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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Amanda B. Womac titled "Controversy in the Coalfields: Evaluation of Media and Audience Frames in the Print Coverage of Mountain Justice Summer." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science, with a major in Communications and Information Sciences.

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with official student records.)

CONTROVERSY IN THE COALFIELDS: EVALUATION OF MEDIA
AND AUDIENCE FRAMES IN THE PRINT COVERAGE OF
MOUNTAIN JUSTICE SUMMER

A Thesis
Presented for the
Masters of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Amanda B. Womac
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Marti and Bill Womac, and my grandmother, Miriam Womac, for their continuous support throughout my academic career, and to my sister, Emily Womac for always being there. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my partner and biggest fan, John Johnson. Thanks for the support and love that helped me achieve my goals. And last but not least, I dedicate this thesis about Mountain Justice Summer to the Movement. Thanks for your work!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the media and audience frames used in print media coverage of Mountain Justice Summer and mountaintop removal. The study synthesizes aspects of framing theory of media effects as described by other media scholars in an attempt to create a working model to evaluate media and audience frames. As this study will show, the media use an overall negative frame in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer, but also have an overall negative frame in the coverage of mountaintop removal. Based on these findings, the study suggest activists with Mountain Justice Summer helped to frame the issue of mountaintop removal by staying on message, and the overall source for negative perception of activists came from industry representatives or community members. Evaluation of audience frames shows an overall positive perception of Mountain Justice Summer activists and opposition to mountaintop removal. This finding suggests a weak connection between media frames and audience frames, but also allows for further evaluation of the framing theory of media effects.

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Introduction

Their hearts were pounding as they made their way to the entrance of the mine site. Burdened with 55-gallon barrels, chains, and quick cement, the activists worked quickly and efficiently to set up the road block. With headlamps and softened voices, the group helped three activists wrap chains around their arms and lock them together through the 55-gallon barrels, using Locking-Ds as anchors. Once the three activists were settled and as comfortable as they could be, the group started filling up the barrels with rocks and mixing in the quick cement. By the time miners began to arrive for work, the activists were ready and waiting with a confrontational surprise.

Across the only road leading to the Zeb Mountain mine, three activists were locked down to two 55-gallon barrels full of rocks and cement. Above them, a blue tarp draped between two bamboo poles and black duct tape read: "Don't Chop Rocky Top." Other activists were milling about, alert and watching as the anticipated confrontation begin to unfold.

Some arriving miners thought the stunt was a joke and began to laugh. Others strolled back to their cars to wait for the police who had been called once the mining company was alerted by miners that there was a problem at the site. But a few miners decided to take matters in their own hands and began to pull on the three activists, trying to physically remove them from the barrels. Armed with video cameras, some activists taped the scene while others tried to deescalate the situation. When the miners discovered the activists were not going to surrender so easily, they began to drive their trucks up to the activists, laughing and joking among themselves about running the activists over.

Police were soon on the scene to arrest the activists. At first, they reacted similarly to the miners, a bit stunned by the stunt and unsure of the next step. However, by mid-morning, the blockade was broken. Because the quick cement did not dry quickly enough, miners and police were able to use tools to dig in the barrels and remove the rock and debris. The police soon discovered the activists were chained together and cut the chains, dismantling the roadblock and hauling the three activists off to jail.

But this would not be the last time activists confronted miners at Zeb Mountain. The August 18, 2003 action would help set the scene for more actions and more opposition to the increased use of an aggressive strip-mining technique with many names: contour-ridge mining, cross-ridge mining and mountaintop removal, the latter being the name most frequently associated with this mining technique.

Chapter 1: Background

A relatively new practice in Tennessee, mountaintop removal has been used to mine coal in West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky for the past 30 years, leveling more than 500 mountains, about 800,000 acres, and burying more than 1,200 miles of headwater streams. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), mountaintop removal is “a mining practice where the tops of mountains are removed, exposing the seams of coal. Mountaintop removal can involve removing 500 feet or more of the summit to get at buried seams of coal. The earth from the mountaintop is then dumped in the neighboring valleys.”¹

Robert Clear Coal Corporation originally owned the Zeb Mountain mine in Campbell County, Tenn., when activists with Katuah Earth First! first blockaded the road in 2003. Falling on hard times and low coal prices, Robert Clear declared bankruptcy and sold the mineral rights to National Coal Corporation, a Florida-based corporation with offices in Tennessee. Even though the mine changed hands, the mining techniques never changed. The Katuah Earth First! activists never yielded on their protests to stop mountaintop removal on Zeb Mountain, the first site in the state of Tennessee, and in 2005 joined forces with groups across Southern Appalachia who were also fighting mountaintop removal in their communities to form Mountain Justice Summer, a call to action for coalfield justice.

Mountain Justice Summer is based on Mississippi Freedom Summer, in which student activists traveled across Mississippi during the height of the Civil Rights

¹Information from an Environmental Protection Agency draft environmental impact statement about mountaintop removal, completed in 2003. <http://www.epa.gov/region3/mtntop/pdf/mtm-vf_fpeis_full-document.pdf>.

Movement to raise awareness of the injustices being done to African Americans. A similar summer, Redwood Summer, took place in the 1990s to raise awareness of the destruction of old-growth redwood trees in California. Activists from across the country traveled to California for a summer of action. Similarly, Mountain Justice Summer is a call for activists and concerned citizens to travel to the coalfields of Southern Appalachia to raise awareness and help stop mountaintop removal.

For the past two years, activists have conducted protests, rallies and direct actions, like the one Katuah Earth First! conducted at Zeb Mountain, under the banner of Mountain Justice Summer. They have hosted training camps for activists and community members to learn tactics, not just of nonviolent civil disobedience, but how to test water in the coalfields, listen to the community, organize a campaign, talk to the media and more. But with all their efforts, mountaintop removal is still practiced at an increasing rate across Southern Appalachia and largely ignored by lawmakers.

Like all environmental movements, Mountain Justice Summer used the media to help spread its message and get noticed. But how does the media use the information provided? What sources do the media go to for the story? And how do Mountain Justice Summer activists fair overall in the coverage of the controversy in the coalfields? This study attempts to answer these questions in order to evaluate media frames used in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer from 2005 to 2007.

In my thesis, I attempt to synthesize existing research on the framing theory of media effects in order to evaluate the types of frames used by media in their coverage of Mountain Justice Summer and contribute to the larger body of knowledge of framing news discourse.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Framing Theory of Media Effects

The original concept of framing in mass media research “offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text.”² Over the past 15 years, framing as a theory of media effects has been studied by researchers who have compared media and audience frames, looked at frames as elements in news discourse, evaluated the salience of frames, and even argued frames are part of a larger struggle for power between media and social movements.

Robert Entman states that “framing essentially involves selection and salience and to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text.”³ In this context, salience is defined as highlighting a piece of information to make it more noticeable to the audience. According to Entman, frames function in four different ways: define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies,⁴ and can be found in four different locations throughout the communications process. The first location is with communicators, who make the unconscious or conscious framing judgment in what to say. Second, the text contains frames manifested by certain key words or stock phrases that reinforce facts or values. Frames then guide a receiver’s thinking and conclusion, which may or may not reflect the intent of the frame. And finally, the culture contains a stock of commonly used frames. Entman suggests that “framing in all four locations includes similar functions:

²Robert Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 51-58.

³ Ibid., 52.

⁴ Ibid.

selection and highlighting, and use of the highlighted elements to construct an argument about problems and their causation, evaluation, and/or solution."⁵

In their 1993 study of political communication, Zhongdang Pan and Gerald Kosicki outlined three questions posed throughout political communications research in framing:

1. How do the news media set the frame in which citizens discuss public events and consequently narrow the available political alternatives?
2. How do politicians and advocacy groups actively court the media to polish their images and frame debates over public policies?
3. How do audiences process news information actively and construct meanings using their preexisting cognitive representations?⁶

Pan and Kosicki present a framing analysis approach to the problem of how to convincingly link news texts to both production and consumption processes. "The basic idea is to view news texts as a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts."⁷

Pan and Kosicki offer the notion of frames as both sociological and psychological conceptions. In the sociological conception of framing, Pan and Kosicki cite examples of research in which frames are labeled as the schemata of interpretation that enable

⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁶ Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse," *Political Communication* 10 (1993): 55-75.

⁷ Ibid., 55-56.

individuals to locate, identify and label occurrences or information.⁸ Frames are also seen as persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusions that can be directly linked to the production of news discourse by enabling journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and package the information for quick relay to the audience.⁹ Pan and Kosicki cite other researchers who define frames as sociological conceptions by stating “a frame is a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning.”¹⁰

As a psychological conception, frames are seen as templates or data structures that organize pieces of information, such as schema or script. Another line of research views framing as “placing information in a unique context so that certain elements of the issue get a greater allocation of an individual’s cognitive resources.”¹¹ Pan and Kosicki suggest that because of overlapping disciplines, frames function as both internal structures of the mind and devices embedded in political discourse and go on to conclude that framing may be studied as “a strategy of constructing and processing news discourse or as a characteristic of the discourse itself.”¹²

In his analysis of framing, Stephen Reese defines frames as organizing principles “that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.”¹³ Reese argues contextual analysis of news does not help to

⁸ E. Goffman, *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (New York: Longman, 1974) as cited by Pan and Kosicki, 1993.

⁹ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) as cited by Pan and Kosicki, 1993.

¹⁰ William Gamson and A. Modigliani, “The changing culture of affirmative action.” In R.G. Braungart and M.M. Braungart (Eds.), *Research in Political Sociology*, Vol. 3: 137-177 (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1987) as cited by Pan and Kosicki, 1993.

¹¹ Pan and Kosicki, 1993, 57.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Stephen Reese, Oscar Gandy, Jr. and August Grant, eds., *Framing Public Life*, (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 11.

identify frames because researchers are usually looking only at the topic or theme of a story, whereas frames identify the organization or structure of the story. He states that it is “*the way* that certain attributes come to be associated with particular issues that should concern framing analysis.”¹⁴ In his opinion, framing research allows room for interpretation and helps to highlight relationships within news discourse. Reese uses the current “war on terror” frame to flesh out his argument for frames as organizing principles and states that this current frame is a cultural frame on which all news stories surrounding the issue are constructed.

In my analysis of Mountain Justice Summer, I am interested to see what cultural frame exists within the media frame used to cover the movement. I hypothesize the frame will be mainly negative because of the type of actions Mountain Justice Summer participates in, particularly nonviolent civil disobedience, which are seen as actions outside of the reasonable means of protest determined by culture. Looking back at the Civil Rights Movement, nonviolent civil disobedience is a great notion of protest, admirable and noteworthy. However, at the time of the action, protestors were not viewed with much admiration at all, and the action itself was translated by the culture as bad because it broke the law.

According to Dietram Scheufele,¹⁵ framing research is characterized by "theoretical and empirical vagueness" because of the lack of a common theoretical frame of research. He states, "Conceptual problems translate into operational problems, limiting

¹⁴ Stephen Reese, “The Framing Project: A Bridging Model for Media Research Revisited,” *Journal of Communications*, 57(2007): 148-154, at 152.

¹⁵ Dietram Scheufele, “Framing as a Theory of Media Effects.” *Journal of Communication*, 49 (1999): 103-122.

the comparability of instruments and results."¹⁶ In order to differentiate framing from other concepts of media effects, Scheufele first examines framing in the larger historical context of media effects research by identifying the four stages of research of media effects.

Stage 1 was dominated by strategic propaganda during World War II and led to a fear of the influence media messages had on attitudes. From the late 1940s to the 1960s, which Scheufele identifies as stage 2, the paradigm of strong media effects was revised because researchers believed personal experience was the main influence on attitude change. Stage 3, from the 1970s to the early 1980s, was dominated by a search for new media effects based not on attitude change, but the cognitive effects of mass media. The fourth and current stage of the history of media effects research is characterized by social constructivism and describes the combination of elements from both strong and limited effects of mass media. Here Scheufele argues mass media have a "strong influence on constructing social reality" because media frames images of reality in a "predictable and patterned way." On the other hand, argues Scheufele, media effects are limited by "the interaction between mass media and recipients" because "media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse." Based on the history and vagueness of media effects and framing research, Scheufele argues the development of a conceptual definition of framing involves "identifying theoretical premises common to all conceptualizations of framing and developing a definition of

¹⁶ Ibid., 103.

framing generally applicable to media effects research."¹⁷

Scheufele poses the question of how framing can be used to broaden mass communication scholars' understanding of media effects and defines three dimensions of news processing: active, reflective, and selective. Active news processing refers to the individual who seeks out additional news sources based on the assumption that "mass mediated information in general is incomplete, slanted or in other ways colored by the intentions of the communicator." Reflective news processors think about the information presented and discuss ideas and notions with others in order to fully understand what they have learned. Selective news processors use mass media to obtain information only relevant to them and "skim over or ignore irrelevant or uninteresting content."¹⁸

As demonstrated thus far, media scholars are still debating the framing theory of media effects and its place in mass media research. I believe there is a place for framing theory, especially as it relates to controversies such as the controversy in the coalfields about mountaintop removal. Media have the ability to present information about the controversy to the public through frames, which can be largely determined by who is quoted and what they say about the issue. Based on this notion, I will focus on what is being said by whom in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer in order to draw educated conclusions about the types of frames used by media.

Media and Audience Frames

In response to a call by Entman for the development of a consistent concept of framing, "a common understanding that might help constitute framing as a research

¹⁷ Ibid., 104.

¹⁸ Ibid.

paradigm,"¹⁹ Scheufele integrates the fragmented approaches to framing in political communication into a comprehensive model that focuses on media frames versus audience frames and frames as individual variables or dependent variables.

Scheufele thinks frames should be considered as schemes for both presenting and comprehending news and therefore identifies two concepts of framing: media frames and audience, or individual, frames. He defines media frames as devices imbedded in political discourse and individual frames as internal structures of the mind.²⁰ In a 1991 study, Entman also identifies the differences between media and individual frames by stating, "Individual frames are information-processing schemata of individuals and media frames are attributes of the news itself."²¹

According to Gamson and Modigliani, media frames are conceptually defined as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events ... suggesting what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue."²² Tuchman sees media frames as necessary elements in the creation of a story because media or news frames can help turn meaningless happenings into discernable events. Tuchman states that "the news frame organizes everyday reality ... it is an essential feature of news."²³ Along these same lines, Gitlin argues media frames "serve as working routines for

¹⁹ Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 51-58, at 56.

²⁰ Dietram Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication*, 49 (1999): 103-122, at 106.

²¹ Robert Entman, "Framing U.S. coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents," *Journal of Communication*, 41 (1991): 6-27, at 7.

²² William Gamson and A. Modigliani, "The changing culture of affirmative action." In R.G. Braungart and M.M. Braungart (Eds.), *Research in Political Sociology*, Vol. 3: 137-177 (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1987), at 143, cited by Scheufele 1999, 106.

²³ G. Tuchman, *Making news: A study in the construction of reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978) as cited by Scheufele, 1999, 106.

journalists”²⁴ that help organize and package information quickly for efficient relay to the audience. According to Scheufele, researchers have examined factors influencing the production and selection of news, but “no evidence has yet been systematically collected about how various factors impact the structural qualities of news in terms of framing.”²⁵ In order to help create a typology of framing, Scheufele identifies five factors that potentially influence how journalists frame an issue: social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalist routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists.²⁶

Pan and Kosicki argue the role of rhetorical choices “constitute important aspects of news discourse construction”²⁷ and identify four types of structural dimensions of news discourse to help identify influences on the formation of frames: syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical. Arguing every news story has a theme that “functions as the central organizing idea,” Pan and Kosicki define a theme as “an idea that connects different semantic elements of a story into a coherent whole.”²⁸ Syntactical structures refer to “the stable patterns of the arrangement of words or phrases into sentences.”²⁹ Script structures are recognizable organizations when news discourse is presented as a story³⁰ and refer to the general newsworthiness of an event as well as “the intention to communicate news and events to the audience that transcends their limited sensory

²⁴ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) as cited by Scheufele 1999, 106.

²⁵ Scheufele 1999, 109.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Pan and Kosicki 1993, 62.

²⁸ Ibid., 59.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 60.

experiences.”³¹ Thematic structures refer to news discourse focused on issues rather than events or action³² and reflect the “tendency of journalists to impose a causal theme on their news stories in the form of explicit causal statements or linking observations to the direct quote of a source.”³³ Finally, Pan and Kosicki define rhetorical structures of news discourse as “the stylistic choices made by journalists in relation to their intended effects.”³⁴

Pan and Kosicki continue by stating that rhetorical choices made by journalists “designate one of the categories in syntactic or script structures” and define it as a designator because “it functions to establish a correspondence between a signifier and signified as well as allocating the signified in a specific cognitive category.”³⁵ Here they argue these syntactical and script structures chosen by journalists signify the presence of a particular frame and suggest “a large portion of the choosing a designator involves labeling, which reveals cognitive categorization on the part of newsmakers.”³⁶ Pan and Kosicki suggest that by using designators such as “sources” or “the Administration,” news reports give indications of the authoritativeness of an action or statement. They use the following example:

By using “Iraqi dictator,” a news report places Saddam Hussein in the same category with Hitler, Noriega, Stalin, and other generally hated men in American culture. By designating the 1989 uprising in China as a

³¹ Scheufele, 1999 p.111.

³² Ibid.

³³ Scheufele 1999, p.111.

³⁴ Pan and Kosicki, 1993, 61.

³⁵ Ibid., 62.

³⁶ Ibid.

“prodemocracy movement,” new reports interpreted the meaning of the uprising and categorized it in the same general category that the American Revolution might belong.³⁷

In evaluating the articles about Mountain Justice Summer activists, I will pay attention to the syntactical and script structures used by journalists in order to evaluate how lexical choices help establish media frames used in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer by print media.

In order to define individual or audience frames, Scheufele again draws upon Entman’s research in framing and defines individual frames as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information.”³⁸ Individual frames help audiences make sense of political news. In his 1987 study, McLeod defines individual frames as “cognitive devices that operate as non-hierarchical categories that serve as forms of major headings into which any future news content can be filed.”³⁹ How audiences define frames within personal world views is also important in framing research, and Scheufele defines two frames of reference used to interpret and process information within the audience frames: a global, long-term political view versus short-term, issue-related political views. The global or long-term political view within an individual frame has a limited influence on perception and interpretation of political problems within the media frame because this view is developed as a personal characteristic or individual world view. The short-term, issue-related political view can have a significant effect on

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Entman 1993, 53 as cited by Scheufele 1999, 107.

³⁹ J.M. McLeod and others, “Audience perspectives on the news: Assessing their complexity and conceptual frames.” Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, San Antonio, Texas, August 1987, as cited by Scheufele 1999, 107.

how an individual perceives, organizes and interprets incoming information, or the media frame, because these views are not developed as a personal characteristic.⁴⁰

In my evaluation of the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer by the media, I will look at news articles, where the media frames are created, as well as letters to the editor, which is a starting point for evaluating audience frames.

Frames as Dependent and Independent Variables

Frames are also portrayed as dependent and independent variables as they relate to media and audience frames. As dependent variables, “the role of various factors in influencing the creation or modification of frames” is examined.⁴¹ At the media level, frames as dependent variables may be influenced by journalists' social structure or organization. Frames as dependent variables can also be influenced at the media level by a journalist's individual or ideological values. Researchers interested in frames at the audience level examine frames as dependent variables as “a direct outcome of the way mass media frame an issue.”⁴²

Frames as independent variables, Scheufele suggests, are typically the effects of framing. Evaluating the effects of framing within the media frame, Scheufele claims “the most logical outcome is a link to audience frames.”⁴³ In studies examining media frames as independent variables, researchers conceptually define media frames as independent

⁴⁰ Scheufele 1999, 107.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² V. Price and others, “Switching trains of thought: The impact of news frames on readers' cognitive responses.” Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Chicago, 1996, as cited by Scheufele 1999, 107.

⁴³ Scheufele 1999, 107.

variables as “having an impact on attitudes, opinions or individual frames.”⁴⁴

With individual frames as independent variables, Scheufele poses two questions for examination: 1) “Does individual framing of issues influence evaluations of issues or political actors,” and 2) “Does the way individuals frame issues for themselves have an impact on their willingness to engage in political action or participation?”⁴⁵ Entman also identifies media frames as independent variables in his 1993 study examining coverage on the downing of a Korean and Iranian airplane. Conceptually defining media frames as independent variables, or “attributes of the news itself”⁴⁶ that influence political decision-making and public opinion, Entman identifies five traits of media texts that set a certain frame of reference: (1) importance judgments; (2) agency, or answer to the question; (3) identification with potential victims; (4) categorization or choice of labels for incidents; and (5) generalizations to a broader national context.⁴⁷

With individual frames as independent variables, Scheufele cites examples of social movements research in order to find an “explicit and direct link” between these and “individual information processing or political action.”⁴⁸ Cycles of protest and mobilization for collective action aimed at social change were evaluated using individual frames as independent variables to show how people interpret conflicts as portrayed by media frames. Entman and other researchers focused on how master frames invented by social movements influence public support for the movement or issue at hand.⁴⁹ In

⁴⁴ Ibid., 110

⁴⁵ Ibid., 107-108

⁴⁶ Entman 1993, 7.

⁴⁷ Scheufele 1999, 111.

⁴⁸ Scheufele 1999, 113.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 114

another study⁵⁰ on individual frames as independent variables, three types of individual frames were identified in an attempt to synthesize previous findings to a single model. Diagnostic framing refers to the identification of a problem by an individual and attributing blame and causality. Prognostic framing identifies what needs to be done and motivational framing is the “call to arms for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action.”⁵¹

However, Scheufele raises the issue of ecological fallacy with regards to these studies because of their limited use in evaluating “the potential impact of individual frames on political participation or action” and suggests “the link between audience frames and individual action needs to be explored more closely in future research.”⁵² Here I would suggest implementing a frame of the social responsibility theory of media effects⁵³ in the evaluation of individual frames and potential action in order to evaluate how media frames create a plane for social discourse, thus creating active and reflective news processors and actors in a democratic society.

The Framing Process

In his attempt to synthesize framing research, Scheufele created a model of framing that examines four processes: frame building, frame setting, individual-level effects of framing, and a link between individual frames and media frames.⁵⁴ Scheufele

⁵⁰ J. Gerhards and D. Rucht, “Mesomobilization: Organizing and framing in two protest campaigns in West Germany,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (1992) as cited by Scheufele 1999, 114.

⁵¹ Scheufele 1999, p.114

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ The social responsibility of media effects states the media have a responsibility to raise conflict to the plane of discussion. F.S. Siebert, T. Peterson and W. Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956).

⁵⁴ Scheufele 1999, 115.

claims that research on impacts of media frames as dependent variables (organizational restraints or professional values of journalists) does not determine how media frames are formed and suggests future research could employ frame building to help answer what kinds of organizational or structural factors at the media level and what characteristics of journalists impact framing of news content.⁵⁵ Three potential sources of influence have been identified by researchers and include a journalist-centered influence where journalists actively construct frames in order to make sense of information; organizational routines that determine the selection of frames; and finally, external sources such as political actors, elites or interest groups who can suggest frames through sound bites.⁵⁶

A second process of framing identified by Scheufele is frame setting, which is concerned with the salience of issue attributes. Research on frame setting has shown that suggesting importance of a specific frame will enhance its salience and accessibility of frames is directly linked to how people think about frames.⁵⁷ Scheufele admits this process is similar to another theory of media effects – agenda setting, which I will discuss in the next section of my literature review.

Studies evaluating the individual-level effects of audience frames, according to Scheufele, have failed to link key variables in the process. “Although making important contributions in *describing* effects of media framing on behavioral, attitudinal, or cognitive outcomes, these studies provide no *explanation* as to why and how these two

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Scheufele 1999, 115-116.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 116.

variables are linked to one another.”⁵⁸ The final process model of framing Scheufele identifies is journalists as audiences, which he claims deserves more attention than it has received because “journalists are equally susceptible to the very frames that they use to describe events and issues.”⁵⁹ Under this assumption, I would argue that objectivity in frames is a problem for journalists because each journalist has cultural frames from within which s/he works that can make objectivity a very hard notion to achieve. I will discuss this in further detail in my discussion chapter.

Framing Theory versus Agenda Setting

Some media scholars believe the framing theory of media effects is second-level agenda setting and do not count it as its own theory. Based on framing literature, I think that framing theory of media effects has its place in media scholarship and is not second-level agenda setting. According to media scholars, the field of media effects has passed through a series of paradigm shifts. The first took place during the 1940s when researchers lost faith in the bullet or hypodermic needle theory of media effects⁶⁰ and turned to more methodological and theoretical ideas of media effects. During this first paradigm shift, media scholars believed media effects were more complex in nature than previously assumed. They argued that media effects “depended heavily on people’s homogenous networks and their selective informational diets, which reinforced existing

⁵⁸ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Under this conceptualization, audience members were isolated from one another and were vulnerable targets easily influenced by mass communication messages. Communication scholars who advocated the bullet theory are difficult to find, but it is a view held by audience members at various times. One example of the bullet theory thinking would be fear of the power of propaganda that was widespread after World War I. Source: Werner J. Severin and James Tankard. (2001). *Communications Theories*, 5th Ed. (New York: Longman, 2001), 13.

attitudes rather than changing them.”⁶¹ In the 1970s, a second paradigm shift occurred in which media scholars assumed “mass media had strong, long-term effects on audiences, based on the ubiquitous and constant stream of messages they presented to audiences.”⁶² McCombs and Shaw’s 1972 study introduced media scholars to the notion of agenda-setting research in political communications, which received a lot of attention from theorists frustrated with minimal-effects perspectives common at the time. The third and current paradigm shift took place in the 1980s and 1990s and introduced notions of priming and framing based on the idea that “mass media had potentially strong attitudinal effects, but that these effects also depended heavily on predispositions, schema, and other characteristics of the audience that influenced how they processed messages in the mass media.”⁶³

Agenda setting theory of media effects is the idea that a strong correlation between the emphasis mass media places on certain issues and the importance attributed to the issue by the audience. Emphasis can include relative placement of a story or amount of coverage the issue receives. A similar effect, priming, refers to “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations”⁶⁴ and occurs when news content suggests to the audience specific issues to use as benchmarks for evaluating political leaders’ performance. Priming and agenda setting are similar in that both media effects are “memory-based models of information processing ... and assume that people form

⁶¹ Dietram Scheufele, “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models.” *Journal of Communication*, 57 (2007): 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

attitudes based on the considerations that are most salient.”⁶⁵ Scheufele argues that framing differs significantly from agenda setting and priming, which he identifies as accessibility-based models of media effects. “[Framing] is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences.”⁶⁶ He goes on to break framing down into macro- and microlevel constructs claiming framing as a macroconstruct refers to modes of presentation used in a way that “resonates with existing underlying schemas among audiences.”⁶⁷ As a microconstruct, framing describes “how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions.”⁶⁸ Ultimately, the primary difference between agenda setting and priming on the one hand and framing on the other is that agenda setting determines *whether* the audience thinks about an issue and framing determines *how* the audience thinks about it.

Reese argues framing is in part “a reaction against the theoretical limitations of its neighbor,”⁶⁹ referring to agenda-setting research, and claims framing “suggest more intentionality on the part of the framer and relates more explicitly to political strategy.”⁷⁰

The Power of Frames

Research in framing theory as it relates to communication is still developing. Entman, Scheufele, Pan and Kosicki, as well as Reese, have all discussed the notion of frames as devices embedded in news discourse, how media frames relate to audience

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Stephen Reese, “The Framing Project: A Bridging Model for Media Research Revisited,” *Journal of Communication*, 57(2007): 151.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 148.

frames, and effects of framing. However, previous research has failed to look at the relationship of media frames within the context of broader political and social issues. Researchers Kevin Carragee and Wim Roefs⁷¹ argue framing research should be linked to social and political questions relating to power central to the media hegemony thesis and contribute to the larger issue of how social movements and media interact. Carragee and Roefs define frames in terms of action and their ability to “construct particular meanings concerning issues by their patterns of emphasis, interpretation, and exclusion”⁷² and claim frames are dependent on journalistic norms and external sources such as power elites, advocates, and movements.

The thesis of media hegemony is that “the routine, taken-for-granted structures of everyday thinking contribute to a structure of dominance.”⁷³ This definition brings in a radical notion of the structure of society in that it suggests the ideas of the ruling, or dominant, class in society become the ruling ideas of society. In his 1974 study on class domination and ideological hegemony, Sallach suggests “mass media are seen as controlled by the dominant class in society and as aiding in exerting the control of that class over the rest of society.”⁷⁴ Although media hegemony is difficult to test with research, D. Altheide (1984) developed three assumptions that serve as basic theses in the writings on media hegemony:

1. The socialization of journalists involves guidelines, work routines, and

⁷¹ Kevin Carragee and Wim Roefs, “The Neglect of Power in Recent Framing Research,” *Journal of Communication* (2004), 214-233.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 217

⁷³ Definition found in Severin and Tankard, 2001, pg. 282, as cited by Antonio Gramsci in Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes and Sasson, “Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 18 (1992) : 373-93.

⁷⁴ D.L. Sallach, “Class domination and ideological hegemony,” *Sociological Quarterly* 15(1974) : 38-50. Concept found in Severin and Tankard, 282.

orientations replete with the dominant ideology.

2. Journalists tend to cover topics and present news reports that are conservative and supportive of the status quo.

3. Journalists tend to present pro-American and negative coverage of foreign countries, especially Third World countries.⁷⁵

Carragee and Roefs also argue that scholarly debate should ensue concerning “the degree to which specific frames are linked to central issues of power ... and what kind of rejections of particular frames constitute resistance,”⁷⁶ keeping the framing process within the larger context of political power as it relates to media and social movements.

They state:

The interaction between social movements and the news media provides a particularly fruitful means to evaluate the relationship between framing processes and hegemony. Social movements are among the premier challengers of hegemonic values. Their ability to challenge hegemony is tied directly to framing processes and to their effectiveness in influencing news discourse. The interaction between movements and the news media’s relationship to political authority and the character of news coverage of challengers demanding change. In short, the study of movement-media interaction necessarily involves considerations of power.⁷⁷

They conclude by recognizing that complex framing processes are shaped by the distribution of power, both political and social, among elites, and the challenge of

⁷⁵ Severin and Tankard, 282.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

framing research is “to study the complex ways power informs frame sponsorship, the articulation of frames within news stories, and the interpretation of these frames by audience members.”⁷⁸

Movements and Media

Social protest movements have played an important role in the history of the United States. Since the formation of this nation, and even earlier, citizens have engaged one another in debates, marches, and even nonviolent civil disobedience in order to raise awareness of social injustices. Beginning in the 1800s, citizen workers challenged the idea that they were mere industry chattel and began organizing for labor rights. This notion took off and by the 1820s, unions had been formed and were working to reduce the workday from 12 to 10 hours. Child labor laws began to emerge from citizen outcry in the 1830s. By the 1840s, the labor movement called for policy change and urged a minimum age standard for child labor, which resulted in an aggressive national campaign for federal child labor laws in the 1900s.

Women's rights have much the same history as the labor movement in regard to community activism. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton stood before more than 100 people and delivered her Declarations of Sentiments, women's rights took a turn towards challenging policy that kept women disengaged from society. By 1850, the first National Women's Rights Convention took place where more than 1,000 people gathered to engage in debates about how to change public policy in regards to women. By 1869, suffrage associations formed to address specifically women's right to vote and in 1913,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 228-229.

Alice Paul and Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union and took to the streets to demand change. By August 26, 1920, women had earned the right to vote because of their willingness to engage in public debate and demand change.

Another example of citizen-initiated change is the Civil Rights Movement, perhaps one of the starkest examples of how citizens can engage in community activism in order to change public policy. When *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954, African Americans were pushed into the spotlight at a national level. By the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing with the Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee (SNCC) organizing Mississippi Freedom Summer in which students (black and white) traveled around the South educating people by challenging cultural myths and engaging in debates. By 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. Although this did not completely destroy racism in this nation, it is another good example of how educated and engaged citizens can affect, and ultimately change society.

The environmental movement also has a history of change due to community activism. When Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962, a movement to conserve nature was already more than 100 years old, but nothing was being done in regard to policy surrounding the environment; Carson's book changed all that. When Union Oil's offshore wells fouled beaches in Southern California, public outcry over pollution became louder and that very same year, 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was formed. In passing NEPA, Congress put pollution control in the hands of the public by asking for comments on environmental policies. One year later, Congress passed the Clean Air Act

and the public celebrated the first Earth Day, which helped to raise awareness of the environmental crisis and engage citizens in the national debate. Species were soon protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and in 1979, nuclear power received bad press because of near-meltdown of Three Mile Island. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the environmental movement swelled as more and more people took to the streets in protest of everything from logging and mining to species and habitat loss. Tactics differ from movement to movement, but one thing that stays consistent is the movements' reliance on mass media to gain access to the public debate and power elites.

William Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld argue that social movements need news media for three major purposes: mobilization, validation, and scope enlargement.⁷⁹ In their study on media and movements, Gamson and Wolfsfeld claim that movements need media more than media need movements, thus creating a power structure between media and movements that can be studied both structurally and culturally. They identify three elements of media coverage that are of interest to movements: standing, preferred framing, and movement sympathy. Standing refers to the extent to which movements are taken seriously, as measured by the extent of media coverage; preferred framing is the prominence of the groups' frame in media discourse surrounding the issue; and movement sympathy refers to the way media content presents the group that is likely to gain sympathy from the public.

Gamson and Wolfsfeld also identify three effects of media on movements: leadership, or the role media play in influencing who has standing; action strategy, that is,

⁷⁹ W. A. Gamson and G. Wolfsfeld, "Movements and Media as Interacting Systems," *The Annals of the American Academy*, 528 (1993) : 116.

the role media play in influencing which strategies are used by the movement; and framing strategy, or the role media play influencing how movements construct and represent messages.⁸⁰ Ultimately, they state “the movement-media transaction is a special case of media transactions more generally, one with some unusual and unique features.”⁸¹

In his 2006 study of mass-media coverage of the Global Justice Movement, Jules Boykoff states, “The mass media constitute a crucial site for the construction of reality, an ever-unfolding discursive locale that influences public opinion on social issues and delimits societal assumptions and public moods.”⁸² Boykoff argues the coverage of social movements or dissidence is a framing contest in which different societal actors present frames in order to gain access to public discourse. However, at the end of the day, journalists incorporate their own frames by focusing on the event or characters in the story rather than the larger issue at hand, which can undercut the agenda of social movements. This is not a conspiracy to frame dissidents and their activities in a negative light, according to Boykoff, but rather “a collection of tactical responses of journalists to the real world, as guided by professional norms, rules, and values . . . that undergird U.S. news production.”⁸³ Consequences of this type of framing process, claims Boykoff, can lead to episodic framing of news, a focus on dissident actions, rather than thematic framing, a focus on the logic behind the action, which can lead to a shallower or misinformed understanding of the political and social issues the movement tries to relay.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid. 121, 123.

⁸¹ Ibid., 125.

⁸² Jules Boykoff, “Framing Dissent: Mass-Media Coverage of the Global Justice Movement,” *New Political Science*, 28 (2006): 202.

⁸³ Ibid., 205.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

In Boykoff's study of the global justice movement, he looked at media coverage of protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, Wash., in 1999 and coverage of protests against the World Bank/IMF April 16, 2000, in Washington, D.C., and found five dominant frames throughout the coverage: a Violence Frame; a Disruption Frame; a Freak Frame; an Ignorance Frame; and an Amalgam of Grievances Frame.⁸⁵ Based on his findings, Boykoff concludes that "media discourse is not only vital in terms of framing social issues and problems for the attentive public, but it is also a place of ideological and ideational struggle for various social movements, state actors, and institutions."⁸⁶ He argues that through framing, news media set parameters for acceptable public discourse based on cultural power structures. Voices outside acceptable public discourse, such as dissidents in social movements, are occasionally permitted a voice in the "mass-mediated terrain," but based on his findings, Boykoff states, "their price of admission is often subjection to mass-media deprecation."⁸⁷ Mountain Justice Summer is similar in its approach to raising awareness as the Global Justice Movement is, which strengthens my hypothesis that media frames of Mountain Justice Summer will be mostly negative because of the movement's approach to discourse and action.

Media Coverage of Environmental Movements

Julia Corbett⁸⁸ also argues media coverage influences the nature, development, and ultimate success of social protests and focuses on the environmental movement in her 1998 study. Corbett also thinks social protest is a time-honored tradition in U.S. society,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 211.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 227.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Julia B. Corbett, "Media, Bureaucracy, and the Success of Social Protest: Newspaper Coverage of Environmental Movement Groups," *Mass Communication & Society*, 1(1998): 41-61.

but claims “societal institutions – including the mass media – do not necessarily welcome social protest or social change.” In her literature review, Corbett states that “the media role in social protest is primarily one of stability and conflict control. Media do not fundamentally challenge the dominant power structure, for they are part of it. In reporting conflict, the media role is one of systems maintenance or social control.”⁸⁹ Numerous studies cited by Corbett have documented “the media’s reluctance to attack important advertisers, individuals, or institutions, and the media’s deference to the power structure through heavy use of authority sources.”⁹⁰ In her discussion of studies, Corbett suggests media hegemony by stating “instead of public interest ‘watchdogs,’ media more accurately act as ‘guard dogs,’ protecting those in power and attacking those in vulnerable or weaker positions who threaten the power structure.”⁹¹

After completing her study, Corbett found that despite the spawn of a new radical arm of the environmental movement in the 1970s and 1980s, direct action is not portrayed as a frequently used tactic in the newspapers she examined. This will be important to note because direct action and nonviolent civil disobedience is a core tactic for Mountain Justice Summer and one employed numerous times in order to raise attention to the issue of mountaintop removal. According to Corbett, some scholars suggest that “resource-poor social movement organizations must create disruptions to obtain coverage, but disruptions may be ignored by media because they are threatening to the status quo.”⁹² Corbett suggests future studies answer the question of whether groups

⁸⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 57.

undertake direct action more frequently than reported by the media. However, I think the main point to come from Corbett that researchers could focus on is the power media have in choosing to give a voice to dissidents. As discussed earlier, media hegemony theory assumes a power structure is in place that sets the reasonable means of discourse. As dissidents, Mountain Justice Summer work outside this means of discourse, thus disrupting the power structure and threatening the status quo, which could lead the media to automatically paint a negative picture of the activists.

Joseph Arvai and Michael Mascarenhas authored a study that focused on print media's coverage of the environmental movement based on a suggestion by another researcher that the reason behind the decline of the environmental movement in British Columbia was the negative portrayal of the movement by local print media.⁹³ In their study, Arvai and Mascarenhas claim "the important implications of the relationship between the media, the process of agenda setting and public opinion is the fact that, if the audience deems media sources credible, media coverage is able to create a feedback loop for codifying issues." Using the *Vancouver Sun*, Arvai and Mascarenhas analyzed the coverage of environmental and forestry issues from 1993 to 1997 and discovered the articles contained a similar proportion of pro-environment and pro-forestry articles; but when they evaluated article themes they found a decline over the years in the frequency of articles dealing with themes "traditionally promoted by the environmental movement."⁹⁴ Articles shifted from a focus on environmental protests and the need for stricter environmental and forestry regulations in 1993 to emphasizing economic and

⁹³ Joseph Arvai and Michael Mascarenhas, "Print Media Framing of the Environmental Movement in a Canadian Forestry Debate," *Environmental Management*, 27(2001): 705-714.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 709.

legal themes in 1997.

Based on their analysis, they concluded there was neither an increase in negative coverage of the environmental movement, nor a decrease in the amount of articles containing environmental themes. However, because coverage focused on the pro-industry themes, results suggest that an agenda shift from environmentally oriented concerns to those relating to the forestry industry had occurred.⁹⁵ Arvai and Mascarenhas partly attribute this agenda shift to a change in management and reporting philosophy at the *Vancouver Sun* over the years under observation. In the middle of the time period studied, 1995, most forestry-related articles were moved from the environment to the business section of the paper, thus emphasizing the business angle of forestry-related issues.⁹⁶ In their analysis, Arvai and Mascarenhas conclude that “findings suggest that public regard for the environmental movement was not the result of negative coverage by reporters ... Instead, it suggests that the decline in public regard for environmentalists reflects a shift in the agenda regarding the forestry debate from environmentally oriented issues to more pro-industry concerns.”⁹⁷

Media Coverage of Mountaintop Removal

Coverage of mountaintop removal in the media is just now being looked at by media scholars. In his dissertation, Marc Seamon analyzed the use of frames by the media in the coverage of mountaintop removal.⁹⁸ His research involved claimsmakers, defined as opponents and proponents of mountaintop removal, and how their arguments were

⁹⁵ Ibid., 710.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 711.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 713.

⁹⁸ Marc Seamon, “Media and Claimsmaker Framing of Controversial Environmental Issues: A Frame Mapping Analysis of Mountaintop Removal Mining,” (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2005).

framed in the media. Using frames as independent variables, Seamon gathered media texts “to determine how the media have framed the issue and to what extent claimmaker frames have appeared in the media.”⁹⁹ He evaluated articles from 1985 through 1996 and from 1998 through 2004, justifying the time periods because they marked the time period in which mountaintop removal moved from a local issue to a national issue.

Seamon identifies three news pegs the media used to “hang” the issue of mountaintop removal on near the turn of the 21st century: a federal lawsuit over the largest mountaintop removal mine site ever proposed; the release of a draft environmental impact statement by the United States Environmental Protection Agency; and two straight years of deadly flooding that experts directly linked to hydrologic changes resulting from mountaintop removal mining.¹⁰⁰

Using content analysis to determine categorical definitions and frame mapping analysis to determine the meaning of each frame, Seamon found that overall, opponents of mountaintop removal had more frames represented in the media than supporters of mountaintop removal, which suggests that “as challengers of the status quo, opposing claimmakers have attempted to proliferate a variety of frames so as to find one that will succeed in capturing the media frame and, ultimately, public opinion.”¹⁰¹ However, when it came to media frames used in debate, Seamon discovered that media were covering the ongoing legal battle and floods, but “they seemed to be framing both in their own way, not in accordance with a particular claimmakers’ frame.”¹⁰² Although, Seamon states,

⁹⁹ Ibid., 110.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰² Ibid., 137.

“overall, the tone of media coverage seems more sympathetic to opponents of mountaintop removal mining than to supporters.”¹⁰³

Although mountaintop removal is not the focus of my framing analysis, it is an integral part of the controversy – essentially, it is the controversy – and I will analyze media coverage of this issue while also looking at how the media frame Mountain Justice Summer. Based on Seamon’s findings, I will have some basis for comparison of how the media frame mountaintop removal in relation to Mountain Justice Summer.

Print Media and Issue Salience

Based on my initial literature review, I found that media scholars were better able to evaluate issue salience in print journalism rather than broadcast journalism.¹⁰⁴ In their study, McClure and Patterson state "television is not an efficient communicator of everyday political information"¹⁰⁵ because television news gives limited coverage to a large number of stories, making television news little more than "a headline service [that] guarantees the content of television news will be severely restricted."¹⁰⁶ In other words, television news’ delivery makes it difficult for the audience to fully understand all angles of each news issue covered.

McClure and Patterson used the 1972 general election campaign for president of the United States to decipher issue salience among heavy and light network news viewers, who were also asked to keep track of the frequency with which they read the newspaper and thus classified as heavy or light newspaper readers. At the beginning of

¹⁰³ Ibid., 138.

¹⁰⁴ Robert McClure and Thomas Patterson, “Setting the Political Agenda: Print vs. Network News.” *Journal of Communication*. 26 (1978) : 23-28.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

the study, respondents were asked to rate their personal feelings about an issue, which helped McClure and Patterson to be able to evaluate issue salience based on different news venues. They found a strong relationship between respondents' issue salience and exposure to newspaper coverage of the issues.¹⁰⁷ They also found that issue salience was the same for television viewers, despite heavy or light use designation of respondents.

According to McClure and Patterson, newspapers succeed where television fails because of the format. "Newspapers have at their disposal the traditional means of indicating emphasis and significance ... thus the print medium gives readers a *strong, lasting, visual* indication of significance."¹⁰⁸

Reporting on the Environment

In their 1990 article about the greening of the media, Holly Stocking and Jennifer Leonard identify 1990 as the year "the sun came up" for environmental journalists because the environment became a national issue once again.¹⁰⁹ During the Reagan years, environmental beats took a beating, but, claim Stocking and Leonard, in 1990 reporting on the environment soared and the greening of the press was significant, including additions of environmental sections to major newspapers across the country. Also during this time, the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) was formed in order to provide resources for journalists placed on the environmental beat.

However, along with the surge of new reporters came problems as to how to accurately report on the environment. Jim Detjen, an environmental reporter for *The*

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰⁹ Holly Stocking and Jennifer Leonard, "The Greening of the Media," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Nov/Dec (1990) : 37-44.

Philadelphia Inquirer, said he ran into problems reporting on the environment because he was not a trained scientist and did not know what to look at in terms of the research. Questions about peer-reviewed science, proper statistics and controls were not asked, which is a problem that plagues inexperienced journalists reporting on the environment. Although groups like the Scientists' Institute for Public Information try to provide journalists with tools for reporting, the authors claim these programs "hardly address all of the problems that beset environmental reporting in this country."¹¹⁰

Another issue of environmental reporting is its place within journalistic norms such as timely and newsworthy stories. The media's "issue-of-the-month syndrome" is problematic for journalists reporting on degradation of the environment because of the media's insatiable appetite for new angles on issues.¹¹¹ Yet another issue identified by the authors is the unrelenting focus on today in the media. "Current environmental crises get the coverage. Future crises are tough to sell."¹¹² Stocking and Leonard cite global warming as a particularly tough sell for the media because of its intangible focus on the future. The last identifiable problem with environmental reporting is the "keep-it-simple syndrome." The authors state: "The environment story is one of the most complicated and pressing stories of our time. It involves abstract and probabilistic science, labyrinthine laws, grandstanding politicians, speculative economics, and the complex interplay of individuals and society."¹¹³ Because of these issues, stories can come up short in delivering all the information required for public discourse around the issue. Stocking

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 42.

and Leonard identify six ways in which stories can come up short:

1. Reporting on events rather than analyzing overarching trends or issues.
2. Approaching one problem at a time without probing for interconnectedness.
3. Failing to challenge conventional wisdom about environmental issues, or probe for underlying social and psychological reasons for environmental problems.
4. Providing little or no context for the issue at hand.
5. Being little more than information dumps into which the time-pressed reporter unloads quotes.

Changes within news outlets have proven to increase coverage of the environment, according to the authors. “Institutional support is imperative” when covering the environmental beat, and several reports who the authors interviewed stated that environmental issues “picked up with a change at the helm.”¹¹⁴

In the following pages, I will look at the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer and mountaintop removal in print media. After identifying media frames, I will discuss each frame, section and media outlet in order to understand how media framed Mountain Justice Summer activists and mountaintop removal. I will then evaluate letters to the editor, or audience frames, in order to draw a correlation between media and audience frames. In my analysis, I will also look at rhetoric used by journalists that could possibly influence the creation of the media frame.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

Chapter 3: Methods

In order to evaluate media and audience frames in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer, I collected newspaper articles and editorials from Lexis Nexis and Factiva databases, both available through the University of Tennessee library web page. Using the keywords “mountain justice summer” in conjunction with “surface mining,” “coal,” “mountaintop removal,” “mountaintop mining,” and “mining” to search through U.S. newspapers and wires from January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007, Lexis Nexis generated a results list of 89 articles. The dates I used are significant because they are the years that Mountain Justice Summer has conducted campaigns thus far. The same search was conducted in Factiva with a results list of 96 articles. Because both databases draw from some of the same resources, I needed to filter out repeat articles and articles that did not have anything to do with my subject matter. After this task was accomplished, I had a list of 57 news articles and 17 editorials and letters to the editor.

The next step was to convert all the articles into a Word document and import them into QDA Miner, a text analysis program. I created two different projects, one for news article analysis (media frames) and the other for editorials and letters to the editor analysis (audience frames). After setting up each project, I created a code book in QDA Miner in order to identify the frames used in each news article. Code categories included quotes, perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists, actions, and attitudes towards mountaintop removal. For audience analysis, I coded for perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists and attitudes towards mountaintop removal. I also created a user account in the newspaper project for two coders, myself and an undergraduate history

major, Lawrence Ferris, in order to keep codes separate during the coding process. An inter-coder reliability test was run in order to evaluate the accuracy of each coder and will be discussed in the findings chapter.

In order to evaluate frames of Mountain Justice Summer and mountaintop removal used by print media, I first had to identify various frames used in the coverage. Frames can be considered themes of articles in some aspects of media scholarship, so in order to identify the frames, I paid attention to the overarching theme of each article and assigned a frame that best represented that theme. Dominant frames among the news articles were protest/arrest, community activism, legal, information about Mountain Justice Summer, education, government, and industry. After assigning frames, I was able to conduct data analyses based on frames as variables and codes. I also used Word Stat in conjunction with QDA Miner to evaluate keyword frequency and cross tabulation of words in the articles.

In QDA Miner, I first evaluated each frame variable by each code used for analysis to come up with a code frequency and percentage of words used in each frame. Because framing theory also takes into account the placement of the article within each newspaper, I cross-tabulated each code with a “section” variable in order to evaluate what impact the placement of news articles has on coverage. Sections included news, environment, state and regional, business, and other and were identified by newspapers at the top of each article. Another variable, media outlet, was used to evaluate Associated Press coverage versus local coverage on the issue of Mountain Justice Summer. Local coverage was defined as papers within Appalachia that are available to coal communities.

Local papers used in evaluation included Virginia-based *Roanoke Times* and *Richmond Times Dispatch*, West Virginia-based *Charleston Gazette* and *Charleston Daily Mail*, Kentucky-based *Lexington Herald-Leader* and Tennessee-based *Knoxville News Sentinel*. Another part of the media outlet variable was identified as “other” and included newspapers outside Appalachia, as well as environmental news services. Further discussion of codes evaluated with the variables of frame, section and media outlet appears in the findings section.

In order to evaluate how Mountain Justice Summer activists were represented in each media frame, I assigned codes of positive and negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer. Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer were identified through quotes as well as how the journalist used particular words, such as “agitator” versus “environmentalist,” to describe a Mountain Justice Summer activist. I also coded for attitudes towards mountaintop removal mining to see whether there was any correlation between perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists and attitudes for or against mountaintop removal. Attitudes identified as support for mountaintop removal included quotes containing positive words about mountaintop removal in relation to the community, economy, and environment. I also included evaluation of the journalist’s use of words and choices of quotations to describe mountaintop removal, which included uses of phrases such as “highly efficient” when describing the process or discussing mountaintop removal. Attitudes against mountaintop removal were defined as any negative quote or phrase used by the journalist when discussing mountaintop removal. Discussion on the results of these evaluations appears in the findings section.

The next step was to evaluate the quotes in each article with the three variables (frame, section and media outlet) to identify who received more attention under what circumstances. Quotes used in the coding process were as follows: activist, identified as an activist with Mountain Justice Summer; government, defined as a governmental official; community member, defined as someone from the local community; industry, defined as anyone related to the coal industry; expert, defined as a scientist or academic; and other, which represents anyone else quoted who does not fall into one of the other five categories. Further discussion of these codes can be found in the findings section.

In order to evaluate the media frames as dependent variables, I evaluated how perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists, attitudes towards mountaintop removal, and the amount of quotes from each authority (activist, government, industry, etc.) related in terms of frame, section of the paper, and outlet (AP wire, local paper, or other). Using the variables of frame, section, and outlet, I ran analysis for code frequency in QDA Miner using all codes under quotes, perceptions, and attitudes. A complete discussion, both qualitative and quantitative, follows.

For evaluation of audience frames, I again ran cross tabulations of guest editorials and letters to the editor with each code and variable of media outlet, represented by the local papers listed above. Although this evaluation does not provide an in-depth look at exactly how the community reacted to Mountain Justice Summer, it serves as a basis for evaluation of audience frames as dependent variables. In order to round out my evaluation of audience frames, I will compare audience frames in letters to the editor with opinion polls about the environment in order to see if there are any similarities. As

mentioned in my literature review, I am also interested in the social responsibility theory of media effects and will discuss how the media outlet variables play a role in this theory by providing Web sites for more information or blogs for readers to participate in discussions on issues presented by each outlet. Because this is not a major focus of my thesis, I will include this discussion in a later chapter rather than in the findings section of my thesis.

Chapter 4: Findings

Media Frames

As stated above, dominant media frames that exist throughout the news articles were protest/arrest, legal, industry, Mountain Justice Summer information, education, community activism, and government. Because I am mainly interested in how the coverage was framed, I will first discuss codes in relation to the dominant media frames and their ability to help categorize the news. I will also discuss findings in relation to media outlet and section, which I believe to be dependent variables that help create the dominant media frames. In each evaluation, I provide percentages for where perceptions of activists and opinions of mountaintop removal exist. These do not all add up to 100 percent, however, because not every article analyzed contained perceptions of activists or opinions of mountaintop removal.

After discussing media frames, I will turn my analysis to guest editorials and letters to the editor. I believe these opinion pieces can help shed some light on audience frames because they represent, for the most part, audience views, which can possibly reflect media frames and thus help support the basic idea that media frames can affect the categorization of news for audience members.

Protest/Arrest Frame

The protest/arrest frame existed in 28 out of 56 news articles evaluated, or 50 percent of all articles, making it the dominant frame used in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer. Because Mountain Justice Summer is an action-oriented protest

movement, the emergence of a protest/arrest frame in news coverage is not surprising. In order to understand a bit more about this frame, however, I ran multiple variable tests, discussed above, to find out more about what was being said about Mountain Justice Summer activists and mountaintop removal and who was saying it.

In the protest/arrest frame, activists with Mountain Justice Summer activists were quoted 52.6 percent of the time, by far the majority, and the action of protest was mentioned 17.9 percent. However, within this frame, when perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were present, they were negative 24 percent of the time and positive 13.5 percent of the time, showing that within the protest/arrest frame, perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were more negative than positive. The absence of perceptions appeared in 62.5 percent of the articles, indicating that these articles focused more on the issue at hand, the controversy, rather than perceptions of activists. The following excerpts from articles provide examples of both negative and positive perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists from quotes used by the journalist.

1. Just look at them," came a hiss from the crowd as a ragtag procession of about 50 protesters marched past Marsh Fork Elementary School beating drums and shaking rattles. "Do they look like they're from around here?"¹¹⁵
2. I think it's ridiculous that they come down here and do this," said Vicky Jarrell, 37, of Rock Creek, who has an 8-year-old at the school and whose husband is a heavy equipment operator for Massey. "I saw one person in that whole group from this area. They must have too much time on their hands," she said. "Don't they have jobs?"¹¹⁶
3. Frankly, OVEC is wary, as we don't know all the groups and

¹¹⁵ The Associated Press, July 23, 2005.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

individuals involved," said Vivian Stockman, project coordinator for the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition. "We are very relieved to see this note on the [Mountain Justice Summer] Web site: 'Mountain Justice Summer is committed to nonviolence and will not be engaged in property destruction.'"¹¹⁷

4. These kids have given up their summer vacations to do this," she said. "They have been working hard to help this region. We should welcome anybody and everybody to come help Appalachia."¹¹⁸

The first two excerpts represent negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists and frame activists as out-of-towners without jobs, a common misconception Mountain Justice Summer activists were confronted with. This quote was coded both positive and negative by coders, indicating disagreement in perceptions of activists. The final quote is from a community member working with Mountain Justice Summer activists and is an example of the positive perceptions some community members had of Mountain Justice Summer activists.

As for attitudes about mountaintop removal, the results show the attitude against mountaintop removal was dominant with 50 percent opposition versus 3.8 percent support for mountaintop removal in this frame. The follow excerpts show the drastic differences in attitudes about mountaintop removal represented in the media.

1. The goal of the Friends of Coal rally "is to show that thousands of people support this industry and believe in it," Bissett said. "We want to make certain that state leaders don't forget about the importance of coal and the jobs and revenue that it provides us every day."¹¹⁹
2. More than 250 protesters marched from Monroe Park to the energy company's office Friday afternoon, part of Mountain Justice Summer's campaign against mountaintop removal mining and other mining practices

¹¹⁷ Charleston Gazette (West Virginia), March 28, 2005.

¹¹⁸ The Associated Press, July 23, 2005.

¹¹⁹ Charleston Daily Mail (West Virginia), March 30, 2005.

the group says damage the environment, put people living near the coal operations in danger and ultimately contribute to global warming.¹²⁰

3. Our communities and children have been the sacrificial lambs long enough to the coal companies. It's time for us as the parents, grandparents and the community to change that," said Debbie Jarrells, whose granddaughter attends the school.¹²¹
4. Mountain Justice Summer members are opposed to all forms of strip mining, especially mountaintop removal, because they say it destroys ecosystems and watersheds. Also, the mountains are part of the southern Appalachian culture, and by destroying mountains, coal companies are destroying a culture.¹²²
5. Critics and opponents of mountaintop removal in West Virginia say that they support the campaign's goal of stopping large-scale strip mining. But they have said they don't want the protests to become violent or involve destruction of property.¹²³

In the first example, the journalist quotes an industry supporter to show support for mountaintop removal. The quote is a good example of how the industry frames its support for mountaintop removal, indicating the economic advantages of the coal mining process. However, this particular frame is rare in the coverage and indicates support for Seamon's findings¹²⁴ that the media do not replicate the claimsmakers' frame, rather create their own, as I will demonstrate in the following frames.

The next four excerpts indicate the existence of opposition to mountaintop removal within the media frame because of the journalist's choice of quotes, both direct and indirect. The first sign of opposition (3) indirectly quotes Mountain Justice Summer activists and includes not only opposition to mountaintop removal, but also a connection

¹²⁰ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), July 9, 2005.

¹²¹ The Associated Press, May 24, 2005.

¹²² The Associated Press, May 23, 2005.

¹²³ Charleston Daily Mail (West Virginia), March 28, 2005.

¹²⁴ Seamon 2005.

to global warming, a phenomenon most people who pay attention to news should be aware of. Debbie Jerrells' quote (4) ties the issue together as not only opposition to mountaintop removal, but also to the coal companies and puts the power into the hands of the community – something Mountain Justice Summer activists proclaim as a goal of their campaign. Example (5) again, ties the issue into the larger picture when the journalist chooses to include activists' ideology that because the mountains are part of Appalachian culture, mountaintop removal also destroys culture. In the final example, the journalist uses an indirect quote from critics of mountaintop removal, which supports the media frame of opposition to the mining process. However, the quote also indicates wariness of Mountain Justice Summer activists, and by using this particular quote, the journalist stays consistent with the overall negative perception of the activists in the media frames. (See Figure 1).

Legal Frame

The legal frame represented eight out of the 56 news articles, or 14 percent of all articles, making it the second principle frame in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer. Most of these articles discussed permit violations by players in the coal industry, mostly Massey Energy, as well as lawsuits challenging mountaintop removal as a legal mining practice, which were brought by environmentalists against the coal industry. Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists within this frame were dominantly negative, at 27.3 percent, as opposed to the lack of positive attributes associated with Mountain Justice Summer activists, zero percent, within this frame. The following excerpts are examples of the negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer

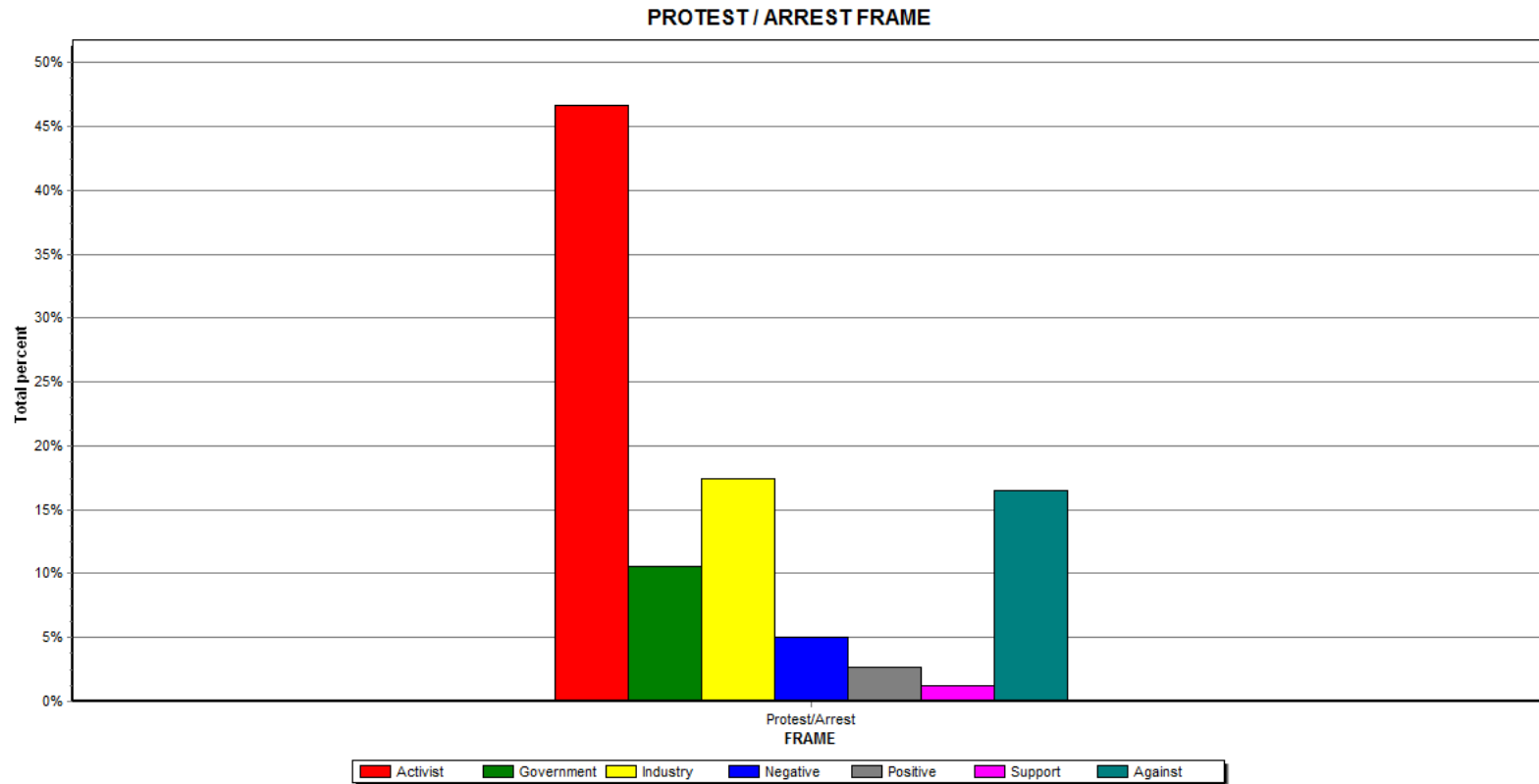


Figure 1: This graph shows the percentage of quotes by MJS activists, government and industry in the Protest/Arrest frame as well as perceptions of activists and opinions of mountaintop removal.

activists within the legal frame:

1. Massey, the state's largest coal producer, has launched a television advertising campaign to challenge the claims of protesters speaking out against the company's coal mining operations. In the ads, Massey emphasizes its commitment to what it calls the "total environment" in West Virginia – including jobs, health care and schools – and alleges that coal protesters forget about "needs of the people."¹²⁵
2. But Elden Green, president of Green Tree Consulting Inc. in McDowell County, chafes at protesters' complaints about the change in terrain caused by mountaintop removal. "People, if we do not develop flat land in rural West Virginia, we are going to be trapped economically as long as we're on the surface of this earth," Green said at the coal show. "And the only way to do this is through the mining of coal."¹²⁶

As shown by these examples, industry puts Mountain Justice Summer activists against progress and communities and champions itself as the best thing for the community. The second quote, again, supports industry and coal mining and frames Mountain Justice Summer activists as complainers who do not know what they are talking about. The dichotomy of progress versus conservation is used by Mr. Green to frame Mountain Justice Summer activists negatively and show support for mountaintop removal. By using these quotes, and by failing to include quotes that cast positive perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists, the journalist stays consistent with the overall negative framing of the activists by the media.

Attitudes of mountaintop removal in the legal frame were represented 24.2 percent for and 30.3 percent against, and the definition of mountaintop removal was found 18.2 percent of the time within this frame. The following excerpts not only show both support and opposition for mountaintop removal, but also the journalists' ability to

¹²⁵ The Associated Press, July 26, 2005.

¹²⁶ Associated Press, September 18, 2005.

define the issue within each frame.

1. The high-efficiency process involves blasting the mountaintop to uncover coal seams.¹²⁷
2. The U.S. Office of Surface Mining proposed easing the federal buffer zone rule in January 2004, saying current policy is impossible to comply with during mountaintop removal mining.¹²⁸
3. From a switchback curve on Black Mountain Wednesday night, the A&G mine was marked by small groupings of lights, flickering like campfires as haze settled into the hollows and a full moon hung overhead.¹²⁹
4. The steady hum of machinery, punctuated by backup warning beepers, mingled with the night insects' sounds as crews continued to mine coal on the diminishing ridge above where Jeremy Davidson used to live.¹³⁰
5. The buffer zone rule was the key issue in a West Virginia lawsuit first filed in 1998 by several coalfield residents and the Highlands Conservancy against the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection in a bid to outlaw mountaintop removal mining.¹³¹

In the first example, the journalist defines mountaintop removal, which is an important role for the journalist. However, rhetorical choices indicate both support and opposition to the practice. The term “high-efficiency” indicates the process of mountaintop removal is more economically efficient for coal companies, thus supports the industry’s frame of economics when discussing coal. On the other hand, the journalist follows the industry frame of efficiency with a destructive word – blasting – which indicates violence on the part of the coal company, and thus supports the dominant media frame of opposition to mountaintop removal.

For the second example, the journalist works within the legal frame and gives an

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ The Associated Press, August 23, 2005.

¹²⁹ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), September 8, 2006.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ The Associated Press August 23, 2005.

official source space to support mountaintop removal, even change the rules about it, because of its necessity for the production of coal. Examples (3) and (4) indicate the media frame of opposition to mountaintop removal, but in a dreamy, poetic-like state. In (3) and (4), the journalist paints a picture of what it is like to live with mountaintop removal and even evokes the memory within audiences of Jeremy Davidson, a 3-year-old boy who was killed in his bed by a 600-pound boulder that fell from a mine site behind his house, crushing him while he slept.

The final excerpt shows the community standing up to the powers-that-be, refusing to accept the official line. Here again, the journalist works within the legal framework to show the controversy in the coalfields over mountaintop removal. Excerpt (2) and (5) are from the same article, but show the existence of both support and opposition to mountaintop removal within the media frame. This could indicate the ability of the journalist to present the information in a fair and balanced approach.

Within the legal frame, activists were the dominant source for quotes, with 37 percent of the words. Industry quotes were used 30.2 percent of the time and government sources were used 28.2 percent of the time. This is an interesting finding because of, again, the negative perception of activists was dominant in the media frame. However, quotes by activists generally discuss opposition to mountaintop removal, whereas quotes from industry show opposition to the activists. This could indicate the activists' ability to stay focused on the issue and the industry's need to cast a negative light on its opposition. (See Figure 2.)

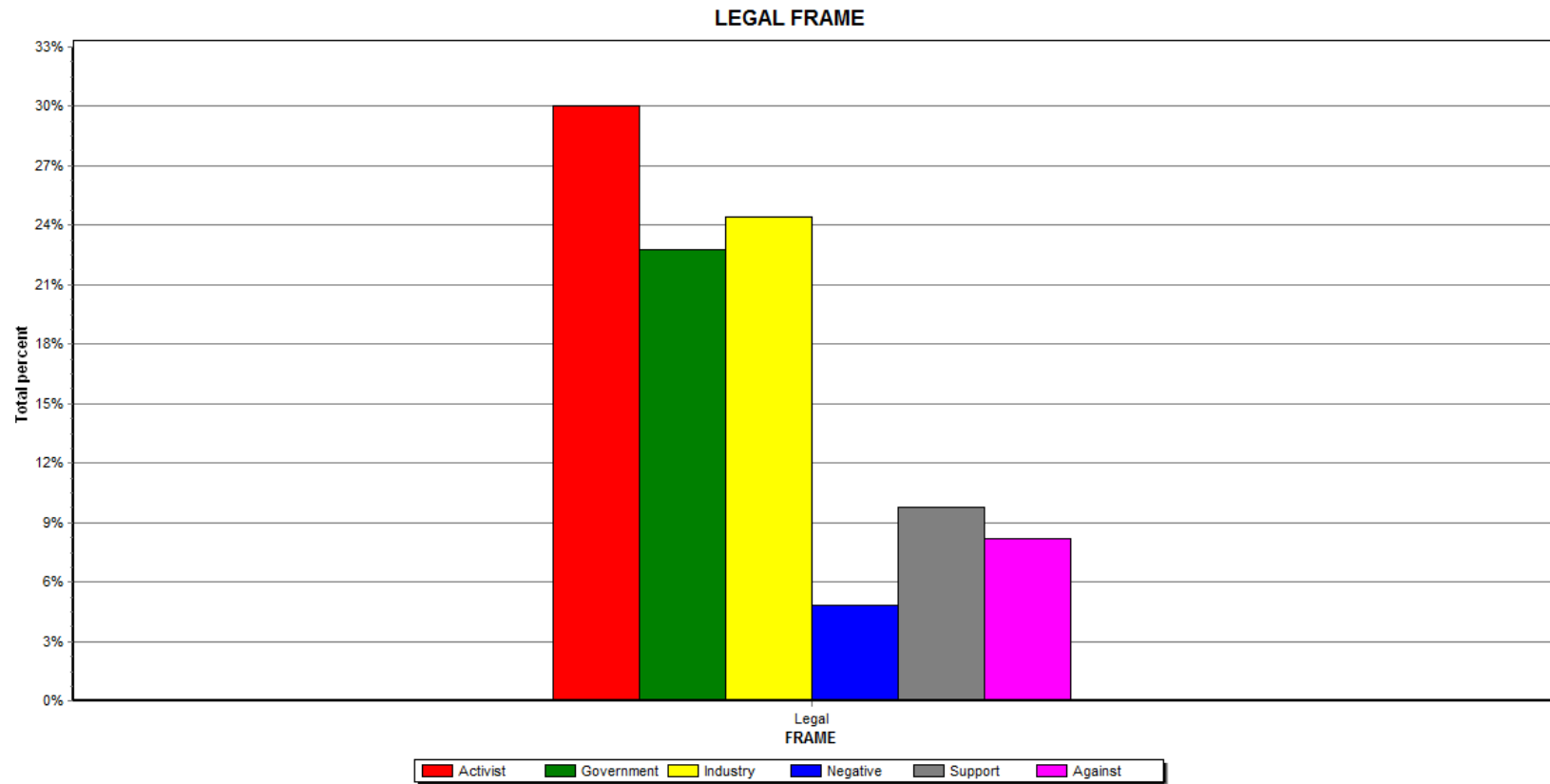


Figure 2: Occurrences of quotes by activists, government and industry as well as perceptions of activists and attitudes towards mountaintop removal in the Legal frame.

Industry Frame

The third prevailing frame in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer is an industry frame. Six out of the 56 news articles, or 10.7 percent, discussed the coal industry and groups associated with the industry, such as Friends of Coal. Industry sources were quoted most often, 44.1 percent, with government officials following at 32.3 percent. Activists were quoted 6.8 percent within this frame, but the mention of protests appeared 13.6 percent of the time. Within this frame, negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were again dominant, with 45.5 percent. There were no positive perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists represented in this frame. Excerpts from news articles with the industry frame help to illustrate the negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists include the following:

1. "People need good-paying jobs, funded pension plans, life-saving health care and quality schools," according to the voice-over. "Massey Energy helps provide all those things to thousands of local families."¹³²
2. "The needs of people: That's what protesters against coal forget."¹³³

Here again, the industry paints an "us versus them" picture of Mountain Justice Summer activists who are invading the community that Massey Energy has worked so hard to provide for. Because this frame is seen in both the industry and legal frame, I would argue the existence of media hegemony at play here. The media has already established its negative frame of Mountain Justice Summer activists, which is consistent with the industry's negative framing of the activists. In my opinion, the media and industry agree that the way Mountain Justice Summer activists protest (direct action, for example) is not

¹³² Charleston Daily Mail (West Virginia), July 26, 2005.

¹³³ Ibid.

within the acceptable means of public discourse. However, the media's role is fairness and balance, so they must provide positive perceptions of the activists at times, but overall, the coverage is negative.

As for attitudes of mountaintop removal, the media frame stayed consistent with its opposition to mountaintop removal, despite the industry's support for it. Media hegemony is not at play here, and in my opinion, I believe it is because there is debate about mountaintop removal within government. If the government is unable to stand united in its support for mountaintop removal, which it seems to not be able to do based on court rulings, then hegemony does not exist and cannot be applied to the issue of mountaintop removal. In the industry frame, opposition of mountaintop removal was at 36.4, and support was at 18.2 percent. The following examples illustrate the overall opposition to mountaintop removal despite the industry frame it is found in.

1. As Blankenship talked about Massey's environmental record, slides of reclaimed strip mines, looking like verdant parkland, flashed on a screen behind him. Built on some reclaimed mine sites were a school, government offices, a golf course and a prison.¹³⁴
2. Bob Pruett, a Raleigh County native, paid FOC spokesman, and former Marshall football coach, said coal mining played a big role in his life. He said his father died of black lung ... He said a recent drive to Gilbert to talk to a group of Christian athletes reminded him of all the good things the coal industry has done for Southern West Virginia. "I truly do understand what coal has done for us in the past," Pruett said.¹³⁵
3. Sister Ruth Kuhn of the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati, who also belongs to a regional coalition for responsible investment, said she is troubled by what she saw and heard from people around Massey mines while visiting West Virginia in the past year.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia), May 17, 2006.

¹³⁵ Charleston Gazette (West Virginia), April 1, 2005.

¹³⁶ Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia), May 17, 2006.

4. And inside, Diana Oleskevich of a Catholic group in St. Louis told shareholders that "some of Massey's practices have torn communities and families apart."¹³⁷
5. Elaine Purkey, a Southern West Virginia singer, entertained the environmental group. She dedicated a pro-union song to any coal miners in the crowd. Not all miners are comfortable with mountaintop removal, she said. "My husband is a third-generation coal miner," she said. "He doesn't agree with this garbage, either."¹³⁸

In the first two excerpts, support for mountaintop removal is again framed in the industry's language of economic stability for the region and is shown through the media's use of quotes from coal spokesmen. The former Marshall football coach brings heritage into the fight for mountaintop removal and seems to become nostalgic when he remembers everything coal, and therefore the industry, has done for him. However, in stark contrast and with God on their side, the next two examples shows the hesitation folks have with swallowing the industry line. In my opinion, the final quote is an example of how the media frame opposition to coal mining. Using someone intimately related to the coal industry, a wife of a coal miner, the journalist illustrates that opposition from within the industry also exists, which gives a bit more standing to Mountain Justice Summer activists in the overall framing of the issue. (See figure 3.)

Education Frame

The education frame appeared as many times as the industry frame did in the coverage with six out of the 56 articles, or 10.7 percent. Within this frame, journalists

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Charleston Gazette (West Virginia), April 1, 2005.

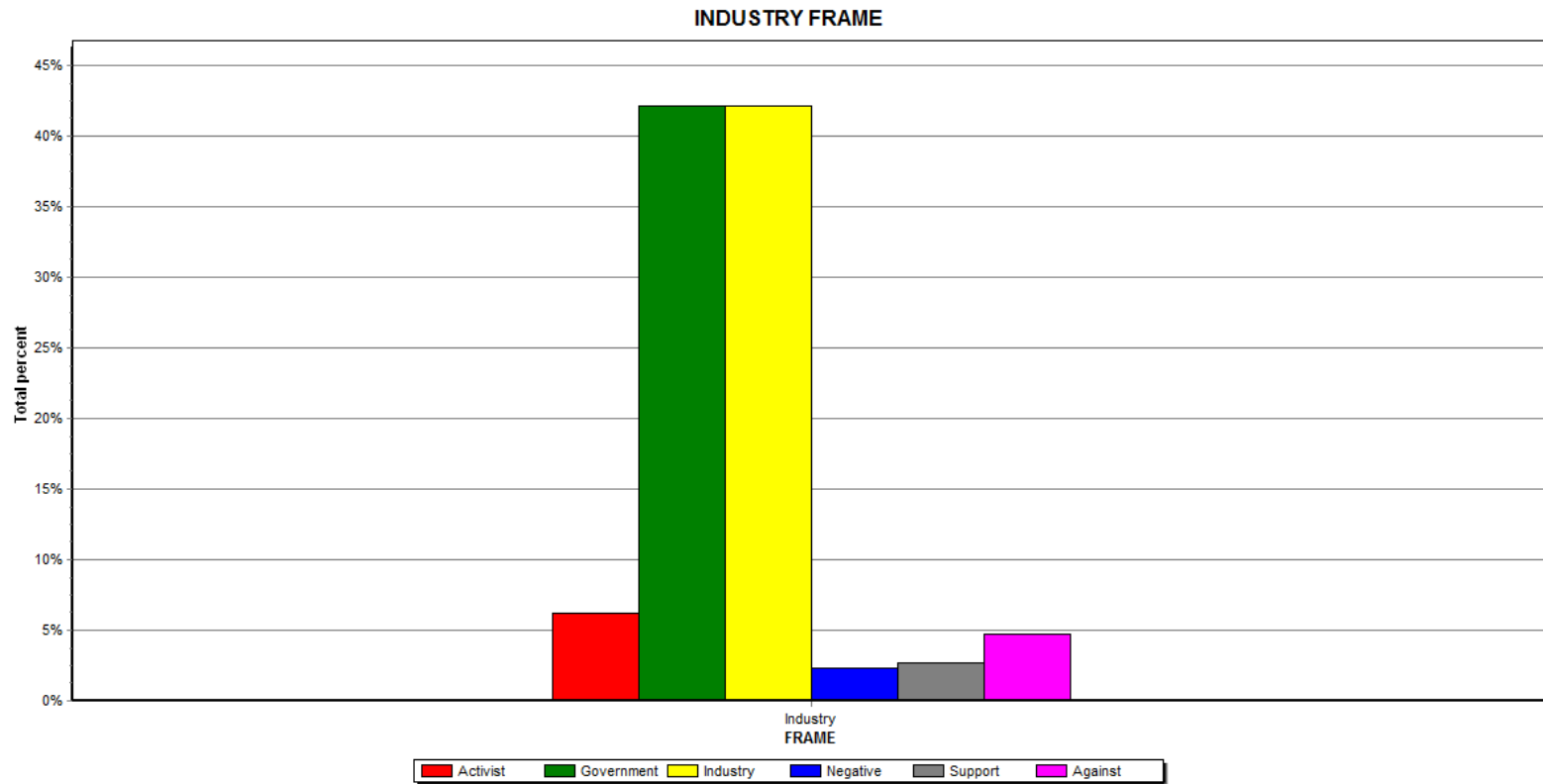


Figure 3: This graph represents the occurrences of quotes from activists, industry and government as well as perceptions of activists and attitudes towards mountaintop removal.

defined mountaintop removal to educate the audience about the debate, such as the excerpt that follows:

A coal mining process that begins with clear-cutting, mountaintop removal uses explosives and machinery to remove soil and rock, exposing coal seams. The soil is often pushed into valleys, raising the valley floor while lowering the mountain, dramatically changing the area's appearance and ecology. Some of these mines cover tens of thousands of acres.¹³⁹

Attitudes against mountaintop removal were dominant within this frame with 31 percent as opposed the 10.3 percent in support of the mining practice. The excerpt that follows shows the journalists' use of rhetoric to define mountaintop removal in a way that is inherently negative:

The coal industry calls it mountaintop mining. Environmentalists describe it as strip-mining on steroids. Trees and topsoil are bulldozed and the top of the mountain is blasted away layer by layer to reach the low-sulfur coal in seams too narrow to economically mine in traditional ways. As the top of the mountain is flattened, dirt and rock are pushed into nearby hollows, burying the headwaters of streams.¹⁴⁰

First, the journalist defines mountaintop removal within the industry frame. The next sentence finds a definition in the activists' frame. The following sentences indicate the media frame of opposition to mountaintop removal because of the rhetoric used by the journalist. Words like "blasted" and "flattened" indicate violence, as discussed earlier in my analysis of a description in the legal frame. This rhetoric indicates the media's overall negative frame of mountaintop removal.

Within this frame, activists with Mountain Justice Summer were quoted 29 percent of the time, and the industry was quoted 20.4 percent of the time. Experts were

¹³⁹ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), April 8, 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Akron Beacon Journal , July 10, 2005

only quoted 8.6 percent of the time within this frame.

Mountain Justice Summer Information Frame

This frame is defined by articles discussing Mountain Justice Summer activists and activities specific to Mountain Justice Summer, such as training camps, and appeared in four out of the 56 articles, or 7.14 percent of the articles. Perceptions of activists within this frame were predominately negative, at 40 percent, although activists were the primary source quoted with 70.8 percent. At first glance, this finding seems to be in contradiction to itself – why would activists, as primary sources, have negative perceptions of themselves? However, in looking through the quotes, negative perceptions of activists came from outside the activist community. Quotes from activists within this frame are mostly educating communities about the campaign. Also, the media provides profiles of the activists within this frame, using quotes from them about why they are involved in the campaign. The following excerpts indicate negative perceptions of activists:

1. Tattooed, pierced and driven by the zeal of young people combating what they see as a great injustice, these environmentalists, anarchists and bicycle advocates are the foot soldiers of Mountain Justice Summer.¹⁴¹
2. Dink Shackelford, executive director of the Virginia Mining Association, lives in the community ... He dismisses Mountain Justice Summer as well-meaning but misinformed. He calls the activists weekend environmentalists. They visit nature. They don't live in it. So they can't understand it. At one rally, Shackelford said, "I saw five or 10 college professors and I saw about 110 misguided kids 17, 18 years old that you can't even hardly get mad at when you see them. "They're so young. You know they don't know what they're talking about."¹⁴²

In the first example, the journalists describes Mountain Justice Summer activists, but uses

¹⁴¹ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), July 3, 2006

¹⁴² Ibid.

rhetoric that can be perceived as negative to a mainstream audience, such as “tattooed and pierced” and “anarchists.” These words automatically place the activists outside the mainstream. The next quote from the coal industry shows the industry’s negative frame of the activists as misguided youth. By using this in the same article as the first quote, the journalist supports the media’s overall negative framing of the activists.

Within the information frame, attitudes against mountaintop removal were seen more often than attitudes of support for mountaintop removal, with 26.7 percent against and 13.3 percent in support of the practice, which again, indicates support for the media’s overall negative frame of mountaintop removal. The following is a quote from a community member that helps the media maintain its negative frame:

Angela Honeycutt, a young mother who lives near the town of Appalachia, said her opposition to mountaintop removal springs from a fear that her community could join the list of former coal camps that have been swallowed by strip mines. "I don't see them stopping until they get everything here," she said. "I just don't understand how they can destroy a whole end of a state and nothing gets done. ... I don't understand why nobody's doing nothing to help nobody down here."

The lack of articles pertaining to information about Mountain Justice Summer helps support my hypothesis that the media negatively frames the movement. By focusing on the disruptions of Mountain Justice Summer rather than the information behind it, media paint only one picture of the activists, which is overall negative. This also shows support for the notion that Corbett¹⁴³ brings up in her study on the success of environmental groups obtaining media coverage that the more dissident a group is, the less of a chance it has of being covered by the media. Perhaps in the future, if Mountain Justice Summer

¹⁴³ Julia B. Corbett, “Media, Bureaucracy, and the Success of Social Protest: Newspaper Coverage of Environmental Movement Groups,” *Mass Communication & Society*, 1(1998): 41-61.

alters its tactics to a more mainstream approach, media coverage of the movement itself will not be framed so negatively.

Community Activism Frame

Only three out of the 56 articles, or 5.35 percent, were framed as community activism, which included stories about community members taking action to stop mountaintop removal without being involved with Mountain Justice Summer. Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists within this frame were equal, with both positive and negative at 5.9 percent. Most of the time within this frame, community members did not even discuss the activists, but instead, tended to share information about the affects mountaintop removal has on their homes and communities. Attitudes against mountaintop removal were dominant with 55.9 percent over the 11.8 percent in support for mountaintop removal. Other sources, mostly religious leaders and local authors, were quoted most in this frame at 37.7 percent. Community members, defined as folks living in the coalfields, were quoted 27.3 percent and Mountain Justice Summer activists were quoted 22.1 percent of the time within this frame.

Government Frame

Coming in dead last is the government frame with only one article out of 56, 1.8 percent, classified as a government frame. This article relied on government sources 56.3 percent of the time and industry sources 43.8 percent of the time. Mountain Justice Summer activists were not represented. Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists and attitudes towards mountaintop removal were also not discussed, but the action of protest was mentioned 11.1 percent within the article.

Media Outlet and Section

In his analysis of media frames, Scheufele argues media frames are represented by influences on journalists such as routines or organizational pressures and constraints. He suggests that three potential sources of influence on the construction of media frames have been identified by researchers: journalist-centered influence where journalists actively construct frames in order to make sense of information; organizational routines that determine the selection of frames; and external sources such as political actors, elites or interest groups who can suggest frames through quotes.¹⁴⁴

In the previous discussion about my findings within each media frame, I discussed the implications use of quotes have on the creation of the frame. Although evaluating the way media frames are constructed is difficult without interviewing each journalist and knowing the history of each news organization, I will continue my evaluation of media frames in this section by making inferences about each frame based on its media outlet or type – AP wire, local paper, or other – and the section in which each story appears. A detailed discussion of how this initial evaluation will help with future research can be found in the future research section. But first, I will discuss my findings for media outlet and section variables.

Media Outlets

Local papers were the primary distributors of news articles relating to Mountain Justice Summer with 25 out of 56 articles, or 44.6 percent, occurring within papers distributed within the coalfields. Within this particular variable, Mountain Justice

¹⁴⁴ Scheufele 1999, 115-116.

Summer activists were the highest-quoted source, with 36.7 percent of all quotes. The coal industry came in second with 18.3 percent of all quotes. Community members and the category of other, defined mostly by religious leaders and local authors, were each quoted 15.9 percent of the time by the local papers.

Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were negative at 19.6 percent compared to the positive perceptions at 6 percent. The fact that perceptions of activists were absent almost 75 percent of the time indicate that local papers focused on the issue and providing information through sources rather than “slinging mud” at the activists. The action of protest was mentioned 10.8 percent of the coverage by local newspapers. Again, the following excerpts show the negative perceptions of Mountain Justice

Summer activists:

1. Tattooed, pierced and driven by the zeal of young people combating what they see as a great injustice, these environmentalists, anarchists and bicycle advocates are the foot soldiers of Mountain Justice Summer.¹⁴⁵
2. Dick Shackelford, executive director of the Virginia Mining Association, lives in the community McCabe wants to organize. Shackelford grew up in the mining community of Keokee, the son of a mine company owner. He dismisses Mountain Justice Summer as well-meaning but misinformed. He calls the activists weekend environmentalists. They visit nature. They don't live in it. So they can't understand it. At one rally, Shackelford said, "I saw five or 10 college professors and I saw about 110 misguided kids 17, 18 years old that you can't even hardly get mad at when you see them. "They're so young. You know they don't know what they're talking about."¹⁴⁶

In the first example, the journalist uses specific rhetorical tools to frame the activists in a negative light by describing the activists in way that automatically separates them from the audience. Also, the use of “foot soldiers” is interesting in that it allows the journalist

¹⁴⁵ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), July 3, 2006.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

to put an almost war-like feel to Mountain Justice Summer, which could also imply the activists' invasion of the coal fields in order to right a wrong *they* perceive – not necessarily the residents. The second example is a quote from a community member, but also someone associated with the coal industry. In his quote, Shackleford dismisses the activists as young kids who do not have any guidance or wherewithal to run a campaign in the coalfields. This quote allows the industry to paint Mountain Justice Summer activists as outsiders and misguided youth.

The prevailing attitude toward mountaintop removal in local papers was opposition to it, which was represented in 50.3 percent of the articles through use of quotes and rhetoric. Support for mountaintop removal in the local papers was only mentioned 15.6 percent of the time, while the definition of mountaintop removal was mentioned only 8.5 percent of the time. The following example shows the prevailing negative frame of MTR in the coverage:

In mountaintop removal mining -- just like it sounds -- the mountaintop is pulverized to get at the coal. Begun in West Virginia and Kentucky in the late 1960s, the pace of mountaintop removal has picked up in the past decade as demand for coal has grown with the rise in the cost of other fuels. And with the increase in mountaintop removal has come greater outcry about the effects of the practice.¹⁴⁷

Again, rhetoric is important in this example in that it shows the journalist's frame of mountaintop removal. Using aggressive language like "pulverized" and "outcry," the journalist, whether he meant to or not, describes the process of mountaintop removal under a negative light. Showing the history of the practice also helps put the issue into context for the audience. By doing this, the journalist rhetorically implies this is not a

¹⁴⁷ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), July 2, 2006.

new issue and there are problems with this particular practice of coal mining. In this example, the journalist is also able to tie the mining of coal in with energy consumption, which helps to educate the audience about the consequences that go along with turning on the lights.

The Associated Press represented 21 of 56 articles in the sample, or 37.5 percent. In covering Mountain Justice Summer, the AP quoted the coal industry the most at 35.2 percent of all quotes used in the stories. Governmental officials were second at 29 percent, and Mountain Justice Summer activists were quoted 27.8 percent of the time. AP wires quoted community members in 8 percent of the articles, but experts and others were not quoted at all. While the dominant attitude towards mountaintop removal was against the practice, 35.1 percent of the time, the dominant perception of Mountain Justice Summer activists was negative at 28.6 as opposed to 9.1 percent positive perceptions. Support for mountaintop removal was mentioned 13 percent of the time, and the definition of mountaintop removal was mentioned 14.3 percent. The AP wire coverage mentioned protest in 12.2 percent of the articles. The following excerpt, an industry quote, shows the negative perception of Mountain Justice Summer activists:

"People need good-paying jobs, funded pension plans, life-saving health care and quality schools," according to the voice-over. "Massey Energy helps provide all those things to thousands of local families. The needs of people: That's what protesters against coal forget."¹⁴⁸

Again, the industry paints Mountain Justice Summer activists as outsiders trying to take away all the coal company has provided for communities, and in using this quote, the AP both supports and takes on the industry's negative framing of Mountain Justice Summer

¹⁴⁸ Charleston Daily Mail (West Virginia), July 26, 2005.

activists. An interesting difference between local papers and the AP wire stories is the reliance on quoted sources. With local papers, quotes from Mountain Justice Summer activists were used to tell their story. However, AP wire stories relied on the “official source” of the coal industry and government officials rather than Mountain Justice Summer activists in order to tell the story of this controversy in the coalfields.

Other news outlets include environmental news wires and newspaper outside the coalfields in places such as Chattanooga, Tenn., Akron, Ohio, and Florida. Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists in these articles were positive 11.1 percent of the time and negative 3.7 percent. For attitudes of mountaintop removal, an overwhelming 61.1 percent of the time, attitudes were against the coal mining practice while 7.4 percent of the coverage supported the practice. The definition of mountaintop removal was found in 16.7 percent of the articles. As for sources used by these other papers and news services, Mountain Justice Summer activists were quoted 58.1 percent of the time. Industry and government were used as sources much less, with 18.6 and 12.8 percent of the coverage, respectively. (See figure 4.)

Sections

I think it is important to note under which section Mountain Justice Summer and mountaintop removal were covered because I think the section under which the article appears also frames the article for the audience because of preconceived notions about what will appear in the specified section based on experience. If a person picks up the paper and turns to the business section, s/he will probably expect a story with a business frame. If the audience looks for the environment or science section of a paper, they are

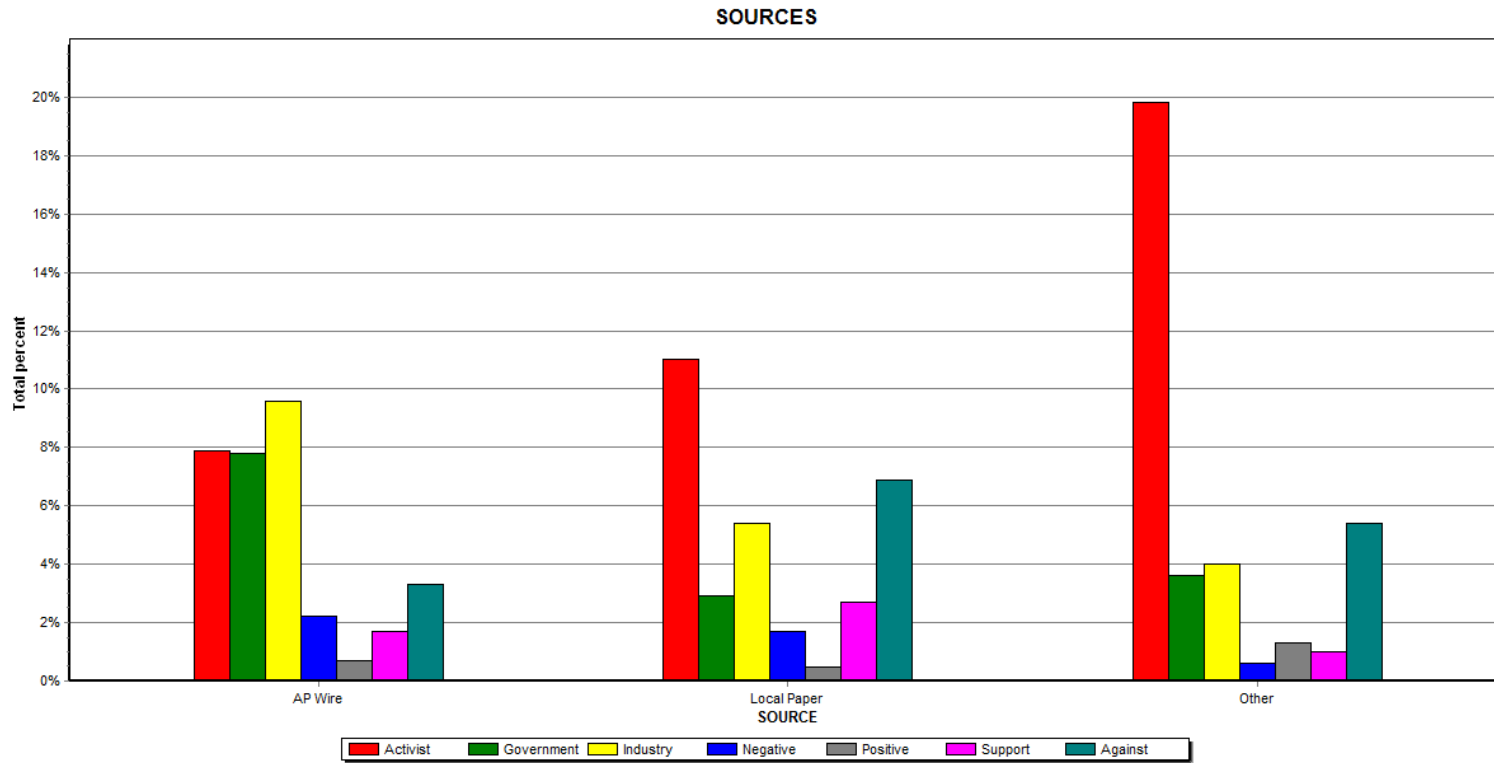


Figure 4: This graph shows the occurrence of quotes by activists, industry representatives and government within each media outlet. Perceptions of activists and attitudes of mountaintop removal are also shown.

probably expecting to read more science-based news about the issue. This evaluation is more specific to mountaintop removal as an issue because of the numerous ways in which the issue can be framed: is it a business story about coal and jobs or is it an environment/science story about nature? Is it news? Asking these questions can help better understand how media frames are formed based on which section in the newspaper the story appears. The sections represented in my analysis are news, state and regional (specific to AP wires), business, environment, and other.

News was the main section articles about Mountain Justice Summer were published in and represented 51 percent of all articles. Again, opposition to mountaintop removal was dominant, 53.4 percent, and support for mountaintop removal was at 15.2 percent throughout the articles. In this section, Mountain Justice Summer activists were portrayed negatively 17.5 percent of the time and positively 5.4 percent. The practice of mountaintop removal was defined in 8.5 percent of articles under this section. Mountain Justice Summer activists were used as sources 35.9 percent of the time in the news section, compared to industry at 19.1 percent. Other sources and community members were quoted almost evenly at 15.4 percent and 15.1 percent, respectively. Here again, the issue comes up with using Mountain Justice Summer activists as sources most, but creating an overall negative frame of the activists. Perhaps one reason for this, as touched on earlier, is that when the activists are quoted, they are discussing the issue, not the controversy. This would help explain the amount of opposition to mountaintop removal (53.4 percent). When industry officials are quoted, they usually discuss the activists, not the issue. This evaluation implies the activists' ability to stay on message and the coal

industry's need to paint a negative picture of the activists in order to disqualify them from the discussion.

The next largest section in all the news articles was the state and regional section, which could be considered news, but was not in this evaluation based on the sections identified by each database used for sample collection. The same pattern emerges in this section as did in the news section with attitudes against mountaintop removal dominant at 38.9 percent, while support for the practice was at 9.3 percent. Perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists are also similar with 25.9 percent of the coverage negative and 13 percent positive. Mountaintop removal was defined in 13 percent of the articles. Mountain Justice Summer activists were again the dominant source used, 35.4 percent of the coverage, with government officials quoted in 32.7 percent of the articles and industry quoted in 20.4 percent.

Three more sections were identified – business, environment, and other – and comprised fewer than 25 percent of all the news articles. In the business section, articles about Mountain Justice Summer portrayed the activists negatively 32 percent of the time. Positive perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were not to be found. In the debate of mountaintop removal, attitudes against the practice were found in 28 percent of the articles, but support was also found in 24 percent of the articles; a much closer representation than the other sections. Industry was quoted most, 53.5 percent, in all articles under the business section. Government officials were quoted in 23.9 percent, and Mountain Justice Summer activists were quoted in 16.9 percent of all articles.

The environment and “other” section were so small that statistical analyses of

these do not make much sense. However, overall analysis of these sections support precious trends in that perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were mostly negative when voiced through quotes, and opinions of mountaintop removal were mostly in opposition to the practice. In both sections, activists were used as the primary source for quotes.

Based on these finding, the controversy surrounding mountaintop removal mostly falls under the news section. Because I focused on Mountain Justice Summer activists in my evaluation of media frames, I would expect more news-oriented stories because of the very nature of the movement (being that it produces newsworthy events such as protests and direct actions). With mountaintop removal being secondary in my evaluation, I am unable to draw direct conclusions about the media frames based on each section for this particular issue. In future studies, I would like to look more specifically at the sections of each newspaper and see what variables influence the formation of media frames within the sections.

In his dissertation, Seamon states, “Overall, the tone of media coverage seems more sympathetic to opponents of mountaintop removal mining than to supporters,”¹⁴⁹ and based on my evaluation of news articles, this still seems to be a true statement. In covering mountaintop removal, media represented views against mountaintop removal in over 60 percent of all articles as opposed to views in support of mountaintop removal, which numbered at less than 30 percent. This finding suggests the media have continued their overall tone of coverage against mountaintop removal. (See figure 5.)

¹⁴⁹ Seamon 2005.

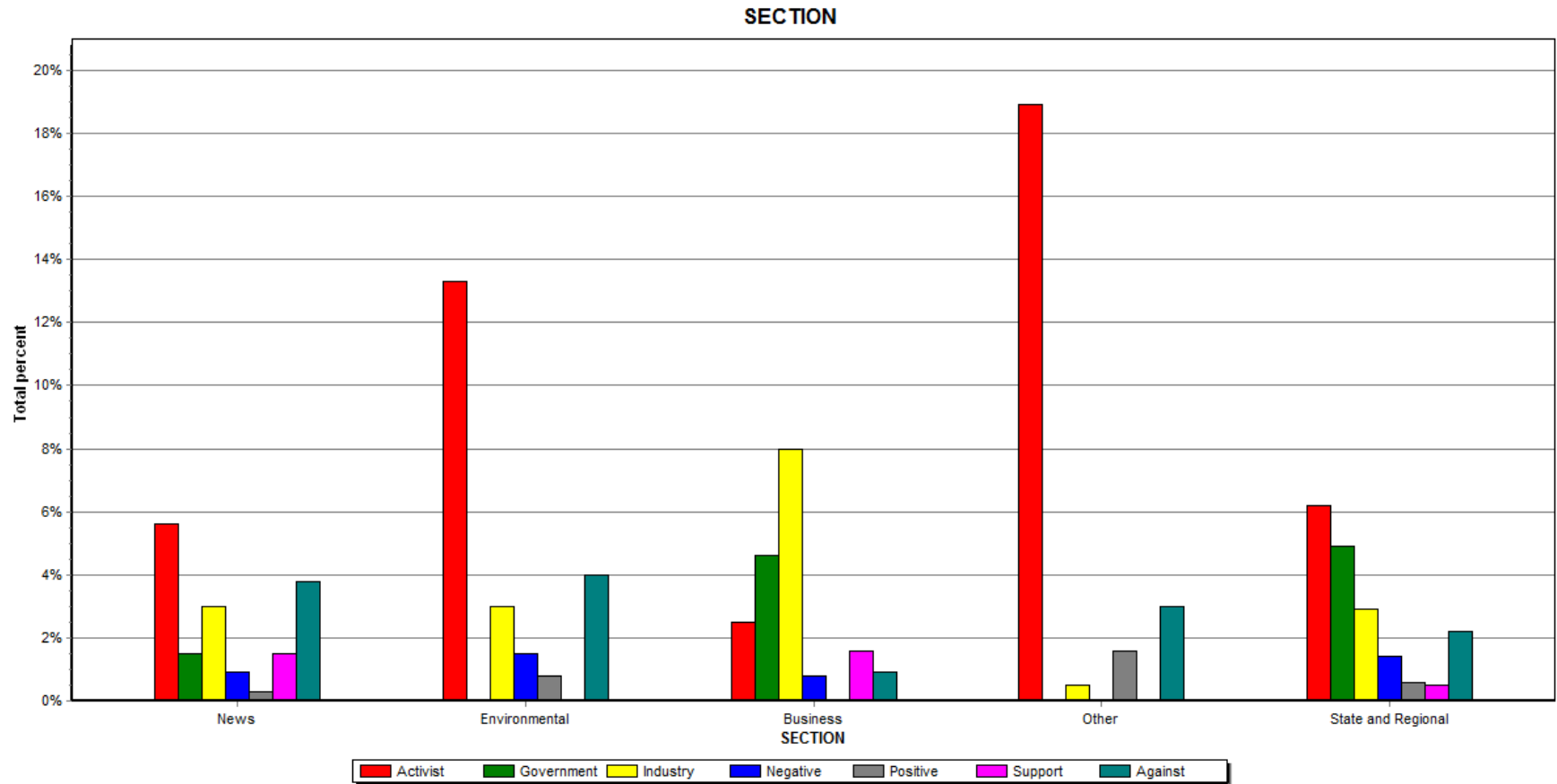


Figure 5: This graph shows the occurrence of quotes from activists, government and industry representatives by each Section evaluated. Perceptions of activists and attitudes towards mountaintop removal are also represented.

Audience Frames

Letters to the Editor

Like the newspaper articles they inspire, letters to the editor can help shed light on the framing of news, but from the audience's point of view. In his analysis of framing, Scheufele argues there are two types of frames: media and audience frames, and defined audience frames "as major headings into which any news content can be filled."¹⁵⁰ By evaluating letters to the editor, an audience's reflection of news, audience frames can be identified and compared to media frames in order to draw inferences on the correlation of media and audience frames, or the effects of media on public opinion.

In order to evaluate audience frames, I employed the same methodology as in evaluation of media frames. Using QDA Miner, I created a code book similar to the one used in media frame evaluation. For Mountain Justice Summer activists, perceptions coded for were 'positive,' 'negative,' and 'other.' For mountaintop removal, opinions coded for were 'support' and 'against.' Variables used in evaluation of audience frames were the newspapers where each letter to the editor appeared: *Roanoke Times*, *Charleston Gazette*, and *Charleston Daily Mail*. Coding throughout dealt with perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists and opinions mountaintop removal.

I used QDA Miner to analyze coding by variables and discovered *Charleston Gazette* represented 70 percent of total letters to the editor. *Roanoke Times* and *Charleston Daily Mail* were represented a total of 17 percent and 11 percent of the time, respectively. Further analysis of just these findings could suggest community awareness

¹⁵⁰ Scheufele 1999.

of this particular issue. For example, perhaps a higher percentage of community members in the *Charleston Gazette* readership are either directly affected by mountaintop removal or involved with Mountain Justice Summer. Studies have shown that the more a community is affected by an issue, the more residents will pay attention to the details, or the NIMBY approach to activism: Not In My Back Yard.

Of the total percentage of words, however, the *Roanoke Times* letters to the editor contained more positive perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists than the other two papers. It is also interesting to note that neither the *Roanoke Times* nor *Charleston Daily Mail* contained negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists. With letters to the editor from the *Charleston Gazette*, positive and negative perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were represented at 14.8 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Opinions of mountaintop removal were voiced in each paper, but represented less than 10 percent of the total words.

The following example is a letter to the editor from the *Roanoke Times*, which shows strong support for Mountain Justice Summer activists from a community member:

I must respond to the comments of Dink Shackelford, executive director of the Virginia Mining Association. He referred to the young Mountain Justice Summer organizers as misinformed. On the contrary, these energetic young people are very knowledgeable. They research relentlessly about the detrimental community and environmental effects of mountaintop removal coal mining. Shackelford also states that the Mountain Justice Summer organizers are misguided, suggesting that professors are leading them. Again, this is not true. These young people are not guided by anyone except their own sense of what is right and wrong. Following in the tradition of Mother Jones, they are fighting against a great social injustice. And as the article points out, there are many older members of this movement. Shackelford's job is to promote the interests of the coal companies, not those of the people affected by coal mining. So, it isn't surprising that he would not understand the

organizers or the problems of people living close to the mines. As Upton Sinclair said a century ago, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."¹⁵¹

This example challenges the coal industry on its framing of Mountain Justice Summer activists and goes so far as to provide concrete examples of how the activists can help the community.

The following excerpt from a *Charleston Gazette* letter to the editor show the positive perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists:

The dust hasn't settled from Mountain Justice Summer, but the coal dust from Massey's Elk Run plant settles every day in Sylvester. It settles in my attic, on my porch and in my lungs. When Massey had their counter-protest outside Elk Run, they told us to go home. I've been living in Sylvester for years. I'd like to stay home. Massey makes life hard for us who should be enjoying our golden years. We have to fight tooth and nail for what we have left. Everywhere Massey goes, communities disappear. They don't want people to go home; they just want them to go away. I have no intention of leaving. They told us to get jobs. I'm retired, but this fight is unpaid hard work. Would Massey supporters have been yelling at us if their relatives weren't getting paid? Maybe they won't be screaming so loud when their jobs are gone like the thousands the coal industry has already eliminated with mountaintop removal. Massey isn't paying their workers out of a sense of charity. They're getting paid for their hard work. I am glad to welcome Mountain Justice Summer. These people are working for a cause greater than money.¹⁵²

In this letter to the editor, the community member shames Massey Energy rather than the activists. This attack on the industry is outside the norm of media frames and shows that audience frames are not wholly affected by media frames. In this respect, audience frames could reflect the ability of a news consumer to process the news. As Scheufele discussed in his 1999 study, there are three types of news processors: active, reflective,

¹⁵¹ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), July 11, 2006.

¹⁵² Charleston Gazette (West Virginia), August 25, 2005.

and passive. Active news processors seek out different sources of information, which may reflect their ability not to be influenced by media frames. I would suggest here that the type of news processor a consumer is depends on the degree of effect media frames have on the audience frame.

Editorials

In my sample, three editorials were present. One editorial was from the *Roanoke Times*, which was a guest editorial by a Mountain Justice Summer activists, and two were from the *Charleston Gazette*, one of which was also a guest editorial from a Mountain Justice Summer activist.

The first example is an excerpt from the *Charleston Gazette* editorial written by newspaper staff. In this example, it is clear that the media frame of negativity still exists when discussing Mountain Justice Summer activists:

State residents, especially Southern West Virginians, should be wary of strangers in their communities this summer. Some of the most activist groups in this country have targeted West Virginia for a campaign geared toward protesting surface mining. They have themed this campaign "Mountain Justice Summer" (MJS) and it appears ominous ... What really scares me, though, is that some of the people involved in Mountain Justice Summer subscribe to the belief that the end justifies the means, and appear willing to not only break the law but to use violence in an effort to move their agenda forward...¹⁵³

This example supports the media frame of Mountain Justice Summer activists by calling them strangers and people who promote violence, which places them even further away from the community they are working in.

The next example is an excerpt from the guest editorial by a Mountain Justice

¹⁵³ Charleston Gazette (West Virginia), July 29, 2005.

Summer activist that attempts to dispute the negative media frame cast on the activists:

It's true, we're "outsiders." We didn't grow up swimming in the creeks of the Coal River Valley, hunting in the hollows, or playing pool at the arcade. The caution with which local residents treat newcomers is, in our opinion, well founded. The communities of Appalachia, especially those nestled in coal-rich areas, have long been exploited and culturally appropriated by the outside world.

The activists who have come to the Coal River Valley this summer have not come to exploit resources or to destroy this beautiful state. Mountain Justice Summer (MJS) was invited by community members to stand in solidarity with those who are defending their homes and lives in the face of environmental and economic ruin.

Solidarity, by definition, means unity, cohesion, and camaraderie. It means to support the positive actions that make the world a livable place. Unions, historically, have organized in solidarity with communities the world over. Here in the coalfields, unions have supported the rights of miners and their families for decades...¹⁵⁴

And the final editorial published in *The Roanoke Times* again disputes the media frame of Mountain Justice Summer activists and attempts to clarify what the activists stand for:

On June 3, *The Roanoke Times* published an article by Tim Thornton titled "Security is watchword at group's camp" about the security measures that organizers were taking at the Mountain Justice Summer training camp. The article made us sound like a bunch of volatile crazies because we're wary of the FBI, coal companies and, of course, journalists.

To put this issue in perspective, coal barons and the government, at times, can be downright scary. I have talked to anti-mountaintop removal activists who have received death threats, who have had their houses shot up and who have been trapped by coal truckers who were trying to run them off the road.

There's a forgotten chapter in American history called the Mine Wars when the coal industry, often with the help of the government, battled the folks who live in the mining communities.

The Mountain Justice Summer campaign is modeled after Mississippi Freedom Summer (the civil rights movement) and Redwood Summer (the movement to protect ancient redwoods on the West Coast against the logging industry)...¹⁵⁵

These editorials provide some insight to the rhetorical defenses used by Mountain Justice Summer activists in the face of negative framing by the media. The fact that most letters

¹⁵⁴ Charleston Gazette (West Virginia), August 1, 2005

¹⁵⁵ The Roanoke Times (Virginia), June 16, 2005

to the editor did not take on the media frame indicates the effects of framing are not as evident as one might expect. Most letters to the editor agreed with the media frame of opposition to mountaintop removal, but refused to accept the negative frame of Mountain Justice Summer activists. This is interesting to note because perhaps the community is more open to help from “outsiders” than the media are willing to give them credit for. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

Public Opinion and the Environment

Along with my evaluation of audience frames, I think it is important to think of them in context of the larger public opinion of environmental issues. What follows is a very brief discussion of attitudes about the environment and environmental activism based on a 2007 Gallup Poll.¹⁵⁶

According to the poll, Americans are not opposed to initiatives to protect the environment, especially water quality, but overall, the environment is not of high concern for most Americans. The poll also suggests Americans have little faith in the government to protect the environment and are growing increasingly pessimistic about future environmental conditions, with 67 percent of those polled in agreement that the environment is not getting any better. Also, results show that “Americans are closely divided on the tradeoff between environment and energy source development, with 49 percent choosing the environment and 42 percent choosing the development of U.S. energy supplies.”¹⁵⁷ Apparently, the American public does not have a sense of urgency

¹⁵⁶ Gallup Poll, “Environment Update,” published online Sept. 24, 2007, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1615/Environment.aspx>. Accessed by author December 19, 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

about the environment at this time, but according to the poll, underlying concern about the environment does exist and could, possibly, be put on the forefront of Americans' minds by politicians, particularly, "if the environment as an issue is connected to tangible aspects of day-to-day living for average Americans,"¹⁵⁸ which supports my statement earlier about communities not getting involved or having concern about the environment until it becomes a day-to-day problem, or NIMBY problem.

Bottom-line: the environment is not a "high salience issue" for Americans. According to Gallop Poll trends, the heyday for environmentalism was in the late 1990s – a period of economic prosperity and low energy concerns and before the "war on terror." It seems that although Americans are aware of the problems we face in terms of global warming and the environment, they are unwilling to compromise economic growth or energy production for environmental protection.

So what does this mean for audience frames? In order to evaluate audience participation, or attention to, environmental news, websites and blogs might be a more effective place to start an evaluation of how media consumers deal with issue salience in environmental news.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

Media Frames of Mountain Justice Summer

My analysis of media frames presents an interesting contradiction of the types of frames that exist. In coverage of Mountain Justice Summer, the media largely frame the activists negatively. However, in the coverage of mountaintop removal, the media create a negative frame here as well. What follows is an analysis of why this could be possible based on previous studies and research on framing.

In his analysis of framing, Stephen Reese¹⁵⁹ discusses cultural frames as influences on media frames. His example of the “war on terror” presents a way the media organize stories based on this particular issue. In looking at the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer, I believe cultural frames are at work in helping the media form its frame of the issue. In our culture, there is an acceptable means of public discourse that usually involves petitioning the government for a redress of grievances, community organizing and actions such as voting and letter-writing. People who follow these accepted means of discourse are seen as obeying the law and doing the right thing, like environmental groups such as the Nature Conservancy or Sierra Club. These groups do not participate in mass protests or direct action and are therefore able to participate in the public discourse surrounding issues they are involved in.

Mountain Justice Summer, on the other hand, does not participate in the accepted means of public discourse and is therefore cast negatively by the media. This argument supports Jules Boykoff’s findings that the news media sets parameters for acceptable

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Reese, “The Framing Project: A Bridging Model for Media Research Revisited,” *Journal of Communications*, 57(2007): 148-154, at 152.

public discourse based on cultural power structures. Voices outside acceptable public discourse, such as dissidents in social movements, are occasionally permitted a voice in the “mass-mediated terrain,” but based on his findings, Boykoff states, “their price of admission is often subjection to mass-media deprecation.”¹⁶⁰

Activists with Mountain Justice Summer break the cultural notions of protest by breaking the law. However, this is the basis for the campaign. When activists working to stop mountaintop removal began discussing the idea of Mountain Justice Summer, they were largely tired of staying within the accepted means of public discourse because it seemed to not be working. Groups such as the Coal River Mountain Watch had been working to stop mountaintop removal in their state for more than 20 years, with little to no result. Therefore, when activists begin talking about stepping up the opposition, other groups disillusioned by the current mode of protest were ready to jump on board.¹⁶¹

As discussed earlier, nonviolent civil disobedience has a place in the history of this nation; however, our cultural amnesia seems to take over when direct actions take place. If more people remembered the Suffragettes’ hunger strikes in jail, Civil Rights movement sit-ins at lunch counters, or even the Boston Tea Party, so-called dissidents like Mountain Justice Summer activists may not be cast in such a negative cultural, and therefore, media frame.

Another aspect of the negative media frame used in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer is the fact that Earth First! is associated with the protest movement and

¹⁶⁰ Jules Boykoff, “Framing Dissent: Mass-Media Coverage of the Global Justice Movement,” *New Political Science*, 28 (2006): 202.

¹⁶¹ The author was involved in the founding of Mountain Justice Summer and had conversations with other activists about this particular matter.

has a torrid history with the media and society. In the 1980s when left-leaning environmentalists became disillusioned with the big environmental groups who always seemed to compromise with Big Business in order to save some land or species, a few radicals formed the controversial movement Earth First!, which took on as its motto: “No Compromise in the Defense of Mother Earth!” Direct action and nonviolent civil disobedience became the trademark of the movement, which placed activists within the movement on the outskirts of public discourse. Soon, the media were at work and were able to use industry and government rhetoric to frame Earth First! activists as terrorists because of tree-spiking, a tactic used in the late 1980s by the group, but has been long-since discarded. So, because Earth First! is an integral part of Mountain Justice Summer, I believe the negative frame the media uses when covering the movement is based on historic cultural frames of dissidents in the environmental movement.

Another issue to address, however, is the fact that journalists relied on Mountain Justice Summer activists as sources more times than they relied on industry or government sources. One would think that if activists were used for sources more than any other player in the controversy, then the framing of the activists would be positive. However, this is not true. In order to understand how this happened, I looked back at the quotes used by activists versus the quotes used by industry and government and discovered an interesting fact: when activists were quoted, they were mostly discussing the issue of mountaintop removal, whereas when industry supporters were quoted, they were usually talking about the activists.

The goal of Mountain Justice Summer activists is to raise awareness of

mountaintop removal in the coalfields. Media trainings were conducted to help the activists learn how to “stay on message,” when talking to the media, which means to discuss the issue, not the personal attacks behind the issue. Also, Mountain Justice Summer was the focus of these stories (particularly because that was the key phrase used to collect the sample), and the media used them as primary sources because the activists are the “experts” on the campaign. In order to balance the story, industry representatives were quoted and most of the time, spoke negatively about the activists, which helped to create the overall negative media frame of Mountain Justice Summer.

Media Frames of Mountaintop Removal

Although it was not the premise to my study, secondary analysis of media frames on mountaintop removal shows the media create an overall negative frame of mountaintop removal, which supports Marc Seamon’s findings in his 2005 dissertation on media frames of mountaintop removal.¹⁶² The fact that my findings suggest consistency with another research is comforting, but the difference in frames between Mountain Justice Summer activists and the issue they are campaigning on, mountaintop removal, seems contradictory.

As discussed in my analysis of the media frames used in the coverage of Mountain Justice Summer, activists with the campaign were quoted most often, and when they were quoted, were usually discussing the issue of mountaintop removal. This is a plausible explanation of the overall negative frame of mountaintop removal in the media. Because the activists were able to stay on message and discuss the issue rather than the

¹⁶² Marc Seamon, “Media and Claimmaker Framing of Controversial Environmental Issues: A Frame Mapping Analysis of Mountaintop Removal Mining,” (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2005).

players in the controversy, the media adopted the activists' negative frame of mountaintop removal. Also, community members were extremely vocal in their opposition to mountaintop removal when quoted, which also strengthens the anti-mountaintop removal frame used by the media.

Another possible reason for the anti-mountaintop removal frame used by the media is the devastation caused to communities by the practice. Newsworthy events such as the death of a 3-year-old boy carry heavy anti-mountaintop removal undertones in the coverage and are seen throughout the articles when the media cover effects of mountaintop removal. There is little in the coverage of this issue, as it relates to Mountain Justice Summer, that shows support for mountaintop removal, or coal in general, unless it comes through a quote from an industry supporter.

Future research into the way media frame environmental issues and specifically mountaintop removal will be needed in order to draw exact conclusions about the framing of the issue. For now, my analysis of media frames of mountaintop removal is a bit skewed because of its secondary nature. My priority was to evaluate media frames of Mountain Justice Summer and then look at mountaintop removal. Correlations between the two – specifically the negative framing of both by the media – suggest the need to study the two separately in order to gain a better understanding of how the media frames each one individually.

Audience Frames

In his attempt to synthesize the framing theory of media effects, Scheufele introduces the concept of audience frames in order to evaluate the effects media frames

have on the audience.¹⁶³ Although a comprehensive evaluation of audience frames was not done in this study, I did attempt to organize a way that audience frames could be evaluated by looking at letters to the editor, which show some indication of how and if media frames affect the audience.

Overall, the tone in the letters to the editor was supportive of Mountain Justice Summer and its activities, which is inconsistent with the overall negative media frame of Mountain Justice Summer. One explanation for this can draw again on Scheufele, who suggests there are three types of media processors – active, reflective and selective.¹⁶⁴ I think that active news processors, those who seek out additional information from news sources because they believe the mass-mediated information could be slanted or incomplete, are more likely to write letters to the editor because they are the ones seeking out the information and participating in the news discourse. Most of the letters to the editor were from residents in the coalfields who were directly affected by mountaintop removal and working with, or at least accepting of, Mountain Justice Summer activists. Because of this, the letters to the editors and the overall audience frame showed support for the activists, which suggests the media frames do not have as much effect on the formation of audience frames as one may suspect. I am still interested to see if I can conduct an adequate study on the effects of media frames and will be looking in the future for ways to collect data about how people process news and come to understand the issue and controversy surrounding mountaintop removal, or any environmental issue.

¹⁶³ Dietram Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication*, 49 (1999): 103-122, at 106.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

Framing Revisited

In his 2007 essay about framing, Stephen Reese argues it is “*the way* that certain attributes come to be associated with particular issues that should concern framing analysis.”¹⁶⁵ In my evaluation of media frames of Mountain Justice Summer, I looked at the rhetorical structures of the coverage and argued lexical choices made by journalists helped to develop frames. This argument supports Reese’s theory and helps to understand how people come to associate one thing with another. For example, in the protest/arrest frame, perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists were overwhelmingly negative because of lexical choices and use of quotes by journalists. Attributes associated with the activists became the way journalists framed Mountain Justice Summer.

The framing theory of media effects is a theory that could alter the way we think about media and their relationship with the public, or their influences on what the public thinks about and how they think about it. More studies evaluating the effects of framing need to be done in order to fully argue media effects take place every day, but I think that my study shows some correlation between media frames and audience frames, thus supporting the framing theory of media effects.

¹⁶⁵ Reese 2007, 152.

Chapter 6: Research Limitations

As discussed earlier, I used QDA Miner for my coding analysis and ran an inter-coder reliability test. Results from that test indicated 74.7 percent agreement in code co-occurrences, which is acceptable, but not great. This is probably the most apparent limitation to my research because it does not provide comfort that the coding is accurate or that categories were explained specifically. One possible reason of relatively low inter-coder reliability is that I have a different perspective on the framing of Mountain Justice Summer activists and mountaintop removal than the other coder, who has had very little interaction with Mountain Justice Summer and mountaintop removal. I believe coder bias may play a role in the low inter-coder reliability because I coded more specifically on perceptions of Mountain Justice Summer activists (such as physical descriptions as well as quotes from sources) than the other coder. Although the code book was straightforward in what I wanted Lawrence to look for, I believe that my bias for Mountain Justice Summer activists and against mountaintop removal may have played a role in the gap between our coding processes. I also think my coding was limited in that there were only two coders. In future coding analyses, I would like to employ four coders who do not know anything about Mountain Justice Summer activists and mountaintop removal in order to see if coder bias and low participation were indeed limitations.

Another limitation to my research exists within my sample. After searching through available newspaper databases, I was only able to find 57 articles to evaluate. I think that more articles from more media outlets would help with defining media frames, which can then be evaluated in terms of dependent and independent variables. However,

as Julia Corbett argues in her 1998 study,¹⁶⁶ environmental groups that do not participate within the reasonable means of public discourse are not as likely to receive coverage by the media. This would be an interesting hypothesis to test in a future study that compared coverage of an environmental group like Save Our Cumberland Mountains, which focuses on community-based activism and stays within the acceptable realm of public discourse, and Mountain Justice Summer, who is quite the opposite.

The final limitation of my research that I have identified is the theoretical framework within which I am working. As discussed in my literature review, the framing theory of media effects has not been completely agreed upon by media scholars. The jury is still out on how to evaluate and apply framing theory in communications research. In my study, I have attempted to take parts of the whole and synthesize an applicable framework for the theory by evaluating media frames as dependent variables, implications of rhetorical choices, and audience frames as they relate to media frames. In order to fully understand media effects, however, I believe more research needs to be done on journalists' processes and audience responses to the frames created by those processes.

¹⁶⁶ Julia B. Corbett, "Media, Bureaucracy, and the Success of Social Protest: Newspaper Coverage of Environmental Movement Groups," *Mass Communication & Society*, 1(1998): 41-61.

Chapter 7: Thoughts for Future Research

As discussed in my limitations, the framing theory of media effects is still being debated within communications research. Further evaluation of how media frames are formed and what implications those have on audience frames is needed in order to fully understand the framing theory of media effects.

Another thought I have for future research is digging deeper into the papers available to coalfield residents. I would like to evaluate coverage of Mountain Justice Summer activists in mainstream papers, but also local weeklies, alternative publications, and local trade journals, if any exist. A total media evaluation of Mountain Justice Summer could also be possible within the Appalachian coalfield by looking at print, television and radio coverage of the activists and comparing how each medium treats the controversy. The same would also apply to mountaintop removal.

Since mountaintop removal is an environmental issue and environmental issues are usually discussed within the notion of science and technology, I would like to examine the coverage of mountaintop removal to see if journalists are getting at the broader issues that arise within the controversy. Hard, investigative science journalism is necessary for an issue such as mountaintop removal because of the many aspects of the issue: water quality, energy production, ecosystem destruction, conservation, etc. If journalists are getting at the hard science of this environmental issue, then how will that affect the framing of the issue?

In this study, I focused only on the framing of Mountain Justice Summer activists. Future studies could compare the framing of Mountain Justice Summer activists to the

framing of the coal industry in the debate about mountaintop removal. It might be interesting to see how the media treat Mountain Justice Summer activists in relation to the way they treat industry in terms of framing the debate. This would be similar to Marc Seamon's dissertation (discussed in my literature review) in that he looked at claimsmakers resonance in print media. A follow-up on the frames used by media could prove to be useful in telling how frames change over time, if they change at all.

Another aspect of future research in order to contribute to the development of the framing theory of mass media is to discuss framing theory in relation to media hegemony and the social responsibility theory of media. As stated earlier, the media hegemony theory makes the assumption that a power structure is in place that determines the overall constraints for public discourse. Some evidence of hegemony is apparent in this study, mostly having to do with the coverage of activists working outside acceptable means of public discourse, but I am curious to see if hegemony is deeper than that. Also, the social responsibility theory of media, that states the media has a responsibility to the public to raise discourse to the plane of discussion, could be an interesting theory to discuss in relation to framing and hegemony because of its implications on audience frames.

And finally, research for the summer. Again this year, Mountain Justice Summer will be active in the coalfields of Appalachia. I would like to conduct a study similar to this study, but focus more on Mountain Justice Summer-media interaction. I am interested in how media tactics used by Mountain Justice Summer have changed over the years, if they have at all, and how that affects community perceptions of the activists and the issue.

These are all possibilities for further research in developing a working model for the framing theory of media effects.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

In my analysis of how print media frames Mountain Justice Summer, I attempted to create my own measurement of theoretical framing based on previous research about framing. I drew from Scheufele's suggestion for audience and media frames in order to evaluate effects of framing. Using Pan and Kosicki's notion that rhetorical structures help to create frames, I evaluated the rhetoric used in covering Mountain Justice Summer. I also looked at how the power of frames is influenced by cultural frames, as suggested by Stephen Reese.

In closing, I would like to suggest to Mountain Justice Summer a few things to keep in mind about media. Overall, the media create a negative frame of mountaintop removal, which helps to support Mountain Justice Summer goals of creating opposition to the coal mining practice. However, because the media exist within a particular power structure, it will be hard for Mountain Justice Summer to achieve visibility within the power structure because Mountain Justice Summer's stated goals are to create change using direct action and civil disobedience. As discussed earlier, these are time-honored tactics in the history of social movements in our culture, but ones that still seen by the power structure as unacceptable because of their lawlessness. I would suggest to Mountain Justice Summer media coordinators to put an emphasis on community building and frame Massey Energy and other coal companies as the outsiders (something I believe they have attempted to do), in order to change the rhetoric used in the debate.

The framing theory of media effects has implications across the communications field and beyond, into sociology and political ideologies. More research on this subject

matter is greatly needed in order for communicators in our mediated culture to understand the power of frames and what implications those frames have on how we perceive our cultural realities.

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Vita

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