UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

MEDIA COVERAGE OF SOCIAL PROTESTS IN GHANA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE *DAILY GRAPHIC* AND *DAILY GUIDE* NEWSPAPERS

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Favour Esinam Normeshie, hereby declare that this research is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university for the award of a degree. All sources and references used in the study have been duly acknowledged under the supervision of Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene.

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Favour Esinam Normeshie (student)                       Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene (supervisor)

Date: ………………………..                                  Date: …………………………..
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Normeshie for their unfailing love.
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My sincere appreciation goes to my lecturer and supervisor, Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene, for her time, attention and supervision which gave direction to this work.

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Abstract

The study was designed to determine how the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers covered four (4) major social protests in Ghana using qualitative content analysis and individual in-depth interviews as means of verification. A total of 57 news stories were analysed, and nine (9) media practitioners were interviewed. The specific aim was to find out the nature of portrayal of protest events and protesters, the factors which informed protest news selection decisions, considerations in the determination of protest story sources, and the tone employed in such coverage. The 1995 Kume Preko, 2005 Wahala, 2009 Atta Adaada Mi and 2015 Won Gbo demonstrations were analysed principally because they were formally organized or supported by political parties, involved large numbers of protesters, and attracted extensive media attention.

The protest paradigm concept together with Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news values hypotheses served as the conceptual framework for the study in addition. The findings showed that the protesters were sometimes portrayed as violent, disruptive and lawless. They were also represented as people with ulterior motives who used the protests to pursue their hidden agendas. In addition, it emerged that the media employed both negative and positive tones during coverage of the events. Factors such as security of journalists influenced protest news selection decisions and source credibility, and willingness of sources to interact with journalists affected source selection.

Future studies should consider including more newspapers as well as journalists so generalizable conclusions could be drawn about the Ghanaian media and coverage of protest events.
CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the study

In nearly all democratic dispensations, citizens have the moral and legal right to protest peacefully about the policies of their governments or the actions of other groups (Boafo-Arthur, 2007). A peaceful and uninterrupted exercise of this moral and legal right of the citizenry aids greatly in the consolidation of a nation’s democracy. This position was shared by some historians such as Ackon (2013) who argued that the political, social and legal gains made by democratic nations such as the United States of America (USA) cannot be lauded without giving credit to the role peaceful protests played.

Social protests are defined as “sites of contestation in which bodies, symbols, identities, practices, and discourses are used to pursue or prevent changes in institutionalized power relations” (Taylor and Van-Dyke 2004, p. 268). The Oxford Bibliographies also describe social protests as forms “…of political expressions that seek to bring about social or political change by influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of the public or policies of an organization or institution.” These definitions imply that protest events are not empty activities which citizens engage in. Rather, they are tools used to pursue certain political and social goals. For this reason, there has been, according to Taylor and Van-Dyke (2004), a worldwide increase in the number of protest activities such as petitions, demonstrations and consumer boycotts.

Studies on protest politics show that although protest movements and political parties are the typical organizers of these events, sometimes, protests are championed by random leaderless social movements which have little or no connection to traditional political parties and which
dispersed once their needs are met (Carothers and Youngs, 2015). Brendas and Engles (2011) indicate that social, political and economic grievances cause these groups to mobilize people and engage in such protest activities. This means that people usually employed social protests as strategic tools to cause social, political and economic changes which they consider beneficial to them. For example, there have been reports of people embarking on pro-Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) protests to demand equal treatment. There have also been protests organized to challenge certain political decisions such as the 2003 anti-Iraq war protest of the United States of America, and there have been economic protests such as the 1995 anti-VAT protests in Ghana.

1.1.1 The role of social protests in a democracy

According to Oliver, Cadena-Roa and Strawn (2003), sociologists in the past considered protests to be “…an undemocratic intrusion into politics” (p. 52). However, by the 1960s, protests were acknowledged as important features of a democracy for which reason they could not be dismissed as unimportant, undemocratic and unpatriotic (Oliver et al, 2003). A review of the literature suggests a number of crucial roles these events play for which reason they are regarded as indispensable in every well-functioning democracy.

For instance, even before most African nations (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe) became democratic, social protests played a key role in the political, social and economic emancipation of the people. According to Ansah (1993), in Ghana, protest marches and demonstrations were used as rightful weapons for gaining political freedom from colonial rule. This position is shared by Dwyer and Zeilig (2012) who noted that “In the twentieth century, social movements were
central to challenging the material exploitations of western imperialism and bringing an end to formal European control of the continent…” (p. 1).

Thus, through social protests, most African countries were able to liberate themselves from imperial rule. After independence, these protest events were used to topple several undemocratic and oppressive regimes on the continent. Dwyer and Zeilig (2012) indicate that, “…between 1990 and 1994, popular protest movements and strikes brought down more than thirty African regimes…” (p. 36). Therefore, such collective forms of action – social protests – could be used by citizens of a democratic dispensation to “challenge unjust and unaccountable systems of political and economic power” (Dwyer and Zeilig 2012, p. 2).

Secondly, protest events serve as legal means through which people express themselves about the performance of elected officials. According to Ackon (2013), protests are “…an expression of how strongly the public feels about controversial issues that their political leaders often prefer to avoid” (p. 1). Therefore, in a democracy, people can show their satisfaction or otherwise with governments’ decisions by embarking on protest marches which could either be in support of or against the government. This is because although citizens could gain governments’ attention through the mass media and telephone calls, such means do not possess the resonating effects of protest marches. As Ackon (2013) argues, governments understand only one type of language – social protests. Therefore, protests were one avenue via which citizens could communicate with their governments in any mature democratic state.

Although some researchers (e.g. Boyle, McLeod and Armstrong 2012; Sobieraj 2010 and Dardis 2006) have established that media coverage of social protests usually suggests that they are unnecessary, illegitimate and disruptive, Oliver et al (2003) found that protests were grounds for
mobilizing people and broadening the public sphere to encourage sharing of ideas and building of consensus since as a group, citizens stood a better chance of having their voices heard than as individuals. Therefore, through social protests, citizens were able to form groups within which they discussed their grievances, decided which issues were important and deserving of immediate attention (Oliver et al, 2004). It was these issues which were then projected into the public domain in order to influence the national agenda. Thus, Taylor and Van-Dyke (2004) concluded that social protests were tools used by relatively vulnerable groups who rely on this indirect use of power to court attention and influence public agenda.

1.1.2 The legitimacy of social protests in Ghana

The constitutionality of social protests is guaranteed in most democratic nations including Ghana. The 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana legitimizes social protests so long as the protesters notify the police service or a police officer in due time. Article 21 (1) (d) of Chapter Five of the Constitution which deals with the Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms of the Ghanaian states that all Ghanaian citizens are entitled to the “Freedom of assembly including freedom to take part in processions and demonstrations.” The only limitation to this freedom which is captured in the Public Order Act, 1994 (Act 491) stipulates that the Ghana Police Service must be notified, in not less than five days, of any ‘Special Event’ to be held. The Act defines a ‘Special Event’ as “processions, parade, carnival, street dance, celebration of traditional custom, outdoing of traditional ruler, demonstration, public meeting and similar event.”

The provision that the police service be notified of any ‘Special Event’ does not imply that they could completely ban any of such events without going to court for an injunction. Per the law, the police service could only request the organizers of the event to postpone or hold the event
elsewhere for reasons such as: the event may lead to violence or endanger public safety, public health or violate the rights and freedoms of other persons. These legal provisions therefore make it legitimate for the citizenry to embark on social protests without interference from the government or the police service.

1.1.3 Social protests and the media

There is a symbiotic relationship between social protests and the media. Protesters need the media to publicize their grievances and activities and the media rely on protest marches for news stories (Boyle et al 2012). Protesters consider both the protests and news coverage of their activities to be crucial political resources because they need the media’s attention as a conduit through which they could get their messages across to the appropriate authorities (Rafail, Walker and McCarthy, 2015; Lee, 2014; Cicco, 2010 and Boyle et al, 2005) in order to mobilize public support for their actions and arguments (Wouters, 2013; Lee, 2014).

It is, however, not enough that the media give attention to protesters and their actions. In McLeod and Hertog’s (1999) opinion, there are two important indicators of the vitality of a nation’s democracy. These were protests and the quality of coverage they receive. The manner in which the media represent protesters and their activities is of concern to the protesters since media coverage could either be beneficial or detrimental to the cause of the protesters (Rafail et al, 2015; Lee, 2014; and Cicco, 2010).

In essence, considering the perception of social protest as an important feature of democracy and the crucial role media coverage plays in the success or failure of such protests and protest goals, a study of social protests in Ghana, particularly how they were framed by the Ghanaian press, was considered important. Therefore, the study sought to find out how the Ghanaian print media, specifically the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers covered four major social protests –
the Kume Preko, Wahala, Atta Adaada Mi and Won Gbo demonstrations – which occurred under the Fourth Republic of Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the problem

According to Brandes and Engels (2011), social movement activism in Africa largely remains under-researched and under-theorized. This position was supported by Dwyer and Zeilig (2012) who noted that although there have been a “considerable proliferation of modern history books on Africa, none focus on popular struggles” and their contributions to the African history (p. 1). For this reason, the discourse on protest movements and activism in Africa has largely been based on anecdotal evidence from other cultures, mainly Western. Such evidence, in the opinion of Dwyer and Zeilig (2012), does not provide solid foundations upon which scholarly judgements could be made about the role of social protests within democracies in Africa, neither do they foster a comprehensive understanding of how the media in Africa, in this case Ghana, covered such events.

A review of previous research revealed that some claims of the protest paradigm concept – the conceptual framework upon which the present study was grounded – were not universally applicable. For instance, Wouters (2015) found that Belgian television news stories covered protest marches more thematically than episodically – a finding which contradicted one main assumption of the protest paradigm concept, and which implied that the assumptions of the concept may not be applicable in all contexts. For this reason it was considered imperative that the concept be employed in studies within different contexts as a way of contributing to the development of the concept.
In addition, although there was substantial research attention on media coverage of social protests, few of these studies investigated the phenomenon from the perspective of media practitioners, thereby creating a gap in the literature which other studies needed to fill. For instance, although studies (e.g. Boyle et al., 2005) demonstrated that protest tactics, instead of protest goal, was a major determinant of which protests received media attention, these studies failed to establish the factors which journalists considered before deciding on which events to cover and which ones to ignore.

This study was therefore necessitated because as noted by Brandes and Engels (2011) and Oliver et al (2003), social movements and their activities cannot be understood and perceived as having universal characteristics. Rather, they ought to be put in perspective by studying them within different cultures. Also, in the absence of empirical evidence regarding which factors determined the newsworthiness of a protest event as well as the determinants of which persons were sourced during media coverage of such events, generalizations about such factors have remained anecdotal in Ghana. To this end, the present study investigated how the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers covered some selected protest events in Ghana.
1.3 Objectives of study

The study sought to determine how protest events and protesters were portrayed by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers.

Specifically, the objectives of the research were:

- To discover which event characteristics and professional principles inform media selection of protests by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers.
- To find out what journalistic principles are used to select sources to be quoted in protest stories.
- To find out the two newspapers’ portrayal of protests and protesters.
- To discover tones used in the coverage of protests and protesters by the two newspapers.

1.4 Research questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. Which event characteristics and professional principles determine the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers’ selection of a protest event for coverage?
2. What journalistic principles determine source selection in coverage of protests?
3. How do media frames used in the coverage of protests portray protesters and protest events?
4. What tones do news frames used in the coverage of social protests reflect?

1.5 Significance of study

Although the protest paradigm concept has been employed by several researchers and has been proven true with media in several countries, a study by Wouters (2015) revealed that some claims
of the concept did not apply to the Belgian media. He linked the difference in his finding to the probable differences in the media and political systems between Belgian and other countries such as the United States of America and Britain. This implied, therefore, that the claims of the protest paradigm may not hold true in the case of the Ghanaian media because of how the media and political landscapes of Ghana differed from those of other nations. Thus, one significance of the research was to contribute to the development of the protest paradigm concept by testing its claims within the Ghanaian context.

In addition, even though a number of studies exist on media coverage of social protests, according to Lee (2014), a substantial number of those studies employed content analysis in their attempt to shed light on this phenomenon. By content analysis, Lee (2014) was referring to the quantitative content analysis method which does not provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The present study was therefore significant because it provided an in-depth analysis and understanding of the media’s coverage of social protests because it employed the qualitative content analysis and in-depth interview methods in the collection of data.

Finally, regardless of the fact that some research has been done on how the media in other countries such as the USA, Britain and Belgium covered social protests, there was very limited work on how the Ghanaian media, especially the print media, covered them. Therefore, evidence from this study was intended to help fill this gap in literature.
1.6 Chapter summary

The first chapter of this study provided a background – conceptualization of what social protests were, their significance in a democracy, their legitimacy in Ghana and the relationship between protests and the media – to the entire research. It also highlighted the statement of the problem of the research. The research objectives and questions which drove the study were also highlighted. Finally, the importance of the study to the academic community was stated in the chapter.
2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual framework (the protest paradigm concept) relied on by the researcher in the conduct of the study. The protest paradigm concept is theorized on the assumption that the media appear to follow a fixed template during the coverage of protest events. The chapter, thus, presents some assumptions of the concept with recourse to their relevance to the study. It also highlights Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news values hypothesis and some factors that influence source selection during media coverage of events.

2.1 The protest paradigm concept

The protest paradigm, which is credited to Chan and Lee (1984), has been used to describe how the media marginalizes and delegitimizes social movements and their activities by portraying them as deviations and threats to the status quo – societal or governmental norms (Boyle et al, 2012; Lee, 2014; Sobieraj, 2010 and Wouters, 2015). The media does this through the news frames used during protest coverage, the images used to accompany text and the placement of stories. Such recurring frames and the media’s treatment of protesters embody the media’s hostility towards protesters. Drawing on McLeod and Hertog (1999) and McFarlane and Hay (2003), Dardis (2006) developed a thorough typology of fourteen (14) marginalization devices employed by the media. According to Dardis (2006), nine (9) of the devices are ubiquitous to all types of protests while five (5) are peculiar to antiwar protests. Since none of the four (4) demonstrations focused on in this study were antiwar protests, the five antiwar marginalization
devices were not included in the study. The remaining nine (9) devices, in this study, were re-categorized into five (5) devices based on the similarities detected in their conceptualization.

a. General lawlessness and police confrontations

Dardis (2006) opines that, usually, journalists are prone to highlight police presence, counter-demonstration and other acts of violence in protest stories. The media, according to him, mostly ignore the philosophical issues underpinning a protest in favour of such instances of violence which Hertog and McLeod (1999) claim emanate from criminal activities such as vandalism and conflict between police and protesters. In this study, the ideas of general lawlessness and police confrontations were not limited to forms of major vandalism but also included instances of counter-demonstrations and minor violations such as blocking of traffic, and deviation from approved protest routes.

b. Idiots at large and romper room

The media also marginalize protesters by concentrating and passing judgments on their mental capabilities, appearances and mannerisms rather than their arguments. According to McFarlean and Hay (2003), the media usually portray protesters as persons who are too obtuse to fully comprehend the issues being debated and so embark on protest activities without fully comprehending the arguments. McLeod and Hertog (1999) state that the media contribute to this type of protester marginalization by concentrating on certain immature behaviours such as jumping in water fountains and dancing exhibited by the protesters. Thus, the media usually depict protesters as persons not worthy of public attention.
c. Carnival

Another assumption of the concept is that the media largely focus on the theatrical aspects of protest events and protesters rather than the concerns raised by the protesters. In the opinion of Luther and Miller (2005), protest frames which mirror protests as carnivals concentrate on the ‘spectacle value’ of these events. This style of marginalizing protesters is also, according to Dardis (2006), accomplished when the media describe protesters as engaging in types of production. Therefore, whenever the media, for instance, focus their attention on the music and dancing that accompany a protest or the bizarre attires of protesters, they project the event as a carnival.

d. Official sources

Proponents of the concept further argue that when covering protest events, journalists stick to the journalistic principle of sourcing news from elected officials and prominent people within the society (Lee, 2014; Sobieraj, 2010 and Jha, 2007). Thus, the media tend to favour the opinions of authorities – government, cabinet members and the police – over those of the protesters. As a result, the views and arguments of protesters are hardly reported, although occasionally, opinions of the leaders of protest groups are included in the news stories. The concept implies that such manner of coverage usually evoke negative public opinion against protesters because the official sources are mostly from or in support of government and so hardly support the aims and claims of the protesters (Boyle et al., 2012; Dardis, 2006; Lee, 2014; and Shalin, Zheng, Sturm and Fadnis, 2016).
e. Generalization and eye witness account

McLeod and Hertog (1999) also indicate that the media marginalize protesters by suggesting that they represent a small group of people and do not speak for the majority of citizens by using public opinion polls or surveys which imply that the protesters lack public support. The researchers conclude that by evoking public opinion against the protesters, the importance of their actions is de-emphasized. Dardis (2006) propose that the relevance of a protest to the public is also downplayed through the use of sweeping generalizations about public reaction and the implementation of witness or bystander accounts which demonize protesters.

Although some studies which examined media coverage of social protests used the framing theory as their theoretical foundations, the present study employed the protest paradigm concept principally because its assumptions were considered better suited for addressing the research questions of the present study. Also, because scholars who have contributed to the development of the concept discovered some news frames – protests as a bother, protesters are disruptive – evident in protest news stories, these news frames were adequate for examining the nature of coverage of the protests studied. The protest paradigm was also useful to the study because it highlights a specific type of media coverage, thereby providing the researcher with a logical means by which the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers’ coverage of the four demonstrations were studied. The concept also served as a guide for the formulation of the interview questions used in the in-depth interviews involving the journalists and editors.

2.1.1 Factors that influence source selection

According to the protest paradigm concept, the media usually used direct and indirect quotes from official sources during the coverage of protest events. The Collins COBUILD English Language
Dictionary defined a source simply as “a person or book that provides information for a news story or for a piece of research.” Sources are identified as persons whose words lend credibility to a news story. As such, the present study sought to determine the factors that informed the selection of the voices included in protest news stories by the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers. According to Galtung and Ruge (1965), one news value which determined the inclusion of an event in a news cast was the status of those who organized or sponsored the event, and elite groups or people, rather than common groups or people, were more likely to capture the media’s attention. Due to this, elite voices dominate news stories. Against this background, the status of a person – elite or non-elite – affected the media’s selection of that person as a source.

A review of the literature also revealed that, particularly in the West, a person’s race and gender determined their inclusion as a source in a news story (Owens, 2010; Poindexter, Smith and Heider, 2003). Studies such as those conducted by Stenvall (2008) and Poindexter et al (2003) revealed that whites as against other races, and men as against women, have been widely used by the media over time and across media. Aside from the status, gender and race of people, the volume of research in this area of media study does not provide an established typology of factors which determine source selection during protest coverage in Africa, particularly Ghana. To this end, this research was done to find out from media practitioners in Ghana the factors they considered before selecting a source during protest coverage.

2.2 Factors that influence protest selection

Extant literature suggest that two main streams of factors account for access to the media: news routines and news values (Wouters, 2013). These two streams of factors were therefore identified and examined as drivers of protest news selection in the study. News routines refer to the news
production process while news values are the event characteristics which captured the media’s attention.

2.2.1 News routines

Sobieraj (2010) identified the existence or otherwise of a civil society ‘beat’ as one news routine which influenced media coverage of protest events. According to her, the absence of a civil society ‘beat’ negatively affected the likelihood of protesters receiving quality and abundant coverage since they were required to work harder to command attention. Sobieraj (2010) thus identified the establishment of a civil society ‘beat’ as a way of enhancing the chances of protests being selected among the events to be covered by the media.

In addition to the civil society ‘beat’, Sobieraj (2010) identified deadline structures as an example of news routines which influenced how protest events were covered. In Wouters’ (2013) opinion, since the journalistic profession required that practitioners work efficiently with tight budgets and under strict deadlines, protesters seeking to gain the media’s attention had higher chances of succeeding if they provided timely and reliable information by having their leaders on standby to respond to probes by media practitioners. According to him, social movements, by doing this, would have helped journalists meet their deadlines and therefore increase their chances of gaining coverage. This implied that coverage of protests was sometimes informed by the availability and willingness of protest leaders to engage with and provide the media with timely information.
2.2.2 News value hypothesis

In their seminal work on news values that determined Norwegian media coverage of certain events, Galtung and Ruge (1965) outlined twelve (12) news values responsible for the choices made by media practitioners. These were:

a. Frequency

Galtung and Ruge (1965) argue that events which happen spontaneously and fit the schedule of an organization’s deadlines were likely to attract the media than those which progressed at a gradual pace and occurred at inconvenient times. Protesters are thus required to stage their activities bearing in mind the schedules of whichever media type/organization they are targeting. For instance, in order to make it into the next day’s publication of a print organization, protesters are expected to carry out their protests early enough for journalists working with print houses to get enough photographs and stories for the edition before going to press.

a. Threshold

Galtung and Ruge (1965) also state that there is a threshold an event is expected to cross in order to make it into the news. The term threshold is operationalized as the magnitude of an event in terms of the impact it has on people or the amount of money needed to resolve it. Therefore, the number of people an event attract and the amount of money needed to resolve an issue determine the type of coverage it received. An event which is considered ‘small’ in terms of magnitude is likely to receive less coverage than one which is considered ‘big’.
b. Unambiguity

The concept of unambiguity has to do with the interpretation(s) one is likely to associate with an event. The more clearly an event is understood without multiple interpretations being given it, the greater the chances of it being included in a news publication (Harcup and O’Neill, 2011). This also means events with complex backgrounds and which require thorough research in order for one to comprehend them are likely to be discarded by the media in favour of those they could easily explain to their audience. Based upon this, it could be argued that protesters who present the media with clear cut reasons underpinning their activities are more likely to engage the media’s attention than those who failed to clearly articulate their goals and reasons for protesting.

c. Meaningfulness

Although the notion of meaningfulness sometimes relates with ambiguity, in this case, Galtung and Ruge (1965) operationalized meaningfulness to mean the relatability of an event to the audience of news stories. According to them, media pay particular attention to the familiar, and culturally similar events instead of culturally distant ones because media practitioners are in the habit of covering events their audiences could identify with. Aside from operationalizing meaningfulness to mean the relatability of an event to people, Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified relevance as a feature of meaningfulness. Audiences are more likely to dwell on events that they perceive as being worthy of their attention. As such, practitioners grant coverage to protesters who speak similar languages, look identical and have the same preoccupation as their audience.

d. Consonance

Galtung and Ruge (1965) believed that the media are more likely to pay attention to an event they had predicted would happen rather than one they had not foretold. Therefore, it was more likely
that stories which matched the expectations of the media would garner more attention than those which failed to do so. This is because, once the media expect something to happen, they are likely to prepare to cover it, and eventually do so. Although the consonance hypothesis may seem to conflict with the unexpectedness hypothesis, Galtung and Ruge (1956) noted that consonance had more to do with the readiness of the media to cover an event than the spontaneity of the event itself.

e. Unexpectedness
Although the consonance and meaningfulness hypotheses, to an extent, suggested that the media may cover events that their audiences identified with, found relevant and expected, the unexpectedness hypothesis proposed that the ‘unexpected of the predicted’ made for better choice when it came to the selection process of news production. Galtung and Ruge (1965) operationalized ‘unexpected’ as ‘rare’. Therefore, an event that is seen as routine, regular or institutionalized fails to grab as much media attention as one which is a deviation from the norm since an event out of the ordinary was likely to make a greater impact than an everyday occurrence.

f. Continuity
Galtung and Ruge (1965) additionally indicated that once an event made it into the news, regardless of whether its amplitude reduced drastically or not, there was the possibility that it would continue to enjoy media attention even if this attention was short-lived. Therefore, should the number of protesters around an issue reduce or should the frequency of their protests reduce, once the group had caught the media’s attention, it was likely to continue to enjoy coverage. They argued that this was simply because there was the need, by the media, to justify why the event made it into the news in the first place thereby making it a running story.
g. Composition

The composition hypothesis has to do with the desire of media practitioners to achieve a level of balance regarding which stories featured in a newscast or print. Galtung and Ruge (1965) were of the opinion that a news story about an event may be discarded and replaced by another story once the category in which the former fell exceeded its threshold. Therefore, the salience given an event is not only dependent on its own news values but also on that of the competing stories.

h. Reference to elite persons/nations

The two researchers state that the actions of the rich, powerful, famous, and infamous individuals, groups or nations are likely to be reported by the media since activities by such persons or nations are perceived as having far-reaching consequences. Therefore, the organizers or participants of a protest event may be the reason for which the event received coverage. In support of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) position, Wouters (2013) suggest that, usually, old social movements – an elite group – rather than new ones make it into the news because the former are deemed credible, organized and professional; therefore they are more resourceful in the news making process.

i. Reference to something negative

Lastly, Galtung and Ruge (1965) stated that the more negative the outcome of an event, the more likely it is for the event to be featured in print stories or newscast since bad news, rather than good news, is more newsworthy. Thus, a violent protest event which is characterized by negative happenings such as police brutality and counter-demonstration is likely to gain the media’s attention.
In summary, even though it has been suggested that news routines and values are the main factors that influence media coverage of protest activities, Sobieraj (2010) was of the opinion that to a large extent, news routines or values were hidden in larger fields of “…professional assumptions, expectations, and standards” (p. 511). Therefore, the question researchers should contend with is whether an event is interpreted by media practitioners as newsworthy and not whether the event is in itself newsworthy. It was based on this observation that the present researcher interviewed journalists and editors in order to establish what, according to them, made a protest event newsworthy and which factors informed source selection during protest coverage.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the protest paradigm concept as framework upon which the study was built by discussing some assumptions of the concept. The chapter also provided information on the factors which influenced event coverage by outlining and discussing Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news value hypothesis which suggest factors for news item selection and representation.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related studies in the field of media coverage of social protests. The literature review was necessitated by the need to situate the present study within the scholarship of media coverage of protest event. The importance of protest groups and their activities to the growth and sustenance of a nation’s democracy has resulted in the conduct of numerous studies on the topic and in diverse fields of academia. In the domain of communication studies, scholars have been interested in how these groups and events are represented by the media. Majority of the studies reviewed in this section emanated from the West and employed the quantitative research approach.

3.1.1 Media coverage of social protests and the protest paradigm concept

In their bid to understand how newspapers in the United States of America (USA) covered protest events, Boyle, McCluskey, Mcleod and Stein (2005) conducted a longitudinal study spanning over 39 years. With the protest paradigm concept as their conceptual framework, the researchers sought to determine whether there were any changes in the way the media covered protest events. Five Wisconsin newspapers which were selected based on their proximity to protest activities, community size and publication frequency were content analysed. The research established that although the nature of protests changed from moderate to radical reforms which strongly challenged the status quo, media coverage of these events remained the same with the newspapers portraying protests as disruptive events throughout the period studied. This implied that the nature of protests – whether radical or moderate – did not affect the media’s treatment of protesters.
Another study which employed the protest paradigm as its theoretical framework was Boyle, McLeod and Armstrong’s (2012) research on how thirteen newspapers from North America, East Asia and Middle East covered a number of social protests. The study sought to discover the roles a protest group’s tactics and goals played in media coverage of protesters and their activities. After content analysing 220 stories, it emerged that a protest group’s tactics, instead of its goals, determined the type of coverage it received. Against this background, Boyle et al (2012) recommended that future research should seek to determine other factors that informed protest coverage.

Wouters’ (2015) study of how Belgian television stations covered demonstrations also used the protest paradigm concept as its conceptual framework. The researcher conducted both a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of media texts and discovered that the Belgian media tended to present social protests more thematically than episodically by focusing mainly on the claims and backgrounds of events leading to the protests rather than the trivialities of the events. His findings, unlike those of Boyle et al (2005) and Boyle et al (2012), did not support the claim that the media mostly focused on the carnival aspect of a protest event instead of the arguments and background of events leading to the protests. Based on this finding, Wouters (2015) concluded that the claims of the protest paradigm were not as ubiquitous as it appeared and so recommended that the concept be tested in other contexts in order to further develop it.

Batziou (2015) studied how photojournalists portrayed a Greek social protest. The researcher theorized that the visual representation of demonstrations and protests seemed to follow the same pattern as textual framing, with violence and conflict dominating news imagery, even if the protest was generally peaceful. Batziou (2015) used the protest paradigm concept and content
analysed 413 photographs. It was discovered that the dominant visual theme was that of ‘destruction’ because most images were of protesters having confrontations with the police.

3.1.2 Media coverage of social protests in an internet age

Jha (2007) conducted a longitudinal study into how the advent and proliferation of internet use by protesters influenced the USA media’s coverage of social protests. Using the protest paradigm concept as the conceptual framework, she content analysed newspapers dating from 1967 to 1999. Jha (2007) argued that the internet afforded journalists the opportunity to source information from the protesters and/or their leaders instead of relying on government and the police for these information. Thus, she hoped to observe that protesters received more voice than elected officials in the news stories on protests. The researcher discovered that by 1999 journalists were beginning to cite more protesters than was the case in 1967. However, the media still relied heavily on elected officials as their main sources of information. This finding, similar to those of Boyle et al (2005) and Boyle et al (2012), substantiated the protest paradigm’s claims that the media, to a large extent, marginalized protesters.

Milioni (2008), unlike the previous studies reviewed, used the framing theory as the theoretical framework in his study of the extent to which the Athens Independent Media Center differed from mainstream media in the coverage of protest activities in Greece. After qualitatively analysing 222 stories, it was established that the news website demonised protesters by using frames such as ‘civic war’ to describe the protests. The study also revealed that unlike the mainstream media, the Athens Independent Media Centre carried a more negative tone and focused more on the drama associated with the protest events than the claims of the protesters.
Du (2015) investigated how media in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan covered the Arab Spring and its accompanying internet censorship. After content analysing 108 news stories, Du (2015) established that the political ideologies and prevailing media systems of the nations included in the study influenced their coverage of the Arab Spring. Hong Kong media – operating within a relatively free press environment – and Taiwan media – operating within a free press environment – tended to side with the protesters, while China media – operating within a strictly controlled media environment – sided more with the government. His study emphasized Wouter’s (2015) contention that the political and media systems of a country influenced its media’s treatment of protesters.

Guzman (2015) used the framing theory and the qualitative methodological approach to investigate how CNN.com and Fox.com used news frames which were previously applied to Muslims and the Middle East to explain the actions and motives of anti-government protesters, President Hosni Mubarak and his government, and the Muslim Brotherhood to U.S. audiences. After analysing 113 news stories, he discovered that while CNN’s coverage was supportive of the protesters and their actions, Fox’s coverage was unsupportive. CNN.com framed the anti-government protesters as ‘rational’, by laying emphasis on their education, professionalism, and non-violent struggle for their goals while Fox.com portrayed the protesters as ‘irrational’ by using frames such as ‘leaderless’, ‘youth driven’ and ‘comprising disparate groups’ in its protest stories. Guzman’s (2015) study therefore established that media organizations which operated within the same political and media system do not necessarily cover protest events in the same manner.
3.1.3 Media coverage of social protests and the nuisance paradigm concept

Cicco (2010) examined media coverage of social protests by five USA newspapers – *New York Times, Washington Post, Seattle Times, San Francisco Chronicle* and *Los Angeles Times* – from the year 1967 to 2007. With the nuisance paradigm concept as the study’s theoretical foundation, he sought to discover how often nuisance coverage was present in each year’s articles. Cicco (2010) quantitatively analysed 840 articles which were retrieved from digital archives. He established that between 1967 and 2004, there was an increase in the number of articles which highlighted the nuisance paradigm. The newspapers presented social protests as a nuisance to society by using frames such as ‘bother’, ‘impotent’ and ‘unpatriotic’ in their description of the protesters. He also found out that stories about protests which did not challenge the status quo contained less nuisance frames than those that did. Thus, as claimed by the protest paradigm, the media was not sympathetic towards radical protest movements.

3.1.4 Media coverage of anti-war protests

Luther and Miller (2005) conducted a framing analysis of US media’s coverage of pro and anti-Iraq war protests of 2003 in an attempt to determine which protest type received more delegitimizing frames. Unlike Boyle *et al* (2012) and Jha (2007), Luther and Miller (2005) did not rely on predetermined frames to code and analyse their data but rather conducted a preliminary content analysis of the units of study and discovered frames unique to the data they were using. Similar to Cicco (2010), Luther and Miller’s (2005) study established that stories about anti-war demonstrations (radical protests) contained more delegitimizing frames than those about pro-war demonstrations since anti-war protesters were represented more negatively than pro-war protesters. It was thus concluded that the media largely supported the status quo by treating
protesters who did not challenge officials more favourably than those who called for radical changes.

Dardis (2006) who also studied the USA media and their coverage of Iraq war protests focused on determining the media’s tone towards protesters and the prominence of marginalizing devices in non-editorial coverage of some anti-Iraq protests. He quantitatively compared the relative prominence of each of the marginalization devices used in 124 news stories from three newspapers – the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*. The researcher discovered that the tone of the media towards the protesters was slightly more positive than negative and neutral. A finding which contradicted a claim of the protest paradigm since it claimed media tone towards protesters was usually negative than positive. In addition, Dardis (2006) discovered that the frames of ‘general lawlessness’ and ‘police confrontation’ were the most prevalent among the marginalization devices employed by the media.

### 3.1.5 Media coverage of protests and practitioners’ perceptions

While almost all the studies reviewed so far used newspapers and the internet as their sources of data, Sobieraj (2010) studied factors which influenced media coverage of protests by engaging with media practitioners and protest activists or organizers. The researcher conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 101 members or organizers of fifty (50) different voluntary organizations and thirty-three (33) journalists who were assigned to cover events organized by the activists. Aside from the in-depth interviews with media practitioners and activists, she also analysed ninety five (95) news stories from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and some major local papers published in the host cities of each of the campaign events organized by the activists or organizers interviewed. Sobieraj (2010) discovered that coverage of protests was
influenced by the authenticity of the actions and claims of protesters which was exhibited through the emotions attached to and the spontaneity of a protest. Based on this finding, she recommended that future studies should focus on determining whether media practitioners interpreted an event as newsworthy and not whether the event was in itself newsworthy.

Another study which employed the qualitative research framework was Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014). The research was interested in determining the factors that informed protest coverage among Israeli media. Through in-depth interviews with journalists selected from eight media organizations that covered the 2011-2012 Israeli protests, the researcher discovered that journalists’ personal identification with the protests, economic considerations – advertisements – political or ideological agendas, professional considerations – accuracy and balance – and news values like novelty and public interest influenced journalists’ treatment of the protests.

3.2 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a review of some related studies. Since one goal of the research was to contribute to the scholarship of media coverage of social protests, studies which investigated this phenomenon were discussed. Also, the literature review was necessitated because the researcher was interested in employing some of the news frames discovered by other researchers in collecting data.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research paradigm and methods used in the study. It focuses on the sources of data, data collection procedure and tools as well as the methods of data analysis and presentation. It also presents definitions of the terminologies and synopses of the four demonstrations included in the study.

4.1 Methodology

Almost every research is influenced by research paradigms or hypotheses (Hashemnezhad, 2015). Generally, there are two major paradigms or philosophies which are the quantitative and the qualitative research paradigms. Researchers select either or both paradigms based on certain research considerations such as the study objectives and the type of data needed in its execution. The quantitative research paradigm favours objective and numerical analysis of data while the qualitative paradigm is basically exploratory in nature. According to Babbie (2010), qualitative reseach involves the logical process through which general principles about a phenomenon or society are derived from specific observations.

The qualitative research paradigm enabled the researcher to use a non-probability sampling technique to select only those editions of the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers relevant to the study. Second, the favoured methodology permitted a truly exploratory investigation into the newspapers’ coverage of social protests since not all the coding categories were derived from existing studies or coding schemes; some categories were derived from the raw data. For example,
although the variables ‘bother’, ‘disruptive’ and ‘chaotic’ – categories derived from previous studies – were used to determine how the two newspapers portrayed the protest events studied, other coding categories such as ‘impotent’ and ‘disguise’ were generated from the data. As such, the researcher was able to discover some other categories which could be used by subsequent researchers when conducting a study of how media cover social protests (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In addition, since the present study sought to determine factors journalists considered before covering a particular event and selecting a source to be used in protest stories, the qualitative research paradigm was opted for because such enquiry, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, had not been investigated in Ghana.

4.2 Sampling and universe of study

The purposive sampling method, which Wimmer and Dominick (2011) refer to as a technique that involves intentionally selecting a sample that meets particular characteristics, was used in selecting four protest events, editions of the newspapers, and the media practitioners included in the study. The *Kume Preko*, *Wahala*, *Atta Adaada Mi* and *Won Gbo* demonstrations were qualitatively content analysed while nine (9) media practitioners from the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers were interviewed.

The nine (9) media practitioners included four (4) reporters and an editor from the *Daily Graphic* and three (3) reporters and an editor from the *Daily Guide* newspapers. The *Kume Preko* demonstration was studied in only the *Daily Graphic* because all attempts to locate editions of the *Daily Guide* newspaper published as far back as 1995 proved futile. Thus, while three demonstrations were studied from the *Daily Guide* newspaper, four were studied from the *Daily Graphic*. The reporters were selected based on the number of times their names appeared in the
bylines of stories about any of the protests studied. Thus, the researcher undertook a basic frequency count and selected those reporters who were identified the most as authors of the news stories involved in the study. The editors, on the other hand, were simply those acting in the role of editor as at the time of the study.

To select content samples, the immediate publication before and five (5) publications after the demonstrations were purposively sampled for inclusion. The researcher limited the editions of both newspapers to the fifth publication after each demonstration because a pilot study revealed that by the time a fifth publication was in circulation, few, and in some instances, no stories were carried about the demonstrations. According to media reports, the *Kume Preko* demonstration which took place on 11th May, 1995, all editions of *The Daily Graphic* from 10th to 16th May, 1995 were studied. For the *Wahala* demonstration which happened on 1st March, 2005, all editions of both the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers from 28th February to 6th March, 2005 were studied. In the case of the *Atta Adaada Mi* demonstration which occurred on 2nd August, 2009, all editions of both newspapers from 31st July to 8th August, 2009 were investigated. And for the *Won Gbo* demonstration which took place on 16th February, 2015, all editions published from 15th to 21st February, 2015 were included in the study. In all, a corpus of fifty-seven (57) news articles was collected from the newspapers.

4.2.1 The selected social protests

The aforementioned protests were selected because, first, all were driven by socio-economic issues such as economic hardship which was sometimes the result of increment in prices of essential goods and services. Since protests are one avenue through which citizens express their opinions about governments’ activities, these events were a reflection of how the electorate felt
about their governments’ performance and so received significant media attention. Second, according to Wouters (2013), political parties are one of the elite groups that organize protests which command media attention. Therefore, since all four demonstrations were either organized or supported by the opposition political parties, the researcher believed there were bound to be news stories about the protest. In addition, all four demonstrations attracted large groups of people and, in some instances, featured counter-demonstrations and violence. As Luther and Miller (2005) argue, massive and violent demonstrations command ample media attention and furnish researchers with data for research.

4.2.1.1 The Kume Preko demonstration
The term ‘Kume Preko’ is of Akan origin which is loosely translated as ‘Kill me completely’ or ‘You may as well kill me now!’ (Anebo, 1997 and Osei, 2000). In 1995, the Rawlings led administration introduced a 17.5% VAT on selected goods and services (Prichard, 2009) as part of its budgetary policy for that fiscal year. According to Boafo-Arthur (2007), because it was introduced with little or no public education, providers of certain services and traders such as sellers of goods also increased their prices in the name of VAT resulting in citizens suffering hardships and agitating against the government.

The protest event was described as the first major challenge to the Rawlings administration after it had been in office for thirteen years (The Statesman, 1995) and the most “dramatic public protest” of its era (Prichard 2009, p. 15). The Alliance for Change (AFC) – an amalgamation of opposition parties and civil society groups – is credited with organizing the protest marches in almost all the capital cities of the ten regions of Ghana (Anebo, 1997). The first of the series of protest events happened on the 11th of May, 1995 in Accra, the capital of Ghana. It was reported that about 100, 000 protesters partook in the demonstration which was reported to have been
peaceful until “an alleged government-sponsored counter-demonstration which” resulted in the
deaths of about four protesters, including a fourteen year old boy (Boafo-Arthur 2007, p. 142).

4.2.1.2 The Wahala Demonstration
The Wahala – a Hausa word which usually means problem – demonstration was staged by the
Committee for Joint Action (CJA), a non-partisan socio-political pressure group, during the
second term of the Kufour administration. The group comprised members of some opposition
political parties, democratic organizations and civil society groups (www.ghanaweb.com, 28-02-
2005). According to the spokesman for the committee, Mr. Edward Omani Buamah, the protest
march was against “bad governance, mounting economic hardships and the insensitivity of the
New Patriotic Party (NPP) government” (www.ghanaweb.com, 28-02-2005). He claimed that the
economic hardships were consequences of increment in fuel prices. The first of the series of the
demonstrations happened on Tuesday, March 1, 2005 and was, according to media reports,
generally peaceful. And like the Kume Preko demonstration, this protest was reported to have
attracted a large following and extensive media coverage.

4.2.1.3 The Atta Adaada Mi demonstration
The first major street protest to hit the Mills administration after its assumption of office in 2009
was dubbed ‘Atta Adaada Mi’, literally meaning ‘Atta (President John Evans Atta-Mills) has
deceived me’ and was organized by the Alliance for Accountable Governance (AFAG), a non-
profit, pro-democracy civil society group. The demonstration was primarily staged to protest the
Mills government’s inability to bring about the ‘positive’ change it had promised the electorates
prior to the 2008 general elections (Daily Guide, 3rd August, 2009). Thus, the protesters expressed
concerns over economic hardships, unavailability of pre-mix fuel, increase in fuel prices,
government’s decision to freeze public sector employment and government’s inability to increase wages beyond 17.5 per cent (Daily Guide, 3rd August, 2009).

4.2.1.4 The Won Gbo demonstration

Won Gbo is a Ga phrase which means ‘We are dying.’ The demonstration, according to Bayor and Yel Yang (2015), was organized on 25th February, 2015 by some of the major opposition parties with support from some civil servants, traders, fishermen, students, market women and artisans. Bayor and Yel Yang (2015) claimed the protest event was caused by the erratic and persistent power crisis – popularly referred to as ‘dumsor’ – and its attendant economic, social and psychological challenges Ghanaians had to deal with. Media reports had it that the demonstration attracted thousands of people from all walks of life with Bayor and Yel Yang (2015) claiming that it was considered the largest social protest in recent times with almost all opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) in attendance.

4.2.2 The newspapers

The Daily Graphic is a vibrant and successful state-owned newspaper while the Daily Guide is regarded as the most successful private newspaper in Ghana. Both newspapers are published six days and have the highest circulation rate in the country. This implied that both newspapers were widely read and so had the ability to influence the attitudes of majority of Ghanaians towards protesters. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate the manner in which both newspapers portrayed protest actions to the general public. Also, because the Daily Graphic is a national newspaper which has been mandated to chronicle the activities of governments as well as all
interests in the country, it was believed that these social protests which had challenged governments’ activities and policies would be considered newsworthy. Therefore, the newspaper was most likely to cover the social protests. The *Daily Guide* newspaper, being the largest private newspaper was also likely to grant coverage to actions organized by the ordinary citizens against those in authority.

4.3 Qualitative content analysis

According to Silverman (2011), in the area of mass communication, content analysis is an accepted method of interrogating textual data since it enabled researchers to conduct in-depth analysis of media text which enhanced detailed understanding of potential meanings – manifest and latent – of news frames used in media texts. By employing the qualitative content analysis method, the study made findings which presented, in details, the news frames used in the depiction of the demonstrators and how these frames portrayed the protesters and their activities since the manifest and latent meanings of the frames were taken into consideration during the analysis and presentation of findings.

The researcher conducted the qualitative content analysis by carefully and thoroughly reading every news article which made mention of any of the demonstrations included in the study and categorized the raw data under themes which Corbin and Strauss (2008) identify as the foundation of analysis in qualitative research. Whenever a news story on the demonstrations was found, the entire story was read, and notes were made because qualitative content analysis relies heavily on researcher ‘readings’ (Macnamara, 2011). The method of constant comparison (Glaser, 1965) was employed to identify and categorize the data under themes derived from existing literature. When these themes were exhausted, the researcher looked out for some themes which also run
through the news stories but which had not been captured in existing literature. By so doing, some themes which, in the opinion of the researcher, were peculiar to the Ghanaian context emerged.

4.3.1 Conceptualization of themes

The definitions associated with each theme used in the study were derived mainly from Cicco (2010), Dardis (2006) and the *Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary: Helping Learners with Real English.*

a. **Protesters and protests are violent, lawless and disruptive**

This theme and its definition were adapted from Cicco (2010)’s study. The idea that protesters and their activities were violent, lawless and disruptive were captured by any statement which suggested that the demonstrations were bothersome and caused inconvenience. This included comments about the demonstrations effects on traffic, on commerce, and general activities. It also included comments on any acts of violence or vandalism.

b. **Protests are carnivals**

The theme of protests being carnivals as well as its meaning were adapted from the protest paradigm. This theme was reflected in any statement which highlighted the spectacle and theatrical elements of the demonstrations by suggesting that these events were similar to a party. Although such portrayal of the protesters was not a criticism, according to Cicco (2010), it had a general bearing on how the public perceived the protesters and their actions. This theme was adapted from Cicco (2010) while its meaning was gotten from Dardis (2006).
c. Protesters are irrational and unpatriotic

The idea that the media sometimes portrayed protesters as irrational was discovered by Guzman (2015). Therefore, the theme and its conceptualization were derived from his study. The theme of protesters being unpatriotic was however discovered after a pilot study was conducted by the researcher. This theme was always found in proximity to the representation of protesters as irrational and that accounts for why they were put together in this study. The conceptualization of protesters being unpatriotic was done with the aim of a dictionary. The notion that protesters were irrational and their actions unpatriotic was captured in statements which questioned the logic behind the protest events and the commitment of the protesters to the nation’s development and stability. The theme was also reflected in statements that portrayed the protesters as being too obtuse to comprehend the arguments which underpinned their demonstration.

d. Protests are guises

Similar to the theme of protesters being unpatriotic, the theme of protests being guises was discovered from the newspapers during the pilot study. The definition of this however was gotten from the Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary: Helping Learners with Real English. This idea was reflected in sentences which indicated that the demonstrations were being used as an avenue by the activists to pursue certain hidden agendas.

e. Protests are impotent

The theme of impotency was adapted from Cicco (2010). The idea that the demonstrations did not stand a chance of causing any change was captured in statements which called for the shunning of the demonstrations and those which questioned the effectiveness of their actions. It
also included statements by decision makers regarding their unwillingness to satisfy the demands of the demonstrators.

f. Protests are potent

This theme was also discovered during the pilot study and its meaning was gotten from the Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary: Helping Learners with Real English. The mirroring of the demonstrations as being potent were captured in statements, particularly, by decision makers which indicated their willingness to comply with the demands of the demonstrators. It also included statements which indicated that the demonstrations were likely to cause some change.

g. Protests are democratic

The notion that protests were democratic was also discovered from the newspapers during the pilot study. The meaning was derived from the dictionary. The theme that the demonstrations were democratic was captured in statements which indicated that the demonstrators were exercising their democratic rights and statements which mentioned that demonstrations were acceptable channels through which the activists could get their issues resolved.

4.4 In-depth interviews

Corbin and Strauss (2008) referred to in-depth interviews as a more likely means through which new knowledge and deeper understanding of a situation could be gotten. The study drew on semi-structured in-depth interviews to understand and broaden insight into the factors which informed protests selection, coverage and source selection during protest events. The researcher was the interviewer in the study. With a semi-structured interview guide which was designed based on
the objectives and concepts of the study, the researcher engaged with nine (9) media practitioners working with the two newspapers involved in the study. The interview guide probed what factors practitioners considered before covering a protest event and selecting a source to be quoted either directly or indirectly in a protest story.

The interviews were conducted within the premises of the newspapers and in three weeks after the researcher had secured an appointment with each interviewee. In order to ensure that the researcher adhered to ethical principles in research, the interviewees were assured of their confidentiality and were made to sign consent forms indicating that they willingly participated in the study. Sentences and words which directly and indirectly identified any of them were not included in the quotes used to support the findings of the study.

The shortest interview session lasted twenty-two minutes while the longest lasted almost an hour. Questions which required the interviewees to briefly describe their backgrounds with relation to journalism and what their impressions were about social protests were asked to set the tone for the interview session. They were then required to recount some experiences – both good and bad – they had regarding the coverage of protest events. Finally, the two interview questions which enabled the researcher to adequately answer research questions one and two were asked. The first question was: what makes you decide to cover a protest event or feature a protest story in a publication? The second was: what factors do you consider before interviewing and/or including the voice of a person in a protest story? Generally, the interviewees were responsive to the questions and whenever it was necessary, follow-up questions were posed to ensure that the answers provided by the interviewees met the objectives of the interview process. The interviews
were transcribed into text and Glazer’s (1965) constant comparison method was used to develop themes which were validated by checking them against the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

4.5 Data collection instrument
A coding guide was developed based on the objectives and research questions posed in chapter one of the study. The guide contained definitions of each of the themes that provided the researcher with the needed classification system for the collection of the data. By using the coding guide, the researcher ensured that both she and the assistant coder maintained a certain level of consistency throughout the data collection process. Although majority of the codes were derived from existing literature, there were times when the researcher employed ‘in-vivo codes’ since some words from the texts and interview transcripts were used as codes.

4.6 Inter-coder reliability
Although Corbin and Strauss (2008) indicated that objectivity in a qualitative study is usually unrealistic, some researchers such as Wimmer and Dominick (2011) believe qualitative researchers could strive for reliability when conducting studies by testing the level of agreement among independent coders. Even though this advice was originally meant for researchers who used the quantitative content analysis method, Macnamara (2011) argued that inter-coder reliability assessment should also be used with qualitative analysis to ensure reliability and validity of the study. Therefore, one coder was recruited and trained to separately code some randomly selected editions in the sampled population. To ensure maximum results, both the researcher and the recruited coder used the same coding guide in identifying the themes which existed in the text. The reliability and validity of the study was attested to once both the researcher and the trained coder agreed upon the conceptualization of the themes and categorized the same
statements under the same themes. According to Macnamara (2011) this manner of determining inter-coder reliability is acceptable in qualitative studies since numbers and figures were not the concern of the researcher.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research paradigm and methods used in the study. The chapter also addressed the sampling technique employed, the units of analysis, the data collection instruments and the manner in which the analysis and discussion were done. In addition, a brief synopses on the newspapers and the four demonstrations involved in the study were presented.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study. In order to firmly situate the study in the area of media coverage of social protests, the findings and discussions are compared and contrasted with the claims of the protest paradigm concept, the news value hypothesis and findings made by other studies. The presentations in this chapter focus on the research questions and objectives of the study. In order to achieve clarity and ordeliness, the presentation of the findings is also segmented into two sections. The first part captures discoveries made from the in-depth interviews involving nine (9) media practitioners while the second part focuses on findings made from the qualitative content analysis.

5.1 Which factors determine media coverage of a protest event?

Galtung and Ruge (1965) claimed that the media is prone to cover events which possessed the news values of unambiguity, meaningfulness, frequency, consonance, continuity, composition, unexpectedness, made reference to something negative, made reference to elite people or nations, and crossed a certain threshold. Thus, the first objective of this study was to determine the news values journalists from the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers considered before granting a protest event coverage. It was discovered that the editors and reporters considered the news values of meaningfulness, magnitude of an event, status of protest organizers/participants, and reference to something negative when selecting and covering an event. Aside from these news values, they identified the security of reporters, protesters’ perception of reporters and the
ability of the demonstration to fit under an already existing ‘beat’ as factors which informed their coverage of protests.

a. Meaningfulness of an event to the audience of the newspaper

The idea of meaningfulness of an event was captured in statements which made reference to how relatable an event was to the audience of the newspapers. Thus, the interviewees regarded events which their audiences could identify with, which they found interesting and which affected a large group of people as newsworthy. According to one reporter, “First, the event must be newsworthy. Meaning it should be something people would be interested in.” Another reporter said,

You must ask yourself, does the issue they are protesting matter to the larger number of people? If it is a national issue, then we cover it. For instance if the people are demonstrating because of petrol prices or utility prices, it affects all of us. The farmers, the market women, the office workers. So we report it.

This practitioner indicated that the issue needed to be of national concern in order for them to cover it because the Daily Graphic newspaper had nationwide circulation. A reporter with the Daily Guide newspaper shared a similar view when he indicated that coverage of a protest event depended “…on the issue that they (the protesters) are protesting” (Daily Guide reporter). According to another reporter with the same newspaper, “…the issue must be big. It must concern so many people that the government or officials will be willing to listen. If not, what am I going to waste my time covering them for?” (Daily Guide reporter).
b. Threshold

The idea of threshold was captured in statements which mentioned the weight of the issues underpinning the protests and the number of people who participated in it. Both journalists and editors reported that they were likely to grant a protest event coverage if it dealt with issues considered crucial and relevant. One reporter said, “you cannot say you are going on demonstration because you have not been paid ten Ghana cedis (10.00 GHS) or two Ghana cedis (2.00 GHS). It should be a big issue before we cover it.” One other practitioner indicated that,

…sometimes, the issue might not affect all of us but if it is a serious issue like when the roads in a certain community are that bad that people cannot use it to get to the hospital on time and some youths go on demonstration, we report it.

As such, even if an issue was not of national concern, the magnitude of it – such as its impact on the health needs of a community – could draw the media to it. The journalists also judged the magnitude of an event based on protestor turnout. According to a respondent, “… the numbers matter since I cannot waste time covering some five (5) or six (6) people who are agitating. Take the NDC or NPP organizing a demonstration or supporting one for instance. A lot of people will attend. So it is one that would make the news” (Daily Graphic reporter).

c. Status of protest organizers/participants

Aside from the news values of meaningfulness and threshold, it was discovered that reference to elite persons was a factor which drove coverage of protest events. The interviewees considered political parties and national social movements such as the Trade Unions Congress elite groups that succeeded in organizing successful protest marches. They reported that they were more likely to grant coverage to such elite groups instead of lesser known ones. According to reporter, “Some
groups like the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) and the political parties draw the media attention.

So when they organize a demonstration, we cover it.” Another one said,

… yeah, the interesting ones are organized by the political parties or the political parties are sympathetic towards it. Take the NDC or NPP organizing a demonstration for instance. A lot of people will attend. So it is one that would make the news.

Therefore, when making decisions regarding which events to cover, the media practitioners consider the question, “… who are the leaders of the demonstration?” (Editor of the *Daily Guide*)

d. The occurrence of something negative

The study also discovered some media practitioners considered the occurrence of something negative before covering an event. Protest events which featured some elements of violence or counter-demonstrations were likely to be covered since these instances of violence, according to the journalists, heightened the newsworthiness of the event. One interviewee stated that,

… during the protest too, you look out for wild things. If the protesters decide to abandon the agreed routes they have chosen … and this resulted in a bit of a confusion, you see, these are the things Ghanaians like to hear when there are protests. That the people were stubborn and the police had to beat them or fight with them. So that is the news, the fact that the protesters decided to vie off the approved routes. This is the angle you can take your story from.

In the words of another interviewee,

When it leads, it must bleed! So you go to a demonstration and nobody threw a stone, nobody burnt a tyre. It is no news because the reason they are
protesting is already in the public space anyway. We want fuel prices reduced.

So? So I’ll write a story saying about five thousand people (5000) walked on the streets wanting fuel price reduction. Is that news? No! I want to say that the deputy Inspector General of Police (IGP) was stoned yesterday by people who want fuel prices reduced.

The practitioners indicated that such instances of violence did not shift their attention from the protest issues during their reportage on protests. According to a practitioner,

Once it is not too violent, I enjoy them. It is part of the news. It does not change anything at all. It does not even shift focus from the main subject. If you talk to people who are field marshals in organizing street protests, they will tell you that if there is such misbehaviour, it sends the message further. Out of all the protests we’ve organized in this country, we remember Kume Preko the most because of the counter demonstrations which resulted in unfortunate deaths of some people. If it all didn’t happen, we would have forgotten about it…

e. Security of reporters

The study also revealed that the security of reporters affected protest coverage. Although the practitioners stated that violence and counter-demonstrations enhanced an event’s newsworthiness and life-span, these event characteristics sometimes deterred them from covering these events. And even when they risked the danger to grant coverage, the quality of stories done on the demonstrations is negatively affected. According to one editor, “… as decision makers, you don’t feel comfortable sending your workers out there to cover some protests because you are afraid something might happen to them.” Another one remarked that, “Personally, in a
demonstration where there is shooting and teargas, I don’t think I would send our people to report it.” Aside from the possibility of denying violent protests coverage, there was also the likelihood of misreporting because some journalists deliberately withheld information in order to remain safe. According to an interviewee, “…there is a saying that get information and die, don’t get information and die, and don’t get information and live. So sometimes we pretend we have not seen anything so we can be safe.” In addition to the possibility of misreporting such events, one practitioner indicated that for security reasons, during violent demonstrations they were compelled to walk strictly with the police and in so doing, they “…don’t see everything.” And this affects the quality of stories they did because “…if it is a cool or calm one, you are able to walk to the back and to the front and hear what people are saying and doing. And based on that, you write a story with more details.”

f. Protesters’ perception of journalists

The study further discovered that the manner in which protesters viewed journalists affected the type of coverage a protest received. According to some of the reporters, the quality of quotes used in protest stories was negatively affected since protesters were sometimes suspicious of journalists and so refused to speak to them. One journalist said that,

You the one giving them publicity can sometimes be considered a mole or someone who is trying to take an information out there and report to an opponent or the securities. Or you are someone who is an undercover security agent and that is why you are questioning them. And this makes them uneasy so some even refuse to talk to you and you come home without any good quotes to use in the stories.

Another reporter said,
Sometimes, those who are protesting don’t want to talk to you. So I don’t get the real issues at hand. Things then don’t become clear to you because sometimes the truth is hidden and if he is not sure who you are, the person would not be honest with you.

g. Ability of a protest to fit under an existing beat
Lastly, it was discovered that both media houses granted coverage to an event which fell within the confines of an existing ‘beat’ since there were usually journalists assigned to cover all events and issues related to the beats. According to an interviewee,

It sometimes depends on what you normally cover. For instance I cover health stories so should the nurses decide to go and give a petition to the Minister of Health or employment, I’ll be there because it concerns health issues. Likewise, when I was with one other media house, I used to report on political issues so once the NDC, I think, was organizing a demonstration, I went to cover it. So normally it depends on your field…

It was thus established that for protesters to gain coverage, there was the need for them to organize around issues which fell under an existing beat.

In summary, regarding the first research objective and question which focused on the factors which informed protest coverage by the two newspapers, Gultung and Ruge’s (1965) news values of meaningfulness, threshold, reference to elite persons and reference to something negative were discovered. In addition, security of journalists, attitudes of protesters towards journalists and the
ability of a protest event to fall under an existing beat determined the newspapers’ treatment of these events.

5.2 What journalistic principles determine source selection in coverage of protests?

Another focus of the study was to find out some journalistic principles which informed source selection during coverage of protest events. The principles of source credibility, willingness of a source to volunteer information, the journalistic principle of objectivity and ‘newsmaking’ value of a person were discovered.

a. Source credibility

It was revealed that one consideration of journalists was the credibility of a person. The idea of source credibility was captured in statements that referenced the wealth or depth of information a person could provide journalists because as indicated by one practitioner, there was always the question of: “If I quote this person will my story be rich?” Thus the study revealed that reporters considered the organizers of protesters credible sources and their first point of contact when sourcing for information on the protests. According to one of the interviewees,

In everything there are authorities. So if you go, you try to locate their leaders because they are the best people to talk to because they have all the information you will need on why they are protesting.

Another said,

Yeah, I’ll choose Mr. A over Mr. B because Mr. A can give me what I want and not Mr. B. That is how I choose and pick those I want to interview. So
yeah, the person must have the information I’m looking for, if not I can’t use that person.

The journalists’ quest to get ‘rich’ information for their stories also led them, sometimes, to engage with ordinary protesters. This point was better captured in the words of an interviewee who said,

… sometimes, we talk to the other demonstrators such as the physically challenged people, children and elderly because sometimes these people say things their leaders couldn’t say or forgot to say.

b. Willingness of a source to volunteer information

One other principle which informed source selection was the willingness of a source to interact with journalists. Some interviewees indicated that although the leaders of a protest event were their first choice when it came to source selection, they were sometimes compelled to quote only the ordinary protester because the leaders made demands journalists could not meet. An interviewee reported that,

And it also comes to how the person behaves. Sometimes, some people will say oh, I want you to write the questions in word, send to my mail for me to reply. We don’t have time! We want the news to go out tomorrow and you’re asking me to send the questions through mail for you to go through before something. But when you go to Mr. A, oh, this is what is going on, what is your opinion about it? Kpakpapkakpa, you’ve gotten your story so you just move on. So the availability of the person and the timeliness of their response matter.
c. The journalistic principle of fairness and balance

It was discovered that the journalistic principle of fairness and balance which requires that journalists give voice to all persons or groups involved in a story in order to provide complete information also played a decisive role in practitioners’ source selection during coverage. According to one journalist, “… I listen to other interest groups so I can give the public all sides of the argument they are making. I talk to the public as well…” Another said,

And then if the protest is against the government, maybe a ministry, you look for the minister or the PRO of the ministry so you can report a balanced story, as we say in the practice. If you report only what the protesters are saying, then your readers will be asking what the minister or mayor or whoever also had to say about their concerns.

d. ‘Newsmaking’ value of a person

Through this study, it was also established that during coverage of protest events, journalists preferred newsmakers to ordinary people. According to the interviewees, these were people who already made the headlines and so commanded the public’s attention. One journalist said,

…hardly would you find us interviewing a casual participant because these people don’t make the headlines. I’m talking purely from a journalistic perspective. I mean, I go to a protest, Jerry Rawlings and his wife are there and the kenkey seller behind my house is there, you say I should interview the kenkey seller? What will she say? I’ll interview Jerry Rawlings and the wife.
To sum up, on the question of journalistic principles which informed source selection during coverage of protest events, the researcher found out that journalists were interested in persons who could provide them with detailed information, persons who were willing to talk to journalists, persons who were newsmakers and journalists’ adherence to the principle of objectivity.

5.3 How do media frames used in the coverage of protests portray protesters and protest events?

The findings to this question are presented in four sections. Each section deals with the discoveries made in relation to each of the four demonstrations studied. It was discovered that the media used the marginalization devices of disruption, violence, lawlessness, carnival, irrational and unpatriotic, impotent and guises in their portrayal of the demonstrators. In addition to these negative devices, the positive cues of protests being democratic and potent were established.

5.3.1 Portrayal of protesters and the Kume Preko protest event

The *Kume Preko* demonstration yielded the highest number of protest stories (twenty-five) used in the study. This could be due to the fact that the demonstration, according to Anebo (1997), was the first major public dissent organized after the nation’s return to democratic governance in 1992 after a long period of military rule. As such, the media – *Daily Graphic* – was enthused and fascinated by the ability of people to openly oppose the government’s policy, and so kept the story running for a long time. Also, the level of media attention enjoyed by the *Kume Preko* demonstration was attributed to the fact that it was one of the demonstrations in Ghana which was characterized by extreme violence that resulted in the deaths of about four (4) people including a school boy (Osei, 2000). And according to one of the journalists involved in the study,
demonstrations of such nature are more memorable and have longer life-span in terms of the coverage they receive.

a. **Protesters and protests are violent, lawless and disruptive**

In their coverage of the *Kume Preko* demonstration, the reporters used words such as ‘lawlessness’, ‘arrest’, ‘vandalism’, and ‘clashed’ which portrayed the protesters and protest events as violent and lawless entities. For instance, in a story carried in the *Daily Graphic* on 10th May, 1995, it was written: “The police statement … cautioned the organizers that they would bear the full responsibility for any ‘acts of lawlessness’ which might be committed” (p. 3). Another sentence from a story published on 11th May, 1995 read, “Following persistent reports of likely acts of vandalism and lawlessness during the anti-Vat demonstrations… Minister of the Interior said security agencies took a number of precautionary measures to protect life and property” (p. 1).

The portrayal of protests as disruptive, violent and lawless was also achieved through statements which mentioned the impact of the demonstration on economic activities. Phrases such as ‘trading activities came to a halt’ communicated this theme of disruption, violence and lawlessness. For instance, a story on 12th May, 1995 had portions which read, “Trading activities in Accra Central … virtually came to halt yesterday following the closure of shops because of the demonstration…” (p. 1). Another example was carried in parts of a story published on 17th May, 1995 which indicated that “He (the president) was particularly sad that at a time when the government was working hard to attract foreign direct investments to boost the economy and provide employment opportunities, such an incident should occur to dim the efforts of we have
made” (p. 9). And a headline carried on the front page of the same edition read, “Protest march cripples commercial activities” (p. 1).

**b. Protests are carnivals**

Another marginalization theme discovered was the portrayal of protest events as a form of carnival through the media’s tendency to project the spectacle and theatrical elements of a protest. The *Daily Graphic* used words like ‘drumming’ and ‘singing’ in describing the protest event. For example, it was written in the 11th May, 1995 edition of the *Daily Graphic* that, “The group, amid drumming and singing of all kinds of songs took off from the Kwame Nkrumah Circle…” (p.1).

**c. Protesters are irrational and unpatriotic**

The present study also established that the *Daily Graphic* by using frames such as ‘no tangible justification’ questioned the rationality of the demonstration and mirrored the protesters as irrational beings. The paper reported that “… with the government’s approach to the Value Added Tax (VAT) … there appear to be no tangible justification for organizing demonstrations by opposing parties” (15th May, 1995, p. 3). Part of another story in the same edition also read, “Under normal circumstances, while the government said corrective measures were to be taken to on the VAT, one would have thought that all would have waited to see the kind of measure before going into action” (p. 5).

By questioning the rationality behind the protest event, the newspaper portrayed the protesters as being unpatriotic. Thus, the commitment of the opposition political parties – the organizers of the demonstration – to the democratic and economic sustainability of the country was challenged. Part of another story read, “… it is highly unfortunate and deplorable for those who profess to
cherish democratic principles to disturb the peace and tranquility of the nation by mobilizing able-bodied youth to the street…” (15th May, 1995, p. 3).

d. **Protests are guises**

A finding which was peculiar to the study was the media’s representation of protest events as events behind which people hid to pursue some ulterior motives. This theme was reflected through the use of frames such as ‘plot’. For instance, it was stated that, “The president said the events of last Thursday was a plot on a nation whose people are known to be peace-loving …” (17th May, 1995, p. 1). Just as the theme of ‘protesters are irrational and unpatriotic’ questioned the rationality and allegiance of protesters, the theme of ‘protests being guises’ questioned the credibility of the actions of these people. Another example taken from the same story read, “President Rawlings noted that certain elements had sought to capitalize on the anxiety and genuine concerns of the ordinary people to promote their own political agenda…” (p. 9).

e. **Protests and protesters were democratic entities**

Through the study, some themes which were considered supportive of the actions of protesters were discovered. And one of such was the portrayal of protesters and their actions as democratic events which were backed by law. This theme was generated through phrases such as ‘demonstrations are permitted’. Another story read, “…we admit that demonstrations and protests are permitted in all civilised societies…” thus “…the demonstrators were exercising their constitutional rights in a civilized society” (16th May, 1995, p. 4).
f. Protest events are potent

One other supportive theme which emerged was the projection of the Kume Preko demonstration as an event which achieved its goals. This theme was deduced from statements which indicated that the protesters managed to court the government’s attention through their demonstration. The newspaper reported that “The Information Minister … said the meeting which was at the insistence of the president discussed a number of burning issues which included the demonstrations organized in Accra” (15th May, 1995, p. 1). Based upon this quote, it was established that the protesters succeeded in gaining the attention of the government against whom the demonstration was staged.

In summary, the Daily Graphic in its coverage of the Kume Preko demonstration used news frames which both marginalized and supported the demonstrators. The portrayal of the demonstration as disruptive, lawless and violent, as a façade and a carnival, and the mirroring of the demonstrators as irrational and unpatriotic people fell under those frames which proponents of the protest paradigm concept such as Lee (2014) referred to as marginalization and delegitimizing devices. The themes of ‘protests are democratic’ and ‘protests are potent’, on the other hand, were considered supportive news frames which when used more in protest stories innure to the benefit of the protesters.

5.3.2 Portrayal of protesters and the Wahala protest event

While the Kume Preko demonstration yielded twenty-five (25) news stories over the six (6) days period studied and from just the Daily Graphic, the Wahala demonstration produced ten (10) stories over the same period of time from the two newspapers used in the research. Both papers produced five (5) stories each. It was discovered that although the Wahala demonstration was
organized almost a decade after the *Kume Preko* demonstration, news frames used by both newspapers portrayed protesters in a manner similar to what was done during the coverage of the latter demonstration.

**a. Protesters and protests are violent, lawless and disruptive**

During their reportage of the *Wahala* demonstration, the *Daily Guide* newspaper portrayed the protesters and their activities as violent, lawless and disruptive events which hindered economic growth and democratic advancement. The newspaper achieved this by stating that protesters engaged in such events after abusing certain substances. It also did so by suggesting that the demonstration projected the government in a negative light to other nations. The newspaper reported that, “Generally, demonstrations are not good omen for the country. They portray the government of the day in negative terms to the outside world” (1st March, 2005, p. 4). This pronouncement was followed by the argument that, “…it is a well-known fact that in such demonstrations, some of the participants take in excess alcohol and smoke some dangerous herbs to enhance their strength” (1st March, 2005, p. 4).

Aside from suggesting that demonstrations were ‘bad omens’, the newspaper indicated that such events made the nation ungovernable. For instance, it was stated that “Daily Guide advises all political parties in the country to desist from demonstrations and walk-outs from parliament anytime they are not satisfied with any event in the country because demonstrations and walk-outs would make the country ungovernable”
It was noted that although the *Daily Graphic* portrayed the *Kume Preko* demonstration in similar light, with the *Wahala* demonstration, the imagery of violence, lawlessness and disruptiveness was carried solely by the *Daily Guide* newspaper.

**b. Protests are carnivals**

One point of convergence between the two newspapers was the portrayal of the *Wahala* demonstration as an event with the trappings of a carnival. Both newspapers carried this theme by making mention of the number of people who partook in the demonstration. In the *Daily Graphic* for instance, it was stated that, “About 1,000 people yesterday joined a protest march in Accra…” (2nd March, 2005, p. 1). The *Daily Guide* also did so by reporting that fewer people than anticipated attended the *Wahala* demonstration (3rd March, 2005).

Regardless of the fact that protest researchers have established that by being fixated on such features of a protest (for example the number of people who participated in a demonstration), the media fail to promote the agenda of protesters, it was discovered through the current study that the media did not do so out of malice. They rather did so based on the conviction that the carnival elements were what the public was interested in reading about. In the opinion of one of the journalists involved in the study,

… as journalists, sometimes odd news sells. So when you go out there, you’ll keep looking out for things that are odd. Like the dressings, some of the demonstrators really come with awkward dressings…

Another one also indicated that they focused on “… the interesting scenes and images” because “…that is what captures the attention of the readers.” In one instance, a journalist insisted that he knows “some people who buy the paper just to watch the pictures of these interesting scenes.”
Based on these admissions from the journalists, it was concluded that the media’s tendency to portray a protest as a carnival was done purely out of the journalists’ belief that the public was usually already aware of the issues being championed by the protesters, thus, there was no need for the media to focus entirely on that. According to a reporter,

… the general rule is probably you’ll know what the event is about before you get there. You’ll know the reason why they are there. You’ll know where they’re starting, where they are ending. So basically, you look at their attire. You concentrate on the attire, you concentrate on the placards. And you also concentrate on what happens at the protest. For instance, if they were stopped intermittently by the police. If they had taken a certain route they didn’t tell the police about. These are the things we look out for because obviously people know about the situation before the protest because they’ve been talking about it and nothing has been done so they are protesting because of that. So we try to look for other things to concentrate on.

c. Protesters are irrational and unpatriotic

Once again, both newspapers communicated the notion that protesters were people who failed to reasonably engage with an issue before taking action. The idea of protesters being irrational and unpatriotic was sometimes captured in statements which questioned the performance of the organizers of the demonstration when they were in power. It also did so by using phrases such as ‘miscalculated’. On 3rd March 2005, the Daily Graphic reported that, “… the motive behind the demonstration was miscalculated…” (p. 12). Before this declaration, the paper had stated that,
“… if the protesters had better ideas, then why was it that Ghana Commercial Bank nearly collapsed from their management?” (2nd March, 2005, p. 17).

The *Daily Guide* also questioned the rationality of the demonstration when it reported that “The New Patriotic Party has played down on today’s planned National Democratic Party (NDC) demonstration, describing it as devoid of economic basis, morally wrong and a rabble-rousing ploy…” (1st March, 2005, p. 4). The newspaper also stated that the demonstrators “…intended to cut-off reasoned debate on oil supply and pricing” (p. 4).

The *Daily Graphic* also achieved such imagery by using words and phrases such as “parochial needs”, “failed politicians” and naïve”. According to the paper,

NDC and its apologists…should not seek power for power sake, and stop thinking about abstract things, and stop being naïve about the realities of the actual global conflict.” The organizers of the protest were called upon not to “…allow our energy policy to become hostage to the parochial needs and desires of failed politicians…” (2nd March, 2005, p. 4).

d. Protest events are guises

Nearly two decades after the nation’s return to democratic rule, the two newspapers still portrayed protesters as persons with some hidden agendum such as ceasing the nation, and who pursued this agendum through protest events. The *Daily Graphic* newspaper used phrases such ‘throw dust’ to describe the motive of the demonstrators. It reported that, … if the NDC had the nation at heart, then it should offer constructive ideas, rather than throw dust into the eyes of the populace” (2nd March, 2005, p. 17). In the *Daily Guide*, phrases such as “cheap political gimmick”, “a ploy” and “seize the nation” were used to paint this picture. It was written that,
For NDC to make the Kufour Administration scapegoat for the current high cost of oil…is not only hypocritical, but a cheap political gimmick, and a ploy used as a genuine economic problem, to cause disturbances, in order to seize the nation (1st March, 2005, Daily Guide, p. 4).

The Daily Guide further allered that the protest event was being used as a tool to cause political unrest in the nation. The newspaper reported that, “The organizers, Daily Guide has learnt, are pushing through the agenda of the NDC founder, in keeping the political temperature high, until the NPP administration is crippled, a possible military take-over revisited as it was in 1981…” (4th March, 2005, p. 15).

e. Protests are impotent

During the analysis of the data on the Wahala demonstration, a theme – protests are impotent – which was not found in the stories on the Kume Preko demonstration was discovered. Both the Daily Graphic and Daily Guide newspapers projected the Wahala demonstration as a ‘useless’ venture which could not and/or did not achieve any meaningful outcomes. This theme was captured in statements which mentioned the failure of the protesters to mobilize lots of people into action. The Daily Graphic reported that,

… if a demonstration in Accra with a population of nearly four million people failed to attract even a thousand people, then it was an indication that it was not necessary (3rd March, 2005, p. 12).

Similarly, the Daily Guide reported that “He (the President) described NDC’s recent ‘Wahala’ Protest march…as unnecessary, stressing that he was not surprised that most of the party’s supporters woefully failed to participate in the protest march” (4th March, 2005, p. 5).
Although the above theme suggested that the media measured the potency of a demonstration through the number of people who participate in it, through the in-depth interviews, the researcher discovered that journalists and editors were divided on this. While some judged the success of protest based on turn-out, others judged its success on other factors such as how peaceful the protest was. According to one journalist,

A successful demonstration, to me, is one that gains media attention and can get the story running several days or weeks after it happens. It doesn’t depend on the number of people who attend. If five thousand (5000) people turn out on the street and nobody reports it, I’ll prefer a single man demonstration that the we can talk about and talk about for a long time… that for me is a successful demo.

Another journalist said,

Oh, one that the people follow the approved route and do not engage in violent activities. And when they are able to give their message to whoever they want, then I can say they have been successful.

On the other hand, one of the journalists who considered protestor turn-out a characteristic of a successful protest event said that, “And the numbers matter, since I won’t waste my time covering five (5) or six (6) people who are agitating.”

**f. Protests are democratic**

Similar to the *Daily Graphic*’s coverage of the *Kume Preko* demonstration, both newspapers’ coverage of the *Wahala* demonstration was not all negative. Some of the articles studied portrayed the demonstration as constitutional. According to the *Daily Graphic*, “…it is the right of every
Ghanaian to embark on demonstration in support or against any issue…” (Daily Graphic, 2nd March, 2005, p. 7). The newspaper also stated that, “… the incident-free demonstration organized by the Committee for Joint Action (CJA) in Accra on Tuesday was a manifestation of the deepening level of democracy in the country” (3rd March, 2005, p, 12).

In the Daily Guide, the constitutionality and acceptability of demonstrations within a democracy was revealed when the demonstrators were described as ‘progressive democratic forces’. The newspaper also projected the demonstrators as law abiding citizens who “… gave the assurance that the demonstration will be organized in a peaceful manner and will also adhere strictly to the routes” (1st March, 2005, p. 2). For this reason, the paper indicated that “… nobody can stop the planned action because the party and the groups are only exercising their democratic rights” (1st March, 2005, p. 4)

In summary, in their coverage of the Wahala demonstration, the newspapers introduced the theme of ‘protest events are impotent’ which studies on media coverage of social protest label as a marginalizing device.

5.3.3 Portrayal of protesters and the Atta Adaada Mi protest event

It was discovered that as the years went by, the number of protest stories reduced. In 1995, the Kume Preko demonstration yielded twenty-five (25) stories. A decade later, the Wahala demonstration produced ten (10) articles. Now, nearly four (4) years after the Wahala demonstration, between the Daily Graphic and the Daily Guide newspapers, only four stories were written about the Atta Adaada Mi demonstration. Out of the four stories, three (3) were by the Daily Guide and one (1) was published by the Daily Graphic.
a. Protesters and protest events are violent, lawless and disruptive

The theme of protesters and their actions being disruptive, violent and lawless was discovered in the *Daily Guide* newspaper only. It portrayed the *Atta Adaada Mi* demonstration as an event which negatively affected the governance of the country. For instance, the protest was presented as an event which could adversely affect Ghana’s diplomatic relationship with the United States of America. According to the newspaper, “… the Ghana Police Service complained that the constitutionally mandated demonstration would among other things disturb the visit of US President, Barack Obama, to Ghana” (3rd August, 2009, p. 1).

Aside from this, the protest event was also painted as one which disturbed business activities in the capital. According to the paper, “The demonstration…brought commercial activites to a halt” (5th August, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, the demonstration was labeled as one which prevented government officials and mandated bodies from executing their official duties. Reference was, for instance, made to how the planned activity could affect the duties of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). For example, on 3rd August, 2009, the *Daily Guide* reported that,

> Other reasons cited by the Police Service to halt the demonstration was that the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) was about to embark on a decongestion exercise and that the intended demonstration would affect the exercise (p. 6).

b. Protests are carnivals

It was established that both the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers focused on the oddities and attributes which characterized the demonstration. The *Daily Graphic* story had
portions which read, “Clad in red clothes and bands…some of the demonstrators also wore pampers while others were seen chewing kebab” (5th August, 2009, p. 24). Also, by reporting that the protesters “…had a gaint-sized canoe on a trunk with some men engaged in a mock paddling…” (5th August, 2009, p. 3) and “…a few shop owners abandoned their wares and danced after them for a short while before running back to their shops” (5th August, 2009, p. 3), the Daily Guide contributed to the portrayal of the activity as a carnival. The paper further contributed to this imagery when it likened the demonstration to a ‘jamboree’. It was reported that the demonstrators “…marched peacefully for about six hours through some principal streets of Accra amidst loud music and dance in a jamboree-like style…” (5th August, 2009, p. 3).

c. Protesters are irrational and unpatriotic

The Daily Guide newspaper portrayed the Atta Adaada Mi demonstrators as irrational people who merely took delight in engaging in a carnival. This imagery was captured in a paragraph which read, “President Mills was reported to have told a newspaper that if members of AFAG were indeed interested in accountability, then they should have watched the on-going Ghana at 50 probe, instead of jumping on the streets” (8th August, 2009, p. 3).

In summary, because there were fewer articles from the two newspapers on the Atta Adaada Mi demonstration, fewer themes, in comparison to those gotten from the Kume Preko and Wahala demonstrations, were discovered. One major difference between the newspapers’ coverage of the Kume Preko and Wahala demonstrations, on one hand, and the Atta Adaada Mi demonstration, on the other, was the fact that the first two protests were portrayed as facades behind which their organizers hid to pursue certain hidden agendum.
5.3.4 Portrayal of protesters and the Won Gbo protest event

The last of the four protests studied produced eighteen (18) stories. Eight of the stories were reported by the *Daily Guide* while ten (10) were by the *Daily Graphic*.

**a. Protesters are violent, lawless and disruptive**

Similar to the coverage given the *Kume Preko, Wahala, and Atta Adaada Mi* demonstrations, the *Won Gbo* demonstrators were portrayed as lawless people who did not adhere to laid down principles and follow approved routes during the demonstration. According to the *Daily Graphic*, “Several attempts by the police to keep all the demonstrators in line on the street only worked temporarily…” (19th February, 2015, p. 19), therefore, “At the Pharisco junction in Adabraka, there was a brief standoff because the police wanted the demonstrators to take a detour and use the road leading to the Traders Union Congress, but the demonstrators had other ideas” (*Daily Guide*, 21st February, 2015, p. 4).

In portraying the protesters as lawless people, the *Daily Guide* newspaper questioned the leadership skills of the protest leaders. The paper claimed that, “The aim of the protest leaders was to get a lot of people involved in the demonstration. But when the numbers came, the leaders led from the back and allowed the overzealous demonstrators to determine the route” (21st February, 2015, p. 4).

**b. Protests are carnivals**

The imagery of protests being carnivals was one which emerged during the analysis of data on all the demonstrations included in the study. This could be because there was no way the media would have reported on a protest event without mentioning the number of people who were present, their mannerism and attires. According to the *Daily Guide*, “… judging by the crowd on that fateful Wednesday on the principal streets of Accra, coupled with the non-violent nature of
the march, there is no doubt that the ‘Won Gbo’ demonstration was a great success…” (19th February, 2015, p. 1). The same publication reported that, “A large number of NPP supporters were clothed in black…and some of them red…” (p. 14). “Some traders” were also reported to have “abandoned their wares briefly to join the fray, singing and chanting…” (20th February, 2015, p. 12).

In the Daily Graphic, the imagery of carnival was communicated through the mention of the number of people who turned out for the event as well as the use of phrases such as ‘trappings of a carnival’, ‘convention’, and ‘jam’. It was reported that “The demonstration..had the trappings of a carnival” since it “…attracted thousands of people…” who were described as a “…sea of red and black demonstrators…” who had “Music blaring from loudspeakers… and miniature vuvuzelars blaring every minute from several lips…” (19th February, 2015, p. 17). The demonstration was also reported as a “…cacophony of noise…” which “…had the similitude of a major convention, carnival or jam…” (19th February, 2015, p. 17).

c. Protesters are irrational and unpatriotic

By publishing that “The Greater Accra Regional Minister…was also reported to have said that, Ghanaians are not stupid, they are very smart people who can discern between the lines and so the NPP could go ahead with its demonstration but should not expect level-headed Ghanaians to join in it” (p. 8), the 21st February, 2015 edition of the Daily Graphic mirrored the protesters as people who were ‘stupid’ and ‘irrational’.

The imagery of ‘protesters being unpatriotic’ was also reflected when it was reported that, “Instead of coming to the table with credible alternatives…”, the protesters chose the “…cheap option by harvesting the genuine public sentiments over the electricity situation…” and “…the path of celebration of setbacks…” for petty partisan gain…” which, according to the paper, “…
had shown that it was simply not up to the task of contributing meaningfully to national
development” (Daily Graphic, 19th February, 2015, p. 16). It was worth mentioning that this
theme was not reflected in the Daily Guide’s stories on the demonstration.

d. Protests are guises

In their coverage of the 2009 Atta Adaada Mi demonstration, both newspapers did not invoke the
theme of ‘protests are guises’. However, this imagery was portrayed by the Daily Graphic through
some of its stories on the Won Gbo demonstration. The paper reported that the demonstration was
an attempt by the opposition party – the organizers of the demonstration – “…to throw dust into
the eyes of the public to cover its guilt…” (21st February, 2015, p. 8).

e. Protests are democratic events

The Daily Graphic categorically stated that, “…demonstrations are part of a democratic
environment” (21st February, 2015, p. 8) and they “…were often times a meaningful avenue for
democratic expression…” (20th February, 2015, p. 17). It was also said that, “…the ‘won gbo’
demonstration was not meant to topple the government but an expression of disappointment at
the lip service of government…” (19th February, 2015, p. 17). This assertion that the
demonstration was not meant to “topple the government” negated the position that the
demonstration was a veil being used by the opposition political party to achieve a hidden agenda.
In the Daily Guide, this theme was highlighted when an organizer of the demonstration was
reported to have said “…we are not gathered here to create confusion…” and that the
“…demonstration is a positive exercise to put positivity in government performance…” (18th
February, 2015, p. 3).
f. **Protests are potent**

Aside from indicating that the *Won Gbo* demonstration was democratica, both newspapers mirrored the event as one which was likely to cause certain changes in the country. For instance, it was reported that the government against whom the demonstration was staged promised to resolve the power challenge the country was dealing with because the protesters had given him the urge to do so. According to the *Daily Graphic*, “President John Dramani Mahama has stated that the NPP-led demonstration has energised him to do more to end the power crisis permanently” (20th February, 2015, p. 2). The *Daily Guide* made a similar pronouncement when it reported that “President Mahama…said, ‘I am emboldened by the demonstration embacked upon by the NPP to solve the power crisis…” (21st February, 2015, p. 4).

g. **Protest are impotent**

Even though the demonstration was portrayed as potent, there were articles which projected it as a waste of time. In the 21st February, 2015 edition of the *Daily Graphic*, it was reported that “…their demonstration is not going to solve any problem” (p. 8). The above quote was preceded by the pronouncement that the “…demonstration was unnecessary and a waste of time” because “…it will not change anything” (21st February, 2015, p. 8). According to the paper, “A number of leading members of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) also said the protest was not necessary” since it was “…a misplaced priority” (20th February, 2015, p. 17). The *Daily Guide* contributed to the portrayal of the demonstration as an impotent event when it reported that “Charles Kofi Wayo…has described the NPP’s ‘Won Gbo’ demonstration as a pointless effort” (20th February, 2015, p. 12).
In summary, in their coverage of the *Won Gbo* demonstration, the themes of protests and protesters being lawless, disruptive and violent, protests being carnivals, protesters being irrational and unpatriotic, protests being guises, protests being democratic, protests being potent, as well as protests being impotent were communicated by the media. This implied that the media used both supportive and unsupportive news frames in their reportage.

### 5.4 What tones do news frames used in the coverage of social protests reflect?

The media’s tone referred to the attitudes of the media towards protesters and protest. These attitudes were captured in the statements used in the coverage of the four demonstrations. The media’s tone were categorized under two broad umbrellas – supportive and unsupportive tone. A supportive tone was one which approved of the actions of the protesters, and one which portrayed the protesters in a positive light. An unsupportive tone, on the other hand, referred to any tone which marginalized and/or disapproved of the protesters and their actions.

#### 5.4.1 Supportive tone

The supportive tone was discovered in statements that portrayed the protesters and their activities as features of a democracy. For example, by reporting that, “…nobody can stop the planned action because the party and the groups are only exercising their democratic rights” (*Daily Guide*, 1st March, 2005, p. 4), the *Daily Guide* appeared to have been in support of the *Wahala* demonstration. Similarly, the Daily Graphic newspaper carried this tone when it reported that, “…it is the right of every Ghanaian to embark on demonstration in support or against any issue” (1st March, 2005, p. 6)
The media’s tone was also judged as supportive once they reported any of the demonstrations as an event which had the potency of causing those against whom it was organized to make certain changes demanded by the agitators. Both the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers did so whenever they published statements of government officials in which they promised to take some steps to attend to the grievances of the protesters. For example, in one story about the *Won Gbo* demonstration, the *Daily Graphic* indicated that, “President John Dramani Mahama has stated that the NPP-led demonstration has energized him to do more to end the power crisis permanently” (20th February, 2015, p. 2).

5.4.2 Unsupportive tone

The unsupportive tone of the media was reflected through some sub-themes.

a. **Tone of sarcasm**

The tone of sarcasm was captured in statements that meant the opposite of what it seemed to say and mocked or insulted the protesters. For instance, some stories in the *Daily Graphic* on the *Won Gbo* demonstration took on the tone of sarcasm when it reported that, “Power Minister Dr. Kwabena Donkor mocked the protest march as a keepfit exercise …” (20th February, 2015, p. 17).

b. **Tone of mistrust or suspicion**

The tone of mistrust or suspicion was communicated the demonstrations were portrayed as guises behind which their organizers and participants hid to pursue certain parochial interests. For instance, about the *Kume Preko* demonstration, it was reported that, “President Rawlings noted that certain elements had sought to capitalize on the anxiety and genuine concerns of the ordinary people to promote their own political agenda…” (Daily Graphic, 17th May, 1995, p. 9). The *Daily
*Guide* also carried this tone when it reported that the *Wahala* demonstration was a “…cheap political gimmick, and a ploy…to cause disturbances, in order to seize the nation” (1st March, 2005, p. 4).

The tone of mistrust or suspicion was also communicated whenever the media predicted violence, lawlessness or destruction ahead of the staging of any of the demonstrations. For instance, the *Daily Graphic* reported that, “Traders and shop-keepers…were advised by the AMA to close their businesses…to protect their wares from being looted by the supporters of the Alliance for Change…” (12th May, 1995, p. 8). Similarly, when it was reported that it was “…a well-known fact that in such demonstrations, some of the participants take in excess alcohol and smoke some dangerous herbs to enhance their strengths” (*Daily Guide*, 1st March, 2005, p. 4), the *Daily Guide* newspaper carried a tone of suspicion.

In summary, the tone of both newspapers towards the *Kume Preko, Wahala, Atta Adaada Mi* and *Won Gbo* demonstrations were both negative and positive.

### 5.5 Discussion of findings

The discussion of findings was done with recourse to the conceptual framework and the literature that were reviewed in the study. The protest paradigm concept argues that media coverage of protesters is usually detrimental rather than beneficial to protests since coverage is usually done more episodically than thematically. Through the literature review, it was established that the media uses both negative and positive frames in the coverage of protesters. For instance, the
frames of carnival, irrelevant, irrational, impotent, potent and rational were discovered by some of the studies reviewed.

In the present study, the news values of meaningfulness, magnitude, status of protestors, and reference to something negative featured in the factors that informed coverage within the Ghanaian context. Thus, Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news values of frequency, unambiguity, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, and composition were not event characteristics taken into consideration by the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers’ during protest coverage. Tenenboim-weinblatt’s (2014) discovery that professional values such as balance resonated with the media practitioners involved in this study’s consideration of fairness and balance as an driver of protest selection. This implied that the media did not merely report the opinion of elected officials in order to discredit the claims of the protesters as claimed by proponents of the protest paradigm concept. This study discovered that this was done simply as a result of the media practitioners attempt to adhere to accepted journalistic practices.

The finding that both newspapers tended to gravitate towards protests organized by or supported by the political parties and TUC resonants with Wouters’ (2013) assertion that usually, old social movements rather than news ones were considered newsworthy by the media. This practice of relying on official sources during coverage of protest events, according to the protest paradigm concept, contributes to the delegitimization of protesters and their actions since elected officials usually berated the efforts and actions of protesters. This implied that in instances where the official voices dominated the news stories, the claims of the protesters may have been sidelined and overshadowed. It is however worthy to note that the media practitioners involved in this study stated that they relied on elected officials and prominent people as sources of news because these group of people were newsmakers and attracted audiences to read their stories. The implication
of this finding for protest activists however is that they need to include prominent people in their activities as one way of courting the media’s attention.

Aside from the news values, security of journalists, protesters’ perception of journalists and the ability of an event to fall under an existing beat determined coverage. The security of journalists as a driver of protest coverage was peculiar to this study. This could be attributed to the fact that historically, journalists in Ghana have suffered injuries during the coverage of an event. Some journalists, during protest coverage, are mistaken for moles sent by those in authority to capture the images of the protesters so they could become targets for certain unfavorable repercussions. As such, journalists were sometimes chased and stoned during the discharge of their duties. The implication of this however was that protesters were likely to lose media coverage since journalists were likely to stay away from them.

While Sobieraj (2010) argued that the absence of a special beat – civil society beat of community-organizing beat – influenced media coverage of social protests, the data revealed that once the issues underpinning a protest fell under an already existing beat, both newspapers were likely to cover the protest. To this end, protesters who sought to gain the media’s attention in Ghana ought to mobilize around issues the media already reports on. While existing literature revealed that a person’s, race, gender and position informed source selection by the media, the study established that reporters were likely to directly and indirectly quote protesters whose information were credible. According to the protest paradigm concept, the media often relied on official sources when reporting on protests because they were regarded as newsmakers and sources of credible information. Thus, the finding that the reporters relied on protest leaders for information resonants with the claim of the protest paradigm concept.
Similar to Guzman’s (2015) finding that CNN.com portrayed the Arab Spring demonstrators positively by referring to them as rational people, it was revealed that *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers used the supportive frames of protests being democratic and potent in their coverage of the *Kume Preko, Wahala, Atta Adaada Mi* and *Won Gbo demonstrations*. The themes of protests being potent and democratic, according Guzman (2015) innure to the benefits of protesters. Such themes had the potential of courting support while encouraging the ordinary person to participate in the protest event. As such, for protesters to gain positively from media coverage of protest events, the media ought to use more of such themes.

A discovery which was peculiar to the study was the portrayal of the demonstrations as façades. This frame could have been used because of the history of the country. Historically, Ghana has dealt with nearly three (3) military juntas. These events were usually justified by the argument that they were for the good of the citizens. As such, it was not surprising that the media contained frames which portrayed the demonstrations as events with hidden agendas. Such media frame is considered a marginalization device since it was likely to evoke negative public opinion against the protesters.

Finally, since the newspapers did not use only delegitimizing devices in their coverage of the demonstrations, the study established that the newspapers’ tone was not only negative but also positive. The tone of sarcasm which made mockery of the actions of the protesters and the tone of mistrust or suspicion were mostly captured in the media’s reporting of third parties. This however was considered the media’s tone since they could have decided not to use the words of those sources. These tones, according to the protest paradigm concept, deligitimizes the actions
of the protesters. The tone of support on the other hand favoured the protesters since it lends support to their actions.

5.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings and discussion of the study according to the research objectives and questions. The findings and discussions were done with recourse to the protest paradigm concept, Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news value hypotheses and existing literature.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction
This final chapter summarizes the entire study, draws out the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for further research.

6.1 Summary
The goal of the study was to qualitatively investigate the *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Guide* newspapers’ coverage of four protest events, *Kume Preko, Wahala, Atta Adaada Mi*, and *Won Gbo*. These events were selected on the basis that they all addressed economic issues affecting the Ghanaian, had large number of people participating in them, were organized or supported by a political party – a group identified by media practitioners and Wouters (2013) as an elite group which captures the media’s attention –, and the protests received extensive media attention. The study was necessitated because of the need to contribute to the development of the protest paradigm concept by providing scholarly evidence about the Ghanaian media’s coverage of protests since social movement researchers such as Brandes and Engles (2011) argue that statements about these movements and their activities in most parts of the world are made based on ancedotal evidence.

To meet the research goal stated above, the study, more precisely, sought to discover the factors that determined protest selection and coverage, and factors that informed source selection when doing protest stories. In addition, how both newspapers depicted the demonstrations and demonstrators, as well as, the tone of the papers towards protesters was examined.
The protest paradigm concept which claims that the media, in its coverage of protest events, employ, to a large extent, certain news frames which delegitimize and marginalize protesters and their actions served as the conceptual framework for the study. Also, ten (10) of Galtung and Ruge (1965)’s news value hypotheses were consulted when dealing with the factors that informed protest selection and coverage. Similarly, from existing literature, the researcher discovered certain drivers which determined source selection during media reportage, and these were employed as a basis upon which the second research question was answered.

Since the study was qualitatively conducted, the in-depth interview and qualitative content analysis methods were employed during the data collection phase of the study. The in-depth interview involved nine (9) media practitioners – journalists and editors. The journalists who were seven (7) in number were purposively selected based on the number of protest stories attributed to them. The two (2) editors were those serving as the newsroom editors of both papers as at the time of the study. The qualitative content analysis was done on all news stories which mentioned any of the four protests studied.

Regarding the factors which informed protest selection and coverage, about four (4) of Galtung and Ruge (1965)’s were identified by the interviewees as what they looked out for when covering such events. It was also discovered that issues such as security of journalists and attitude of protesters towards journalists informed which protests got covered. In response to the factors that informed source selection, it was established that source credibility, among others, determined who got quoted both directly and indirectly by the media.

In addition, the researcher discovered that while both newspapers indeed covered protests as disruptive, violent and lawless events, they also mirrored them as facades behind which people
hid to pursue certain hidden agenda such as attempts at toppling the governments against whom the protests were staged. Such negative imagery influenced the newspapers’ tone towards protesters. For instance, the tone of mistrust and/or suspicion as well as the tone of sarcasm were sometimes reflected in the news stories.

Through the study, it was noted that the media’s portrayal of protesters was not all negative. For example, the protesters and their actions were sometimes portrayed as democratic and potent. And such positive news frames, according Lee (2014), innure to the benefit of social movements. Likewise, the tone of the media towards these groups was not always negative. It was established that the media sometimes sounded approving and supportive of the actions of the protesters and their actions.

6.2 Limitations of study

Although the researcher took the necessary steps to ensure that the study was accurate, certain limitations were encountered during its conduct. First, the findings of the study should be considered more suggestive than definitive since the two newspapers and nine (9) media practitioners involved in the study cannot be considered representative of the media in Ghana. A more definitive study would therefore have to include more newspapers and a larger sample size of media practitioners.

One other limitation had to do with the fact that the study failed to account for the extent to which the Ghanaian media covered social protests more episodically than thematic since the researcher did not measure but sought to understand the phenomenon. Therefore, to fully comprehend the nature of media coverage of social protests in Ghana, a quantitative study needs to be undertaken. Also, since the data for this study was analysed qualitatively, there was the possibility that the researcher’s biases were introduced into the study.
One other challenge encountered during the development of this study was the researcher’s inability to find an established typology on the factors which informed source selection during protest coverage. However, by the end of the study, the researcher was able to provide some clues as to what journalists and editors considered before including a quote from somebody in a news story on a protest event.

6.3 Recommendation

It is recommended, based on the limitations of this study, that future researchers employ the quantitative content analysis method and include more newspapers in subsequent studies of this nature so the findings could be generalized to the media in Ghana. Similarly, instead of in-dept interviews, a survey of journalists could be used in future studies to determine which of the news values inform protest selection and coverage to a large extent.

Also, in order to make pronouncements on the extent to which the newspapers employed each of the devices discovered in this study, future studies must employ the quantitative content analysis. With this research method, a researcher could make findings regarding which devices were mostly used by the papers. This way, one could test for the extent of adherence to the marginalization devices revealed in this study.

Finally, since it was established through the study that the perception which protesters had about journalists and the willingness of protesters to share information with the media influenced protest coverage and source selection, it was recommended that social movement and protest groups educate their members on the role of the media plays in the attainment of their goals. By so doing, these people would be more willing to interact with the media thereby getting the opportunity to have their voices projected.
6.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, a summary of the study was presented. This included a brief background of the study, the essence of it, the major claim of the conceptual framework which informed the study, and some findings which emerged from the study. The chapter also included some limitations upon which recommendations were made.
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[www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)
APPENDIX

I. Media portrayal of protesters and protest events

a. Protesters and protests are violent, lawless and disruptive
Portrayal of protesters as engaging in acts of grievous and minor violence or vandalism such as burning of properties, looting of shops and throwing of stones which hinder economic activities.

b. Protesters and protest events are impotent and useless
Depiction of protesters and their activities as not having the potential to make any impact such as causing the authority against whom they protest to make the changes the protesters demand.

c. Protest events are useful and patriotic
Depiction of protest events as having the potential to cause change, and as events which contribute to the growth of democracy.

d. Protest events are disguises
Conceptualized as protesters having ulterior motives instead of what they claim to be the reasons behind their actions.

e. Protesters are irrational
Conceptualized as portrayal of demonstrators as being too obtuse or too oblivious to understand the real issues under debate. Or portrayal of protesters as leaderless, uneducated people who are not properly informed or in the position to engage in discussions surrounding the issues they protest.

f. Protesters are rational
Portrayal of protesters as being educated and well informed to engage in the discussions surrounding the issues they protest.
g. Protest events are carnivals
This referred to coverage of protest events as spectacles which poses theatrical elements such as drumming, dancing and merry making.

II. Media’s tone towards protesters and protest events
Defined as the attitudes of the media towards protesters and protest events which are reflected through the words used in the coverage.

a. Tone of approval
Defined as any positive reference to protesters which indicates that they are necessary in a democracy.

b. Tone of sarcasm
Defined as mocking the protesters and their activities/efforts.

c. Tone of mistrust
Defined as being suspicious of the motives of protesters and their actions.

NB: How to identify the themes
The coder can identify the words, phrases, clauses or sentences which speak to the themes identified. For example, adjectives which were used in describing the protesters and protest events could be analyzed to illustrate how the media portrayed the protesters and protest events.
### III. Coding Sheet for Media Coverage of Social Protests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. protests are disruptive, lawless and</td>
<td>“… the protest events which caused a vehicular traffic jam in the capital…. ”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Interview Guide

Hello, my name is Favour Esinam Normeshie, a student of the University of Ghana, Department of Communication Studies. As part of the university’s requirements for the award of a post-graduate degree, I am researching on media coverage of social protests in Ghana. And the study, among other things, is interested in determining protest characteristics which are considered by the media during coverage of such events. I would therefore appreciate it if you could answer a few questions. All of your answers would be taken and evaluated anonymously. Your statements would only be used for research and would not be forwarded to other persons or organizations. There are no correct or incorrect answers since I am using a semi-structured interview guide. Thank you.

1. Tell me a bit about your background and how long you have practiced journalism.
2. What are your impressions about social protests?
3. Tell me about your experience with protest coverage.
4. What makes you decide to cover a protest event?
5. During coverage, what do you look out for?
6. What principles of journalism inform source selection during coverage?
7. Do you face any constraints during coverage of such events?
8. If you do, what are some of them?
9. In your opinion, how do such constraints influence coverage of protests?
10. In your opinion, what are the markings of a successful protest event?