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That is Not Goldfish Swallowing: Newsreels Encounter Protests Against the Vietnam War

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That is Not Goldfish Swallowing: Newsreels Encounter
Protests Against the Vietnam War

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Abstract

Universal Newsreels did not shut down until the end of December 1967, so it had an opportunity to present images and narration about the growing U. S. antiwar movement. British Pathe’ Newsreels lingered longer, not shutting down until 1970. Thus, it was able to cover the rapidly growing U. K. antiwar movement. The researcher explored how these established and establishment media forms (which had not technologically or ideologically adapted as the world changed) handled such protests. A critical viewing of those last newsreels as they encountered antiwar protest validated social movement theory. Mediated resistance spewed forth in many forms, but the uniformity of resistance suggested the generation gap between the protesters and the newsreel editors played a large role, too.
That is Not Goldfish Swallowing: Newsreels Encounter

Protests Against the Vietnam War

In the mid-1960s newsreels were dying and Vietnam-related antiwar protests were on the rise. These two phenomena crossed paths in 1967, the last year for Universal Newsreels—the last remnant of a once-thriving American media business. British Pathe’s newsreels held on until 1970. In their closing installments these two newsreel firms both covered Vietnam War protest, but in the process revealed much more about themselves, their industry, and some of the social splits in their respective societies.

So why study how a dying medium dealt with an emerging movement? Initially such a review should add to the growing body of data about generational change and the Vietnam era. From the perspective of the young, newsreels were a lingering form from their parents and grandparents. Those still working in newsreels in the late 1960s likely were “old hands,” part of the older generation. Secondly, critical evaluation of these newsreels should yield some understanding about how news assumptions from World War II and Korea lingered well into the very different war that was Vietnam. Finally, newsreels from this period should add to our understanding of social movement theory, notably how discontent faces mediated resistance. This “push back” can take many forms: ignoring the movement, downplaying its significance, misrepresenting it, creating and exaggerating opposition to it, and emphasizing fringe elements, violence, and threat.
Literature Review

Newsreels relayed major information about world and national events, but only a broad and generous definition of news would lead one to call them journalism. Typically newsreels were created by major motion picture production companies and distributed to movie theatres as part of package deals. The package elements included: full-length entertainment films, short-subject films such as travelogues, short films in serial format such as “B-movie” westerns or science fiction, newsreels, and animated cartoons. Bill Moyers hosted and narrated a documentary about newsreels, The Reel World of News (Grubin, 1982), part of the Walk Through the 20th Century series. The documentary pointed out that in the newsreel field crew the cameraman was king. Good film was paramount at all studios, including Paramount. Note-takers were low on the authority chain. Even when newsreels switched from silent to sound, most often they’d be shot in silent black and white film with sound effects, narration, and a musical track matching the mood of the story—from ominous to bouncy—all added during editing.

During the heyday of newsreels, roughly 1911 to 1945, the camera operators were very competitive with each other. Few also saw any problems with staging or recreating shots, or reusing unlabeled stock or file footage. Though those working in newsreels had no qualms about journalistic ethics, they tended to follow a journalistic structure. Big news, often war footage, went first, followed by some other news events (highway construction, earthquake damage, flooding, disputes in Washington, etc.), and closing with light, amusing fare: beauty contests, sports, unusual animals, fads, fashion, and funky inventions (Fielding, 2006, 19-151).
Raymond Fielding (2006, 153-154) has suggested this declining significance model may not have been the best possible for the medium. He noted how the German newsreel *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* in service of an evil cause used more of a rising action/climax structure. Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov incorporated some of his techniques of multiple edits and in-frame motion into short films of a newsreel style. Yet, despite all the noted flaws, newsreels today remain a documentary resource for historical visual storytelling.

Yet newsreels had a conflict-avoidance tendency that could limit the historical record. Studios certainly did not want to emphasize racial matters for fear of antagonizing white Southern audiences. Hearst Metrotone News was present for April 15, 1947, the day Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball’s color barrier. The film was indexed and kept, but not shown. “The newsreels studiously avoided controversy,” admitted Peter Bregman, director of archives for Fox Movietone newsreels (Kimball, 2007).

Newsreels certainly told to domestic movie audiences the story of World War II. Combat footage, gunfire, exploding bombs, aerial dogfights, ship cannons, advancing and retreating troops all flickered across the screen. Paramount News tallied 1944 coverage and found 77 percent of total content devoted to war news (Fielding, 2006, 183). Black and white described not only the film but also the moral and ethical tone. It was good versus evil, clear battle lines, and unwavering commitment. Television critic Michael Arlen (1969) has observed these themes carried over into early U. S. television news coverage of Vietnam. Arlen laments that with few exceptions network news presented
the war as a clash with global communism rather than noting the strong overlay of nationalism and colonialism.

Vietnam was a war without fronts, often without reliable local allies or a clear sense of mission beyond body counts. Yet early TV news coverage looked more like World War II, primitive map graphics showing battles, borders, and troop advances. Unchallenged sound bites from generals or administration officials trumpeted success and promised victory. Only after the North Vietnamese and Vietcong Tet Offensive in early 1968, as Arlen and others have noted, could one find much doubt, dissent, or even understanding of Vietnam on its own terms (Arlen, 1969; Hallin, 1986; Halberstam, 2003; Moorcraft and Taylor, 2008).

Similarly, Fielding reports that many liberal figures of the newsreel era complained that protest, dissent, and labor strife rarely appeared in newsreels, and when they did the emphasis would be on violence, threat, or public inconvenience (Fielding, 2006, 153-169). When World War I veterans descended on Washington, D.C., in 1932 to demand a promised bonus, the prime visual medium of 1932, newsreels, rarely showed up at the Bonus March camps, though cameramen were told to cover any outbreak of violence. Fox and Hearst cameramen had specific orders from New York headquarters to shun the vets. Paramount carried only one short item, Pathe´ two (Dickson and Allen, 2004).

Herbert Gans (1979) later would describe these phenomena when he studied the news processes of network TV newscasts and two major news magazines. The organizations used a social disorder frame regarding protest and dissent, covering the clash and not the underlying grievance. Edward Jay Epstein (1973) explored the same
news tendencies, habits, traditions, and other influences leading to a status quo slant in content. Jules Boykoff (2006) has added that five frames dominate both print and broadcast protest coverage—Violence, Disruption, Freak, Ignorance, and Amalgam of Grievances. The work by Gans, Epstein, and Boykoff all support what would be expected under social movement theory.

Social movement theory began as a framework for understanding the discourses and practices of those seeking social and political change. It began by approaching dissent as irrational psychological aberration, but in the 1970s shifted to recognizing protesters as rational actors within social structures. The paradigm shifts to organizational structures and resource mobilization (Garner and Tenuto, 1997).

Coming from the perspective that social movements are socially constructed, it is crucial then to understand which societal actors are taking part in the construction of their realities and in what manner. Several scholars (e.g., McLeod & Hertog, 1999; Putnam, 2002) have asserted that over the past few decades the mass media have been prominent players in contouring images associated with social movement organizations.

Research on social movements suggests that the type of media coverage movements receive often reflect the needs of political and economic elites. Viewed as being a part of the power elites in society, mainstream media are said to grant legitimacy only to those movements that are believed to pose no threat to the status quo. Those movements that are seen as undermining the stability of the established political and societal consensus are portrayed as deviant and lacking legitimacy.

In attempting to explain why journalists would assign deviant status to certain individuals or groups, Daniel Hallin (1986, 117, 162) created a model of the modes of
journalistic coverage. Hallin contends that journalists operate within three spheres of journalistic coverage. The first is the sphere of legitimate controversy. Within this sphere, journalists attempt to be balanced and neutral in their coverage mirroring the journalistic ideal of the watchdog model of the press. The second is the sphere of consensus in which journalists do not remain objective, but rather serve as advocates of what are viewed as consensus values. The third sphere of journalistic coverage is the sphere of deviance. Within this sphere, journalists act to silence or condemn those individuals or groups that are viewed as challenging political consensus. Through these models, Hallin argues that those individuals or groups, such as social movement organizations, that are striving to bring about change to the widely agreed upon political or societal stances encounter much difficulty in having their voices heard by the mainstream press.

Hallin’s assertions are sustained by a number of studies that have been conducted over the years regarding news coverage of social protest. In one of the earliest works, Breed (1955) in his analysis of newsroom practices found that members of the press tend to establish informal organizational policies that are mainly aimed at promoting social conformity. He writes that by avoiding coverage of social actions deemed to be nonconformist, or by assigning these stories to staffers who will provide a certain slant to the actions, newspaper editors are able to maintain the deception of societal equilibrium and tranquility. In Gitlin’s (1980) study of anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, Gitlin showed that while the news media may at times concede to the need for certain reforms within the political system, it will disparage any movements which attempt to go against
the system itself. He found that anti-Vietnam war demonstrators were often negatively presented, not reflective of the actual demonstrators.

McLeod and Hertog (1992; 1999), in several of their studies on social protests, have found that demonstrators are often defined by the news media as being violent and criminal in nature. The authors claim that journalists often use a violent crime narrative to set up a conflict scenario between protesters and law enforcement officers. Journalists’ use of a conflict scenario in their coverage of social movements has been found in other studies (e.g., Manoff & Schudson, 1986; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) as well. Conflict is said to boost the spectacle value of the coverage. By discussing the size of the protests, the presence of police, and clashes between police and protesters, newsworthiness of the protests is heightened. Newsworthiness is also heightened if protests are associated with issues already attracting news attention. Interestingly, with the increase in social movement coverage due to perceptions of newsworthiness, however, resistance to those changes being called for by the social movements also tend to rise (e.g., Gitlin, 1980; Altschull, 1984; Parenti, 1986; Loewen, 1996).

Gustainis and Hahn (1988) looked specifically at the social movements aimed at ending the Vietnam war, and asserted those movements failed and negative public reaction actually prolonged the U. S. role in the war. They argued the protesters and protest groups made rhetorical errors such as identifying with the counter culture, and using immoderate protest tactics including violence, obscenity, and flag desecration. Pro-war forces were very effective, they argued, with responses that tapped into the audience’s fear of communism, and opposition to protests in general and protest violence in particular. Those authors make an important contribution, but one should note that
only massive, noisy, and impolite protest garners mediated attention—and protesters must operate in that reality, and the smarter ones recognize and use that reality.

It is impossible to determine precisely whether antiwar protest lengthened, shortened, or had no effect on the Vietnam War. There is no “control group” contemporaneous war done without protest for comparison. It seems likely the war protests did some good by breaking the “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Those who had doubts about the war (or any war sub-point such as cost, fatalities, congressional authorization, performance of South Vietnamese allies) had validation they could express those doubts, even if at the same time they could express revulsion at the protesters bringing the message. The Gustainis and Hahn article makes a stronger contribution when it points out that U. S. news media got to the antiwar protest story late, generally gave such protests negative coverage, and curtailed coverage when faced with criticism.

In summarizing the major findings from research on press coverage of social movements, the news media have been found to often: deny the existence of the movement, ignore the movement as meaningless or irrelevant, dismiss the cause as hopeless, stereotype the adherents as extreme or odd, create alternate and less threatening spokesmen, fragment the movement into competing groups, co-opt leadership, co-opt the least threatening ideas, prematurely declare the movement dead, recall the movement as an aberration no longer needed, and finally forget the movement ever happened.
Methods


By the time the last creaky newsreel was made few could call it anything other than a status quo organ, a mouthpiece for a worldview that served its purpose but hadn’t adapted, technologically or ideologically, as the world changed. Thus, a critical viewing and content analysis of those last newsreels as they encountered antiwar protest should be a telling demonstration of social movement theory operation at high intensity. Thus, the researcher set out to view 1967 antiwar protest coverage from Universal Newsreels, available at www.archive.org, and British Pathe´ coverage of antiwar protests 1967-1970 available at its own website, www.britishpathe.com.

Findings

An April 18, 1967, Universal Newsreel had the opening full-screen title graphic “Peace March.” Following a crescendo of ominous music, announcer Ed Herlihy tells us
of 125,000 marching from New York’s Central Park to the United Nations. He describes them as “students, housewives, beatnik poets, doctors, businessmen, teachers, priests, and nuns.” Providing pictures to match, he proclaims, “Makeup and costumes were bizarre.” The newsreel shows draft card burning and the copy tried to minimize it by first saying that demonstrators claimed, vocal emphasis on claimed, 200 cards were burned but no accurate count could be determined and “reporters and onlookers were jostled away on purpose.”

This newsreel also had an unusual quick-cut sequence of four shots of legs marching; the last three at odd angles, perhaps an implied visual cue of oddity.

Images from Universal’s Peace March newsreel. Available at www.archive.org, under Creative Commons, no rights reserved.
The narrator admits the event is mostly peaceful, but then he tells us “shouted confrontations were frequent and fiery” as the film shows us a U.S. Army logo on a jacket and pulls out to show us a clean-cut young man yelling at a hooded demonstrator. Following brief footage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. walking to the United Nations to protest the war, the newsreel takes us to 50,000 “pacifists and hippies together” in a San Francisco protest. Protesters carry the blame when we hear “antiwar songs and speeches trigger a short scuffle between pro and con factions.” The event is described as “sponsored by a loose coalition of left-wing pacifist and moderate anti-war groups.

The story ends with the official line and implicit threat, “President Johnson meanwhile let it be known that FBI is closely watching all antiwar activity.” The newsreel then transitions to antiwar protests in Rome where the announcer lapses into casual, almost gleeful, chatter as he describes police and fireman turning hoses on sit-down protestors. “The solution H-Two-O applied freely under high pressure…The strong water jets bowled over demonstrators one after another. They dried out in the pokey.”

A May 5th Universal Newsreel entitled “Protests Galore!” started in London with footage of police and crowd pushing one another as the tells us 4,000 Londoners “were decrying British support for U. S. action [note “war” not used] in Vietnam.” The announcer admits to only a “few minor scuffles, but no arrests.” The announcer tells us the demonstrators were stopped [by whom not stated] from approaching Prime Minister Wilson’s Downing Street home. The newsreel makes no mention that is the official
residence of all prime ministers, akin to White House protests. That segment concludes with word the protesters used “mimics” of Queen Elizabeth to present “mock medals.”

The themes of disrespect and danger carried on when the scene switched to protests at Madrid University. Herlihy bellows, “Posters, leaflets, slogans, and student speeches all carried a virulence seldom seen here before,” a statement at odds with scenes of a happy, clapping crowds. The audio and video come back into match as the copy and film both address the burning of an American flag. The announcer wraps the segment by declaring, “Both President Johnson and Francisco Franco were vilified, a new low in public protest added strain on Spanish-American relations.” The last phrase, of course, is both an unsubstantiated assertion and blatant editorializing. The segment is accompanied by alarming horn sounds.

The newsreel abruptly shifts to upbeat music and pictures of people wearing balloons and flowers. We are in Detroit at a “social phenomenon sweeping the country.” The Love-In is a “close relative to the be-in, sort of a happy happening laced with the rites of spring.” The narration and video align in showing hippies, would-be hippies, colorful scenes, high frolic, and folks dancing. The announcer notes, “Group therapy like this outdrew the Detroit Tigers that day. The end, man.” Any protest in this Group Protest segment was missing.

The newsreel then shifts to official aerial footage of Vietnam air raids. The narration tells us the bombers “blasted” communication and boat repair and “annihilated” targets, and then asserts, “Our pilots hit only military targets.” Maintaining the illusion of a front and a traditional war, the newsreel tells us the jets struck close to North Vietnamese capital Hanoi once again, ant that ground troops moved to within ten miles of
the North Vietnam border. Just to drive home the Cold War connection, the newsreel closes with footage of soldiers, weapons, and Soviet leaders in the annual Moscow May Day parade complete with reference to speeches by Kremlin leaders accusing the U.S. of “criminal war in Vietnam.”

The October 24th newsreel, “Anti-War Demonstrators Storm Pentagon,” once again starts with ominous music. Protesters carry a “Support Our Troops…Bring Them Home” but the camera only shows the “Support Our Troops…Bring.” The narrator once again mentions scuffles and calls the organization a “loose confederation of some 150 groups and included adults as well as children.” Subtle status-quo shading can be found in both film and narration. The stand-off at the Pentagon is described as a “test of strength,” an odd phrasing when one side is armed. Military police “contain” the crowd, and the MP perimeter is described as a “protective line.” In the subsequent clashes the narrator intones, “Two soldiers are injured [no mention of injured protestors] and tear gas is used.” The passive voice construction does not specify for the audience that it was the soldiers who used the tear gas.

Newsreel coverage of the second day began with garbage being kicked around and a campfire that looked like it was burning books or pamphlets. The narrator noted the fires were to hold off the autumn chill while the footage showed a smaller crowd, focusing on a bearded protestor and a clean-cut MP. As the music changes to an upbeat swell, the narrator talked about nationwide demonstrations the same weekend supporting GIs in Vietnam. Abandoning any pretense of objectivity, Herlihy concluded, “The two-day protest ends with over 600 arrested and the widespread opinion that the demonstration made everyone a loser.”
British Pathe´ newsreels covered the same October 1967 protest at the Pentagon. Unfortunately this footage, and only this footage among all the protest newsreels analyzed, was retained as silent footage. Nevertheless, even with the British footage missing narration and natural sound, Universal and British Pathe´ present the same protest with some intriguing differences. The British film, compared to the U.S. newsreel footage of the same protests, uses more extreme long shots showing the large size of the gathering in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Like the U. S. newsreel, British Pathe´ 71984 showed minor scuffles and arrests. Unlike the American counterpart, the British film repeated shows the entire banner “Support Our G.I.s, Bring Them Home.” The British newsreel also showed a peaceful pro-war demonstration in San Francisco. The video shows flags and parade-formation American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars veterans. This pro-war parade is mislabeled an anti-war protest in the British Pathe´ archive description.

The British Archive also erred in its listing regarding the April 1967 protests, mistakenly listing them as 1966. Once again the British used wider shots than the Universal Newsreel did to show the large crowds. Universal only showed Dr. Martin Luther King walking toward the U.N. Pathe´ 83341 showed him speaking to microphones and cameras. The first moments of the newsreel, however, give a lot of time to the counter-demonstrators, their placards visible in medium shots and close-ups. One calls the protestors cowards. Another proclaims, “Victory, Bomb Hanoi” and another echoes “End Hanoi Sanctuary”. Some anti-war signs are seen in long shot. Only one quick medium shot shows an anti-war sign. It reads “Vietnam for Vietnamese. Let’s Get Out.” Later the Pathe´ film does show large numbers marching and we see additional
placards in the San Francisco march. That footage also shows the large Kezar Stadium crowd, but once again a “Support Our Men in Vietnam” is center screen.

British Pathe´ Newsreels also had footage and sound of several British anti-war protests: a March 21, 1968, demonstration that ended in chaos and became known as the Grosvenor Square riots (45122); a March 28, 1968, “Mothering Sunday” march (45136); color footage [all other newsreel footage examined is black and white] of a July 25, 1968, demonstration in front of the American Embassy (45365); an October 31, 1968 march to Downing Street (45509); an April 1969 Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament march (45754). The newsreel archive also contains a color collection of “offcuts, selected scenes, out-takes, rushes” from various Vietnam demonstrations (45366).

The Grosvenor Square narration had such strong editorializing, the archive added a “[c]ataloguer's note: commentary very biased in favour of police - in contrast with the actual footage showing shocking examples of police brutality.” Indeed, the footage begins with the most inflammatory posters: Mao, a hammer and sickle, and Ho Chi Minh. It devotes attention to the presence of actress Vanessa Redgrave. The narrator then warns about hate-makers, hard-core troublemakers determined to “drag the majority of well-intentioned demonstrators to their sickening level.” As snare drums increase tempo, we hear passive voice, “Riot was being incited.” The footage then just offers natural sound and shows incidents of teargas, demonstrators wrestled to the ground by groups of police, and at least one instance of police kicking the prone demonstrator. The narrator concludes with praise for the police restraint.

The “mothering day” march by contrast was presented with fewer machinations, though the peaceful march to the U.S. embassy was paired with a Campaign for Nuclear
Disarmament youth antiwar rally in Trafalgar Square. The narrator reminds of the previous week’s violence, and, as we see police pushing back against the crowd, the narrator opines, “The police had reason to fear another flare-up.” He concluded with the glib, “London had not suffered more violence in the cause of peace.”

The march from Trafalgar Square to the U. S. embassy on July 25, 1968, followed a similar route and a similar pattern of newsreel coverage. It begins with the narrator stressing the protestors were young and sincere; withholding the implied and condescending term naïve. The banners shown largely were ones with Soviet or communist icons. The mood abruptly shifts at the embassy as we are warned there are “aggressors, troublemakers, and anarchists” in the crowd. Their offense appears to be stepping over some bushes and a small garden-style mesh fence about a foot tall. As police grab offenders and push them back, strong editorial narration begins. “There are those who complain that the police use undue violence. Others more likely complement them on their restraint when faced with thugs, bullies, and flaunters of the law. How can anyone ever hope to have pleas for peace seriously considered when their terms are so violently and wrongly presented?” The film ends with a musical flourish and American flag being burned.

The October 31, 1968, demonstration showed the large crowd as the narrator told listeners what side they were on, “It was a day that many Londoners had dreaded for many weeks. Past experience had shown that bitter violence could take control.” We see an Australian flag in flames as the narrator says, “Flag burning hurts national pride, but breaks no heads.” After praising police and the majority of demonstrators the camera follows a breakaway group that the narrator at various times calls fringe fanatics, self-
described Maoists, troublemakers, hooligans, anarchists, and an uncontrollable faction. Sixty percent of the time of this newsreel was spent on clashes between this group and police, the narrator boldly asserting, “Nobody, not even the troublemakers themselves, could condemn the police for standing their ground and giving as good as they got.” He also concluded the other protestors thus “lost some of the sympathy and understanding they might have earned.”

The April 1969 CND rally was on Easter weekend. The crowd at Trafalgar Square looked larger than the narrator-provided number of 5000. The narration praised the march to the square as done by “orderly sober citizens.” A handful of young anarchists who “tried to stir up trouble” were “quickly dealt with before the mass reached Trafalgar Square.” How, we are not told. The crowd heard from the woman who was the North Vietnamese delegate to the Paris Peace Talks. We see her at the microphone, but do not hear her in this newsreel. The crowd shots include one with a banner of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.

A simple content analysis of the three Universal war protest newsreels, three war protest newsreels from British Pathe´, as well as three items of more typical newsreel fare from both Pathe´ and Universal, provides some useful numbers for comparisons. For comparisons the researcher chose from both Universal and Pathe´: a pro-war Loyalty Day parade in New York City, the opening of Expo ’67 in Montreal, and a wedding in President Johnson’s family. Pathe´ had a newsreel on the 1966 Luci Baines Johnson and Patrick Nugent wedding; Universal one year later had the White House wedding of Lynda Bird Johnson and Charles Robb (Table 1).
Table 1. Newsreel Content Analysis [U: is Universal, B: is British Pathe’]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newsreel</th>
<th># Shots</th>
<th>Sec.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th># LS</th>
<th>#MS</th>
<th>#CU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U: Peace March</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: October Demo.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U: Protests Galore</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Mothering Day</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U: Storm Pentagon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Grosvenor Sq.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U: Loyalty Day</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Pro-War Parade</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U: LBJ Wedding</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: LBJ Wedding</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U: Expo ‘67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Expo ‘67</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One notices that in five of the six pairs of stories the British newsreel was longer, though both British Pathe’ and Universal generally had similar ranges of shot lengths and
similar mean shot lengths. In the hard news protest stories Pathe´ compared to Universal used fewer close up shots, though that pattern was reversed in the soft news stories. Universal also devoted more seconds to the protests newsreels than the selected softer stories, 359 to 245. However, Pathe´ spent more time on the softer stories, 439 seconds to 385, especially doting on a wedding in President Johnson’s family for twice the time devoted to a similar story by its American counterpart.

Another notable difference was in the use of the natural sound of the protests. The Pathe´ newsreel of an October 1967 protest march included four consecutive shots during which the narrator remained silent, an uninterrupted 19.7 seconds of nothing but the natural sound of the chants and noises from the clashes with police. None of the Universal stories had any similar “nats” break. In fact, protest natural sound was evident during much of the Pathe´ protest coverage, while it was missing entirely from all the Universal newsreels. Universal relied instead on narration and a musical bed—often ominous or blaring for protests but conversely upbeat, light, and lively for the pro-war Loyalty Day parade.

The Loyalty Day parade pointed to another prominent shading of the antiwar protest stories. The parade images showed people of all ages; while the protest video almost exclusively showed teens and young adults, complementing a narration meme, found in both Pathe´ and Universal, that antiwar sentiment was just youthful naiveté. Pathe´, however, did exhibit some diversity of protesters effectively forced upon it by the content and design of the Mothering Day protest. The meme also is at odds with the historical record regarding public opinion. The online American National Election Study
shows that throughout 1966-1970 older Americans (45+) were actually more likely than the young to favor pulling out of Vietnam.

Above images from Universal’s Loyalty Day newsreel. Available at www.archive.org, under Creative Commons, no rights reserved. The last image on the right is prominent pro-war spokeswoman Martha Raye. British Pathe’ coverage of the same parade also had images of various laborers marching behind their union banners.
These youthful images are from Universal’s Peace March and Storm the Pentagon newsreels. All available at www.archive.org, under Creative Commons, no rights reserved.

Discussion

The analyzed newsreels provided coverage clues for all antiwar protesters in the forthcoming challenge about television coverage:

* Conflict, no matter how unrepresentative or minor, will get a lot of camera time.

* Police violence will be lessened by blaming the victim or by passive voice, no subject doing the violent acts.
* Default news themes for antiwar protests are ones of protestor disrespect and danger to the community.

* Reporters will assume all veterans support the war, and only pro-war demonstrators “support the troops.”

* Reporters will seek out a pro-war speaker, even if only a few are present or if one who did not attend has to be found for a quote. Those pro-war speakers almost invariably will equate war opposition with cowardice or support for an enemy.

* Great effort must be sustained to separate highly credible voices such as antiwar veterans. The news tendency will be simply to list participating groups.

* The central organizing principle of the Cold War, free world capitalist v. captive world communist, is deeply engrained and will become the default frame for news coverage.

* No matter how well organized any protest may be, it likely will be presented as a convenient, if naïve, casual assemblage of groups.

* News coverage generally will comment often on how well behaved any group may be, not the merits of that group’s arguments. Thus, the news conundrum for social movements is established and maintained. No threat of conflict likely means little coverage, but if conflict occurs, it gets covered instead of the group and its message.
Thus, newsreel coverage of Vietnam War protests largely fit the expectations from both social movement theory and what other researchers have found about protest coverage. Newsreels arrived late to the story, effectively denying the existence of the movement. Newsreels by word and picture choice presented the movement as meaningless or irrelevant, dismissed the cause as hopeless or dangerous, and stereotyped the adherents as naïve, extreme, odd, or misguided. The emphasis decidedly and overwhelmingly was on threat and behavior, not underlying grievances.

The above images are from Universal’s Peace March, Protests Galore, and Storm the Pentagon newsreels. All available at www.archive.org, under Creative Commons, no rights reserved. Both Universal and British Pathe employed a Cold War frame, and
largely validated the expectations of social movement theory. They also presented Vietnam antiwar protests as a social disorder among naïve youth, leading one to conclude generational differences played a large role in how these messages from a dying medium were crafted.

Newsreels would not be around for the latter stages of how mediated resistance arises to social movements. TV would take over the role of creating alternate and less threatening spokesmen, fragment the movement into competing groups, co-opting ideas or leadership, prematurely declaring the movement dead, and recalling the movement as an aberration no longer needed. However, the parent companies of newsreels, major movie companies, would offer both gritty and realistic Vietnam War entertainment films as well as propagandistic historical revisionism as varied as John Wayne’s *The Green Berets* and Sylvester Stallone’s Rambo movie *First Blood*. Thus, it appears mediated forms change a lot more rapidly than human behavior within political and social systems. The latter reacts in predictable opposition, including mediated opposition, to threats such as antiwar protests.

Two other observations need to be made, and the first is a note of caution. A critical analysis, supplemented by a content analysis, such as this research can offer some insight into the organizational forces and ideological assumptions at work in the creation of a message by bringing “fresh eyes” to the communicated messages themselves. It cannot, however, conclude anything about contemporaneous audience reaction—agreement, disagreement, cognitive dissonance, boredom, or using the opportunity to get popcorn.
Secondly, although newsreels seemed at times to rely on a simplistic, two-sided, Cold War model for the Vietnam War, the reality of public discourse was not that simple. Neither anti-war nor pro-war forces were monolithic. Anti-war groups, for example, included pacifists who opposed all war, anti-draft forces who opposed compulsory military service, civil rights groups who saw the war burden as being borne unfairly by minorities and working-class youth, social reformers who saw the war as a drain on Great Society programs, and many intellectuals who saw the war more in nationalistic and colonial terms rather than capitalism versus communism.

Finally, one should note something about the telling similarities between the British and American newsreel coverage of the same events. The British, more than the Americans, were more likely to show the scale of crowds at U.S. protests and let the audience hear some natural sound of U.K. protests, but otherwise the newsreels usually were similar in types of shots, lengths of shots, use of mood music, and pro-war narration. One could see little, if any, of the historical and cultural differences in approach to journalism. This may be because both newsreel organizations were deeply connected to the entertainment film industry, not any news outlet, for both operational control and distribution.

These similarities suggest something more profound than the general and specific support for social movement theory noted previously. The establishment forces in the U.S. had a much stronger stake in the Vietnam War compared to the establishment forces in Britain. American industry made supplies for the war. American troops fought in the war. American politicians dug in their heels to insist on an escalated U.S. role. Yet, the American and British newsreels made similar pro-war newsreel product. The historic
military alliances between the U. K. and the U.S. may play some role, but certainly those
nation states did not agree on every Cold War aspect of Vietnam policy. Instead, one
must offer up the observation that, at least in this case, the generational differences likely
were a dominant factor in newsreel creation. Those who made newsreels simply could
understand or sympathize with the young people they saw only on film in the
Moviescope viewers of their dying media form.
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