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Introduction

Uncovering a History of US Social Movements

JOURNALISTS LIKE TO SAY that newspapers provide the first rough draft of history. And much of what we know about US social movements stems from their reporting on subjects ranging from environmental and peace campaigns to veterans' and old-age benefits, from rights for labor, African Americans, women, and the homeless to restrictions on alcohol, immigration, abortion, and taxation. In the twentieth century, newspapers commanded the production of politically relevant information, setting the agenda for television news and other media outlets. But the same digital revolution that knocked the major news organizations back on their heels now makes it possible to replay this record in full. And this history turns out to diverge considerably from conventional wisdom, scholarship on social movements, and popular historical accounts.¹

Scholarship on US social movements tends to focus on five big ones, four of which flourished in the 1960s and 1970s: the Black rights, women's rights, environmental, and anti-war movements. Each is an important movement to be sure and received extensive attention in the press in its heyday. However, the fifth movement, organized labor, received the most journalistic attention of any movement of the twentieth century and is greatly understudied in comparison to how much it dominated the public sphere. More generally, older and more conservative movements and organizations had a far higher profile in the public debates of the day than they do in academic publications or current memory. These include the veterans', anti-alcohol, nativist, elderly rights, and anti-government movements. Little academic ink has been spilled, for instance, over the National Security League, American Legion, American Liberty League, Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, Ham and Eggs,

Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, International Typographical Union, and John Birch Society. But each of these organizations had their days in the *Suns*, *Times*, and *Posts*.²

Some of these movement actors had moments that were quite influential. The first Red Scare surrounding US entry into the First World War brought nativist organizations into the news, for instance, including the National Security League and American Defense Society. They hastened the demise of the German-American Alliance, which also became newsworthy. The latter was a bulwark against Prohibition and one of the few membership organizations in US history to enroll more than 1 percent of the population. Anti-immigrant and white supremacist movements have been a recurrent theme in US history and are well documented in the news record. While the campaign to pass Prohibition is well known, moreover, the organizations that led to Prohibition's repeal and the news debates surrounding them are not. But the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment and the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform had big years in the news and made arguments that are echoed in debates over the legalization of marijuana. Movement organizations seeking to keep the country out of the Second World War provoked public controversy that ensured that US support to the Allies would be tentative, and that the nation would be poorly prepared for war once it came.

The relative lack of emphasis on labor also leads to the neglect of important debates. The struggles of US labor to organize industrial unions through dramatic strikes in the 1930s are well known, but less well addressed are controversies surrounding unions in the postwar period. The news treatment of labor strikes immediately after the war was integral to the passage of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, a piece of anti-union legislation that brought the Orwellian phrase "right to work" into common parlance and helped start the United States down a path leading to a time where unionized workers now constitute only about 10 percent of the labor force. The extensive and often consequential news coverage labor was afforded in the postwar period was greatly reduced by the end of the century.

As the Taft-Hartley Act example shows, however, the news coverage of movement actors often can be negative, forcing ideas politically out of bounds and distorting our memory of how debates played out. Perhaps no large political organization was ridiculed in the news so roundly as the Townsend Plan, which promised large sums to the elderly to keep them out of poverty and to end the Great Depression. Elected officials made headlines disparaging this

group, helping to discredit the idea that pensions could be a right for all elderly citizens. The news treatment also condemned the idea that radically extensive government spending could aid the economy—even though the country exited the Depression only by way of massive war expenditures. And without this organization there would likely be no Social Security as we know it today. More sympathetic news treatment might have amplified its influence on that program's generosity or helped to end the Depression sooner. The Black civil rights movement has been heavily and rightly studied in the run-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. Scholars and history textbooks recount the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the dogs and water cannons unleashed on school children in Birmingham, and the beat-down of marchers in Selma—all of which were integral to the passage of these laws. But Black rights organizations actually received more news coverage in the less remembered second half of the decade, and their treatment was not nearly as useful to the movement. Key issues, including police shootings, were dismissed in public discourse by their association with the Black Panther Party, which was tried in the press as well as in the courts.

Other movement actors have enjoyed great scholarly attention despite having received less than extensive press attention, including the anti-war, anti-abortion, and LGBTQ rights movements. Moreover, some movements received greater newspaper attention than others despite differences in size. The anti-abortion movement has more organizations and adherents than the abortion rights movement, but the latter has received far more coverage in high-profile news. Nativist and white supremacist movements have only rarely drawn extensive popular support—with the “second” Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s standing out as an exception. But these organizations have been in the news regularly. There is a straight line between the discussion of nativists more than a century ago and former President Donald Trump's encouragement of the so-called alt-right, with paramilitary groups like the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers making headlines.

Often movement-related events that are now considered influential and important received little play at the time they occurred or were greatly overshadowed by other events of the day. The account of the famous women's rights protest against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City in September 1968 was buried deep inside the *New York Times* and was illustrated not by protesters, but with a headshot of the winning contestant. Also consigned to inside news was the following summer's legendary Stonewall Inn uprising, which helped to spark the LGBTQ rights movement. The minor coverage of



FIGURE 0.1. The iconic women's rights protest in Atlantic City was far from front-page news. Charlotte Curtis, "Miss America Pageant Is Picketed by 100 Women," *New York Times*, September 8, 1968, p. 81.

this event focused on the protesters' ill treatment of the police, and although the protest raged over several evenings, it never made page one. The same sort of marginal treatment was accorded the veteran Bonus Army in the early 1930s and student lunch-counter sit-ins in the early 1960s.

The iconic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 1963 did command a three-tier headline on the front page of the *Times*, as might be expected, with sidebars that included excerpts from speeches. For all its news play, however, this event found itself in partial eclipse by an account of the resolution of a railroad strike. The march received some coverage in the buildup to its transcendent moment on the National Mall. But the railroad strike had been in the news for weeks. The vote to end it prevented many members of Congress from meeting with civil rights leaders. More generally, although large protest marches often made the news, more sustained attention was trained on long-running events like strikes. And, more important, organizations, like the five striking rail unions, were covered more extensively than protests and their organizers typically were.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION
is a special issue of the Evening
Clayton with scattered news today
partly from the night and tomorrow
Temp. range: 77-82; showers 81-84;
Temp.-Hum. Index: 79 to 73; yesterday: 72.

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© 1963 by The New York Times Company

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1963.

TEN CENTS

KENNEDY SIGNS BILL AVERTING A RAIL STRIKE

**PRECEDENT IS SET:
Arbitration Imposed by
Congress—Vote in
House 286-66**

Text of Kennedy's statement will be found on Page 13.

By JOHN D. FOSBERT
Special to the New York Times
WASHINGTON, Aug. 28—
Congress passed today a bill
that prevented a national rail-
road strike scheduled for next
night. President Kennedy signed
it immediately.

The House completed the Con-
gressional action. It adopted the
a standing vote of 286 to 66 to
the same joint resolution passed
yesterday by the Senate. The
measure provides for arbitration
of the two principal issues if
the railroad were to call off the
dog on a strike for 180 days.
The action was without Pre-
sidential approval. Never before in
the history of peacetime labor
relations has Congress imposed
arbitration in a labor-management
dispute.

The failure of the railroad
and the fire train operating
units to resolve their dispute
and the Congressional action
the week necessary, it is con-
sidered by many to represent
a major failure for the collect-
ive bargaining system.

Many Are Relieved
Even many Congressmen who
voted for the measure con-
vinced that the economic con-
sequences of a national railroad
strike might be so great as to
warrant a national strike. They
said that their action might
be a precedent, detrimental to
collective bargaining.
An arbitration board was estab-
lished by Congress to consider
whether direct legislative inter-
ference was necessary in freight
and yard service and the sit-
ing of train service crews.
Congress acted in negotiation
on the remaining issues on the
theory that with the two major
issues disposed of, the remain-
ingly less important matters
could be settled by traditional
collective bargaining.

But some well-informed Con-
gressmen sources do not believe
the remaining issues will be
settled by traditional collective
bargaining.
Continued on Page 13, Column 2

U. S. PRESSES U. N. TO CONDEMN SYRIA ON ISRAELI DEATHS

**Stevenson Deplores Killing
of Youths—Thant Assures
Council on Cease-Fire**

Text of Stevenson statement appears on Page 2.

By KATHLEEN TELFORD
Special to the New York Times
UNITED NATIONS, N. Y.,
Aug. 28—Aldo D. Stevenson
declared today that the United
States is "in a position to
play a role in the settlement
of the Arab-Israeli conflict"
deserving the strongest
condemnation by the Security
Council.

The United States delegate,
followed by the British repre-
sentative, gave forceful support
to Israeli charges against Syria
for Israeli deaths resulting from
the Aug. 20 ambush killing of
two 18-year-old Israelis at the
Abnager farm settlement.
Mr. Stevenson rejected Syria's
countercharges against Israel as
"not corroborated" by United
Nations investigations.

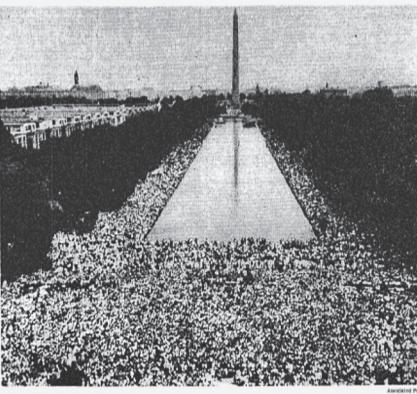
The United States policy
statement drew a favorable
reaction from Michael J. Conroy
of Israel, who said it encouraged
him to expect the Council to
take "firm and vigorous action."

Syria's Response
However, there was disap-
praisal from Dr. Salah al-Tarazi
of Syria, who criticized Mr.
Stevenson as "not particularly
objective." He added that Mr.
Stevenson in past years had
not deplored Syrian losses with
equal feeling.

The Council, remaining in ac-
tion of the new crisis, was led
by the Secretary General, U.
Thant, that United Nations in-
vestigation showed "no evidence
of a military buildup on either
side of the armistice line."
Mr. Thant reported that both
Syria and Israel had agreed to
a cease-fire achieved last
Friday after the military and
subsequent exchange of shoot-
ing greatly increased tension
in the area. He noted that
both Mr. Stevenson and
Mr. Conroy indicated a
willingness to accept the
suggestion by the United
Nations cease-fire line, Gen.
U. Thant, for avoiding new
incidents along their border
including an exchange of pris-
oners. Mr. Conroy indicated
a favorable Israeli reaction.

Evidence Questioned
Dr. Tarazi, in his turn, in-
sisted that Israel's allegations
remained unproved and that
the same evidence could have
been found in other photographs
of footprints found at the ambu-
sh.

200,000 MARCH FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN ORDERLY WASHINGTON RALLY; PRESIDENT SEES GAIN FOR NEGRO



VIEW FROM THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL. The scene during the march looking toward the Washington Monument.



United Press International Wirephoto

ACTION ASKED NOW

**10 Leaders of Protest
Urge Laws to End
Racial Inequity**

Excerpts from talks at rally
are printed on Page 21.

By E. W. KENNEDY
Special to the New York Times
WASHINGTON, Aug. 28—
More than 200 Americans,
most of them black but many
of them white, demonstrated
here today for a full and speedy
program of civil rights and equal
rights for all citizens.
It was the greatest assembly
for a subject of this nature that
this capital has ever seen.

One hundred years and 20
years after Abraham Lincoln
joined the emancipated slaves to
"obtain from all citizens"
and "labor faithfully for reason-
able wages," this vast crowd
proclaimed in march and song
and through the speeches of
their leaders that they were still
waiting for the freedom and
the job.

Children Cry and Sing
There was no violence to mar
the demonstration. In fact, at
times there was an air of hos-
pitality about it as groups of
schoolchildren stepped hand-
in-hand among into the familiar
freedom songs.

But if the crowd was good-
natured, the underlying tone was
one of steel resolve. The com-
mitment was "Freedom" and
"now." At the same time the
marchers emphasized, predict-
ably but realistically, that the
struggle was just beginning.

On Capital Hill, opinion was
divided about the impact of the
demonstration in stimulating
Congressional action on civil
rights legislation. But at the
White House, President Ken-
nedy declared that the cause
of 20 million Negroes had been
advanced by the march.

The march leaders went from
the shadow of the Lincoln
Memorial to the White House
to meet with the President for
15 minutes. Afterward, Mr.
Kennedy issued a 400-word
statement praising the march-
ers for the "long fever and the
quiet dignity" that had charac-
terized the demonstration.
Rape Victim Can Be Proud

FIGURE 0.3. The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom received extensive play on the front page of the *New York Times*, but there was longer-running coverage of legislation seeking to avert a national railroad strike.

similar, as figure 0.4 shows. But the 'Teamsters' news coverage was often quite negative and harmful to the organization as well as to the labor movement as a whole—an issue that points to the importance of the quality of coverage received by organizations.

All this is in no way intended to fault scholars for focusing on movements that were more influential, more recent, more amenable to research, or simply

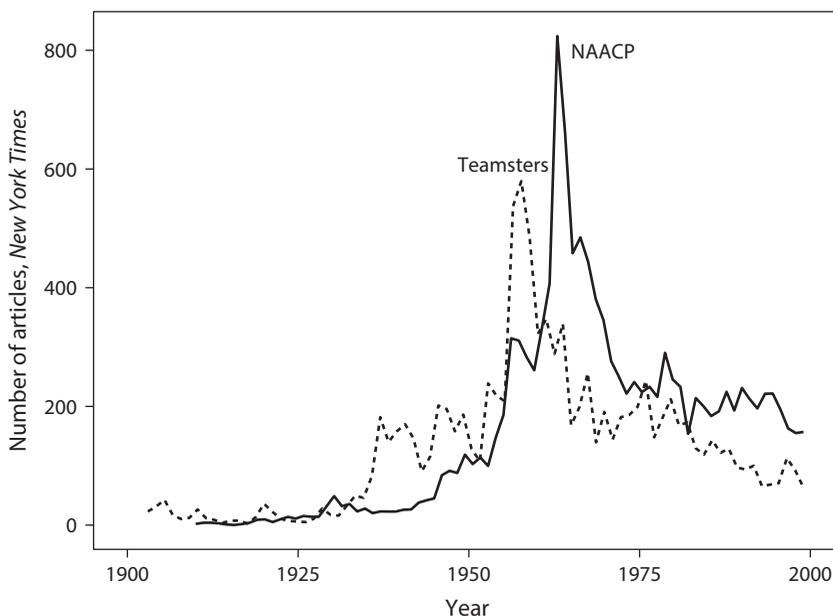


FIGURE 0.4. The News Coverage of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and NAACP, 1900–1999.

more interesting to them. Logistical difficulties are great in studying any social movement, much less ones in distant memory, and almost everything we know about movements has come as a result of these studies. But at a minimum, taking stock of a century's worth of news coverage of movement organizations suggests that scholars have neglected prominent ones that were influential in public discourse and policy. A comprehensive approach to analyzing movements in the news can unearth anomalies or examples of novel lines of action worth exploring, as well as new routes to influence for movements. In some instances, these neglected challengers provide examples of consequences that are worse than simply failing to achieve goals—such as in the cases of the German-American Alliance and the Teamsters—which are also worth addressing. More generally, analyzing news coverage of movements over time, across issues, organizations, periods, and news outlets, can help to appraise key arguments about the influence of movements, given the wider net and greater variation in movement actors, the actions they took and the contexts in which they acted.

Understanding the news coverage of movements is important because of its influence on cultural and political change. News media coverage matters to

movements' bids to alter public debates over social problems and their solutions. In a classic account, Michael Lipsky argues that protest cannot be influential or draw the general public into political battles over new issues without gaining close attention from the news media. Todd Gitlin's landmark study of the news coverage of Students for a Democratic Society showed that movement actors usually try to submit to the rules of journalism to become political players and advance their causes, and this still holds true today. Despite the upheavals in the media ecology, which we address near the end of the book, professional news organizations and the so-called legacy media still matter. The national news organizations remain the central institutions of newsgathering. The prestige press, including the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, still sets the agenda for other news outlets, and mainstream news organizations constitute the top digital news entities. There remains no better way to reach large numbers of people, gain support and legitimacy, and influence elite actors than through the professional news media. That they aspire to fairness, objectivity, and truthfulness also affords them greater credibility among third parties than partisan and amateur news outlets. Not only is news coverage a means to advancing a movement's causes and organizations. Movements also often seek to transform how their constituents are perceived or referred to by the public. Groups wish to be called the elderly or senior citizens rather than being labeled "oldsters" or worse, or to be called gay or lesbians rather than "sexual inverts" or worse. How they are covered in the news is accordingly an important outcome, especially as the terms in the news often diffuse into everyday discourse.⁴

A lot is at stake in the news treatment of social movements. Social movements' bids to effect major social change are the reason people join them, and the reason scholars study them. For most of US history, however, as we will see, movements have been represented in the national news mostly by only small groups of organizations, with others mainly sidelined. Because of their media exposure, the higher-profile organizations are often viewed by the public and elites as representing the interests of politically underserved groups. Yet these organizations were not necessarily representative and often were quite idiosyncratic in their views—and were frequently treated poorly during their news closeups. Identifying when movements and the organizations that represented them were covered—and how they were covered—can say a great deal about how the public has understood underrepresented groups and their possibilities for influence.

As we will see, too, often the news record defies expectations. Sometimes waves of movement coverage align with general and scholarly understandings of their prevalence, such as those that occurred in the 1930s and 1960s—decades well known for their activism. However, at less noted times, news attention to movements was also high, including during some parts of the 1920s, 1940s, and 1980s—decades not considered to be movement eras. An account based on newspapers also provides a far more accurate view of the historical debates in which movements engaged and their influence over the public sphere. Newspaper coverage is an important potential cultural consequence of movements, leading to many questions about the amount and quality of coverage.

Despite the focus on protest by scholars, moreover, movement organizations have been covered far more frequently outside the context of marches and rallies than inside them. Marches on Washington or around the country have only rarely brought sustained news attention. Also, movement organizations land in the news for any number of reasons, ranging from strikes to referendums, from reacting to political proposals to community events, from third party runs to occupations. Movement organizations frequently appeared in national political coverage and in city sections, but they might show up anywhere in the newspaper. Their most extensive treatment centered on action that could more easily be converted into long-running stories, such as legislative and litigation campaigns, initiatives, strikes, occupations, boycotts, civic action, investigations, and trials. And not only do movement organizations get covered far more outside of marches and demonstrations. Movement organizations usually receive their best press when the story is not about protest. It is usually covered in the news in an episodic and logistical way—with the so-called protest paradigm that treats movement action mainly as a problem of social order and not as political action. Analyzing coverage that goes beyond protest is key because movement actors doing other things often have a better chance of making major news and gaining standing with the news media—conveying the messages that may activate supporters and influence political debates.⁵

In our analyses, we focus on two dimensions of news: substance and sentiment. Movements attempt to insert into the public sphere new political and social issues and innovative diagnoses of problems and solutions to them. Movements tend to be low on power, and, according to the dictum of Frederick Douglass, power concedes nothing without a demand. One key element

of substantive coverage involves framing, and a central element of frames is a demand, also sometimes called a “prescription” or a “claim.”⁶ Movements typically aim demands at targets that can grant concessions and are crucial to contests over meaning. A second aspect of substance for movement actors in the news is being connected to discussions of issues they seek to promote. If an article includes the organization or other movement actors in discussions of key issues, it portrays that organization as a player with standing and a stake in the debates. The tone of the news discussion also matters. Scholars have noted that movement actors are frequently treated as criminal or deviant, and references to them often carry a negative tone. Although inserting issues and demands into the public sphere through the news is the most important mission for movement actors, these demands will resonate more if these actors are portrayed in a positive, or at least neutral, way.⁷

In the best types of news for movement actors, they receive long-running, substantive treatments that reflect positively on them and their missions. However, that sort of “good news” was rarely the case across the twentieth century. There were also many long strings of coverage that were even worse for movement organizations than logistical discussions or simply being ignored. In this variety of “bad news,” movement actors were disparaged and portrayed as criminal or deviant in coverage that ranged sometimes over weeks and months. There were also major moments of coverage where substance and sentiment were not in sync. Sometimes the news addressed movement actors’ issues and claims but treated them unfavorably—which we call “hard news.” At other times journalists treated movement actors respectfully, but failed to discuss their claims or treat them as significant players with stakes in important issues by way of what we refer to as “soft news.”

Here we show the who, what, when, and where of movements in the news. But we also address a series of critical “why” questions: Why do some movements receive extensive newspaper coverage when they do so? Why do some organizations receive far more coverage than others and make a major splash in the news? As for the quality of coverage, why do some movements and organizations receive more favorable coverage than others, especially at the times when they are most in the news? Why do movements sometimes get treated in ways that are discrediting—worse than no coverage at all?

Scholars studying social movements rely heavily on case studies, as the difficulties in tracing even a few movements over time have warded off broader analyses. Notable exceptions include William Gamson’s landmark study in 1975 of the impact of the strategies of a random sample of all US movement

organizations from the mid-nineteenth century through 1945, and Theda Skocpol's analysis in 2003 of the 58 largest voluntary membership organizations in US history.⁸ Like Gamson and Skocpol, we seek to break through the limits of case studies and to provide a big picture of movement news coverage. We do so not by sampling movement organizations or identifying the largest ones, but through a comprehensive approach: tracking *all* mentions of national social movement organizations, including labor unions and political advocacy organizations, in four nationally oriented newspapers over the twentieth century, with some follow-ups for the current century. We identified more than 1,500 qualifying organizations through various means, including scholarly monographs, expert-generated lists of organizations, and encyclopedias. Using information about the organizations, and by trial and error, we located all the articles mentioning these organizations in four national newspapers—the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*.⁹

Like these scholars, moreover, we examine a wide variety of organizations, not just those that engaged in protest. Gamson notably included in his sampling frame labor unions and public-interest advocacy organizations, which is a lead we follow. Like Skocpol, we analyze large, midcentury, civically engaged organizations that addressed political issues, such as the American Association of University Women and the PTA. Like Gamson, we include low- and high-profile organizations alike, ones that rarely or never made it into print as well as big newsmakers. Like Skocpol, however, we focus on the most prominent—the organizations and movements that commanded the most headlines and newsprint during the century. As we will show, to the extent that the news provides a history of movements, it is largely an account of these most covered organizations. We highlight especially the 100 organizations that experienced at least one year of major attention in the news in the century.¹⁰ Our approach also allows us to pose and address important questions that were previously off limits for scholars and can go well beyond addressing protest events.

Institutional Mediation and the Determinants of Movements' News Coverage

To explain these developments, we develop an institutional mediation model of news coverage for movements. The model is based on the recognition that movements are not routinely powerful, and gaining favorable outcomes for

them almost always depends on a convergence of favorable circumstances. The impact of movements on how they are treated in the news is mediated by both political and news contexts. The news coverage of movements is a potential cultural consequence of them but is not under their control. In that way, movements' newspaper coverage is unlike mobilizing constituents, creating collective identities, increasing individual and organizational capacities, altering the career trajectories of participants, or publishing their own newsletters, press releases, and websites. For newspaper coverage, the key determinations about who, what, when, where, and how to cover are made by journalists. Newspapers in turn are concerned mainly with politics and the institutions in which political decisions are made. Journalists are also keenly interested in issues of social order, as well as the state institutions designated to uphold it. In contrast, movement actors are infrequently a major focus of news attention.¹¹

Building from the historical institutionalism of Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, the social organization of the news approach of Michael Schudson and others, and the political mediation model of movement consequences, we argue that the social organization, operating procedures, and institutions of the news media help to account for the media's treatment of movements. When and how movement organizations are covered depends on how the news media are organized, the political circumstances that influence issues over which movements contend, and the form and nature of movement organizations and their activity. The influence of movements is mediated in multiple ways, through the organization and processes of news institutions and the political contexts in which movement organizations act. What is more, political shifts influence both media institutions and movement actors.¹² Because the social organization of the news strongly mediates the impact of movements over their treatment, we first discuss the evolution of US news organizations.

Meet the US Press

For most of the twentieth century, US news as an institution was dominated by a commercial press that grew up alongside political institutions. Initially almost all newspapers were political party operations, supported by favorable government postal policy and priced for elites. At the turn of the twentieth century, US newspapers took advantage of mass literacy and won independence from parties and elites through low prices, mass subscriptions, and extensive advertising revenues, and were shielded from state interference

through judicial decisions. They became more professionalized and nationalized in the twentieth century in tandem with the professionalization and nationalization of the government and other institutions.¹³ In comparative terms, US news organizations have conformed to a “liberal” model—dominated by for-profit, increasingly professionalized enterprises, with only minor contributions from publicly supported ventures and party organs. Although they retained editorial pages with partisan slants, the organizations’ main goal was to provide objective and balanced news. At midcentury, professionalization in newsrooms took another leap forward. Journalists provided greater context for news events and took a more questioning and oppositional stance toward political officials. This model reached its zenith near the end of the twentieth century, with monopoly revenues from subscriptions and advertising subsidizing the public good that was the political scrutiny supplied by journalists.¹⁴

Politics has been central to news organizations’ missions, identities, operating procedures, and business models. Professional journalism seems necessary to the existence of modern liberal democracies, and the news media view themselves as political watchdogs in the public interest. Government officials have long used the news media to transmit their messages to the wider public. Since Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the twentieth century, presidents and other institutional political actors have engaged in elaborate efforts to stage news, expecting it will be covered and hoping it will be reported as they present it. Journalists’ news routines rely on access to the actors, outputs, and processes of political institutions. News beats assign reporters to probe these sources for news daily. The news values of professional journalists also ensure the coverage of political officials. Decisions about what is news and how to cover it are based on events’ qualities, including timeliness, currency, impact, actors’ prominence, proximity, novelty, and conflict, and political decisions and events score high on all of these qualities. Often political stories involve conflict, such as those between political parties, the president and Congress, and factions on the Supreme Court, as they contest elections, debate policy, and hand down law-like decisions.¹⁵

Professional news organizations see themselves as seeking accuracy, balance, and fairness, but routinely interpret these qualities to mean being fair and balanced to representatives of the two major parties regarding issues over which they disagree.¹⁶ Daniel Hallin has referred to this constrained discursive field as the “sphere of legitimate controversy.” In the first wave of the professionalization of journalism, that meant providing “objective” treatment, with the two main political views being balanced. In the wake of the egregious lies

of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s and the Watergate cover-up of President Richard Nixon in the 1970s, journalists increasingly assumed a more adversarial relationship toward political officials and others in authority. They sought to check the validity of official accounts, asking hard questions about them, and sought to place news in larger political contexts. For all these reasons, the amount and quality of coverage gained by movement organizations depends importantly on how they and their actions intersect with how journalists cover politics.¹⁷

The poorer treatment of movement organizations and actors by the news media is due to their compounded legitimacy and newsworthiness deficits. Gaining legitimacy has long been viewed as a central goal for organizations, as prominent new institutionalists such as Paul DiMaggio and Woody Powell have argued. This issue, which involves aligning organizations with cultural rules, norms, and expectations, poses many challenges for organizations seeking political influence on behalf of groups with little power. Though often chartered and formal, movement organizations frequently have little official standing regarding the people they seek to represent; their claimed constituency is typically far more extensive than their participating membership. Unlike institutional political officials, movement organizations are not elected or certified through political processes, and thus do not exercise any legitimate political authority in the Weberian sense. Moreover, movement actors usually express views that are at odds with the mainstream of current political discourse, which is often defined by the claims of the legitimately elected authorities. Movement actors engage in behavior outside the bounds of institutional politics and often represent marginalized groups. For those reasons, they constantly seek to display their worthiness, as Charles Tilly noted. Finally, movement actors are usually not politically influential, compounding their news-making deficits with journalists.¹⁸ Rarely do news organizations compete over information movements may have, and rarer still is it any journalist's beat to follow movements. Even when movement leaders and participants follow what they perceive as the rules of news-making, as Gitlin has called them, usually the media are uninterested. Movement actors are forced to play by different and more stringent rules that tend to keep them and the issues they seek to advance out of the news.¹⁹

The US news media are sometimes called the fourth branch of government or, more grandly, the Fourth Estate, and their existence seems necessary for the flourishing of democratic political institutions. Also, newspaper owners, publishers, and editors, ranging from William Randolph Hearst to Harrison

Gray Otis, from a series of Sulzbergers to Philip Graham, from Jeff Bezos to Patrick Soon-Shiong, have been influential in politics to be sure. But news media are far from being a coequal part of the state. After all, they lack binding rule-making authority, implementation capacities, or recourse to legitimate violence. They do not supply candidates for election to run state institutions.²⁰ And foremost, US news institutions are not politically secured through taxation revenues and the state organizations that collect them. News organizations are mainly businesses subject to both political and market forces—as the upheavals of the twenty-first century have amply demonstrated.

Political Development, News Media, and Social Movements

The news media are certainly political institutions in that, like social movement organizations, they are and have been strongly influenced by major political developments and transformations. Both news and movement organizations have been shaped by state-building and “durable shifts of governing authority,” to use the terms of Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek. These processes include the centralization and democratization of political institutions, their modernization, the appearance of reform-oriented, partisan regimes, and major policy innovations that promote professional state bureaucracies. The barriers to nationalized politics, modern political organizations, and policy reform have been exceptional in the United States, however. These barriers include the great authority exerted by states, localities, and courts; strongly rooted patronage-oriented political parties, mainly in the Northeast and Midwest; an under-democratized polity, characterized most notably by a denial of civil and voting rights to African Americans in the South for most of the century; and a winner-take-all and presidential electoral system. These structural political features also inhibited national social movements. Activists were often mired in battles in individual states and localities, fended off by party bosses, or unable to organize in states where basic democratic rights went unprotected.²¹

The rise to prominence of national US movements in a national public sphere depended on certain political prerequisites, we argue. National movements require a more nationalized polity that is open to their participation. A national public sphere depends on news organizations seeing the national government as a central source of political decision making. For these reasons, one prerequisite for the flourishing of movement and advocacy groups was the attack during the first decades of the twentieth century on the patronage

party system. After these battles, the major parties became weaker catchall entities, more open to the influence of political organizations such as movement, advocacy, and interest groups. At this time, too, the US central or “federal” government began to emerge out of the fiscal and functional shadows. It increased its expenditures and revenues dramatically during the First World War, without their ever returning to their previous levels. The same ratcheting-up process of national government growth occurred during the New Deal of the 1930s and the Second World War that followed it. Just as news organizations were professionalizing, so, too, were governmental ones. The federal government eclipsed local governments in the 1930s and never looked back. As the century progressed, both news institutions and movement actors had greater reason to focus on the national government. Still, unlike many of their European counterparts, US activists have been unable to create viable national parties of their own because of structural barriers to entry based on electoral rules. Though it was not for lack of trying—Populists and Progressive parties attempted to do so at the beginning of the century and Reform and Green parties at the end of it.²²

Historical institutionalists hold that policy alters politics, and we similarly argue that movement trajectories and their news coverage are shaped by policy innovations and changes. Because of political institutional barriers, including much of the country being under-democratized, policymaking has been slanted in the US setting, and modern social policy slow to develop. Yet policymaking processes influence movement organizations and their coverage in important ways. When movements’ constituents gain in policy, we argue, that will bolster movements and their attention in the news long after their initial victories. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, Civil War veterans’ pensions were greatly augmented, boosting both veterans’ organizations and their public presence. At the end of the 1910s, both women’s and anti-alcohol movements won major policy victories. In the 1930s, the labor movement benefited greatly from policies, and in the 1960s the African American rights movement did likewise. We expect these policy changes to boost movements and their public profile. In part this is because policy changes can make movement organizations more legitimate. They represent groups now supported by official policy and will be more likely to be sought out by journalists when the implementation or amendment of policies is at issue. Because policies themselves are sticky, that is, highly likely to remain in place, they can increase attention to movements for the long run.²³

We see one key asymmetry in the influence of political change on the news treatment of left and right movements. Scholars have recently returned their

attention to movements of the right—returning to what was a key subject of scholars in earlier periods. These authors argue that right movement actors are more apt to respond to grievances and often focus on blocking social change and state action demanded by other groups. For instance, rights for minorities and immigrants have been opposed by the Ku Klux Klan and other nativist groups, income taxes by conservative movements, reproductive rights by the anti-abortion movement, LGBTQ rights by the Christian right, and expansions of domestic spending and health care by Tea Party activists. Right movement actors are also often distrustful of the professional news media, considering them biased against their views.²⁴ Because of their negative agendas, rightist movements are unlikely to gain the same sort of long-term benefits in news coverage from policy in the manner of movements that seek new policy advances, including increased government regulations and protections.

We expect both right and left political regimes—such as the Republican-dominated 1920s or the liberal Democratic-dominated middle 1930s—will spur the mobilization and news coverage of both right and left movements. We expect the public presence of movements to be driven especially by those rare moments when power is taken by left-wing “reform-oriented regimes.” By this we mean when the presidency was held by a Democrat and Congress was dominated by Democrats from democratized polities, which for most of the century meant Democrats from outside the South. This unusual formation happened only twice in the twentieth century: from 1935 through 1938, and from 1965 through 1966—and briefly again in 2009–2010, after most southern elected officials turned Republican and the remaining southern Democrats became closer to the mainstream of the party.²⁵ During these periods, new policies appeared in what Skocpol calls “big bangs” of legislation, or in what Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones call “punctuated equilibrium.” Although we focus on those moments in US history when power is taken by progressive, reform-oriented regimes, we also expect the rise of right-wing, conservative, or “retrenchment” regimes to spur movements, if not as greatly, for two reasons. The right seeks programmatic retrenchment, cutting back individual programs, and systemic retrenchment, cutting taxes to starve the government of the revenue needed to create new domestic programs or augment existing ones, as Pierson argues. These threats tend to incite the defensive mobilization, and news coverage, of movements and advocacy organizations. Retrenchment, however, hinders the building of a right-wing state and accordingly does not provide policy or bureaucratic support for movements of the right. We expect only progressive or left regimes to produce the sorts of policy changes that provide a more enduring presence for movements.²⁶

Political contexts also mediate the influence of challengers' collective action on the quality of their coverage. Having a favorable policy being considered by Congress or a favorable regime in power, which might pass such legislation, will make substantive news coverage more likely for movement actors. They will be seen as influential political players and gain better chances to transmit their views of these issues in the news. Some political and news contexts are so unfavorable, however, that they will deflect substantive newspaper coverage for movement actors. It is almost impossible for them to gain a meaningful airing of grievances or proposed solutions to problems when movement organizations and leaders are being subjected to state-authorized investigations or trials. When unions are investigated for corruption, movement organizations are called on the carpet for allegedly un-American activities, or when movement leaders are on trial for criminal acts, little of substance will emerge.²⁷

Movements Making News

Although political and news contexts shape the possibilities of news treatments for movement actors, these actors have many options to increase their chances of making news, including the sorts of news that will aid their causes. These options center on reducing movements' legitimacy and news-making deficits. The best ways to do that is by choosing organizational forms and collective action that will play to journalists' news values and routines. Journalists' focus on politics, novelty, and conflict, and their concern for balance, also provide opportunities for movement organizations and actors to influence the substance of the news. For movement organizations to receive substantive treatment in the news media, we argue, often depends on mimicking institutional political actors or seeking to preempt their functions, or both. Devising collective action profiles that involve close engagement with institutional politics helps reduce legitimacy deficits. Engaging political processes—whether through contesting school board elections, promoting initiatives, running candidates for office, or litigating laws—signal to journalists the political seriousness of movements, and these actions are more likely to work their way into the political coverage of beat reporters.²⁸

Three organizational characteristics matter most in making movement actors newsworthy. One is having resources, and first among these resources is extensive membership. Membership shows that organizations have a real basis to represent the groups they claim to represent. Large membership

organizations are often seen as synonymous with the interests and political views of groups: for instance, veterans and the American Legion, gun owners and the National Rifle Association, senior citizens and the former American Association of Retired Persons (now, AARP). Moreover, organizational resources such as large budgets, a formal organization, a national office, and media departments often will promote news coverage. At the movement level, having more organizations devoted to an issue has a similar stimulant effect.²⁹ In addition, ideologies, frames, and strategic profiles that resonate with social norms are more appealing to the news media, whereas espousing goals outside of mainstream values or embracing violent tactics will marginalize an organization.³⁰ We argue similarly that movement organizations with commitments to the political process, moderate ideologies, and non-violence will have better chances at substantive coverage. Less resourced and more radical organizations have opportunities for coverage, but more work will need to be done and more favorable contexts may be necessary.

Second, organizations with greater political capabilities have better chances to gain extensive coverage. News about policy change sometimes plays out over months or years, and when movement organizations can insert themselves into political processes, they will have a better shot at landing a part in this storied treatment. Additionally, those organizations focusing on a specific line of policy will benefit if that policy has been advanced politically. Among the many issues addressed by the second wave of the women's rights movement, for instance, by far the most covered in the *New York Times* has been gender equity.³¹ Not coincidentally, this issue also has been the subject of much legislation and policy effort. When policies for the movement's constituents are gaining traction, these organizations often will come to represent the movement in the news media.³²

Third, to gain extensive news attention, it is valuable for organizations to have disruptive capacities. The standard large protest event does not usually remain long in the news, but there are many routes to coverage involving disruptive action. The strike has been first among them. It applies sanctions and often leads to continuing stories in the news. Similar effects may come through boycotts or direct-action campaigns to induce the enforcement of laws that are being ignored in practice. In addition, many activists, ranging from veterans to anti-war protesters and from workers to civil rights workers, have been able to occupy public or private spaces for decent intervals and make news with long legs. However, some types of action will reduce news-making deficits but increase legitimacy deficits. Violent action will often be covered but

may leave movement actors, their causes, and constituents worse off in discursive contests.³³

Historical institutionalists argue that many policies have positive feedback loops that will promote their continuation, and similar processes can keep movement organizations newsworthy once they start making news. The media critic and journalism professor Jay Rosen has called journalists “a herd of independent minds.” Professionally trained journalists will often act similarly in reporting an event due to common internalized judgments of its newsworthiness. They are not engaged in social action, as Max Weber would define it; rather, they are like his celebrated pedestrians, who open their umbrellas, without regard to one another, when rain begins to fall. However, journalists also will follow the lead of their peers when they are late to an important story or are “beaten” to it—like people standing in doorways who open their umbrellas when they see people on the street with theirs open. Journalists will have developed contacts with organizational leaders and may even view some of them as quasi-celebrities or as spokespersons for a group, especially if their issue is being addressed in politics.³⁴ We also expect a secondary policy legacy effect. A policy has a life after its passage, and an organization that has advocated for it will typically gain further coverage opportunities, such as during the implementation of the policy or when changes are proposed to it. In the best case, individual journalists may be assigned specifically to cover especially prominent movements or movement organizations as a news beat, such as occurred for organized labor in the 1930s and beyond, and shorter periods for the Black rights movement in the 1960s, and even shorter for the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street in the first part of the twenty-first century. Sometimes violent movement organizations or ones mismanaged by their leaders will end their own stories.³⁵

Different sorts of action can induce sustained news for movement organizations, but the type most likely to lead to sustained and substantive coverage is what we call assertive political action. Assertive action includes the introduction and the fight for passage of movement-sponsored legislation and initiatives, litigation that seeks to change laws, electioneering activity, such as running candidates for office and seeking to defeat enemies and support friends in elections, and mass political meetings that challenge the main parties’ nominating conventions. Although it works through institutionalized channels to promote political change, political assertive action challenges the power and prerogatives of institutional actors, usually seeking to sanction them, and often is politically influential. The fact that movement actors are not institutional players may add to the novelty and newsworthiness of these

campaigns. Assertive political action can be contrasted with simple lobbying or letter-writing, which is politically oriented but not assertive. Direct action will work best when it is done peacefully and when challenging political officials who are failing to enforce legislated rights. When peaceful direct action is confronted by illegal violence, movements will be more likely to receive favorable coverage, as in the case of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, but this has happened only rarely.³⁶

Of the other routes to extensive coverage, the most prominent way involves labor strikes. Strikes exploit the institutional bargaining leverage of workers as they withdraw labor power, or threaten to do so, often over long periods of time. Strikes that employ institutional leverage, involve large numbers of people, and are protracted will draw keen attention. Such action also plays on the norm to craft what journalists view as “balanced” articles. The grievances and demands of strikers are almost always going to constitute a relevant side of the story during strikes, and their targets are less likely to have the high legitimacy of elected officials. Boycotts work similarly, though are attempted less frequently and often do not have the same long news legs. Like politically assertive action, strikes and boycotts involve applying sanctions directly to institutional actors, in contrast to protest, which works symbolically and indirectly. However, because strikes and boycotts typically cause disruption and may mean inconvenience for news consumers—the “readers” that journalists often seek to represent—these actions are not likely to result in favorable accounts of the actors.³⁷

P. T. Barnum, who co-founded the Barnum and Bailey Circus in the late 1800s, is reported to have said that there is no such thing as bad press, but that is not at all true for social movement actors. They are not seeking paying customers at a carnival, but to establish political and social legitimacy. They want the public and powerful third parties to see the good in their causes and claims, or to gain a more favorable image of the groups they represent. Bad press along these lines is certainly a collective bad for these groups and is doubtless far more routine for movement actors in democratic political systems than negative political consequences. And there is not much movement actors can do about it, as news organizations are not accountable in the ways that political institutions are.³⁸ We argue that some key events—trials and investigations—will often trap movement actors in a cycle of bad news in the mainstream media that provide few chances for substantive treatment. Scholars have found that when protest strays into petty vandalism, traffic disruption, counter-movement clashes, and police confrontations, it usually will be covered as crime. Trials and investigations can be worse. Publicized scandals can be

debilitating to a cause and an organization and are typically more devastating for movements than for political parties. Across the century, many organizations were weakened or failed entirely in the wake of a long string of bad news. These included the German-American Alliance, Townsend Plan, Communist party, Teamsters, Ku Klux Klan, and Black Panther Party. We also argue that movement actors can be covered extensively and not unfavorably, but not seriously either, making what we are calling soft news.³⁹

There are many different and important patterns in the news coverage of movements and a variety of implications to the model, and we employ diverse methods to identify empirical puzzles and solve them. At the center are historical analyses identifying which movement organizations and broader movements were newsworthy when they were. From there we compare the most widely covered organizations to see what they have in common when they were most covered. We compare the news treatment of movement organizations that varied greatly in terms of ideology and era but engaged in similar sorts of action. We zoom out to track the historical trajectories of coverage for 30 broader movements to ask why some periods and some movements received extensive coverage when other periods and movements did not. Then we zero in on two case studies. To uncover the determinants of the news coverage of movements and organizations, we employ comparative historical analyses supplemented with negative binomial regressions. To ascertain the quality of coverage, we employ valence analyses and machine learning techniques, and we also inspect headlines and hand-code articles. But we rely especially on qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), which is designed to address theoretical accounts that rely on interactions. It can appraise the sorts of configurational arguments Ira Katznelson argues are central to the historical and comparative study of politics—and to our model.⁴⁰

Seven Patterns in Our Analyses of Highly Newsworthy Movement Organizations

These are the seven key patterns in findings that recur throughout the book.

Rediscovering America

Many movement and advocacy organizations that dominated the public sphere in their day have been lost to history, and the news treatment of many

better-known organizations when they were most newsworthy has often also been underappreciated. By recovering these accounts, we construct a political history of US contention, as the public understood it at the time.

Big Newsmakers

To identify these accounts and place them in perspective, we examine the news coverage of more than 1,500 national movement and advocacy organizations but focus on the treatment of those that made the greatest impacts in US public discourse: 100 movement organizations and 30 movements. We want to explain why organizations and movements became prominent in public discourse when they did. That said, we analyze hundreds of organizations, large and small, to see what separated the prominent from the also-rans.

No Magic Bullets

High news profiles and favorable coverage for movement actors never depended on one factor or on specific movement characteristics. Although actions and organizational characteristics influence the treatment of movement organizations in the news, there is no magic bullet or secret sauce that ensures favorable attention. There are no seven habits of highly newsworthy social movements. Gaining extensive and favorable coverage in a routine way depended on combinations of favorable circumstances, some internal to organizations and movements—including organizational characteristics and lines of action—and some external to them—including political and newspaper contexts.

Protest Too Much?

Our investigations show that there are many ways for movement and advocacy organizations to get into the news—not just or even mainly by way of street protests, marches, and rallies, actions on which scholars and the public often focus. Movement organizations often made front-page news through the sorts of standard political treatment accorded institutional political actors, as well as a series of civic actions. They also appeared on sports, business, science, lifestyle, and arts pages. Protest events rarely led to long-running coverage and did not usually provide the types of news that movement actors sought.

Not All News Is Good News

Movement actors often made big news and frequently in ways that they wanted, but sometimes media attention hurt their chances to transmit demands, raise new issues, and advance their preferred ways of referring to their groups. Scholars have known that the news treatment of protest often ignores the claims of movement actors. Worse than that, though, we find that other types of long-running coverage, notably through trials, violence, and investigations, can disparage and discredit movement actors, and hasten their declines.

Policy Supports

Major gains in legislation programs are often thought to signal the impending demise of movements. We find instead that policy gains often spurred attention to movement actors, making them more legitimate newsmakers. Many movement actors made more news after policy victories than during them. Policy setbacks, moreover, often harmed movement organizations and reduced their standing in public discourse. Also, assertive political action in legislative campaigns often provided the best news for movement organizations.

Sticky Situations

News coverage is sticky, a process that builds on itself, and so organizations and movements that make big news will often remain in the news. Journalists work from similar news values, often have pack mentalities, and will return to previous sources, and news coverage also spurs organizations, making them more prominent and increasing their followings. Policy gains can cement the process by keeping the best-known organizations newsworthy. For these reasons, too, usually only a handful of organizations will gain the bulk of the news coverage that their movements will receive at any given time.

News Teasers: The Inside Story

The first chapter identifies the movement organizations that were the most newsworthy in their days, offering a contentious history from the journalistic point of view. We zero in on the 100 organizations that received extensive news coverage in a given year. Some were often highly newsworthy and are well known. Think of the AFL-CIO, NAACP, and ACLU. Yet several others are

obscure today, including many from the first half of the century, including the Independence League, German-American Alliance, National Security League, Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, and Ham and Eggs. But some from the second half of the century also do not appear much in scholarship or current memory, including the Peace and Freedom Party, Jewish Defense League, and Major League Baseball Players Association. On the other hand, no organization from movements that today are well-known, such as the anti-smoking or animal rights movements, ever made this kind of major news. There were no big years in the news for the American Cancer Society or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. We show that the most covered organizations almost all had high membership, disruptive capacities, and an orientation toward politics. We conclude by addressing debates about whether movement organizations have become less membership-oriented, less material, and less protest-oriented over time.

Chapter 2 focuses on the quality of coverage of the 100 organizations when they were their most newsworthy. These organizations made news for a range of reasons, which included assertive political action, such as electioneering, legislative and litigation campaigns, and third-party challenges. Some organizations had big coverage years based on labor strikes and others had big years based on civic action. Yet others were in the news for the sorts of collective action often associated with social movements, such as protests and occupations. Finally, some organizations were thrust into the news for congressional investigations and criminal trials. These major moments of attention provided different kinds of news, too. Some years brought relatively good news: respectful treatments that influenced the framing and discussion of key issues. In some years of big attention, the news addressed movement actors' issues and claims, but treated them unfavorably. We are calling that "hard news." In other years, articles treated them respectfully, but ignored their views—"soft news." In yet others, the press brought the kind of bad news that helped to send organizations into a tailspin. These different types of news were closely linked to the reasons for coverage. However, as we will later show, gaining substantive coverage in a reliable way depended not just on the type of action, but on action combined with favorable organizational characteristics and political contexts.

The third chapter pulls back for a more macro view, examining the coverage of 30 broader movements across the century and addressing key questions about their trajectories. There were waves of attention to movements, but they were irregular ones that diverge from historical accounts and common

understandings. These waves were shaped by large-scale political changes—the modernization of the polity, the rise to power of left and right political regimes, and, for specific movements, major changes in policy. The chapter also identifies which of the 30 movements received extensive coverage and when they received it—including the labor movement for the entire century, long runs for the veterans’, women’s rights, African American civil rights, and environmental movements, and a smattering of others at different times. Qualitative comparative analyses show that what set apart the movements that received extensive coverage when they did was a confluence of factors; conditions at the movement organizational level, individual movement actions, and macro political conditions had to happen simultaneously for movements to make big news. Benefiting from a major policy breakthrough notably helped to buoy movements in the news, rather than being a signpost of movement decline. And there is one partial exception to the no-magic-bullet rule for extensive coverage, though it is more like the kind that perforates your foot. Having an organization that was being investigated by Congress routinely made big news for movements, if not in ways they would want. Finally, extensive news coverage often just continued for movements in the news, especially for those with policy gains and organizational capacities.

In the fourth chapter, we home in on the Townsend Plan, an old-age pension organization that commanded headlines and political interest in the 1930s and 1940s. Although not much remembered, the Townsend Plan captured the nation’s attention in the mid-1930s, when Townsend clubs were springing up all across the country. The organization was often treated substantively in the news, with its \$200 per month pension highlighted, but the proposal, the organization, and its leaders, notably Dr. Francis Townsend himself, were usually treated dismissively and often derisively. Townsend’s pension program was labeled unrealistic, dangerous, and “fantastic,” back when that term meant something hopelessly unrealistic. During the group’s investigation by Congress, the doctor and other organizational leaders were often portrayed as mercenaries, criminals, and deviants. Often news attention focused on its leaders as squabbling quasi-celebrities, highlighting the organization’s irascible frontman. We conclude by examining all the front-page news of the Townsend Plan and identify through QCA the characteristics that led reliably to substantive coverage when the organization was able to gain it. Assertive action was key to the main pathways, but also had to happen in a favorable political context or in stories initiated by the action of the organization.

The fifth chapter focuses on a movement that has received the most scholarly attention: the Black rights movement of the 1960s. This period is often seen as a time when journalism did what protesters always want it to do—highlight the justified demands of powerless groups and transmit them to more influential third parties, culminating in real change, including civil and voting rights acts. And it is true that national reporters descended on the South, covering the “race beat.” But that leaves out much of the story. Like the old-age pension movement, the Black rights movement often received dismissive and trivializing coverage. Moreover, the main organizations were covered more frequently not in the triumphant first half of the decade, but in the less celebrated second half of the decade. Great attention was lavished on controversies among and within organizations, the meaning of “Black Power,” failed initiatives in the North, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Vietnam War, and the trials of Black Panther leaders. As the decade closed, Black rights organizations were less likely to be covered in the context of important issues. The leaders often received celebrity treatment, with non-movement actors often portrayed as leaders, disputes among leaders foregrounded, and notoriety cast on them regarding run-ins with the law. This chapter also drills down to analyze the articles that brought these organizations into the news and identifies why some of these articles provided substantive treatments. Here we identify the more numerous routes to this sort of useful coverage for organizations with more moderate goals and tactics, such as the NAACP and Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, than the more radical ones, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Black Panther Party.

Chapter 6 moves into the twenty-first century. Politics has become increasingly nationalized, while political parties have become asymmetrically polarized and, more important, different in kind. At the same time, the old news media regime was overthrown, with the rise of the internet and social media, the emergence of a powerful right-wing media system, 24-hour news, and the demise of many local newspapers. These transformations have boosted right-wing movement actors’ bids for attention and policy change at the expense of those on the left. But there remain many continuities with the past. National news organizations still do the bulk of newsgathering, have become even more important relative to their regional and local counterparts, and retain great influence over political debates. Movement coverage remains dominated by larger organizations, with changes in the standing of movements influenced

by the decline of organized labor and the ascendance of movements that took off in the second half of the twentieth century. The news coverage of movements still responds to partisan regimes and policy change, though for left movements such change has been harder to come by. We show how some of these transformations played out in the news coverage of the Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party movements, each with historical forerunners. We address the degree to which they have been able to influence public debates. For all the changes in the media environment, much of their news coverage follows long-standing patterns from the twentieth century. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and addresses the current state of movement news attention. We end with thoughts about the future of news and the prospects of social movements.

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