Framing Occupy Wall Street:
A Content Analysis of *The New York Times* and *USA Today*

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Previous research has shown that media coverage of social protests tended to frame domestic protest activities in various negative ways. This study proposed a typology of six framing/marginalization devices to media coverage of Occupy Wall Street that started in New York in September 2011. Through a combination of content analysis and logistic regression analyses, this study found that *lawlessness*, *official sources*, *show*, and *ineffective goals* are the most widely used marginalization devices in reporting OWS, and that five out of the six devices are associated with the overall tone of the coverage of the protest groups—*public disapproval* is the most explanatory device, followed by *negative impact*, *show*, *ineffective goals*, and *lawlessness*. These five framing devices as a whole can explain 65.5% of the variability of the overall tone.

Keywords: Occupy Wall Street, protest groups, framing, marginalization devices, content analysis, logistic regression

Introduction

In Western liberal democracies, nonviolent social protest is a legal right given to citizens by the constitution. Protest is viewed as a supplement to voting and lobbying activities to influence government policy, constituting a bridge that connects the public and policy-makers (Cottle, 2008). At the same time, in order to monitor and control social protests, government and law enforcement usually require the protest organizers to apply in advance, to implement and end the peaceful protest within the approved location and time period. On the media side, control is exerted mainly through negative news framing, which functions as a mechanism of social control to weaken the influence of social protests in public opinion (McLeod & Hertog, 1992), or by "manufacturing consent" (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). This double-level control of government and mass media has led to the diminishing impact of social protests

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over the past several decades in the United States. Although the strategies implemented by the government in handling protests can be observed more easily, for example, through the words of officials or actions of the police, strategies taken by the mass media to weaken the influence of protests are not so overt—partly due to the independent or semi-independent status of the U.S. media from the government (Bennett, 1990; Bennett & Livingston, 2003)—and thus need careful examination. Through such studies, we may unfold the role of the media in maintaining the status quo in western democracy.

In September 2011, a historic event occurred in the United States: the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. This movement was attributed to issues including economic decline, high unemployment, economic inequality, dissatisfaction with the concentration of wealth in the hands of the elites and with the larger political and economic systems, and the refusal of educated youth and the middle class to accept the status quo. This movement gained widespread media coverage at home and abroad, but there is a lack of systematic analyses of the coverage of the protest. The objective of this study is to examine how the U.S. mainstream media framed the OWS movement and, more specifically, to propose a typology of six framing devices to the study of OWS framing, examine the prevalence of these devices, and to explore the relationship between these devices and the overall tone in reporting OWS. This study can help us understand how the media could weaken the impact of social protests like the OWS through a series of marginalization devices.

Framing Protest

Since the early 1990s, framing has attracted widespread attention in mass communication and sociopolitical science, and research findings about this area are abundant (Borah, 2011). Goffman (1974) posited that frames are "schemata of interpretation," which enables individuals to label, organize, and interpret information, life experiences, and the surrounding world. According to Entman (1993), to frame is to select and highlight some aspects of the problem while at the same time neglecting and excluding other aspects of the problem. Framing is the device that makes the frames communicable and salient.

A number of researchers have studied how the U.S. media framed domestic social protests. One of the earliest studies was Gitlin's (1980) analysis of media coverage of the anti–Vietnam War movement. Gitlin found that the framing devices used by the U.S. media on the antiwar movement and protesters include trivialization (making light of protesters' dress, appearance, age, language), marginalization (downplaying the representativeness of the movement), undercounting protesters, denying the movement's effectiveness, and exaggerating the threat that the movement posed to mainstream society by emphasizing the presence of communists in the protests. Along this line of inquiry, scholars have examined the framing strategies of news media in reporting protests in the past three decades. Although earlier studies were influenced by the traditional social scientific research and focused on effects of framing strategies on perception of protest groups through experiments (McLeod, 1995; Shoemaker, 1982), later research has focused on framing strategies, per se, using content analysis. For example, through a study of the coverage of women's movement in the United States from 1966 to 1986, Ashley and Olson (1998) found that the U.S. media delegitimized the movement mainly through the following frames: (1) focusing on protesters' unusual appearance and dress to show the antimainstream nature of the movement, (2) using nonspeech quotation marks on protesters' key slogans to show that their slogans

and demands are unrealistic or not serious, and (3) emphasizing dissensions among the participants to demonstrate that the movement lacks consistent goals and guidelines. Boykoff (2006) investigated the media coverage of the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999 and the World Bank/IMF protests in Washington, DC, in 2000. Their analyses found five major frames about the protests: violence, disruption, freak (focusing on the appearance and nonmainstream ideology of protesters), ignorance, and amalgam of grievances. Dardis (2006) studied news coverage of the U.S. antiwar movement and found that media reports mainly adopted the following themes to negatively frame the antiwar movement: (1) the protests violated regulations and social order, (2) protesters clashed with police, (3) quoting official sources, (4) antiwar is against American troops and American soldiers. These studies showed that media framing of protests has been consistently negative.

Research on media coverage of protests has continued, and some scholars have conducted comparative and longitudinal studies (Boyle, McCluskey, McLeod, & Stein, 2005; Di Cicco, 2010; Jha, 2007). For instance, Jha (2007) compared news coverage of two social protests set three decades apart and found that the news coverage of anti-WTO protests in 1999 relied on official and authoritative sources more than the news covering anti–Vietnam War protests in 1967. Di Cicco (2010) examined U.S. mainstream newspapers' coverage of social protests that happened in the United States between 1967 and 2007 and found that the U.S. media have become increasingly conservative and often framed social protests in three major ways: (1) protests caused inconvenience to people's daily life; (2) protests have little effect; (3) protests are unpatriotic. These comparative studies found that recent coverage of protests are even more negative than reports of earlier social movements.

Building on the cumulative research on media coverage of social protests, researchers posited that such coverage and the set of framing strategies utilized constituted the "protest paradigm" (Brasted, 2005; McLeod & Hertog, 1998). The protest paradigm generally tended to support the status quo and treated protest groups who were trying to disrupt it as politically deviant (McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Shoemaker, 1984). News coverage often has a status quo bias because of journalistic rules for objectivity and media relationships with sociopolitical elites (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995; Tuchman, 1978). The protest paradigm focused on protest activities rather than sociopolitical issues behind the protest, and on police–protester conflicts rather than conflicts involving sociopolitical inequalities, thus failing to provide the public with the necessary information to understand the root cause of the protests (Brasted, 2005; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). Such coverage can have negative effects on people's perceptions of protest groups, including viewing them as illegitimate troublemakers and perceiving the protests as useless and a threat to social order (McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Shoemaker, 1982). The protest paradigm consists of a set of common framing strategies and devices for covering protests. The current research focused on six framing strategies/devices in the study of news coverage of the OWS protest.

First, news coverage of protests tended to select and highlight lawlessness, violence potential (although no violence actually occurred), and the violent behaviors of a few protesters (e.g., confrontation and clashes with the police) while ignoring the peaceful actions of the majority of protesters (Boykoff, 2006; Dardis, 2006; Husting, 1999; McLeod & Hertog, 1998). Such reports highlighted protesters' disruptive behaviors and confrontations between the protesters and the police. The protesters were described as troublemakers and anarchists who threaten social order, while the police were described as

simply responsive and preventive, working to protect and restore social order, although their actions and arrests were also violent. The protesters vs. police conflict news frame replaced the real conflict between the protesters and their intended opposition target, typically the government or a corporate agency (McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). In this way, protesters who challenged the political status quo were presented as a group of deviants challenging the police and the law, and the political protests were described as disruptive activities.

Second, the news reports focused on the dramaturgical, performative activities of the protest and the depictions of protesters—including their young age, funny dress, and immature appearance—rather than the main issues and goals of the protest (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Gitlin, 1980; McFarlane & Hay, 2003). Such reports highlighted the theatrical elements of the protest, which McLeod and Hertog (1998) termed "freak show" (p. 312). When issues are covered, they are often trivialized and oversimplified. In this way, the protest was presented to the public as a stage for drama, party, and entertainment, thereby reinforcing the laughable aspects of the protest and weakening the serious issues and problems OWS aimed to address.

Third, the coverage of protests emphasized the internal dissension of protesters' goals and a few of the obviously laughable or radical slogans or ideas in the protest, which are often used in nonspeech quotation marks, thereby rendering the ideas and goals of the protesters as less serious or threatening to mainstream values and norms and reducing the legitimacy of the protest's missions (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Brasted, 2005; Gitlin, 1980). For example, Ashley and Olson (1998) found that the use of nonspeech quotation marks to delegitimizing feminist protesters occurred 181 times in their sample. McLeod and Hertog (1992) pointed out an analogous technique in television news: the use of the phrase "the protesters call." By saying, "the protesters call it a peace march," the reporter is questioning the truthfulness of the words "peace march" in the same way that the print media would use scare quotes on the label "peace march" to deride antiwar demonstrators.

Fourth, the coverage of protests emphasized public disapproval of the protest by undercounting the number of protesters, claiming that protesters were not representative of the public and that the public did not support the protest (Ashley & Olson, 1998; Di Cicco, 2010; Gitlin, 1980; Small, 1994). Such reports often used opinion polls to show that a majority of those surveyed did not support the protesters, but details about the survey questions and procedures of the opinion polls were seldom disclosed. The media also used negative comments made by bystanders to indicate public disapproval of the protest and protesters (Brasted, 2005; McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). The bystanders were used to represent a large portion of the population and might have a large impact on the audience because of the group pressure to conform to assumed majority opinions; bystanders who were sympathetic to the protest were generally treated as participants of the protest (McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). Public disapproval was used to downplay the representativeness of the protest and served as a mechanism of social control.

Fifth, media quoted official and authoritative sources and used their words and perspectives to explain the protests and define the issues. Research has shown that news reports often solicited the opinions of official sources like police, government officials, and business leaders rather than nonelite

sources (Brasted, 2005; Dardis, 2006; Jha, 2007; McFarlane & Hay, 2003; McLeod & Hertog, 1998). News media rely on official sources to add prestige to the story, to increase the efficiency of news production, to maintain status quo norms and rules, and to maintain "objectivity" (McLeod & Hertog, 1998).

Finally, the coverage emphasized the negative impact of protests: the protests caused inconvenience to transportation or annoyance to residents and employees who lived or worked in the neighborhood, the protests increased cost to the public as a result of expanded police patrol, the protests hurt business, the protests threatened the American family and community values, or the protests were unpatriotic and harmed national interests (e.g., considering antiwar protests as being anti-American troops) (Boykoff, 2006; Di Cicco, 2010; Husting, 2006). By highlighting the negative aspects of the protest, news reports framed the protest as a disruption to social order.

Prior research has provided consistent empirical evidence about the protest paradigm and the above-mentioned framing strategies or devices. However, very little research has examined the prevalence of these framing devices and the relationship between the overall tone of news story and the devices (Dardis, 2006). For example, Dardis proposed a typology of 14 framing devices and found general *lawlessness*, *police confrontation*, and *official sources* are the mostly widely used devices and are associated with negative overall story tone. Although Dardis' typology provides the most complete list of devices in the existing literature, it has several limitations and needs improvement. First, there are overlaps between some of the devices, which may make it difficult to differentiate them. For example, *general lawlessness* and *confrontation with police* were treated as two different framing devices; however, confrontation with police is a kind of lawlessness, and it has few practical implications to treat them as two rather than one framing device. *Freak show* and *carnival* can also be combined into one framing device as *show* or *performance*. Second, some of the devices (e.g., *counterdemonstrators* and *protest as treason*) are particular to Dardis' antiwar protests but may not be applicable to other types of protests. To make studies comparable, it is necessary to have more parsimonious typologies that can be applied to a variety of social protests. The typology of the six framing devices proposed in this study is developed mainly based on the commonalities of Gitlin (1980), McLeod and associates (McLeod & Hertog, 1992; McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Hertog, 1998), and Dardis (2006), and can be applied to various different protest events while being parsimonious. For instance, *public disapproval* can be used to include negative framing of the protest based on statistics or accounts from public opinion polls, bystanders, counterprotest groups, or undercounted protesters, which were treated as four different devices in Dardis' typology (statistics, generalizations, witness accounts, and counterdemonstrators).

After the OWS movement started in September 2011, it gained widespread media coverage at home and abroad. However, there is a lack of systematic analyses of the coverage of the protest. The objective of this study is to examine how U.S. mainstream media framed the movement, looking specifically at the prevalence of the framing devices and the relationship between the devices and the overall story tone. To achieve this purpose, this study proposed the following two research questions:

RQ1:   What was the frequency of occurrence of each framing device in the coverage of the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement?

RQ2:   *Are the six framing devices associated with the overall tone of media coverage toward the OWS protest groups?*

Method

Sample

Data for the current study were collected from *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. *The New York Times* is the most influential elite newspaper in the United States that not only sets the agenda for many other U.S. news media but also has a significant impact on U.S. national policy. *USA Today* is a popular newspaper that had the second-largest circulation in the United States at the time of the OWS movement and is generally considered centrist in its reporting. This study analyzed a census of coverage from *The New York Times* and *USA Today* about the OWS movement during the 120 days following the first protest on September 17, 2011. The articles were drawn by conducting a search in the LexisNexis database using "occupy wall street" as the keywords. After double-checking every article and cleaning irrelevant articles, this process resulted in 132 noneditorial/non-op-ed/non-letter-to-the-editor newspaper articles that were about the OWS protests. Among these articles, 107 were from *The New York Times* and 25 were from *USA Today*. Because the OWS movement started in New York, it is understandable that *The New York Times* devoted more resources to cover the protest.

Coding

The coding unit was the article. The article has been used frequently as a coding unit by many communication researchers on social movements and protests (Armstrong & Boyle, 2011; Dardis, 2006; Di Cicco, 2010), and this method can be more efficient in capturing the content and themes of the overall coverage than using the paragraph as the coding unit. Articles were coded for the presence or absence of the six framing devices (thus, six yes–no binary items) and another item, the overall tone toward protesters/protest.

When coding these six framing devices, it was very common that some contents could be coded as two kinds of framing devices. The following example that appeared in *The New York Times* was both using bystanders' disapproving comments about the protest and about the negative impact of the protest:

> "Four hours is too much," said a mother of four who lives by the park and did not want her name made public for fear of backlash from protesters. "It's been hell. Even as I speak, these drummers are going at it." They said they felt menaced by the protesters and sickened by unsanitary conditions in parts of the park. They feared that the violence and deaths that have occurred at other Occupy sites would unfold at Zuccotti, too. (Buckley, 2011, p. 22)

Because this study did not treat these framing devices as categories for the same variable—rather, it treated them as separate variables and each variable had *yes* versus *no* options—using two framing devices on the same content (e.g., public disapproval and the negative impact of the protest for the above

example) was feasible and did not violate the rule for coding. The *yes* versus *no* options were consistent with the rule of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusivity on categories for a variable.

Lawlessness

The news article was coded as *yes* if the coverage mentioned the violent activity of the protesters, the potential threat to social order, or conflict between protesters and police. An example of lawlessness that appeared in *The New York Times* was,

> But to the New York Police Department, the protesters represented something else: a visible example of lawlessness akin to that which had resulted in destruction and violence at other anti-capitalist demonstrations, like the Group of 20 economic summit meeting in London in 2009 and the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in 1999. (Bellafante, 2011, p. 1)

An example of violent lawlessness that appeared in *USA Today* was,

> A group of about 300 protesters, many of them men wearing black, some covering their faces with bandanas and some carrying wooden sticks, smashed windows of a Wells Fargo bank branch while chanting "Banks got bailed out. We got sold out." (Weiss, 2011, p. 3A)

An example of potential threat or violence that appeared in *The New York Times* was, "The protesters were threatening to disrupt the stock exchange and city subways on Thursday with demonstrations marking their two months' occupation of Zuccotti Park" (Halbfinger & Barbaro, 2011, p. 1). The article was coded as *no* when its content did not mention such disruptive activity or conflict between the protesters and the police.

Show

The article was coded as *yes* when the content mentioned the performative and theatrical activity of the protesters and described the protesters' young age, funny dress, or immature appearance. An example that appeared in *The New York Times* was,

> By late morning on Wednesday, Occupy Wall Street, a noble but fractured and airy movement of rightly frustrated young people, had a default ambassador in a half-naked woman who called herself Zuni Tikka. A blonde with a marked likeness to Joni Mitchell and a seemingly even stronger wish to burrow through the space-time continuum and hunker down in 1968, Ms. Tikka had taken off all but her cotton underwear and was dancing on the north side of Zuccotti Park, facing Liberty Street, just west of Broadway. (Bellafante, 2011, p. 1)

Another such example that also appeared in *The New York Times* was,

> At 9:30 p.m., a couple was swing dancing to live accordion accompaniment in the southeast corner. On the western end, three girls Hula-Hooped with illuminated hoops. Billy Wittreich, 23, rolled cigarettes and gave them away at a booth decorated with a flickering jack-o'-lantern engraved with "99%." "It's to prevent edginess among protesters who would otherwise have nicotine withdrawal," he said. (Nir, 2011, p. 25)

The news article was coded as *no* when its content did not include items that focused on protesters' age, dress, or theatrical activity.

Ineffective Goals

The article was coded as *yes* when the content emphasized that the protest was ineffective and would not bring about substantive changes by stating that the protesters' ideas and goals are extremist or immature, or the protest groups are disorganized or not clear or united on their goals, messages, or strategies. An example that appeared in *The New York Times* was,

> The group's lack of cohesion and its apparent wish to pantomime progressivism rather than practice it knowledgably is unsettling in the face of the challenges so many of its generation face—finding work, repaying student loans, figuring out ways to finish college when money has run out. (Bellafante, 2011, p. 1)

Another example that appeared in *USA Today* was,

> The weakness of the Occupy movement is its lack of a unifying message, other than the mantra about representing 99% of America. The Tea Party movement, at least, had a clear message—smaller government and a return to the Founding principles—and drew from different camps within the conservative establishment. (Hampson, 2011, p. 1A)

The article was coded as *no* when its content did not have such negative comments on the goals or strategies or the protest.

Public Disapproval

The article was coded as *yes* if the content claimed that the public (e.g., opinion polls), media, bystanders, or counterprotest groups opposed, did not support, or did not pay attention to the protest or undercounted protesters to make claims that they were unrepresentative. An example that appeared in *USA Today* was,

> Two months after the Occupy Wall Street movement spread to dozens of cities and colleges, six in 10 Americans still don't know enough about its goals to decide if they are for or against it. A *USA TODAY*/Gallup Poll conducted Saturday and Sunday found that 56% say they neither support nor oppose the movement or have no opinion. That's unchanged from a poll in mid-October. . . .The poll found the biggest change was in the

percentage of Americans who disapprove of the way the movement is being conducted: 31%, up from 20% in October. One in five approved, down from one in four. (Bello, 2011, p. 1A)

An example using bystanders to negatively comment on the protest appeared in *USA Today*,

Brenda Joy, 36, who works at a Chicago cosmetics store, says the protesters have hurt business. "People don't want to come by," she says, and ask instead that purchases be delivered. "They just take up the sidewalk, and they don't get out of the way. I have no sympathy for them." (Copeland & Keen, 2011, p. 3A)

The article was coded as *no* when its content did not have such negative remarks about the protest/protesters.

Official Sources

The article was coded as *yes* when the article quoted official sources such as law enforcement and government officials. An example that appeared in *The New York Times* was,

The mayor spoke to reporters at an event in Central Park promoting the New York City Marathon. "You know, I think increasingly you're seeing that the community, businesses and residents in Lower Manhattan feel that they are the ones that are being occupied," he said. "This isn't an occupation of Wall Street. It's an occupation of a growing, vibrant residential neighborhood in Lower Manhattan, and it's really hurting small businesses and families." (Taylor, 2011, p. 28)

The article was coded *no* if its content did not quote official sources.

Negative Impact

The article was coded as *yes* when the content emphasized the negative impact of the protest (e.g., the protests caused inconvenience to transportation or annoyance to residents and employees who live or work in the neighborhood; the protests increased cost to the public as a result of the increased parole of the police; the protests hurt business; the protests threatened the American family and community values, or the protests were unpatriotic and harmed national interests). An example that appeared in *The New York Times* was,

As the Occupy Wall Street protest nears its third month, Lower Manhattan residents who live nearby have alternately grown more accustomed to it or increasingly aggrieved. Foremost among complaints are the protesters' daily drumming sessions, which, some neighbors say, jangle nerves, scare young children, disrupt homework and make working at home impossible. (Buckley, 2011, p. 22)

The news article was coded as *no* when its content did not mention the negative impact or emphasized the movement's potential positive impacts (e.g., the protests will bring about policy change and favorable outcomes for the protesters and the larger public and society).

Overall Tone

The overall tone refers to the general attitude toward protesters or the protest group and was conceptualized to represent the predominant feeling of the story's tone after one had read the entire article (Dardis, 2006). It was coded as negative if the overall tone of the article toward the protest/protesters was negative. It was coded as neutral/positive if the overall tone of the article toward the protesters was neutral or positive. Because this study focused on negative framing devices and aimed to explore which framing devices are associated with negative coverage of the protest, it did not further distinguish between neutral and positive tones. In other words, overall tone was treated as a binary variable in this study, and it can also help improve intercoder reliability with only two categories. In order to have distinct measure of frames (IVs in RQ2) and overall tone (DV in RQ2) and avoid the potential impact of coding the framing devices on coding the overall tone (e.g., one may tend to code the article as negative if the article was found to have used many negative framing devices, but this will constitute measurement error—the error of the DV will vary with the value of IVs if the same coder codes both IVs and DV), this variable was not coded by the two coders who coded the framing devices but by another set of two coders.

Intercoder Reliability

Before the coding, the researcher conducted a training session and explained the coding scheme to two coders who coded the framing devices and two coders who coded the overall tone of the news stories; all are graduate students in the author's department. After they coded 10 articles, the researcher discussed with them the disagreements between their coding results and helped them reach agreements. Then, they independently coded 28 randomly chosen articles, accounting for 21% of the 132 articles. Cohen's kappa was used to calculate intercoder reliability. The reliability is .80, .92, .83, .82, .86, .80, and .78 for *lawlessness*, *official sources*, *show*, *ineffective goals*, *negative impact*, *public disapproval*, and *tone*, respectively, which showed substantial agreement.

Results

Among the 132 articles (*The New York Times* had 107 articles and *USA Today* had 25 articles), 68 articles (51.5%) were negative toward OSW protesters, while 64 articles were neutral or positive (48.5%). *The New York Times* had 51 negative articles and 56 neutral or positive articles, whereas *USA Today* had 17 negative articles and 8 neutral or positive reports.

To answer RQ1, Table 1 listed the frequency of the occurrence of each framing device. The table showed that the mostly widely used framing device of the protest was *lawlessness* (n = 69, or 52.3%), followed by *official sources* (n = 54, or 40.9%), *show* (n = 49, or 37.1%), *ineffective goals* (n = 35, or 26.5%), *negative impact* (n = 32, or 24.2%), and *public disapproval* (n = 29, or 22.0%).

Table 1.Frequency of Framing Devices by Newspaper.

	Total (%a)	NYTimes (%b)	USA Today (%c)
Lawlessness	69 (52.3%)	57 (53.3%)	12 (48.0%)
Official sources	54 (40.9%)	45 (42.1%)	9 (36.0%)
Show	49 (37.1%)	44 (41.1%)	5 (20.0%)
Ineffective goals	35 (26.5%)	25 (23.4%)	10 (40.0%)
Negative impact	32 (24.2%)	26 (24.3%)	6 (24.0%)
Public disapproval	29 (22.0%)	19 (17.8%)	10 (40.0%)

Note. %a = percentage of the total, *n* = 132; %b = percentage within newspaper, *n* =107; %c = percent within newspaper, n = 25.

For instance, numerous articles in the two newspapers claimed that the OWS was ineffective in that the protest groups were not clear or united in their goals or messages. The media have used the absence of consistent demands to write off this movement. One article in *The New York Times* stated:

> The lack of a coherent message on the left has been evident at the Wall Street protest. "I have not heard a single song that sums up what we are trying to do here," said Martian Hughes, a 24-year-old college student, after Mr. Morello's performance. (McKinley, Jr., 2011, p. C1)

Another article in *The New York Times* wrote:

> The location works, and the crowd makes for good television, but crunchy sound bites are hard to find. The movement's anticorporate rant lumps together complaints as varied as mortgage foreclosure wrongs and torture. And the idea of "a feeling of mass injustice" is less compelling than the Tea Party's clear "taxed enough already." (Beales, Hadas, Larsen, & Currie, 2011, p. B2)

Such dismissal of OWS failed to realize that the strategic vagueness of their goals actually helped the protesters because, in this way, it absorbed the causes of unions, students, and frustrated Americans alike. Despite the varied demands, one central message was clear: the political and the economic system have concentrated wealth and power in the hands of a few at the expense of the many; they are not capable of action to respond to the middle class and thus must be dramatically reformed.

Negative impact was reflected in content regarding the annoyance caused by the protests, including impact on residents, business, and safety in the surrounding communities. For example, an article titled "When Occupying Becomes Irritating" in *The New York Times* stated:

Residents, too, say they are losing patience. Mothers have grown weary of navigating strollers through the maze of barricades that have sprouted along the streets. Toddlers have been roused from sleep just after bedtime by chanting and pounding drums. Heather Amato, 35, a psychologist who lives near the protest area, said she felt disturbed by some of the conduct of the protesters. . . . "It's been three weeks now," Ms. Amato said. "Enough is enough." (Bukley, 2011, p. A15)

Another article in *The New York Times* claimed that the protests hurt business:

The barricades that were removed had lined Wall Street for six weeks, and businesses had blamed them for a decline in foot traffic. At Milk Street Cafe, at 40 Wall Street, sales were down so much since the beginning of the protests that the owner, Marc Epstein, said he laid off 21 of 100 employees last week. (Taylor, 2011, p. 28)

An article that appeared in *USA Today* on November 30 emphasized sanitary problems, noise, and crime caused by the protests:

The park protesters have been camping out in the urban environment, unsuitable for such activities. They have created sanitary problems and noise pollution by beating drums and other instruments. Crime has shot up in and around the park, including rapes and physical assaults. Police officers have been injured in confrontations with protesters—problems that are not limited to Occupy protests in New York City. (Rivkin, Jr., & Casey, 2011, p. 9A)

Undoubtedly, any protest (including the Arab Spring) will cause inconvenience to the neighboring communities, residents, and businesses; however, these articles emphasized the bothersome aspects of the OWS, and such characterization of the protests would lead people to develop negative views of the movement. On the contrary, *The New York Times* and *USA Today* have never reported on such bothersome aspects of the Arab Spring. The American audiences got used to such characterizations of domestic protests like the OWS; however, they may find it astonishing if these media had described the Arab Spring protests as they did the OWS protests: "The protesters have been camping out in the urban environment, unsuitable for such activities."

To address RQ2, analyses were conducted in two steps. Firstly, separate 2 × 2 chi-square tests were conducted to examine whether the use of each framing device was associated with the overall tone of the news coverage. The results showed that all six framing devices were significantly associated with the overall tone of news coverage (see Table 2).

Table 2 Chi-Square Analyses of the Association Between Framing Devices and Overall Tone.

Variable	x^2	Goodman and Kruskal tau
Outcome variable = Overall tone		
Lawlessness	8.69**	.066
Show	17.96***	.136
Ineffective goals	26.19***	.198
Public disapproval	30.18***	.229
Negative impact	34.80***	.264
Official sources	4.80*	.036

Note. N = 132. *df* = 1. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

The results indicated that news stories that used these framing devices tended to be more negative in overall tone toward the protest/protesters than stories that did not use such framing devices. The results also showed that the strength of the association between *negative impact* and overall tone was the largest; the Goodman and Kruskal tau = .264, which meant that there was a 26.4% reduction in the article's overall tone being misclassified as emphasizing the *negative impact* of the protests, followed by *public disapproval*, *ineffective goals*, *show*, *lawlessness*, and *official sources*.

Although crosstab chi-square tests can tell the relationship between variables, the predictive effect of variables can be spurious, hidden, or reversed when just looking at the marginal totals in crosstabs because they do not take into account correlations of predictive variables. Regression models can often be the best way to attribute causal effect to predictive variables. Thus, the second step was to run binary logistic regression models with the overall tone of news coverage as the dependent variable and the six framing devices as the independent variables. Before running the logistic regression models, the adequacy of expected frequencies between each independent variable and the dependent variable was examined using SPSS CROSSTABS. The results showed that no expected frequencies were less than five. Therefore, the goodness-of-fit criteria could be used to evaluate the model.

Of the 132 news articles, 64 (48.5%) articles were neutral/positive and 68 (51.5%) articles were negative toward the protest/protesters. In other words, the overall percentage of correct classification by chance (without using any predictors) was 51.5%. A useful regression model needed to significantly exceed the 51.5% chance classification. The results of the direct binary logistic regression analysis (in Table 3) showed a highly significant probability value, $\chi^2(6, N = 132) = 92.63$, $p < .001$, indicating that the six framing devices, as a set, reliably predict the overall tone of the news coverage toward the protest/protesters. The R^2 for this model is .673, showing that it accounted for a large amount of variance in predicting the overall tone of the coverage. The overall correct percentage of classification was 81.8%, a significant increase from 51.5% of the baseline model ($p < .001$). Tables 3 and 4 provide specific results of the logistic regression analyses. Table 3 shows that five out of the six framing devices had significant coefficients, and only *official sources* had a nonsignificant coefficient, which means that the use of official

sources could not significantly predict whether the overall tone of the news coverage was neutral/positive or negative when all other things were equal. Odds ratio analyses showed that the odds ratios for the five significant framing devices ranged from 4.42 to 29.96; in other words, the odds of being negative in overall tone for a news story with these framing devices are 4.42 to 29.96 times the odds of being negative for a news story without these framing devices. The most explanatory variable on story tone is *public disapproval*, followed by *negative impact*, *show*, and *lawlessness*, respectively. The chi-square difference between this model and a model without *official sources* showed that the difference was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 132) = 3.50$, $p > .05$. The results of the stepwise logistic regression analysis in Table 4 with all the six framing devices also showed that this variable was not included in the best predictive model, which consisted of the other five framing devices, excluding *official sources*. Block 5 with five framing devices is statistically significant and has more explanatory power in explaining the overall tone than Block 1 through Block 4, with one to four framing devices, respectively. The five framing devices as a whole can predict the overall tone and have significant main effects, (R^2 Change for block = .054, R^2 = .655, χ^2 value for block = 10.16, $p < .001$), and all the five framing devices are significantly associated with overall tone. These five framing devices as a whole can explain 65.5% of the variability of the overall tone. Compared with Block 5, Block 6 is not statistically significant. In other words, adding the frame *official sources* does not improve the model and has no extra explanatory power. Therefore, the simpler model Block 5 was preferred.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Analyses for Framing Devices Predicting Overall Tone.

		95% CI for Exp(B)		
Variables	B (SE)	Lower	Exp(B)	Upper
Constant	-3.38***(0.77)			
Lawlessness	1.49* (0.67)	1.19	4.42	16.4
Show	2.32** (0.74)	2.34	10.16	43.11
Ineffective goals	2.12* (0.87)	1.52	8.31	45.48
Public disapproval	3.40** (1.22)	2.75	29.96	326.66
Negative impact	2.90* (2.90)	1.95	18.25	171.02
Official sources	1.33 (0.75)	0.87	3.77	16.27

Note. R^2 = .67. Model x^2 (6, N = 132) = 92.63, $p < .001$. CI = confidence interval.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4. Hierarchical Logistic Regression for Framing Devices Predicting Overall Tone.

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	Block 6
	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
Public Disapproval	44.10***	30.93**	38.38**	23.36**	19.81*	29.96**
Negative Impact		38.64**	41.11**	36.94**	28.20**	18.25*
Show			5.71**	4.34**	5.70**	10.16**
Ineffective Goals				2.93	7.25*	8.31*
Lawlessness					6.27**	4.42*
Official Sources						3.77
R^2	.323	.512	.588	.601	.655	.673
R^2 Change for block	.323	.189	.076	.013	.054	.018
x^2 value for block	36.56***	27.35***	12.79***	2.29	10.16***	3.50
x^2 value for model	36.56***	63.91***	76.70***	78.98***	89.14***	90.24***

*Note. N = 132; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001 (2-tailed).*

Discussion

Previous framing research on protests focused on identifying marginalization devices that the media used to delegitimize social protests (Brasted, 2005; Di Cicco, 2010; Gitlin, 1980; McFarlane & Hay, 2003; McLeod & Hertog, 1998. This study attempted to examine how the mainstream media framed the OWS movement. The results of this study contributed to the understanding of news coverage of the OWS movement and to the literature of protest framing in several ways.

This study proposed and tested a typology of six framing devices used in the coverage of the OWS protests and explored the relationship between the occurrence of framing strategies and the overall tone of the news coverage of the protest. The results showed that the five devices as a whole can explain story tone well and are more parsimonious than previous typologies of framing devices used in media coverage of social protests (Boykoff, 2006; Dardis, 2006; Husting, 1999; McLeod & Hertog, 1998). The

contribution of this study is not limited to media coverage of social protests; it could be applied to framing and communication research, in general. Framing involves selecting and highlighting some aspects of the problem while at the same time neglecting and excluding other aspects of the problem (Entman, 1993). The framing devices examined in this study could help researchers understand what types of framing strategies and media contents could be effective in shaping public opinion. More specifically, highlighting the negative side of the target group and their actions could weaken the support of the public for the cause of that group.

Lawlessness, official sources, and show are the most widely used devices in these news reports. The findings are consistent with Dardis' (2006) results that general lawlessness, police confrontation, official sources, and freak show are the most widely used devices among a typology of 14 framing devices (general lawlessness and police confrontation are treated as one device—lawlessness—in this study). Framing the OWS protests as lawlessness and show made the protesters appear to be immature youths and deviant troublemakers. It was a dilemma for both protesters and journalists. For protesters, on one hand, performative activities and deviant behaviors are ways to attract media attention; on the other hand, they could lead to negative perceptions of the protest when these activities and behaviors were covered in the media. Journalists report what they see, and focusing on these protest activities can attract audience interests. Using official sources can have a double-edged sword effect; it was an efficient way to get authoritative information, but it was also a way to define the problem with the official perspectives, which made the coverage biased for the official voices. The other three framing devices, which were ineffective goals, negative impact, and public disapproval, were also prevalent in the news coverage.

While all six framing devices are associated with the overall tone of the news coverage, the strengths of association were different. Among the six devices, the most explanatory variable on story tone is public disapproval, followed by negative impact, show, ineffective goals, and lawlessness, respectively. It is reasonable to assume that the media's coverage of public disapproval and negative impact of the OWS could lead the public to have negative views of the movement, whereas show, ineffective goals, and lawlessness are common to almost every social protest. Official sources showed only a weak relationship with the overall tone. The results of the binary logistic regression and hierarchical regression models showed that the five framing devices as a set predicted the overall tone of the news coverage, but the use of official sources could not significantly predict whether the overall tone of the news coverage was neutral/positive or negative when all other things were equal. The results were consistent with the chi-square analyses that yielded a relatively weak relationship for official sources with the overall tone. This means that although the use of official sources was prevalent in the coverage of the OWS protests, it was used rather widely in both negative and neutral/positive coverage. This was understandable in that the protest chose to be leaderless, which made quoting official sources an efficient way to get authoritative information. The findings are partially consistent with Dardis' (2006) results showing general lawlessness, police confrontation, and romper room are associated with the overall tone, but differ on official sources (significant relationship in Dardis' study) and freak show (nonsignificant relationship in Dardis' study). The reason for the differences may be that this study used one device (show) rather than two different devices (freak show and romper room).

This study found that the amount of negative news coverage and neutral/positive coverage was close. Because neutral and positive coverage were treated as one rather than two categories, it was obvious that the negative coverage would be more than the positive coverage, which made the coverage of the OWS appear to be negative. This was reflected by the fact that the first in-print article in *The New York Times* about the OWS protest was Ginia Bellafante's (2011, p. 1) dismissive piece headlined, "Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim*." USA Today*'s first in-print coverage also focused on the carnival atmosphere of the protest and made light of the issues that concerned protesters with quotes like the following:

> The draws: face painting, drum circles and a chance to meet such activists as Bill Steyert, 68, a Vietnam War veteran from Queens. Sporting a tie-dyed T-shirt and peace symbol pendant, he tells Lewis he is "just as angry now as I was back in 1968." . . . Meanwhile, visitor Lewis is entertained—if not convinced—by Occupy Wall Street's message. Interrupting Steyert's harangue comparing the current U.S. movement to recent protests in Cairo, she tells him, "You can't equate a dictator who tortured people and shut down democracy with what's happening here." (Bly, 2011, p. 2A)

Such negative descriptions of the OWS are recurrent in the two newspapers.

The findings also have methodological and practical implications. Methodologically, this study was one of the very few studies to empirically model the predictive effect of framing devices on the overall tone of media coverage toward the protest/protesters through logistic regression models. The relationship between the framing devices and the overall tone of media coverage was supported by empirical data. Practically, this study suggests to protest groups that although dramaturgical and performative shows and occasionally disruptive behaviors can attract media attention, media coverage of such events can make them appear negative. It is perhaps better to avoid such activities and behaviors in favor of activities that look more serious after gaining media attention at the initial stage of protest. Because *public disapproval* and *negative impact* are the most important framing devices that could predict the overall tone of the news coverage, protesters should come up with plans to minimize the negative impact of the protests on the local communities and pay special attention to show appreciation to those who might be potentially affected by protest activities, including residents in the community, people who pass the protest site to work or watch their activities, the local businesses, and the police who monitor protest activities. Finally, the findings of this study can also be used in media education to help the public understand the framing strategies of the media and become responsible citizens and watchdogs of the watchdogs. If the public cannot critically evaluate media contents, it would be difficult for people to effectively challenge the media, which often act as a mechanism of manufacturing consent (Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

Despite the contributions discussed above, this study has several limitations. First, this study focuses on marginalization devices the media have used to frame the OWS, which may give readers an impression that it assumes every journalist wants to destroy the social movement. The framing devices discussed in this article need to be examined with consideration for what happened in this particular protest, what reporters saw and were able to find out when not much happened every day to advance the story of the protests, and when there was disruption to the area around the protest. Second, the articles

were selected by conducting a search in the LexisNexis database. Although this database has been widely used in newspaper research, it only included articles that appeared in print. As many newspapers have become multimedia news organizations, their online reporting is also relevant. For example, *The New York Times* covered the protests from the day they started in numerous stories that appeared online, even if they did not make the print paper until September 25. Excluding these online stories means results may not present a complete picture about the coverage of the protests. Third, although the quantitative nature of this research can test the proposed typology of framing devices and the relationship between the framing strategies and the overall tone of media coverage toward the protest/protesters, qualitative analysis of media framing (see Edgerly, Toft, & Veden, 2011) would allow researchers to engage complex data more thoroughly to find framing strategies particular to the OWS protest. Finally, although *The New York Times* and *USA Today* are representative of the U.S. mainstream media and can influence other media due to their reputation, including additional media outlets in the study would make the sample even more highly representative of the newspaper population.

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