earl, 2004) and a collective benefit (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010), news coverage is also external to movements and their control over it is at best indirect. The relationship between movement actors has been called “asymmetric” (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993) and “suppliant” (Amenta, Caren, & Tierney, 2015; see also Sobieraj, 2011). Key decisions about who, what, when, and how to report about movements are made by journalists in news organizations (Amenta et al., 2015; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Schudson, 2011), and movement actors are among many potential causal influences on coverage. Research finds that movement actors receive both low newspaper attention and favorable coverage relative to institutional political actors, largely because of the features of the news media as an institution (Boydston, 2013; Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 2006) and the social organization of the news (Schudson, 2002, 2011)—professional news institutions' form of organization, practices, and thinking regarding what counts as news (Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Gamson, 1990; Ryan, 1991; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Schudson, 2011). However, movement actors sometimes do gain significant coverage, much of it favorable, substantive, or valuable in some other way, and we review the literature addressing the conditions under which that occurs.

The most useful accounts of movement news coverage focus on what Oliver and Maney (2000) call “triadic” interactions: those between news organizations, practices, and actors, movement actors, and the political and social contexts in which they engage (Amenta et al., 2012a; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Elliott, Amenta, & Caren, 2016; Ferree et al., 2002; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Rohlinger, 2007). But because news institutions and journalists make all calls on movement coverage, we start with how these institutions are organized and operate.

## 2 | NEWS RULES AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE NEWS

At the center of the mission and business model of the news media is to publish “news” (Schudson, 2011). They seek paying audiences by providing high quality, fresh, and objective daily news, and by gaining readers, they also generate income, through subscriptions and advertising revenue, which is based on subscriptions and viewers of their Web pages. News organizations are staffed with journalists trained in the practices and ethics of reporting and editing, and who employ standard operating procedures regarding what constitutes news and how it should be covered (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1980). They see news as being based on qualities including timeliness, the impact of events, the

prominence of the people involved, and the proximity to readers, with local news angles being important in national stories (e.g., *Boydston, 2013; Mencher, 2008*). News also comprises events that are unusual, highly conflictual, or with currency. Decisions regarding the placement and length of an article will refer to these guidelines, and there is substantial subjective agreement among professional journalists on what constitutes news and the relative salience of different news items (*Clayman & Reisner, 1998; Sigal, 1973*).

Moreover, professionalized newsrooms are organized in specific ways, with journalists assigned to cover people and issues expected to be recurrently newsworthy in separate orienting news “desks,” with subject, issue, or territorial concentrations known as “beats.” Professional news organizations seek profits but enforce strict separations between the newsroom and both the editorial page and the advertising that support the business (*Kahn & Kenney, 2002; McQuail, 1992; Sigal, 1973*).

### **3 | WHY DO NEWS MEDIA PRIVILEGE INSTITUTIONAL POLITICAL ACTORS OVER MOVEMENT ACTORS?**

Journalists privilege institutional political actors over movement ones simply because of news rules and the way that news gathering is socially organized. Newsrooms are organized substantially around politics, given that political decisions have high impact and involve prominent people to whom reporters have great access (*Bennett, 2007; Fishman, 1980; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1980*). Beats are organized such that most coverage of politics is initiated by those elected to the highest offices, those seeking election, and those appointed to positions of administrative or judicial authority. Some issues receive recurrent attention: new laws being proposed, debated, enacted, or rejected; court cases and decisions; candidates seeking election to key offices. Often political stories involve conflict and disputes, such as those between the major political parties in a two-party system like the U.S. one. These stories are expected to include the views of the main opposing sides, somewhat evenly balanced (*Hallin, 1984*). Although some argue that movements are marginalized in news because they threaten business interests, and newspapers are businesses (*Herman & Chomsky, 1988*), mainly movement actors receive less attention because they are less influential (*Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993*) and unelected, and thus less legitimate as political actors (*Amenta et al., 2015*).

Crime and scandal are also central to news coverage, given their timeliness, impact on people, and that they sometimes involve important people (*Hetherington, 1985; Schudson, 2002*). Movement actors and activities are far more likely than institutional political ones to be featured in crime-related reporting (*Bennett, 2007; Gitlin, 1980; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Sobieraj, 2011*), which focuses on the threats to public order posed by protest, logistical considerations, or issues surrounding the right to protest, but avoids the substantive issues of protest (*Bennett, 2007; Iyengar, 1991; Kaniss, 1997; Kutz-Flamenbaum, Staggborg, & Duncan, 2012*).

Most movement actors seek such coverage and will adapt to news routines in order to gain it (*Rucht, 2004; Sobieraj, 2011*). But some movement actors avoid mainstream news attention or see an advantage in attacking professional news media (*Rohlinger, 2014; Rucht, 2004*). All the same, their actions will still be subject to the social organization of the news and news rules.

### **4 | WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO EXPLAIN ABOUT THE NEWS COVERAGE OF MOVEMENTS?**

Scholars initially sought to ascertain whether collective action reported in newspapers was subjected to “selection biases.” By comparing official records and coverage, they found that newspapers are more likely to report collective action that is large, violent, geographically proximate to the newspaper, or draws the participation of larger groups (*McCarthy et al., 1996; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Myers & Caniglia, 2004; Strawn, 2008; reviews in Earl et al., 2004; Ortiz et al., 2005*). As a result, scholars have used newspaper data on protest more as a potential explanation for political and other outcomes—given that only covered events get on the radar of political officials—than as valid measures

of collective action events (e.g., McAdam & Su, 2002; Soule & King, 2006; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012). However, these data can be adjusted in various ways (Earl et al., 2004), and newspapers remain valuable in assessing overall collective action; the largest events are few in number but involve the vast majority of participants and are typically well reported (Biggs, 2016). Newspaper data on collective action is valuable for research questions ranging from the policing of protest (e.g., Earl, Soule, & McCarthy, 2003) to the diffusion of tactics (e.g., Wang & Soule, 2012) and its influence of political agendas (Soule & King, 2006; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012). And the literature seeking to determine the conditions under which collective action is reported provides many key insights into explaining coverage.

But newspapers are not in the business of providing collective action data for researchers, and scholars have turned to focusing on why and how movements get covered during collective action and otherwise. Notably, scholars have been addressing why some movements get covered extensively when they do (Amenta, Caren, Olasky, & Stobaugh, 2009; Amenta et al., 2012b) and why some organizations gain more coverage than others within a movement (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Corbett, 1998; Elliott et al., 2016; Rohlinger, 2014; Rohlinger, Kail, Taylor, & Conn, 2012; Seguin, 2016). The more movements get covered the greater their chances to achieve goals by way of newspapers. Moreover, organizations that dominate the coverage of their movement in effect publicly speak for it, gaining long-term media standing (Ferree et al., 2002). In the United States, high-profile organizations often seen as synonymous with the groups they claim to represent: veterans and the American Legion, gun owners and the National Rifle Association, senior citizens and the AARP. Also, movements and their organizations get most of their coverage in nonprotest situations, and this attention is likely to influence their goals and influence. There were approximately 21,000 articles on protest events in DoCA data set from 1960 through 1995, whereas the article mentions of nonlabor, but national movement organizations in the PONs data set for the same newspaper and time period were 5 times as great, at about 100,000 articles.

Not all coverage is good coverage for movement purposes; therefore, the quality of coverage is also important to conceptualize and explain. Initially, scholars addressed "description bias," or whether the press faithfully reproduced movement claims in their coverage of collective action (Gitlin, 1980; Smith et al., 2001; reviews in Earl et al., 2004 and Ortiz et al., 2005) and found that events including arrests or violence will provide coverage lacking in the discussion of movement issues (Smith et al., 2001). But more detailed research has focused on various aspects of the quality of coverage movement actors receive when they do manage to be covered.

Several dimensions of the quality of coverage have been identified. One is whether the newspapers print a movement actor's demand (Amenta et al., 2012b), claim, (Tilly, 1999), or prescription (Benford & Snow, 2000) in the framing literature. A demand conveys the social movement organizations (SMOs) interpretation of a policy issue (Ferree et al., 2002; Rohlinger, 2007) and may gain support for the SMO and help its cause (Koopmans, 2004; Lipsky, 1968). Also important is whether articles will print the movement actor's diagnostic framing or its definition of the problem (Benford & Snow, 2000; Ferree et al., 2002). Other scholars focus similarly on whether coverage provides a nonindividualistic or "thematic" discussion of issues (Iyengar, 1991), and the coverage seriously addresses the movement actor's issue or issues (Amenta et al., 2016). The coverage may also take a positive or negative tone regarding a movement action in a slanted article (Rohlinger, 2007; Smith et al., 2001). Negative coverage indicates that movements can do worse than fail, just as in politics (Amenta et al., 2010).

## 5 | CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MOVEMENT ACTORS ARE COVERED, AND HOW

Sociological understandings of newspaper organizational practices also suggest ways that movement actors can receive coverage and valuable coverage with substance. Yet, the factors that drive coverage do not necessarily promote substantive or favorable coverage. Also, determinants may work differently at the movement and organization levels. In addition, even though movement actors are considered to be potential causes of coverage, theories of

mobilization may also apply to their coverage: the larger the presence or the greater the activity of a movement player, the more likely it is to be newsworthy. As we indicate above, many scholars focus on triadic interactions between news organizations, movement actors, and political and social contexts (Amenta et al., 2012a; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Elliott et al., 2016; Ferree et al., 2002; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Rohlinger, 2007). We first address newspapers, movement actors, and contexts separately. We then turn to interactive arguments.

## 5.1 | Newspaper and article characteristics

Newspaper organizations vary in important ways that influence the coverage of movement actors. One is the political slant of the newspaper (Davenport, 2010; Kahn & Kenney, 2002; Molotch & Lester, 1975; Rohlinger, 2014). Left-leaning or liberal newspapers—as evidenced through their political endorsements or stances on issues—are more likely to cover progressive social movements that conservative papers (Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, & Giugni, 1995; Oliver & Myers, 1999; Ortiz et al., 2005) and may provide more substantive coverage to progressive movement actors, and conservative papers may do so for conservative movements. Newspapers may be oriented favorably toward some specific movement actors and negatively toward others, and these stances may influence how seriously they cover these movement actors (Amenta et al., 2016). Newspapers with local foci treat movement organizations differently than those with a national focus (Andrews & Caren, 2010), and journalists covering local news may provide more informed coverage than distant sources (Davenport, 2010), possibly facilitating more substantive coverage. However, it has also been argued that movements need to break into national coverage to engage political issues (Amenta et al., 2012b).

Relatedly, scholars have found that some basic characteristics of articles will influence the coverage of movements. A key distinction concerns who or what initiates the coverage—its occasion or “news peg.” Any article initiated by the action of movement organizations makes it more likely to lead to substantive coverage (Amenta et al., 2012b). Space considerations and “news holes” have been shown to influence the publication of collective action (Oliver & Maney, 2000). The length of an article may influence the chances that movements receive substantive discussions (Amenta et al., 2016). Coverage that appears on the front page is likely to be more in-depth than coverage inside the newspaper (Collins & Cooper, 2015).

## 5.2 | Movement organizational characteristics and strategies

Other scholars focus on characteristics of movement actors and typically find that the closer they resemble institutional political actors, the more likely they are to be covered and with substance (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Elliott et al., 2016; Rohlinger et al., 2012). Specifically, organizational resources, including large budgets and membership, a formal organization, a long tenure, a national office, and a media department, often lead to increased coverage or more substantive coverage (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Elliott et al., 2016; Rohlinger, 2002; Rohlinger et al., 2012); these characteristics make effective media contact more likely and reduce legitimacy deficits endemic in movement organizations.

Scholars have found that ideologies, frames, and strategic profiles that resonate with social norms and involve close engagement with institutional politics are more appealing to the public and mass media (Amenta et al., 2012b; Benford & Snow, 2000; Rohlinger, 2002, 2014) and should lead to more coverage and more substance in coverage. More important, espousing extreme goals outside of mainstream societal values or endorsing violent tactics will likely marginalize an organization within public discourse (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Lipsky, 1968). Therefore, movement organizations with moderate ideologies and commitments to the political process and nonviolence will have better chances at substantive coverage (Amenta et al., 2016), though violent action is also associated with coverage (Earl et al., 2004). Moreover, a movement organization's strategic orientation toward mainstream media (Rohlinger, 2014) will also matter, especially if it seeking to avoid coverage. An organization's history of receiving coverage in itself helps it gain future coverage, as there can be positive feedback effects. Some organizations become either go-to sources for journalists (Ferree et al., 2002) or routine subjects of news (Rohlinger, 2014; Seguin, 2016). In most movements, the top five organizations in attention at any moment gain the vast bulk of coverage. However,

extensive coverage does not necessarily mean favorable or substantive coverage, as organizations such as the Black Panthers or Ku Klux Klan received long runs of coverage largely devoid of substance (Amenta et al., 2016).

### 5.3 | Social and political contexts

Newspapers focus on crisis and disasters (Molotch & Lester, 1975), which can influence the coverage of movements, just as they spur social movement activity. Crises can cast uncertainty or doubt on the legitimacy of existing experts, allowing movement actors to challenge previously dominant accounts and provide alternatives (Colby & Cook, 1991; Epstein, 1996; Lawrence, 2000). The AIDS crisis boosted the coverage of protest-oriented movement organizations in the LGBT and AIDS movements (Elliott et al., 2016). The September 11 crisis provided new political and discursive opportunities for anti-Muslim fringe activists (Bail, 2012).

Political contexts also influence the coverage of movement actors. Political opportunity theory highlights political contexts, notably the presence of movement allies that promote mobilization, which in turn might increase movement coverage. Movement allies have been understood mainly through political partisanship (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). From this perspective, it is expected that left-wing governments will make it more likely that left-wing movements will gain greater coverage and more favorable coverage, whereas right-wing regimes would do the same for right-wing movements. Alternative, "political reform" arguments (Amenta et al., 2012a) hold that social movements of all sorts will gain more coverage with either left-wing or right-wing partisan regimes in power. The political reform perspective also expects that when policies beneficial to movement constituencies are enacted and enforced, they will lead to both increased movement activity and coverage for the long run (Amenta et al., 2012a) and provide media standing to the most prominent, policy-focused organizations in the movement (Elliott et al., 2016). Also important is the issue attention cycle (Downs, 1972), notably whether legislation pertaining to the movement is on the political or policy agenda and being discussed (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Oliver & Maney, 2000); movement actors will be covered more and receive more substantive coverage (Amenta et al., 2012b). Finally, movement actors gain greater standing in an institutionally weaker party system (Ferree et al., 2002).

### 5.4 | The coverage of collective action

The action reported in articles combines features of news organizations, articles, movement organizational capacities, and action and can be an important determinant of substance in coverage for movement actors. There are many ways movement actors can be covered across different sorts of action that will be treated differently depending on their connection to news practices and how these actions influence the legitimacy deficits of movement actors. Politically, assertive action seeks to preempt and wrest the prerogatives of institutional political actors, typically using political institutional routes (Amenta et al., 2012b), and is expected to promote substance in coverage. Assertive action includes the introduction and the fight for passage of movement-sponsored legislation and initiatives, electioneering activity, such as running candidates for office or seeking to defeat enemies and support friendly candidates, mass political meetings that challenge the main parties' nominating conventions, testing the implementation of new laws, and litigation that seeks to challenge or rewrite laws. Journalists will treat assertive action similarly to institutional political coverage and movement actors as a legitimate side of an issue. Assertive action led to substantive coverage for the Townsend Plan (Amenta et al., 2012b). Moreover, addressing legislative issues helped to gain coverage for protest in Madison, Wisconsin (Oliver & Maney, 2000), and policy-oriented organizations in the LGBT and AIDS movements received more coverage (Elliott et al., 2016).

Strikes and boycotts may work similarly. Strikes are correlated overall with the coverage of the U.S. labor movement in middle of the century (Amenta et al., 2009). Moreover, strikes and boycotts likely produce more substantive coverage. Given the balancing norms of journalism, the demands in strikes and boycotts are almost always central to their coverage, and they also impose sanctions on their targets, which make them more newsworthy than collective action with similar sanctions (Lipsky, 1968). In addition, these actions may reduce movement actors' legitimacy

deficits, as their opponents in such disputes are unlikely to be elected or appointed state actors and may be more vulnerable local businesses (Luders, 2011). Another route to coverage that is likely to be substantive comes through joint action, when smaller movement actors join or piggyback on action taken by typically larger movement actors. Protest with larger actors is more likely to be covered (Oliver & Maney, 2000) and can also increase the perceived legitimacy of the action and improve the chances for substantive coverage (Amenta et al., 2016).

One place where there is a divergence between whether action will be covered and how it will be covered is through violent action by movement actors. Such violence makes events more likely to be covered, but they will usually be featured in crime-related reporting (Bennett, 2007; Gitlin, 1980; Oliver & Maney, 2000; Smith et al., 2001; Sobieraj, 2011) and lack substance. Research finds that at the movement level, having disruptive capacities significantly increases coverage (Amenta et al., 2012a) but also that the coverage of disruptive collective action is less likely to be substantive (Smith et al., 2001). The impact on coverage of violence by police on movement actors is less studied (cf. Lawrence, 2000), but will also increase the chances of coverage (Earl et al., 2004; Ortiz et al., 2005); whether the coverage will be sympathetic toward movement actors likely depends on whether police are responding to violence. When movement actors are being officially acted on by state authorities, such as through trials or investigations, they may be covered extensively, but these events will provide little opportunity for substantive coverage (Amenta et al., 2012b; Amenta et al., 2016).

## 5.5 | Interactive views

Finally, because most scholarship on the coverage of movements focuses on the interaction of news organizations, movement actors and their targets, and the contexts in which they engage them, scholars have made theoretical claims about the amount or quality of coverage that are interactive. Amenta et al. (2009) find that to gain extensive coverage in any given year, movements need a combination of favorable internal and external conditions: having disruptive capacities or a large number of organizations, on the one hand, during a period in which the movement is benefitting from public policy or when a partisan regime is in power. Oliver and Myers (1999) find that local newspapers are more likely to cover protest events that have conflict, are large in scope and message, take place in central organizations in a city, and are sponsored by businesses. Elliott et al. (2016) find that the coverage of larger, better resourced, and policy-oriented LGBT and AIDS organizations was boosted in the wake of new policies in favor of their constituencies. By contrast, more poorly resourced protest-oriented organizations received extensive coverage only during the peak of the AIDS crisis.

Scholars also have found interactive influences on the quality of coverage. Amenta et al. (2012b) find that the Townsend Plan had its demands covered when the article included assertive action during periods when legislation was under consideration. Similarly, Amenta et al. (2016) find that moderate civil rights organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the early Congress of Racial Equality, received issue-oriented coverage or had its demands printed in the context of assertive action and boycotts; organizations less moderate in ideology and not eschewing violence, such as the later versions of Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, more frequently needed to engage in action joint with larger organizations to receive this sort of substantive coverage. Bail (2012) argues that fringe organizations gain coverage of their talking points through displays of negative emotions during unsettled times. These examples of interactions between news institutions, movement actors, and contexts point the way to the future of theorizing about movement news coverage.

## 6 | CONCLUSION: THINKING ABOUT FUTURE RESEARCH

As we have seen, the coverage of movement actors in newspapers is an important subject of research in itself, not simply as a source of data on protest. We close with some suggestions for future research on this news coverage,

especially by addressing the digital revolution over the last generation. Our first suggestion is to go back to the future. Now that newspapers have been digitally archived, notably by ProQuest, it is possible to go beyond the case-study orientation of the literature on social movements. Extensive comparative and historical analyses of newspaper coverage can now address whether results in the main national newspapers regarding the amounts and quality of attention hold up across the country. A series of African-American newspapers are now available online, moreover, and it worth addressing which issues prominent in those newspapers found their way to national mainstream attention and why. Of course, scholars should also exploit the newspaper coverage of individual movements to enrich the sorts of case studies prevalent in the literature. It is also worth addressing questions related to the coverage of collective action and the coverage of movement organizations. One of the findings from the PONs project is that movements gain coverage from their capacities for disruption (Amenta et al., 2009); this can be analyzed further through the DoCA project's data on the amounts and specific types of disruptive collective action to see what is driving this effect and which organizations gain most from it.

Jumping forward in time, we think that it is important to address the different importance of newspaper and professional online news coverage over the last two decades and into the future. In some ways, newspapers have been completely surpassed for movements, as there are so many ways to transmit messages through the Internet and social media, which are especially valuable in politics without freedom of the press. Newspapers have lost almost all classified ad revenue, have seen circulation dropped to levels not seen since 1940, have tighter news holes, and have shed 39% of their workforce over the last 20 years, with many local newspapers folding. The survivors refer to themselves as "news organizations" rather than newspapers and have many online competitors, as old boundaries have blurred between professional and amateur journalists, nonprofit and for profit news, and old and new media (Schudson, 2011). Yet, for democratic politics with press freedom, the role of newspapers in getting on the radar of political actors may have changed a little. Major newspapers have strong Web presences, their coverage can provide legitimation that other media cannot, and the centralization of news media heightens the importance of the national newspapers that remain. According to the PEW Research Center (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016), 62% of U.S. adults get news on social media, but a large percentage of it comes from institutional news organizations. In addition, news articles have become more interpretive, and the research reviewed above suggests that the coverage of movements has become more substantive over time. It is worth examining further the influence of this change in focus on the coverage of movements and to identify how and where the news coverage of movements is amplified through social media.

We finish by suggesting that scholars address how news media discussions influence the political process (Lipsky, 1968). Scholars have addressed how protest as covered in newspapers influences political agendas (Soule & King, 2006; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012); more research is needed on how, why, and when the newspaper coverage of movement actors does so. It is worth examining as well whether the newspaper coverage of movement actors not engaged in protest can influence policy change beyond the agenda stage. Also, studies show divergences in the interaction between media systems and political contexts cross nationally (e.g., Ferree et al., 2002; Kriesi et al., 1995; Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012), but such studies remain too few. The 2016 American Sociological Association meeting, featuring social movements, asked "can changing the conversation change the world?" Analyzing whether the newspaper coverage of movements influences the policy process is one way of addressing that question.

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