

# “Painting with Words”: “Social Justice” Protest’s Narrative in the Israeli’s News

Alonit Berenson

Zefat Academic College, Safed, Israel

This article analyzes the role of the media during the 2011 social protests in Israel, in order to examine why the “Social Justice” protest proved more effective than any other social protest organized previously in Israel. Scholars have shown that media framing has a powerful effect on citizen perception and policy debates. The social protests focused on the political-social-economic policy based on a neo-liberal ideology. They signified the beginnings of resistance to the system and became the focus of public and media identification via reports published by leading Israeli newspapers: *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Israel Hayom*. Using content analysis, the author explore how the media plays an important role to shape the public perception of how to think and act about the protest. Due to the results, we evident the expand media capacity and influence, and that these effects are mediated in presenting positive and supportive coverage, including connotations and metaphors expressed by means of familiar slogans and events in the collective memory of Israeli society. Additionally, the expression “social justice” that became the protest’s slogan, offered a broad common basis with which each citizen could identify, including journalists.

*Keywords:* media framing, journalism, social justice, protest

## Introduction

Towards the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, social groups and individuals began organizing small-scale demonstrations in the streets and town squares of a number of European cities, in countries such as Britain, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, as well as Israel. In 2011, the “Occupy Wall Street” demonstration that originated in New York spread to other cities throughout the US. Demonstrators from different countries took part in permeating and giving significance to the images and practices of a democracy that opposes, fights, and protests against the dominant political system.

This was the case with the 2011 “Social Justice” protest, which changed the meaning and scope of the protest issue in Israel. While the protests were taking place, an extensive public discussion evolved concerning economics and society. According to Ram and Filk (2013), the traditional media—radio, television, and newspapers, and new media—social networks, forums, and blogs—became important actors in this process. Journalism provided the protest with headlines, commentaries, and opinion articles, as well as special supplements. Throughout the protest period, the new “social dialogue” turned into the “In” topic and the socioeconomic issues became the focus of the news. What began as an exchange of ideas on the social networks quickly transitioned into a format for the traditional protest—mass street protests.

---

Alonit Berenson, Ph.D., Political Science and Media Studies, Deputy Head of the Interdisciplinary Program, Zefat Academic College.

### **Social Protest on the Web**

The new media—the internet—played an important role in the social protests in both Israel and the world over. New data technologies and communications have transformed the way activists interconnect, cooperate and conduct demonstrations. These technologies are managed via mobile phones and the global Web. The panorama of the social organizations is changing as they move via the mobile phone, to coordinating the demonstration, to developing a program to bypass the spyware operated by state authorities, which includes firewalls, limitations, and regulators. Technology offers a quick and wide-ranging structure to mobilize people, using a mechanism that enables them to connect to a collective activity by sharing information that includes new social constructs and a new repertoire of strategies. The latter describes how protests over the past years shaped their collective activity, allowing them to be aware of their ability to utilize these technologies and employing them to their advantage. Support of an accessible and share-friendly organizational system gave rise to extensive mobilization and a familiar type of protest that led to an increase in the active participation of the social groups. New data technology leads to an “instant” and rapid flow of news, especially those that include contemporary and relevant data. When people are receptive to new ideas, they absorb information more readily. A flexible and diverse data environment is created with data that is transmitted in different ways, from text to pictures, audios, and videos, all of which can be shared dynamically and interactively by technologically well informed users. The faster the arrival of data as it crosses geographical borders, the more intense its permeation among social groups who are activists in demonstrations. News coverage of protest activity in one location can spread to others in the same area and become a potential in boosting motivation to action everywhere. Proof of this was how the protests spread over the last two years in some Arab states, Europe, the US, and Israel. In this wave of protests, the feeling became “contagious” between different areas and countries, even if the demonstrations’ agendas were not always the same.

### **“Social Justice” in Israel: A Demonstration of Civic Identity**

In light of the “politics of identity” theory, Melucci (1989, 1995) found that it is not only self-awareness of identity, but rather the recognition by others of their unique group members’ identity, even receiving legitimacy forth is identity from the surrounding society. A common identity defines the limits of belonging to the group, its beliefs, and world perception, which forms a basis for building trust as a critical step in accepting members who will act on urgent issues (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). This process led to social activists identifying themselves by themselves and by others as part of a wider community within which they could attach meaning to their experience by constructing it on this shared involvement (Della Porta & Diani, 1999, p. 85). The politics of resistance is predicated on a belief that power is ubiquitous (Foucault, 1980), and as a result, resistance must be diffuse (Pickett, 1996) occurring at micro as well as macro levels (Thomas, 2005). As mentioned below, the number of demonstrators is very important; as the number of demonstrators’ increases, decision makers can no longer ignore the repercussions arising from public solidarity, identification and the consensus relating to the issue promoted by the demonstration (Berenson, 2013). In this case, the message that was voiced in all the mass rallies was simple, authentic and as such powerful; by chanting “the people want social justice”. The Israeli “occupiers” called for the need to place “society before economy”, to be “apolitical”, to be “broad based, diffused, with no form of hierarchy and partisan organization” (rarely were politicians allowed to participate, and at times the terms “chaos” and “anarchy” were also voiced) and “to have the government come up with concrete solutions” (Alimi, 2012, p. 405). Demonstrators were organized via the

internet, mainly the social networks. As mentioned above, in general, over the past decade the social networks have changed the workings of social communication. The importance of news media and the internet news depends on an additional, critical component for social groups—that of mobilization. Messages of different types transmitted via the social networks express the demand to share resources, increased entitlements or material benefits, on an equal basis. The social protest’s challenge brought about new meaning to the concept of “Social Justice” as it spread to other social and politico-economic levels in the country. On the *social level*, the “Social Justice” demonstration became the common denominator of the social, status and intellectual assortment of people. The protest attracted many people who believed that structural changes are possible within the socioeconomic order of preferences in Israeli society, and even instilled in their hearts the faith that declining social solidarity can be restored and Israeli society become more humane and fair (Yonah & Spivak, 2011). The protests’ agenda rapidly widened from housing prices to the high cost of living and from there to the government’s social and economic policies and the high concentration of wealth in Israeli society (OECD, 2011). Calls for a return to the old welfare state were widely heard. The summer “Social Justice” protest changed the meaning and scope of the protest issue in Israel. Through the influence of the media, the protest had a snowball effect that included all civic groups, such as journalists, politicians and public figures, who competed with one another in their praise for the protesters and their protest (Ram & Filk, 2013). The obstacles activists and policy challengers’ face in getting their messages inserted into public discourse have been well documented. However, there is a growing recognition that activist-media-government interactions constitute a dynamic process in which all players struggle for advantage (Sascha sheehan, 2013). The protest ceased to focus on material issues but rather moved to an abstract value level, where the protesters demanded a profound change in Israeli society, such as reforming the relationship between the citizen and state institutions, and restraining the economic system of a free market. A large section of society identified with these claims for justice and equality, as evidenced by the huge crowds taking part in the demonstrations, more than at any previous protests in Israeli society (Haber, Heller, & Herman, 2011). For example, a time of relative calm in terms of security threats, Israel was shaken by a small group of citizens of Sephardic origin, who protested against what they perceived as an unjust government socioeconomic policy that systematically discriminated against “oriental” Jews. This group of youngsters, who called themselves the Black Panthers (referring to the US Black Panther Party that inspired them), managed to broaden their protest and sustain it for more than two years with some significant signs of success, yet only to lose momentum in the build-up to the Yom Kippur War. They simply did not have a chance! To give a sense of how deeply ingrained the “security situation” is in people’s cognition and thinking, consider the following (Alimi, 2012, p. 403).

Reactions to the Social Justice protest’s reverberations created by the demonstrations in the public discourse did not take long to arrive. President Shimon Peres met with protest leaders and stated that priorities must be changed. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to the protest by saying that he also understands that priorities need to be changed. In effect, according to Alimi (2012, p. 404), the move away from a welfare state to neoliberal global capitalism promoted by Netanyahu as Finance Minister during Ariel Sharon’s first term as Prime Minister between 2003 and 2005, has become the norm under Netanyahu’s own administration. Not surprisingly, the initial demands centered on affordable housing (rent or purchase), tax reform, reducing the concentration of the Israeli economy, regulation of food prices and other daily necessities (e.g. gas) and fair salaries. In addition, the forum of company directors and business managers published a

letter directed at the Prime Minister in which they made it clear that they identified with the protesters’ demands (Ram & Filk, 2013).

The journalists reappeared on a massive scale as creators of the public agenda. How did they frame their case in the media and to what extent were their efforts a success? More specifically, to what extent were the frames they promoted in the coverage’ commentary picked up in the broader more influential arena of news? In this article, the author propose to monitor, how “Social Justice”—as a slogan—became the focus of identification, and how leading journalists’ reports in Israel provided a common aim for the public on a social, class-related and intellectual level. Overnight, “Social Justice” became the leading, influential narrative within the public discourse. This narrative controlled new coverage and occupied a central place in the printed news media pages. This article examines how the controlling narrative weaved its way through the media discourse, which I consider, an important component in the success of the protest over a long period of time; from the time the tents were put up on Rothschild Boulevard in July 2011, through the mass demonstrations all over Israel, until the “March of the Million” in September 2011. In my view, the news media were active participants in shaping by framing the positive and sympathetic portrayal of the “Social Justice” message.

In an analysis of dozens of demonstrations over three decades (1951 to 1979), Lehman-Wilzig (1982, p. 136) found that a demonstration makes a political impression, a demonstration is “News” and the more impressive it is, the more “Newsworthy” it becomes. By means of the social networks, the social protest had an intensity that Israeli society had never before experienced, and the extent of it offered an impressive and powerful demonstration of citizenry (Yonah & Spivak, 2011). Most policy issues, for example, have an issue culture dominated by a particular frame. Issue cultures often contain alternative frames at odds with a dominant one. These additional frames provide opportunities for activists and policy challengers to redirect the public’s attention. The “Social Justice” symbol is framed and, as such, uses slogans that are an integral part of the Israeli lexicon. These garnered public sympathy to restart the political debate, which addressed the need to make a proper response to the protest, because this time it included different social groups and crossed the boundaries of class, nationhood, age, and gender.

These waves of protest changed the pattern of coverage to one that was sympathetic and supportive. According to Weimann (2012), the traditional media in Israel, still run by the “Old Boys” who draw up the public agenda, expressed great interest in the protest—initially at least. They identified a story of an authentic and colorful movement, the uniting of different social groups suffering from real hardships (Weimann, 2012, see also Haber, Heller, & Herman, 2011), who set up camp in the middle of the high-class neighborhood of the Israeli metropolis. Weimann (2012) mentions that the media actually empowered the protest by means of their supportive coverage of the events and their submission of live reports from the tent camps in different cities, while reporters mingled with the protesting crowd, showing a generosity of spirit and even acting friendly to the participants. Furthermore, the majority of reports clearly sympathized with the protest and its initiators, and even increased the resonance of the messages against government policy (see further at Lev-On & Mann, 2012). Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014, p. 410) who conducted in-depth interviews with the reporters and editors involved in the coverage of the Social Justice protests in Israel found that considerations of news worthiness are constructed as complementing and justifying all other types of influence, such as professional values and organizational economic considerations. Evidence can be found in a quotation from a journalist who covered the Social Justice protest in the Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014) research:

The protest helped me understand that I’m not alone—that I’m a young person who lives in this country and wants to raise a family, but can’t do it financially, even though I work 24/7. It is very difficult in terms of the cost of living in this city [Tel Aviv], in this country. I can tell you that today my net [monthly] income is 6000 [NIS; ≈1700], and only the rent on my apartment is 3000 [NIS; ≈\$850]. It’s very difficult to survive, very hard to live on a journalist’s salary, if you are not one of the star reporters... The media in general have a very thick layer of journalists who make between normal salaries to salaries that are below the minimum wage, and a very thin layer of “talents” earning disproportionate amounts. (p. 417)

### **News Coverage as Constructing Reality**

Journalists do not frame information in order to create news, but rather, inevitably, they create news by adding their own interpretation to the news reporting process (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Kuypers, 2006 see also Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Journalists are finding themselves in the midst of a dynamic process in which they must remain significant, so they present additional levels of interpretation about issues and events in the form of a news story. They cannot tell stories efficiently without advance preparation of ideas and concepts regarding how to arrange the story’s components and the impact that can or must be made on these components. Klein (2010) maintains that the news is really a collection of narratives and that journalistic writing is like historical or literary texts: indeed, journalists write about reality. This means that in this sort of writing the text’s rhetoric is a tool to disguise the writer’s ideology (Brook, 1991).

The Israeli social protest provides a particularly useful case study whereby the ways in which journalists negotiate and (re)interpret the various influences on their work can be examined (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014, p. 414). In the main, journalistic stories help shape the common worldview and the most genuine ideals: they define what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or corrupt. They construct political opinions and social behavior, and provide beliefs, ideologies and standpoints by means of which people create their own identities (Klein, 2010). Foucault (2005 in Klein, 2010) maintained that the journalistic discourse, like others, such as scientific discourse and political discourse, is not only a medium that formulates the struggles or control systems, but also the object about and through which the struggle is taking place. Therefore, as determined by Fairclough (1995) and Klein (2010), the journalistic text can be considered a “wrestling ring” in which there is a hierarchy of discourse types that are influenced by different ideologies competing with each other for the narrative’s significance.

In spite of the fact that the terms “News Report” and “Story” are used by journalists, in professional discourse, there is a refusal to acknowledge that the journalists are really storytellers (Roeh, 1994). According to Bird (1996), this refusal arises from the tendency to relate to the news as verifiable and factual, although the news is actually a cultural construct—a narrative that tells a story about new and important events. According to Oring (1990), to consider news as reflecting reality is a fallacy. He claims, in fact, that the entire range of choices used, in creating the media text is set in advance by the editors and writers. Media coverage is also not free of emotional content and values (Tankard, 2001, p. 97). Media writing is creative, and emanates from constructing reality from the journalist’s viewpoint (Klein, 2010). In practice, Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014, pp. 414-415) found that news values in the sense of news worthy considerations remain central in journalists’ narratives throughout the course of the coverage, helping to justify any of the other influences, like organizational considerations. In other words, the news value of the story was often presented as justification for the influence of their ideological and economic perception.

### **Framing the News**

An essential principle in the study of media coverage is to minimize specifics in the topic being reported

and focus rather on the presentation of the topic. In this research, as in other framing researches (D’Angelo, 2002; Entman, 1993, 2001, 2007, 2010; Reese, 2007, 2010; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Snow & Benford, 2000; Van Gorp, 2010), the following questions arise: Where does the frame actually exist—in the news text, in culture or in the cognitive system of the recipients? How can a researcher be convinced that the news report has actually been framed? What should be examined or analyzed in the news data? To answer these questions, a study should be made of Entman’s (1993, p. 52) work, as he suggests that content framing should be considered while being fully aware that it has the power to convert events into news that will shed light on what is happening in an environmental context. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.

In any policy struggle, all players (activists, politicians, and the media) want to control public narrative. How the media cover an issue has been shown to be a powerful influence, of citizen perception (Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998), shaping opinion on topics as varied and controversial as racial politics (Kinder & Sanders, 1996), gun control (Callaghan & Schnell, 2000), hate crimes (Bramlet-Solomon, 2001), the war on terror (Ryan, 2004; Reese & Lewis, 2009), affirmative action (Richardson & Lancendorfer, 2004), legalization of marijuana (Golan, 2010), political parties frame European integration (Helbling, Hoeglinger, & Wuest, 2010), The Global Justice Movement (Berenson, 2013), marginalized political actors (Sascha sheehan, 2013).

“Framing”, actually means the presentation of information in an interpretative cover. Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984), winners of the Nobel Prize, add that while framing emphasizes and directs attention to certain aspects in the description of reality, it also ignores other aspects. By means of framing, which is merely a process of constructing reality, journalists decide how their audience will think about the issues being reported, thus manipulating the perceptive process of readers regarding events and people (Entman, 2007, p. 4). This way, the framing coverage creates a narrative of events “to think about it this way” (Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002, p. 7; Reese, 2007, 2010; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Tankard, 2001). This method is compatible with the system of values and beliefs in the local culture, and is carried out by using metaphors or certain contexts (Entman, 1993, 2003, 2007) that create a well-known reality. As a result, the public feeds on most of the media selection that highlights a protest’s success, and the public inclination is meaningful. In other words, the perception of reality is sometimes no less important than actual reality. If the public believes, even mistakenly, that the chances of the protest succeeding are high, then this bias perception is likely to expand the scope of extra-parliamentary activity (Lehman-Wilzig, 1982, p. 119).

### **News Frame Social Protest**

Researchers found that news coverage tends to depict the demonstrators in a negative light, to exaggerate their lack of normative activity and delegitimize them while ignoring their real aims. Thus giving a superficial impression of the protest and emphasizing violent activities as part of social criticism (Berenson, 2013; Hertog & McLeod, 2001; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Leung, 2009; Rauch et al., 2007; Reese, 2001). Research on the type of media coverage of protest groups shows that not only do they receive minimal voice, but also that mainly they are portrayed rather negatively in the media and this image is preserved over a long period of time. This type of coverage has become a systematic characteristic in coverage of the protest groups by journalists because the media have a tendency in the main, as noted above, to allow the institutional voices to be heard; in this case, the

police and the government. Framing such as this contributes to the shaping of negative public opinion regarding the protest and its goals (Detenber et al., 2007). However, while national crises tend to trigger patriotic sentiments and national identification in support of government action, the social protest in Israel initially triggered class/socioeconomic identification, in opposition to government policies (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014, p. 425). While framing, rhetoric, and selective use of sources play significant roles in policy debates, credibility and critical or focusing events (Kingdon, 1984) can be key. Scholars have shown that credibility is critical to frame resonance. Frames must be consonant with cultural narratives and larger belief systems (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Long-term coverage of the social demonstrations in Israel included descriptions of solidarity and support. Analysis of the coverage clearly showed how the media embedded the structure of the coverage and how it revealed itself in news texts. From the first pre-test qualitative analysis of the newspaper coverage there was an obvious pattern of transition between Reese and Lewis’ three dimensions: transmission, reification, and naturalization (Reese & Lewis, 2009). The narrative is constructed at the time of transmission; at the second stage, the narrative is reified according to what was conveyed at transmission, and at the internalization stage, the narrative coverage is taken for granted.

Reese and Lewis’ three-dimensional framing analysis tool (Reese & Lewis, 2009; Reese, 2010), is a qualitative system that enables news framing to be tested by analyzing the media-cultural content and the way in which the frames are stored in a social context. The frames, in a systematic and deliberate way, promote the reported issues and corroborate them.

### **Three-Dimensional Framing: Transmission-Reification-Naturalization**

*Transmission*—*News transmission* is the media’s most basic construct. The news is transmitted by choosing the specific narrative and the use of quotes from original sources (demonstrators, professionals, commentators, government officials). This is the most difficult part because in this stage journalists choose the expressions that will be used by the media in future to control the discourse on a basic level. In a new media transmission, the coverage will usually include a clear statement of fact from the event being covered; for example, a description of the demonstration and its agenda.

*Reification*—Following the basic news transmissions’ stage there is the *reification* stage at which the abstract transmission becomes reified. Reification is what turns the idea of the struggle itself into an accepted fact. At the reification stage, the text carries with it the language that has already been included in the “transmission” frame and the assumption that it has passed from theory into practice. When this action becomes routine there is no criticism of the narrative that has been constructed; in other words, the “transmission” is presented in terms and expressions that were already constructed at the initial construction stage of the narrative, and its reification in acts that are carried out in practice. Reese and Lewis (2009) also found that reports of public opinion contribute to the reification process.

*Naturalization*—This is a process of assimilating information in the long-term memory, and is composed of emotional and verbal memory and their connection to other internalized data. Naturalization can happen consciously or unconsciously. It is a bias created artificially by the media and means that the message is internalized and taken for granted. It describes the stage at which the “Transmitted” and “Reified” world perception in the news frame has been internalized. This is the expression of the narrative, even more than the reification stage of the transmission. If reification changes the frame of the struggle into a clear fact of life,

naturalization changes it into a substantial statement, raising the social struggle to a broader narrative of an inclusive struggle for social justice. Indeed, the demonstrators were the ones who originated the slogans, but on a practical level the question that arises is: How does the framing, which was created through media transmission, become reified and naturalized, and taken for granted?

This article relates to the way in which the controlling narrative was constructed and how it weaves its way through the media discourse by means of coverage framing, supporting and backing the overall social struggle. However, another question can be asked: How did the controlling narrative that intertwined itself in the media discourse become constructed in such a way that it extended beyond the scope of coverage in all previous protests in Israel’s history?

### Method

The research method is qualitative, and uses a critical discourse analysis of newspaper texts. Contrary to quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis of discourse is interpretative, and attempts to explain discourse structure, not merely describe it. This method is appropriate for an analysis of social-cultural phenomena and changes as seen in journalistic texts, and reveals the part of the journalists in shaping social and cultural constructs. Thus, it also offers a way to indicate how different types of newspapers perceive their social role (Klein, 2010, p. 230). The uniqueness inherent in a multifaceted approach, blending a variety of analytical methods that reveal both the exposed and hidden meanings of the journalistic text, makes it possible to track the ideological and political dimensions of cultural narratives (Van Dijk, 1990; Klein, 2010).

The newspapers chosen for analysis in this research were those with the largest circulation of printed media in Israel—*Yedioth Ahronoth* from which 189 news items were analyzed, and *Israel Hayom*—97 ( $N = 286$ ). While the level of news consumption and newspaper circulation is still relatively high in Israel, the challenges facing the news industry worldwide have not passed over the Israeli news media. Stiff competition within a small market, a decrease in advertising revenues, and struggles to find a viable economic model for the digital age have led to increasing financial difficulties for leading news organizations and substantial layoffs of Israeli journalists in recent years (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014, pp. 414-415).

A variety of search words were used, such as “protest”, “tent protest”, “social justice”, appearing in headlines or the main texts from 14th July 2011, the beginning of the “Tent Protest” on Rothschild Boulevard, until the end of September—coined as the “March of the Million”. The author proposes that the inclusive discourse is relevant, so that distinctions have not been made between editors, writers or news articles in newspaper supplements, as recommended by Reese (2010, p. 29).

### Results

#### Framing cultural Narratives and Belief Systems

In an attempt to analyze the phenomenon behind the success of the social protest in Israel, the author examined the media presence and its mechanics as a major factor. The supportive coverage amount indicated 86.7% for *Yedioth Ahronoth* and 78.4% for *Israel Hayom*. Using cultural narratives and larger belief systems (Benford & Snow, 2000) the narrative was constructed as favors and support of media coverage. Even the media covered itself as an overall backing “umbrella” for the protest, as we can see below:

The majority of the Israeli media, without which the protest would not have taken place, provided unqualified support for the legitimate public outcry. This support did not allow for discussion. Everyone fell in love with the revolutionary

slogans that were brought out of their dustcovers. Every broadcaster wanted to be more “Che Guevara” than the original himself, and it’s as if every female newscaster is competing to become “Israel’s New Female Social Leader” in a reality show. The basic components of serious journalism—restraint, detachment, logic and doubt—didn’t come back from the weekend break. (*Israel Hayom*, 2/8/2011, p. 9)

As a result, the protest picks up speed and reaches levels never seen before. Indeed, we see in the “Social Justice” protest a social and class mosaic whose common denominator of shared belief could definitely not be taken for granted. Differences in social standing and level of intellect, students with professors, all came together with cab drivers and artisans. Parents together with single people, religious with secular, right-with left-wingers, etc. “30,000 demonstrators were packed together yesterday in Jerusalem’s Paris Square, outside the home of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with placards raised... no right, no left, it is all about accountability” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 7/8/2011, p. 6)<sup>1</sup>. “This is an exciting protest specifically because it is real; it crosses borders and makes no distinction between left and right, Arabs and Jews. It is about basic human rights—social justice” (*Israel Hayom*, 4/8/2011, p. 37).

This framing created an image in which each person joining the protest could fit under the media’s “umbrella” and gain a sense of being a person with societal values. With the media’s frames, everyone can find his place in the success story of the social protest in the hope of creating the desired change for which he or she has gone out to demonstrate.

By means of metaphors and contexts (Entman, 1993, 2007, 2010), the supportive narrative siding with the protest was constructed in the media coverage. Furthermore, framing is the mechanism that organizes and incorporates a social principle, which continues over the course of time and acts symbolically as the meaning of the social structure (Reese & Lewis, 2010, p. 777). This principle is expressed in the title of the article *On Rothschild we established the State of Tents* (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 21/7/2011, pp. 6-7), based on Herzl’s statement “In Basel we established the Jewish State”, directing the collective memory to a fundamental historic event in the life of the nation. This protest represented this fundamental turning point.

A common identity was formed, which is really a cultural process expressed via language and symbols. The joint definition of a group is drawn from the common interests, experiences and solidarity of its members (Taylor & Whittier’s, 1992, p. 105). Thus, the slogan “Social Justice” is framed in news texts by means of slogans with which it is easy to identify, from a type that is common, accepted and loved. For example, the message in the song ““In the children’s country, oh! such an uproar; cash-strapped parents are going off to war” was sung by the mothers and fathers, and yellow balloons were distributed among the children” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 29/7/2011) is associated with a popular children’s song in Israeli culture. Regarding the issue discussed in this research, familiar historical connections of “Social Justice” were found that were used in the past to express social problems, such as “40 years ago, when the Black Panthers demanded social justice, the economic gaps were far smaller than they are today” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 3/8/2011, p. 6). In spite of the fact that “Social Justice” has no official definition, news reports create framing by using slogans that link the reader to protest events or other conflicts deeply embedded in the Israeli collective memory.

Therefore, in its scope and the importance of its influence on the structure of policy, social and media discourse, the “Social Justice” demonstration could be the most important frame embedded in the collective memory of Israeli society over the past years. This was expressed not only in control over the discourse, but

---

<sup>1</sup> Derived from the Jewish-Israeli ethical metaphor “All Israelis are responsible for one another”.

also in the increase in the scale of citizens’ participation from one demonstration to the next. Unconditional media support was evident in the ability to mobilize citizens by making use of the broadest common denominator.

### Three-Dimensional Framing Analysis

In the transmission stage, journalists choose the expressions on which the media news will depend in order to control the discourse.

Yesterday’s protests were the largest in the history of the State. There have been mass demonstrations here in Israel, calling for peace or protesting war failures, and now who would believe that 150,000 Israelis would bother to go out into the streets to demonstrate for social reform. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 31/7/2011, p. 2)

In the second stage, as noted above, reification changes the idea of the struggle to a tangible stage, making it real.

The cry of protest must be specific and focused on painful issues—raising children in a working family, exploiting contract workers, the cost of living, unfair division of taxes, the housing crisis. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 9/8/2011, p. 20)

The coverage reifies this act when presenting the news under main headlines, such as “A social Star of David” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 6/8/2011, pp. 4-5), “All of Israel” and “This is how social justice is being achieved” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 7/8/2011, p. 12). A logo repeating itself at the top of every news page on 7/8/2011 declares “The Protest Nation—the Outcry Intensifies” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 7/8/2011); a personal opinion column demands “Struggle Results, Elections Now” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 9/8/2011, pp. 20-21). In this way, the protest appears more reified although it seems like another “routine” coverage. The transmission includes allegedly established details, the facts of which are unsubstantiated. “The present government is not interested in a change of priorities, just as it is not interested in social justice” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 9/8/2011, pp. 20-21). This statement in the name of the government is the writer’s interpretation that creates a reified message, rendering it sustainable even though the statement has no backing. According to Reese and Lewis (2009), backing by the common masses is also a kind of reification. “It was the victory photograph of the protest leaders: on the stage, facing hundreds of thousands of people and beside them ‘The most Israeli’ artist—Shlomo Artzi” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 7/8/2011), or “Keep your eyes away from other politicians, and stop listening to advice. Continue in your own way, you are great, it’s working for you. Don’t feel pressurized” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 4/8/2011, p. 24).

Journalists followed the public and political discussion about the protest issue and encouraged the reification of the dominant narrative, in which the reasons for the “animated” struggle for social justice were reified.

The leaders [of the protest] must be patient, to give it time to ripen and allow the government to “stew in its own juice”. These protests should not be merged; on the contrary, merging them would only create a pressure-cooker effect emphasizing the differences and making it easier to kill the struggle. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 4/8/2011, p. 24)

Or, for example,

The individualistic alienating cage of avaricious capitalism in which we were raised has been split open [...] I recommend to anyone who has not yet gone out into the streets, get yourselves to the next protest even if it is just to see every single demonstrator with his placard raised. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 3/8/2011, p. 6)

According to Reese (2010), even public opinion reports sometimes contribute to the reification process. The public demanded a reified answer to solve the issue of “Social Justice” and that answer, was supplied by

the media in a frame of accepted wisdom.

If they [the demonstrators] intend to meet with Trajtenberg<sup>2</sup> and his cohorts, they must come with concrete demands. A struggle without concrete demands will fizzle out in a Saturday night concert-festival that moves from one location in Israel to another. If they continue talking in generalizations, the protesters will get another one of Trajtenberg’s “social agenda” documents. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 16/8/2011, p. 16)

In the naturalization stage, the narrative’s message has been taken for granted; a stage in which the world perception that has been “transmitted” and “reified” in the news frame has been “naturalized”. The demonstrators did indeed create the slogan “Social Justice”, but *how* was the frame created in media reports, and to what degree was it taken for granted? The answer to this can be found mainly in personal columns that offer the option of “Open discussion” “People—you have an unprecedented protest that is supported by 80% of the public... the present situation is bad for all of us” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 4/8/2011, p. 24). Such an example indicates that the constructed and reified frame narrative has been thoroughly absorbed. Certainly, in Israel, the demonstrations did not receive even a modicum of criticism from the very start. Even if such had existed, it was rejected by the media. The rubber stamp was given when the media, by supporting the demonstration, labeled “Social Justice” as a generalization, thus presenting it as majority opinion. In addition, some of the journalists embedded clues in their reports and statements that expressed the message naturalization in a way that appealed to common sense and insight, while claiming that social benefits would be achieved as a direct result of the social protest. They claimed that the protest’s success was a result of an appeal to common sense: “It isn’t a 5% increase in salary that the people demand; they demand a just society; the people demand social justice” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 9/8/2011, pp. 20-21). There are other concealed insights at the stage of message naturalization that allow the reader’s common sense to understand what lies behind the assertion.

Like many others, I realized that this protest is not about a reduction of half a percent in indirect taxation, not even about building another thousand housing units. This protest is an expression of dissatisfaction with the State of Israel’s order of preferences... (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 9/8/2011, pp. 20-21)

No-one will take the authenticity from this protest. A huge public of the middle class, whose soul has shouldered the burden, has gone out to struggle to make it possible to live in this country, to reside in it and earn a decent income. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 22/7/2011, p. 2)

The protest movement is a contagious issue. Every Israeli is involved socially and politically. The alienation and cynicism that characterized the public over the past years have made way for involvement and protest. This is not a simple matter. (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, 31/7/2011, p. 2)

It created a sense of “knowing what it means” when the words “Social Justice” were uttered, that there was no need to discuss the topic. It was inbred and perceived as “going without saying” with no need for judgmental or critical discourse. “Social Justice” was accepted from the beginning with an unclear and weak conceptual definition. It was a protest that began with the “Cottage Cheese” demonstration, moved on to the “Housing Protest”, continued on to the “Rothschild Tent Protest” and finally ended up under the broader umbrella containing all these topics under the slogan “Social Justice”.

In fact, it was a unique process involving one meaning only in the media news and among the public as a result. A parallel process can be seen here of *transmission* through *reification* and *naturalization* as journalists, who became “Caged” in the narrative framing around which they enclosed themselves, broadened the news-framing span using lenses of reality through which the world was perceived.

<sup>2</sup> The chair of the committee established by the government to consider the demonstrations’ claims.

## Conclusion

Why, then, was the “Social Justice” demonstration of 2011 relatively so much more successful than any previous demonstration in Israel? What caused its success to become the dominant narrative in the public, political and economic discourse in Israel? I maintain that the media news constantly nurture done side of the coin—the public arena. The daily printed media, when covering the events, heaped support onto the demonstrators by intensive reporting and interviewing during the course of 50 days, until the Rothschild tent camp was disbanded. The ability of the media to shape the public’s perception of the protest shows the importance of the aspect and status of the media. By the qualitative-interpretative method, an analysis was made of articles in the two most widely distributed newspapers—*Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Israel Hayom*. It was found that the media framed the coverage by using cultural narratives and larger belief systems (Benford & Snow, 2000) expressed in familiar slogans, causing every single person in the Israeli public to identify with a broad group on all levels, i.e., Israeli society that went out to a social protest. It is easy to “be with everyone” under the protection of a supportive media. In addition, hardly any articles criticized the demonstrations or the demonstrators’ agenda, and if an observer found any, the following day he found another one, which raised eyebrows in light of criticism. The “Social Justice” protest received coverage that was so supportive, unlike any other in the history of the State of Israel.

The “Social Justice” protest’s agenda had a weak definition. Everyone who took part in a demonstration had his own subjective “Social Justice”. Interpretations of the concept were broad. Some connected lack of “Justice” to the cost of living; others protested the cost of housing, education, social services, and more. Media coverage took on the role of shaping the protest’s narrative in its social sense, and empowered the feeling of mission of those people who joined the demonstration in order to heal the ills of society. This is a concept in itself, the broader meaning of which happens to create the same wide umbrella under which every person can find himself. The lack of greater specification of claims and a proactive stance regarding solutions (i.e., we are not the ones to come up with solutions), certainly a major cause of alarm and embarrassment for the Netanyahu coalition, nonetheless gave the government the wiggle room and way out it needed (Alimi, 2012).

The overwhelming support in the coverage of 2011 protest cannot be explained by journalists’ personal identification with the protest. Creating a narrative for the protest is a system that to some extent gives the journalist a platform on which to fight from within, through writing on the issues raised by the protest, and with a new voice that was discovered during the social protest. In the “Social Justice” protest in Israel, journalists used the narrative they chose at the transmission stage, as if they were an integral part of the demonstrators.

The unreserved backing of the media enabled citizens to be mobilized while approaching the broadest common denominator. A common identity was created for the demonstrators—the struggle for “Social Justice”—that defined belonging to an undefined group that had never been unified before in anything concerned with social, intellectual and ideological status. According to Della Porta and Diani, a situation such as this, basically helps to build trust as an essential component for accepting members who will take action in many and various urgently needed issues (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). That common identity—the one that is actually a cultural process expressed via language and symbols—received a definite expression in this instance. As well as the media framing that offered a common identity, it turned to the conscious level while using familiar language and symbols to such a degree that the collective memory of Israeli society was awakened. The narrative wove itself extensively, boldly showing its presence in its coverage from the stage of

transmission, its reification, and naturalization in Israeli society. This research found that “Naturalization” is a world perception that, having been formed from the coverage of one demonstration, became the “Transmission” of the next protest and so on, and the “Reification” stage enabled the struggle to be framed in such a way that its coverage included the protests that preceded the one being covered. After reification turned the framing of the struggle into a social reality, naturalization raised the social struggle up to a broader narrative about an inclusive struggle for social justice. The “Social Justice” protest created a symbiosis between the demonstrators, the media and the political echelon forming a common denominator—a changing political culture in Israel of the beginning of the 21st century. Indeed, measured by the ultimate test of success—policy change—the Israeli protest-tent summer would be considered a failure. Yet, it is also true that the Israeli summer has propelled an important shift in public and media discourse, showing the way to future initiatives and forcing the government to take the public voice into consideration, more seriously than before. Put differently, as defined by Alimi (2012, p. 406) “...we have witnessed that such a powerful public voice is certainly a source of sober optimism”.

In light of the findings, and the fact that social protests of this type have been of a similar nature, internationally, in recent years, it would be interesting and thought provoking in future studies to carry out an analysis and a comparison of the coverage of social protests in other countries. For example, the coverage trend of the “Arab Spring”, even if the protest issues are different from those of the western world. In addition, it would be edifying to examine whether the pattern of protest coverage in Europe and the US also presents media identification expressing evident solidarity of journalists, as we have learned from this research. Such research would expand the knowledge base and shed additional light on the role and status of the media covering social protests.

## References

- Alimi, E. Y. (2012). “Occupy Israel”: A tale of startling success and hopeful failure. *Social Movement Studies*, 11(3-4), 402-407.
- Berenson, A. (2013). The anti-globalization movement in the “eyes” of journalism: “global justice” or “mind framing”? *Journalism and Mass Communication*, 19(3-4), 240-253.
- Bird, E. (1996). CJ’s revenge: Media, folklore and the cultural construction of AIDS. *Critical Studies and Mass Communication*, 13(1), 44-58.
- Bramlet-Solomon, S. (2001). Newspaper editorials show few regional differences. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 22(4), 28-43.
- Brook, T. (1991). *New historicism and other old-fashioned topics*. New York: Princeton University Press.
- Callaghan, K., & Schnell, F. (2000). Media frames, public attitudes, and elite response: An analysis of the gun control issue. *Public Integrity*, 1, 47-74.
- D’Angelo, P., & Kuypers, J. A. (2010). Doing news framing analysis. In P. D. Angelo, & J. A. Kuypers (Eds.), *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspective* (pp. 3-13). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dalton, R. J., Beck, P. A., & Huckfeldt, R. (1998). Partisan cues and the media: Information flows in the 1992 presidential election. *American Political Science Review*, 92(1), 111-126.
- D’Angelo, P. (2002). News framing as a multiparadigmatic research program: A response to Entman. *Journal of Communication*, 52, 870-888.
- Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (1999). *Social movements: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Detenber, B. H., Gotlieb, M. R., McLeod, D. M., & Malinkina, O. (2007). Frame intensity effects of television news stories about a high-visibility protest issue. *Mass Communication and Society*, 10(4), 439-460.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Entman, R. M. (1997). Manufacturing discord: Media in the affirmative action debate. *The International Journal of Press and Politics*, 2(4), 32-51.

- Entman, R. M. (2003). Cascading activation: Contesting the White House's frame after 9/11. *Political Communication*, 20(4), 415-432.
- Entman, R. M. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 163-173.
- Entman, R. M. (2010). Media framing biases and political power: Explaining slant in news of campaign 2008. *Journalism*, 11(4), 389-408.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis*. Boston: Addison Wesley.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Brighton, UK: Harvester Press.
- Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95, 1-37.
- Golan, G. J. (2010). Editorials, op-ed columns frame medical marijuana debate. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 31(3), 5-61.
- Haber, C., Heller, E., & Hermann, T. (2011). *Solidarity in the protests of summer 2011*. Israel Democracy Institute.
- Helbling, H., & Wuest, B. (2010). How political parties frame European integration. *European Journal of Political Research*, 49, 496-521.
- Hertog, J. K., & McLeod, D. M. (2001). A multiperspectival approach to framing analysis: A field guide. In S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, & A. E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 139-162). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47, 263-291.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1984). Choice values and frames. *American Psychologist*, 39, 341-350.
- Kim, S. T., Scheufele, D. A., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Think about it this way: Attribute agenda-setting function of the press and the public's evaluation of a local issue. *J&MC Quarterly*, 79(1), 7-25.
- Kinder, D. R., & Sanders, L. M. (1996). *Divided by color: Racial politics and democratic ideals*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Klein, A. (2010). Critical analysis discourse of the newspaper text. In L. Kasan, & M. Kromer-Mevo (Eds.), *Data analysis in qualitative research*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University.
- Kuypers, A. J. (2006). *Bush's war: Media bias and justifications for war in a terrorist age*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lehman-Wilzig, S. (1982). Public protests against central and local government in Israel, 1950-1979. *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 24(2), 99-115.
- Leung, L. (2009). Mediated violence as "global news": Co-opted "performance" in the framing of the WTO. *Media, Culture and Society*, 31(2), 251-269.
- Lev-On, A., & Mann, R. (2012). *Annual report: The Israeli media in 2012: Agendas, uses and trends*. Ariel University Center School of Communication.
- Libes, T., & Bar-Nahum, Y. (1994). Supportive communication: Attempted attack thwarted at Nizanim beach. In D. Caspi, & Y. Limor (Eds.), *Mass Media in Israel* (pp. 393-407). Tel-Aviv: Open University.
- McLeod, D. M., & Hertog, J. K. (1992). The manufacture of public opinion by reporters: Informal cues for public perceptions of protest groups. *Discourse and Society*, 3(3), 254-257.
- McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass communication theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the present: Social movements and individual needs in contemporary society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Melucci, A. (1995). The process of collective identity. In H. Johnston, & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *Social movements and culture* (pp. 41-63). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Neuman, R. W., Just, M. R., & Crigler, A. N. (1992). *Common knowledge: News and the construction of political meaning*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- OECD. (2011). *Development Co-operation Report 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/developmentco-operationreport2011.htm>
- Oring, E. (1990). Legend, truth and news. *Southern Folklore*, 47, 163-177.
- Pickett, B. L. (1996). Foucault and the politics of resistance. *Polity*, 28(4), 445-466.
- Ram, U., & Filk, D. (2013). The 14th of July of DaphniLeef: The rise and fall of the social protest. *Theory and Criticism*, 41, 17-43.
- Rauch, J., Chitrapu, S., Evans, J. C., Mwesige, P., Paine, C., & Eastman, S. T. (2007). From Seattle 1999 to New York 2004: A longitudinal analysis of journalistic framing of the movement for democratic globalization. *Social Movement Studies*, 6(2), 131-145.

- Reese, S. D. (2001). Framing public life: A bridging model for media research. In S. D. Reese, O. Gandy, & A. E. Mahwah (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 7-32). NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Reese, S. D. (2007). The framing project: A bridging model for media research revisited. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 148-154.
- Reese, S. D. (2010). Findings frames in a web of culture. In P. D. Angelo, & J. A. Kuypers (Eds.), *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspective* (pp. 17-42). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Reese, S. D., & Lewis, S. C. (2009). Framing the war on terror: The internalization of policy in the US press. *Journalism*, 10(6), 777-797.
- Richardson, J. D., & Lancendorfer, K. M. (2004). Framing affirmative action: The influence of race on newspaper editorial responses to the University of Michigan cases. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 9(4), 74-94.
- Roeh, I. (1994). *A different view of the media: Seven ways to review media and journalism*. Even Yehuda: Reches.
- Ryan, M. R. (2004). Framing the war against terrorism. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 66(5), 363-382.
- Sascha Sheehan, I. (2013). Challenging a terrorist tag in the media: Framing the politics of resistance and an Iranian opposition group. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 22(2), 229-261.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting and priming: The evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 9-20.
- Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. D. (1988). Ideology, frame resonance and participant mobilization. *International Social Movement Research*, 1, 197-219.
- Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. D. (2000). Identity work processes in the context of social movements: Clarifying the movement/identity/nexus. In S. Stryker, T. J. Owens, & R. W. White (Eds.), *Self, Identity, and Social Movements* (pp. 41-67). Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press.
- Tankard, J. W. (2001). The empirical approach to the study of framing. In S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, & A. E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing the public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 95-105). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Taylor, V., & Whittier, N. E. (1992). Collective identity in social movement communities: Lesbian feminist mobilization. In A. D. Morris, & C. M. Muller (Eds.), *Frontiers in social movement theory* (pp. 92-104). New Haven, CY: Yale University Press.
- Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. (2014). Producing protest news: An inquiry into journalists’ narratives. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 19(4), 410-429.
- Thomas, R. (2005). Theorizing the micro-politics of resistance: New public management and managerial identities in the UK public services. *Organization Studies*, 26(5), 683-706.
- Tilly, C. (1984). Social movements and national politics. In C. Bright, & S. Harding (Eds.), *Statemaking and social movements: Essays in history and theory* (pp. 297-317). Anne Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Tilly, C. (1993). Social movement as historically specific clusters of political performance. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 38, 1-30.
- Tilly, C. (2003). Political identities in changing polities. *Social Research*, 70(2), 605-620.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1990). Discourse & society: A new journal for a new research focus. *Discourse and Society*, 1, 5-16.
- Van Gorp, B. (2010). Strategies to take subjectivity out of framing analysis. In P. D. Angelo, & J. A. Kuypers (Eds.), *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspective* (pp. 84-109). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Weimann, G. (2012). *New protest—old media*. Retrieved from <http://Haaretz.com>
- Wicks, R. H. (2005). Message framing and constructing meaning: An emerging paradigm in mass communication research. *Communication Yearbook*, 29, 331-361.
- Yonah, Y., & Spivak, A. (2011). *Doing things differently—A model for a well ordered society—The social protest 2011-2012*. Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.