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Protest Paradigm in Multimedia: Social Media Sharing of Coverage About the Crime of Ayotzinapa, Mexico

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In 2014 protests erupted around the world after 43 college students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico, were kidnapped and massacred. This bilingual, cross-national content analysis explores the relationship between multimedia features in stories about the Ayotzinapa protests and how social media users liked, shared, and commented on that coverage. This study furthers our understanding of the protest paradigm in a digital context, and sheds light on differences in mainstream, alternative, and online media outlets' coverage of protesters. Additionally, this study suggests social media users might prefer more legitimizing coverage of protesters than mainstream media typically offer.

On 26 September 2014, 100 students from the Normal Rural School of Ayotzinapa, in the Mexican state of Guerrero, entered the nearby town of Iguala de la Independencia, planning to raise funds for their activities. Upon entering the village, their buses were ambushed by corrupt local police forces in collusion with criminals of the main local drug cartel, Guerreros Unidos. The attack was ordered by Iguala mayor José Luis Abarca, who believed that the rural students, known for their political protest activities, were planning to sabotage a political rally scheduled by his wife, María de los Ángeles Pineda. Ten students were killed and another 43 were abducted, leaving no trace behind. Only a few students escaped to report the incident (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR], 2015). As of March 2016, the remains of

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more than 100 bodies had been found outside Iguala, but only one bone fragment from one missing student had been identified (Flores, 2016).

The crime of Ayotzinapa was just one more example of the violence and corruption that has plagued Mexico for years (Aviña, 2014). Media covered the investigations into the murders and reported on the resulting widespread, international protests, which included everything from peaceful marches and sit-ins to the use of roadblocks and property damage. In fact, the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students produced one of the most prominent and long-lasting cases of social protest in Mexico in recent years, calling attention to injustice in poorer, rural areas, and making these protests particularly important for understanding how rural social claims of the have-less operate within a digital context. Further, the presumption that authorities were behind the disappeared students, which perhaps contributed to a view that protesters were the aggrieved victims, could potentially influence how the media covered the protests. This also was one of the first cases in Mexico in which online social media played a leading role in helping "viralize" protest messages (Camacho Vega, 2016). The attention that social media, as well as mainstream and alternative media from around the world, devoted to the case provides an opportunity to better understand the relationship between how international media cover protests and how protest-related news is circulated online. Such a study adds to the nascent research on "shareworthiness" (Trilling et al., 2016), and strengthens our insight into ways that protest coverage might be shifting because of the public's ability to like, share, and comment on stories via social media.

Scholarship suggests traditional mainstream media rely on a "protest paradigm" (Chan & Lee, 1984)—a master narrative of news coverage that tends to focus on protesters' tactics, dramatic actions, and spectacle, rather than emphasizing the protesters' grievances and motives (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). Better understanding the protest paradigm is important because studies show that the media's portrayal of protesters influences whether the public will support the protesters (Detenber, Gotlieb, McLeod, & Malinkina, 2007). With little research to date on the paradigm's existence outside traditional media, the interactive affordances of social media offer the opportunity for an even more nuanced understanding of whether the paradigm is found on social media, and if audiences are choosing to share and interact with stories that adhere to the paradigm.

Therefore, this study examines the relationship between mass-media reporting and audiences' sharing, liking, and commenting practices on social media to get a more profound perspective on the digital existence of the protest paradigm. Specifically, this research explores multimedia elements from 2014 stories related to the Ayotzinapa protests, comparing the audience's social media interactions via Facebook and Twitter with content published by English- and Spanish-language online and traditional media outlets. This study sheds light on differences in mainstream, alternative, and online media outlets' multimedia coverage of protesters, indicating whether the paradigm indeed remains a problem in this digital era. Ultimately this study makes several contributions to scholarship. First, it furthers our understanding

of how and when the protest paradigm operates in visual, multimedia elements of online news stories and on social media. Second, this research adds to communication scholarship more broadly by examining differences in multimedia news coverage across languages, regions, and types of media outlets, and how those differences influence a story's social media shareworthiness (Trilling et al., 2016).

The protest paradigm

Historically, the relationship between social movements and the mainstream media is complicated. The press often marginalizes and delegitimizes protesters, and yet at the same time protesters need media attention to spread information about their cause (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; McLeod & Hertog, 1999). To grab the media's attention protesters often use dramatic techniques like mass demonstrations, nudity, graffiti, and clashes with police, but such actions often lead to negative news coverage and the protesters' message gets lost in the spectacle—a "lose–lose" situation (Boyle et al., 2004). Rucht (2004) offered the "quadruple A" model of the relationship between protesters and mass media: abstention (distorted coverage causing protesters to abstain from trying to attract media attention); attack (protesters criticizing media's biased coverage); adaptation (complying with journalistic values and routines, such as through press conferences or tailoring the protest to draw media attention); and alternative (using alternative media and creating their own media).

Antagonistic coverage of protesters is often attributed to the protest paradigm (Chan & Lee, 1984), or the "routinized pattern or implicit template for the coverage of social protest" (McLeod & Hertog, 1999, p. 310) that often works to protesters' disadvantage. Generally this paradigm evinces by a reliance on official sources, narrative structures that highlight spectacle and favor the status quo, use of public opinion, and demonization of protesters (McLeod, 2007; McLeod & Hertog, 1999).

Framing and the paradigm

McCurdy's (2012) literature overview found framing as one of two main approaches to studies of protests and media coverage, adding that while there is lack of consensus on the definition of framing, "assessing how political movements are represented in the media is undeniably valuable" (p. 246). Framing scholars consider how meaning is constructed depending on which elements of a news story are emphasized. Within social movement research, framing creates a sense of collective identity, motivates the mobilization of a social movement, and affects legitimacy (Detenber et al., 2007). Gitlin's (1980) seminal framing study showed how mass media focus on violence and spectacle when covering social movements. More recent framing studies consider how media represented the antiwar movement (Murray et al., 2008) and indigenous protests in Canada (Wilkes, Corrigall-Brown, & Myers, 2010).

Protest framing research often follows the approach of McLeod and Hertog (1999), who found that most news stories about protests employed frames of *confrontation* (focusing on the conflict between protesters and police), *riot* (emphasizing the conflict between protesters and society), *circus* (highlighting the drama, oddity, and spectacle

of the protests and protesters), and *debate* (focusing on the protesters' viewpoints and demands). These first three frames thus define protesters and their causes as deviant, leading audiences to view them as less legitimate. Building on McLeod and Hertog's frames, Dardis (2006) proffered a typology of "marginalization devices" used in media coverage of protests, including a focus on *general lawlessness*, which explicitly mentions protesters as violent vandals and lawbreakers, as well as *police confrontation*, *freak show*, and *carnival*, similar to the circus/spectacle frame. Ultimately, news frames that emphasize violence and confrontation work to delegitimize protesters and their cause by turning public opinion against them and dissuading any potential supporters (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). For the purposes of this paper, then, we consider such frames and devices focusing on riotousness, confrontation with police, spectacle, and violence to be *delegitimizing* for the way they focus on the negative actions of protesters rather than focusing on protest agendas. In contrast, the *debate* frame, focusing on the underlying reason for protests, offers a more *legitimizing* view of protesters and their demands. Further, we argue that an emphasis on peaceful protests, as opposed to the marginalization device (Dardis, 2006) that focuses on violence, also serves to lend legitimacy to protesters. This study thus employs the four main frames identified in protest paradigm literature (McLeod & Hertog, 1999), as well as the interplay between the devices of violence (Dardis, 2006) and peacefulness.

Seminal framing studies, such as by Gitlin (1980), included visual elements. In fact, studies increasingly use visual framing analysis (Araiza et al., 2016; Fahmy, 2010; Schwalbe, Silcock, & Keith, 2008) to examine how photos, videos, and other visual elements can, like text, be framed to promote a particular interpretation. Analyzing visual elements is important since images can convey information and emotions in ways language cannot (Messaris, 1997), and multimedia are increasingly incorporated into online and social media content — an area of research not explored by most scholars. Thus, framing is the appropriate approach to extend the current research on the protest paradigm by taking into account online visual elements (multimedia) and to what extent they employed the delegitimizing and legitimizing frames outlined in paradigm research.

Based on the preceding, the first hypothesis this research poses is:

> **H1:** Frames of Ayotzinapa protest-related multimedia features that marginalize protesters will be associated with more references to violent protests, and the legitimizing debate frame will be associated with peaceful depictions of protesters.

Paradigm factors

Recent studies suggest an evolution of the protest paradigm, showing that the level of adherence to the paradigm depends on a number of factors; mainstream media's delegitimization of protesters is not systematic but rather is more nuanced and complicated than a long line of research previously suggested (Cottle, 2008). For example, Shahin, Zheng, Sturm, and Fadnis (2016) found that media from countries that value more informal political power negotiations tend to follow the paradigm less than media in countries with more formal political systems. Other factors impacting the

degree of paradigm adherence include the ideology of the protesters and the media outlets (Boyle et al., 2004; Lee, 2014), the violence levels of the protest (Boyle, McLeod, & Armstrong, 2012), how radical the protesters' tactics are (Lee, 2014), and the news media ownership (Ibrahim, 2012). Additionally, social, political, and cultural contexts can influence coverage (McCluskey et al., 2009). As Cottle (2008) noted, today's media outlets are in a much more "complex relation to the politics of protest than assumed in the past" (p. 859). With this in mind, Lee's (2014) examination of protests from 2001 to 2012 in Hong Kong treated the paradigm as a variable, finding that it predicted coverage of some, but not all, protests, depending on tactics, target of protest, type of government, and media-outlet ideology. In line with Cottle's (2008) findings, Lee (2014) concluded that protest coverage became slightly less negative over time.

Some scholars attribute this trend of news coverage becoming less biased against protesters to the Internet, the abundance of user-generated content, and "citizen self-mobilization" (Lee, 2014). For example, Harlow and Johnson (2011) showed that the online citizen journalism site Global Voices, as well as Twitter, covered the Arab Spring less according to the paradigm than did *The New York Times*. Similarly, Hänska-Ahy and Shapour (2013) found that the BBC relied heavily on user-generated content to cover the Arab uprisings, institutionalizing citizen participation in the news process and, as a result, potentially changing the way protests were covered. The Internet has also impacted the way journalists and protesters relate (Poell & Borra, 2012). Protesters have expanded their communicative opportunities (Cammaerts, 2012), allowing them to take control of their own messages and circumvent the gatekeepers of mainstream media (Poell & Borra, 2012). No wonder Segerberg and Bennett (2011) concluded that we seem to be living in "a media world that places the mass media at the margins, and elevates purveyors of social technology from NGOs to Flickr to prominent roles" (p. 205). However, Poell (2014) cautioned that while social media platforms accelerate the speed and extend the reach of communication, they only facilitate self-representation if protesters use them to report differently than mainstream media. As Poell's (2014) study of the 2010 Toronto G20 protests suggested, protesters' use of social media reflected the same patterns found in mainstream media, including a focus on spectacle.

Thus, despite research that points to a weakening of the paradigm, in general comparative studies still broadly suggest that mainstream media coverage around the world adheres to the paradigm, albeit to varying degrees. For example, Ghobrial and Wilkins' (2015) study of coverage of the 2011 Egyptian protests in elite news sources in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United States showed a reliance on official sources across all countries. Boyle et al. (2012) analyzed protest stories in 13 English-language newspapers from Asia, the Middle East, and North America and concluded that there are "clear and systemic biases in news coverage" (p. 139) that extend the validity of the protest paradigm as an analytical tool across countries.

Most of the research into the paradigm focuses on mainstream media, but a few studies (Araiza et al., 2016; Harlow & Johnson, 2011) suggest less conformity to the paradigm on social media. Further, researchers expect that alternative media—the media of social movements, protesters, and dissidents—would follow less delegitimizing patterns of coverage than mainstream media (Downing, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001). Online-only media outlets, such as digital-native news sites like *The Huffington Post*, social news aggregators like *Buzzfeed*, and online portals are different than both alternative and traditional mainstream media. Such online-only sites are highlighted for their innovations in terms of technology, content, format, funding models, distribution, and audience relations (Cohen, 2015), all of which help distinguish them from traditional mainstream media (Meléndez Yúdico, 2016). Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton's (2012) study exploring journalists' use of Twitter found that less-elite news outlets were less likely than elite news outlets to follow traditional journalistic norms and values. Lasorsa et al.'s findings suggest that, for the purposes of this current study, the newcomer online-only sites (the "less-elite" outlets) might be less likely than traditional mainstream media to conform to the protest paradigm, as the paradigm reflects traditional news values and practices. It is thus important to consider type of media outlet.

Previous research on the paradigm has also hypothesized, although not empirically explored, language as a factor that may predict adherence. In their international newspaper study, Boyle et al. (2012) purposefully examined publications written in English; however, they recognized this monolingual approach as a limitation restricting "a true representative sample of the regions discussed in [their] article" (p. 141). These authors implicitly suggested that a multilingual study could have provided different results, thus considering language as a factor that may condition adherence to the paradigm. Other research (Knox & Patpong, 2008; Vo, 2011) has found that communicating the same news to the same public in a country through different languages results in subtle changes in the content and news values.

Adding to this literature, this study posits the following:

H2: The *type of news outlet* is related to whether the Ayotzinapa protest-related multimedia features in stories shared on social media adhere to the protest paradigm.

RQ1a: Is the *region of the news outlet* related to whether the Ayotzinapa protest-related multimedia features in stories shared on social media adhere to the protest paradigm.

RQ1b: Is the *language of the news outlet* related to whether the Ayotzinapa protest-related multimedia features in stories shared on social media adhere to the protest paradigm.

Social media sharing

Recommending and sharing the news via social media has become an expected, fundamental part of the news experience (Hermida et al., 2012). Social media platforms facilitate users' ability to like, share, and comment on news stories, enabling new means of distribution (Gerlitz & Helmond, 2011; Tenenboim & Cohen, 2015). Marwick and Boyd (2011) referred to a "networked" audience in which users are

connected not just to the source of the information (like in a broadcast audience), but also to each other via the ability to recommend and share content. Understanding the networked audience and what types of content are shared among users is key for the journalists who craft the stories (Olmstead, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2011), as well as for social movement actors looking to mobilize supporters.

Multimedia and social media

Most research tends to understand multimedia as the combination of text, image, and sound (Sundar, 2002) or sometimes, more broadly, "all types of content that cannot be produced in an analogue paper" (Karlsson & Clerwall, 2012, p. 551). Based on this multimedia concept, numerous studies in recent years have examined the expressive characteristics of the content published by digital news media (Maguire, 2014; Thurman & Lupton, 2008). This study understands "multimedia" as news elements that include a combination of still images (photos, illustrations, maps, static infographics), moving pictures (videos, interactive infographics), and/or sound recordings, either as independent pieces or embedded into larger text-based stories.

Focusing on multimedia in protest-related stories is important since most research on the paradigm relies on text-based analysis. An exception to this is Araiza et al.'s (2016) qualitative study about the Ferguson, Missouri, protests that examined written texts and photos that journalists posted on Twitter. Generally, this study revealed that journalists' tweets adhered to the protest paradigm, although interestingly, they found that visual journalists' tweets with photos demonstrated more sympathy toward protesters. This research extends their study by quantitatively looking at multimedia elements of protest-related stories shared on Twitter and Facebook. Thus, the final research questions we analyzed are:

RQ2: What is the relationship between protest paradigm frames and type of multimedia feature in stories related to the Ayotzinapa protests?

RQ3a: What is the relationship between the number of shares, likes, and comments on social media and the type of media outlet that published the Ayotzinapa protest-related stories?

RQ3b: What is the relationship between the number of shares, likes, and comments on social media and the region of the media outlet that published the Ayotzinapa-related stories?

RQ3c: What is the relationship between the number of shares, likes, and comments on social media and the language of the outlet that published the Ayotzinapa protest-related stories?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the number of shares, likes, and comments on social media and whether the Ayotzinapa protest-related stories included multimedia elements?

RQ5: What kinds of multimedia features in stories related to the Ayotzinapa protests are most recommended via social media?

RQ6: What is the relationship between social media recommendations of Ayotzinapa protest-related stories with multimedia features, and adherence to the protest paradigm?

Methods

This study examines multimedia elements in Ayotzinapa protest-related stories published in English- and Spanish-language online media outlets around the world. We retrieved data using NewsWhip, a company that collects news stories and social media analytics from more than 50,000 publications across the globe (see Kilgo & Sinta, 2016; NewsWhip, 2016). NewsWhip's API traces URLs of content and news articles hosted on each media outlet's site and scrapes associated analytics on Facebook and Twitter (NewsWhip, 2016). For Facebook, it captures any shares using the share button, the copy-and-paste of a URL, or the use of a shortened link of a URL through services such as a bit.ly. It also collects the cumulative total of likes and comments from the URL. For Twitter, collected data include all original tweets and retweets. It does not include favorites. Sharing data was positively skewed, so final counts for all interaction variables were normalized using a Log10(variable + 1) equation. While there are some limits to how far a particular news story will spread on social media, examining the NewsWhip data of publicly shared posts reduces the temporal and spatial limitations in this study, as a story from a Latin American news outlet has the ability to spread as far and as wide as a story from a U.S. publication, regardless of audience size or amount of site traffic.

We collected all articles with the keywords "Ayotzinapa" and "protests" in an English search, and "Ayotzinapa" and "*protestas*" in a Spanish search from 26 September 2014 through 31 December 2014. Every article was shared on Facebook at least once. Each downloaded article also included article link, headline, publication dates, and coordinating social media information (number of Twitter retweets and Facebook likes, shares, and comments). NewsWhip collects data in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Italian, but because this study is focused on protests related to a news event in Mexico, Spanish and English were deemed most relevant for the purposes of this research.

This bilingual and cross-national approach allows for the detection of variations in news coverage between languages and countries. Previous research has noted language-related differences (Knox & Patpong, 2008; Vo, 2011), a relevant aspect for our study.

From the total of 14,853 articles collected, researchers randomly sampled 400 English-language articles and 400 Spanish-language articles, resulting in a dataset of 800. During coding, researchers discarded and replaced dead links and irrelevant articles.

Two of this study's researchers underwent several rounds of coder training. Training sessions focused on coder disagreements primarily about the identification of the debate frame as well as the news organization type. The first round of intercoder reliability (ICR) testing was performed on 10% of the data (Riffe et al., 2014). ICR was achieved at acceptable levels, with Krippendorff's alphas ranging from .80 to 1. Due to the length of time in coding, researchers reviewed the codebook and checked ICR again before coding the last 400 articles using

a subsample of 25 articles, again resulting in acceptable alpha levels, ranging from .87 to 1.

We first coded articles for whether they mentioned the Ayotzinapa protests, whether they included multimedia elements, and whether the multimedia feature was relevant to the protests. The recognition of protest-related activity included protesters in the streets, vigils, protest-related memorial services, artistic protest through street performances and art, as well as violent protest, clashes with police, sit-ins, marches, and boycotts. Because this study was interested in a visual, rather than textual, analysis, we included only those stories with protest-related multimedia elements in the final sample. We coded these multimedia elements ($n = 553$) for how they portrayed protesters, according to frames and mechanisms specified in the protest paradigm scholarship. Coding categories and ICR alpha ratings are detailed below:

Region of media outlet

Coders identified the region of the outlet as one of the following: Mexico, Latin America/Caribbean, Europe, United States/Canada, Africa, Asia (China, India, etc.), Middle East, and Pacific (Australia, New Zealand, etc.) ($\alpha = 1$). They then collapsed regions into Mexico, Latin America/Caribbean, United States/Canada, and the rest.

Type of media outlet

Coders identified media outlets as online-only mainstream news outlet (i.e., *The Huffington Post, Vice, Mic*, or news outlets that do not have a print counterpart and do not consider themselves alternative); online version of traditional/mainstream news outlet (i.e., nytimes.com; all newspaper, radio station, and broadcast television networks with an online presence, like NBC, CBS, CNN, FOX); alternative media outlet/social movement/activist/nonprofit organization/partisan website (i.e., Democracy Now, Alternet, IndyMedia, Anonymous, Latino Rebels); social news aggregator (i.e., *Buzzfeed*); video-sharing site (YouTube, Vimeo); portal news site (i.e., Yahoo! News, UOL Noticias, AOL); or other ($\alpha = .80$). To determine type of outlet, coders visited the sites' "about us" sections; when no such information was available, coders conducted web searches and conferred to determine outlet type. During analysis, they collapsed categories so that social news aggregators and portal news sites became online-only news.

Frames of protests

Riot focused on the violence of protesters, rioting, looting, and destruction, including depictions of protesters setting fires, cars being turned over, and buildings being smashed in ($\alpha = 1$). *Confrontation* included all physical interactions or confrontations between police and protesters ($\alpha = .90$). *Spectacle* was coded for cascading pans of protesters that emphasized the number of protesters; an emphasis on emotion (sadness, grief, hysteria); drama or oddity; and the involvement of celebrities ($\alpha = .85$). Finally, *debate* focused on dialogue that emphasized the protesters'

demands, including photos and moving images of protesters holding signs that explicitly included a demand, or blamed the government for corruption or for the deaths of the missing students. Coders considered audio cues and captions in each evaluation, particularly in the event that text was not legible in the photo ($\alpha = .92$). Frames were not mutually exclusive, so each frame was coded as present or absent.

Other mechanisms

Coders identified, in two separate variables, if protests/protesters were explicitly visually depicted as violent or peaceful. To code "yes" for violence, coders looked for violent or destructive actions, or insinuations of actions in the case of photos ($\alpha = 1$). They identified peaceful by showing protestors who were engaging in nonviolent, peaceful activity such as simply holding up signs (as long as they didn't promote violence), having prayer vigils, etc. ($\alpha = 1$). Coders also took captions into consideration to give context, so that a photo of seemingly peaceful protesters watching others participate in violence would not be coded as "peaceful."

Results

Overall, 74.8% of stories contained a multimedia element. Of those, 57.3% were about protesters or protests: About 64.6% were photos, 16.4% were videos, 3.7% were infographics, and 15.3% contained multiple multimedia elements. Most multimedia elements came from online-only media organizations (40.2%), followed by online versions of traditional media outlets (27.7%), alternative media outlets (23.4%), and video-sharing sites (8.7%). Most stories with multimedia came from U.S. publications (51.7%), followed by Mexican outlets (32.1%). The spectacle frame was the most common (64%), followed by debate (41.9%). The riot (22.3%) and confrontation (19.4%) frames were found less frequently. About 23.4% of multimedia elements emphasized the violence of protesters, while 61.8% highlighted peaceful protesters.

Framing

H1, which hypothesized that marginalizing frames of Ayotzinapa protest-related multimedia features in stories would be associated with more references to violent protests, and that the legitimizing debate frame would be associated with peaceful depictions of protesters, was mostly supported (see Table 1). The riot ($X^2 = 263.595$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) and confrontation ($X^2 = 159.187$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) frames were present more often than not when violence was depicted. Of riot frames, 79.4% focused on violence, while of confrontation frames, 61.7% emphasized violence. The legitimizing debate frame ($X^2 = 62.726$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) was used significantly more when peaceful portrayals were present (72.4%). Interestingly, the spectacle frame, while delegitimizing, showed no significant differences when it came to violence ($X^2 = .318$, $df = 1$, $p = .573$); spectacle frames included and did not include violence at roughly equal percentages. However, there was significance when it came to peace ($X^2 = 21.142$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$), with 72.1% of spectacle frames mentioning peace.

Table 1 Comparing Paradigm Frames by Violence and Peace

Frames Present	Violence		Peace	
	No (%, *n*)	Yes (%, *n*)	No (%, *n*)	Yes (%, *n*)
Riot	4.8 (17)	79.4 (85)***	21.7 (38)	22.6 (64)
Confrontation	6.6 (23)	61.7 (66)***	18.3 (32)	20.1 (57)
Spectacle	64.7 (227)	61.7 (66)	50.9 (89)	72.1 (204)***
Debate	56.4 (351)	63.6 (107)	34.9 (61)	72.4 (205)***

Note: ***$p < .001$.

Media outlet type, region, language, and source

H2, which hypothesized that the type of news outlet would be related to whether the multimedia features in stories shared on social media adhered to the protest paradigm, was partially supported (see Table 2). Type of news outlet was not significantly related to the delegitimizing frames (riot, confrontation, spectacle) or depiction of protesters as violent. However, the hypothesis was partially supported in that type of outlet was significantly related to the debate frame and peacefulness. Alternative outlets (72.9%) and video-sharing sites (90%) used the debate frame more than other types of outlets ($X^2 = 37.415$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$). Likewise, alternative (70.1%) and video-sharing sites (77.5%) mentioned peace more than other outlets ($X^2 = 21.050$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$).

In answering RQ1a, about whether the region of the news outlet was related to adherence to the paradigm (see Table 3), results showed that region significantly mattered when it came to the confrontation ($X^2 = 10.327$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) and debate ($X^2 = 49.881$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$) frames. The United States (22.8%) and countries other than the Americas (33.3%) used the confrontation frame more than Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. U.S. media (71.3%) also used the debate frame more than other regions, and Mexico used it the least (36.1%). Region was also significant when it came to the presence of violence ($X^2 = 21.530$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$) and peace

Table 2 Comparing Presence of Paradigm Frames by News Story Source

Frames Present	News Story Source			
	Online (%, *n*)	Traditional (%, *n*)	Alternative (%, *n*)	Video-sharing (%, *n*)
Riot	21.7 (40)	25.2 (32)	22.4 (24)	15 (6)
Confrontation	22.8 (42)	17.3 (22)	18.7 (20)	12.5 (5)
Spectacle	62.0 (114)	68.5 (87)	59.8 (64)	70.0 (28)
Debate***	47.8 (88)	50.4 (64)	72.9 (78)	90.0 (36)
Violence	20.1 (37)	26.8 (34)	28.0 (30)	15.0 (6)
Peace***	49.5 (91)	67.7 (86)	70.1 (75)	77.5 (31)

Note: ***$p < .001$.

Table 3 Comparing Presence of Paradigm Frames by Region

	Region			
Frames present	Mexico (%, *n*)	Latin America (%, *n*)	United States (%, *n*)	Other (%, *n*)
Riot	19.0 (28)	13.0 (3)	22.8 (54)	33.3 (17)
Confrontation*	13.6 (20)	4.3 (1)	22.8 (54)	27.5 (14)
Spectacle	66.0 (97)	82.6 (19)	63.7 (151)	51.0 (26)
Debate***	36.1 (53)	43.5 (10)	71.3 (169)	66.7 (34)
Violence***	12.9 (19)	8.7 (2)	27.8 (66)	39.2 (20)
Peace***	39.5 (58)	78.3 (18)	74.5 (169)	71.3 (38)

Note: *$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

$(X^2 = 46.289,\ df = 3,\ p < .001)$, with Mexico (12.9%) and other Latin American countries (8.7%) focusing the least on violence, and elsewhere in Latin America (78.3) and the United States (74.5%) focusing the most on peace.

For RQ1b, which questioned whether the language of the news outlet was related to adherence to the protest paradigm (see Table 4), results indicated significant differences between language and all frames: riot ($X^2 = 5.155,\ df = 1,\ p < .05$), confrontation ($X^2 = 12.803,\ df = 1,\ p < .001$), spectacle ($X^2 = 4.376,\ df = 1,\ p < .05$), and debate ($X^2 = 51.456,\ df = 1,\ p < .001$). More English- (25.8%) than Spanish- (16.8%) language media outlets used the riot, confrontation (24.7% English, 11.2% Spanish), and debate (71.3% English, 37.4% Spanish) frames. More Spanish (69.8%) than English (60.2%) outlets, however, used the spectacle frame. Analysis also showed significant differences between language and whether a multimedia element featured violence ($X^2 = 26.671,\ df = 1,\ p < .001$), with more English (31.5%) than Spanish (10.6%) focusing on violence. Likewise there were significant differences when it came to multimedia elements that emphasized peaceful protests/protesters ($X^2 = 52.046,\ df = 1,\ p < .001$). Again, more English (74.9%) than Spanish (41.3%) multimedia elements emphasized peace.

Table 4 Comparing Paradigm Frames by Language

	Language	
Frames Present	Spanish (%, *n*)	English (%, *n*)
Riot*	16.8 (30)	25.8 (72)
Confrontation***	11.2 (20)	24.7 (69)
Spectacle*	69.8 (125)	60.2 (168)
Debate***	37.4 (67)	71.3 (199)
Violence***	10.6 (19)	31.5 (88)
Peace***	41.3 (74)	74.9 (209)

Note: *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 5 Comparing Paradigm Frames by Multimedia Type

Frames Present	Multimedia Type			
	Photo (%, *n*)	Video (%, *n*)	Infographic (%, *n*)	Multiple (%, *n*)
Riot**	19.3 (57)	22.7 (17)	5.9 (1)	38.6 (27)
Confrontation***	13.5 (40)	22.7 (17)	5.9 (1)	44.3 (31)
Spectacle***	61.8 (183)	68.0 (51)	17.6 (3)	80.0 (56)
Debate***	43.9 (130)	84.0 (63)	94.1 (16)	81.4 (57)
Violence***	18.6 (55)	25.3 (19)	11.8 (2)	44.3 (31)
Peace**	56.1 (166)	78.7 (59)	52.9 (9)	70.0 (49)

Note: ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Framing and multimedia

RQ2 asked what the relationship is between the main frames in multimedia features and type of multimedia feature in stories related to the Ayotzinapa protests (see Table 5). Results showed significant differences between multimedia element types and all four frames: riot ($X^2 = 14.942$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$), confrontation frame ($X^2 = 36.736$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$), spectacle frame ($X^2 = 24.752$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$), and ($X^2 = 69.817$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$). The riot, confrontation, and spectacle frame appeared in stories with multiple multimedia elements more than other types of multimedia. Infographics (94.1%) and videos (84%) used the debate frame more than other types of multimedia. Further, among photos, the spectacle frame was most common, and among videos and infographics, the debate frame was most common.

Results also showed significant differences between type of multimedia element and whether the multimedia element emphasized violence ($X^2 = 22.335$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$). Additionally, there were significant differences between type of multimedia feature and whether that feature emphasized peaceful protests ($X^2 = 15.191$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$). Peace (79.7%) appeared in videos more than other types of multimedia, while violence appeared in stories with multiple multimedia elements (see Table 6).

Table 6 Comparison of Mean Number of Social Recommendations by Outlet Type

	Online	Traditional	Alternative	Video-sharing	*F* value
FB shares	1.73 (1.13)	1.54 (1.05)	1.73 (1.03)	1.94 (1.25)	1.664
FB likes	1.59 (1.42)	1.49 (1.35)	1.28 (1.0)	1.46 (1.18)	.872
FB comments	1.7 (1.1)	1.28 (1.0)	1.28 (1.0)	1.46 (1.18)	2.56
TW shares	1.79 (.92)[a]	1.55 (.93)[a]	1.63 (.86)[a]	1.03 (.96)[b]	7.963***

Note: Higher means represent more social recommendations. Standard deviations are noted in parentheses. Different superscripts (a, b, c, or d) indicate statistically significant differences in Tukey's post hoc tests. FB = Facebook; TW = Twitter.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 7 Comparison of Mean Number of Social Recommendations by Region of News Outlet

	Mexico	Other Latin America	United States/Canada	Other	*F* value
FB shares	1.18 (.9)	.66 (.9)[a]	2.06 (1.07)	1.96 (.96)	32.922***
FB likes	.71 (.93)	.35 (.71)	2.23 (1.32)	1.94 (1.07)	62.543***
FB comments	1.27 (1.12)	.55 (.93)	1.59 (1.08)	1.43 (.99)	7.885***
TW shares	1.51 (.83)	1.06 (.88)	1.69 (.99)	1.87 (.83)	5.144**

Note: FB = Facebook; TW = Twitter.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Social recommendations

For RQ3a, about the relationship between social recommendations and type of media outlet, results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test showed significance only when it came to Twitter shares ($F(3, 454) = 7.963$, $p < .001$). Post hoc Tukey honest significant difference (HSD) tests revealed that video-sharing sites had significantly fewer Twitter shares than the other types of media (see Table 6).

Answering RQ3b, about region and social recommendations, results of ANOVA tests suggested significant differences when it came to Facebook likes ($F(3, 454) = 62.543$, $p < .001$), shares ($F(3, 454) = 32.922$, $p < .001$), and comments ($F(3, 454) = 7.885$, $p < .001$), as well as Twitter shares ($F(3, 454) = 5.144$, $p < .01$). Post hoc Tukey HSD tests showed that stories with multimedia from the United States/Canada received significantly more Facebook likes, comments, and shares than those from Mexico or other Latin American countries, and more Twitter shares than other Latin American countries (see Table 7).

For RQ3c, an independent samples *T*-test found significant differences between language and all types of social recommendations analyzed: Facebook shares ($t(423) = 9.301$, $p < .001$), Facebook comments ($t(456) = 2.329$, $p < .05$), Facebook likes ($t(451.26) = 15.494$, $p < .001$), and Twitter shares ($t(456) = 4.358$, $p < .001$). English-language media received significantly more Facebook likes, shares, comments, and Twitter shares (see Table 8).

Table 8 *T*-tests of Social Recommendations by Language of Media Outlet

	Spanish *M (SD)*	English *M (SD)*	*t*	Df
FB shares	1.164 (.91)	2.036 (1.078)	9.3***	423
FB likes	.659 (.898)	2.226 (1.264)	15.494***	451
FB comments	1.267 (1.139)	1.512 (1.069)	2.329*	456
TW shares	1.388 (.894)	1.769 (.926)	4.358***	456

Note: FB = Facebook; TW = Twitter.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 9 Comparing Means of Social Recommendations by Multimedia Type

	Multimedia Yes M (SD)	Multimedia No M (SD)	Photo M (SD)	Video M (SD)	Infographic M (SD)	Multiple M (SD)
FB shares	1.695 (1.1)	1.31 (1.049)	1.586 (1.104)	1.893 (1.207)	1.532 (.740)	1.99 (.968)
FB likes	1.614 (1.368)	1.066 (1.206)	1.487 (1.361)	1.712 (1.44)	1.643 (1.048)	2.038 (1.317)
FB comments	1.417 (1.102)	1.158 (1.122)	1.4 (1.117)	1.477 (1.206)	.92 (.645)	1.539 (.987)
TW shares	1.62 (.931)	1.41 (.896)	1.631 (.901)	1.415 (1.161)	1.733 (.638)	1.766 (.816)

Note: FB = Facebook; TW = Twitter.

To answer RQ4, which questioned the relationship between the number of social recommendations and whether the Ayotzinapa protest-related stories included multimedia elements (see Table 9), results of an independent samples *T*-test indicated significant differences when it came to Facebook shares ($t(798) = 5.05$, $p < .001$), likes ($t(776.24) = 5.997$, $p < .001$), comments ($t(798) = 3.254$, $p < .01$), and Twitter shares ($t(798) = 3.255$, $p < .01$). Multimedia elements received more social recommendations than those without multimedia.

For RQ5, which asked what kinds of multimedia features were most shared on social media, results from an ANOVA test revealed significant relationships between type of multimedia element present and number of Facebook shares ($F(3, 454) = 3.586$, $p < .05$), and likes ($F(3, 454) = 3.282$, $p < .05$). Stories with multiple multimedia elements received significantly more shares and likes than stories with photos only.

RQ6, which examined the relationship between social recommendations of Ayotzinapa protest-related stories and adherence to the protest paradigm (see Table 10), results of an independent samples *T*-test revealed a significant relationship between the confrontation frame and Facebook likes ($t(141.27) = 4.164$, $p < .001$), shares ($t(153.128) = 4.526$, $p < .001$), comments ($t(152.374) = 2.791$, $p < .01$), and Twitter shares ($t(456) = 3.014$, $p < .01$); elements with the confrontation received significantly more social recommendations than nonconfrontation frames. The debate frame also received significantly more Facebook shares ($t(456) = 3.969$, $p < .001$) and likes ($t(456) = 4.17$, $p < .001$) than nondebate frames.

Independent-sample *T*-tests also showed significant differences between the violent portrayal of protesters in multimedia features and the number of Facebook

Table 10 Comparison of Mean Number of Social Recommendations by Presence of Frame

	Riot	Confrontation	Spectacle	Debate	Violence	Peace
FB shares	1.781 (1.204)	2.116 (.942)	1.682 (1.111)	1.866 (1.082)	1.935 (1.128)	1.838 (1.137)
FB likes	1.802 (1.453)	2.124 (1.269)	1.59 (1.402)	1.836 (1.359)	1.971 (1.39)	1.861 (1.383)
FB comments	1.485 (1.397)	1.68 (.958)	1.408 (1.1)	1.45 (1.078)	1.529 (1.095)	1.467 (1.1)
TW shares	1.7 (.967)	1.885 (.86)	1.601 (.938)	1.649 (.959)	1.816 (.949)	1.644 (.977)

Note: Higher means represent more social recommendations. Standard deviations noted in parentheses. FB = Facebook; TW = Twitter.

likes ($t(456) = 3.114$, $p < .01$) and shares ($t(456) = 2.592$, $p < .01$), and Twitter shares ($t(456) = 2.504$, $p < .01$). Multimedia elements that focused on the violence of protesters received more of these social recommendations than those that did not mention violence. Results likewise revealed significant differences in means when it came to peaceful portrayals and Facebook likes ($t(397.2) = 5.169$, $p < .001$) and shares ($t(404.28) = 3.685$, $p < .001$). Those multimedia elements focused on peace received more Facebook likes and shares than those that did not focus on peace.

Discussion and conclusions

This bilingual, cross-national study makes an important contribution to the extant protest paradigm literature as little research explores how the paradigm operates on social media, especially in terms of multimedia elements (photos, videos, and infographics), rather than text alone in traditional mainstream media venues. This study intentionally compared differences in adherence to the paradigm not just by region and language of media outlet, but also by type of online media outlet. This study thus situates our understanding of the protest paradigm in the 21st century's mediascape of seemingly endless information created by traditional news producers *and* everyday news consumers.

Findings from this research suggest the multimedia features of protest-related stories shared on social media do not necessarily adhere to the paradigm in the same way as traditional text-based stories in extant research. Although a large body of scholarship suggests that mainstream media focus on violence and negatively portray protesters in order to delegitimize them and their cause, this study somewhat challenges that: While multimedia elements employed the delegitimizing spectacle frame the most (64%), they used the legitimizing debate frame almost as much (58.1%), and the delegitimizing riot and confrontation frames appeared less than a quarter of the time. Further, about two thirds of all multimedia elements focused on protesters as peaceful, rather than violent, indicating further rupture of the protest paradigm. Also noteworthy is that even as the delegitimizing riot and confrontation frames were significantly associated with portrayals of protesters as violent, thus partially supporting our first hypothesis, the delegitimizing spectacle frame along with the legitimizing debate frame were linked with peaceful portrayals, further nuancing how the paradigm operates with multimedia as opposed to text. Future research should explore whether this finding is applicable to multimedia elements in general, or whether it is specific to this case, where audiences could have viewed protesters more sympathetically because of officials' presumed implication in the students' deaths.

Among photos, spectacle was the most common frame, while among videos and among infographics, the debate frame was most common. Such a finding makes sense: Photos are meant to grab attention and illustrate a story, and in the case of Ayotzinapa protest stories, that means photos often depicted the large number of demonstrators, or highlighted the drama and emotion of the protests by picturing protesters — often family members — holding up photos of the missing students. In contrast, the videos

and infographics, because of their length and ability to include textual information, respectively, were able to present contextual information about the protesters' cause, and about the long-time institutionalized corruption at the heart of the issue.

This study also adds to the protest paradigm literature by examining region, language, and type of media outlet. For region of the outlet, results were significant when it came to the confrontation and debate frames. Publications from the United States/Canada and other countries not in the Americas used these frames significantly more than those from Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America. Similarly, language also was found to be an important indicator for adherence to the paradigm. English-language publications used all but the spectacle frame more than Spanish-language outlets. This finding can perhaps be explained by the fact that Mexican media used the debate frame less since the protests were aimed against the Mexican government—their home country—while United States/Canada/English-language media can offer a more sympathetic view since the protesters were not causing disruptions that might impact them directly. What's more, the implication of corrupt government officials colluding with narco-traffickers in the students' deaths unites two common narratives (the war on drugs and corruption) in U.S. media coverage of Mexico. Additionally, U.S. audiences might need background information about the institutionalized corruption that historically has plagued Mexico more than would native audiences. In terms of language, English-language multimedia elements emphasized the violence and peacefulness of protesters more than Spanish-language multimedia elements. This finding adds weight to previous studies that suggested that language is a key factor in variations of news coverage (Knox & Patpong, 2008; Vo, 2011).

Type of media outlet also was found to be a factor in adherence to the paradigm. Video-sharing platforms and alternative media employed the debate frame and focused on the peacefulness of protests significantly more than other types of media outlets. This finding aligns with alternative media scholarship: Alternative media often have a reputation as the media of social movements (e.g., Downing, 2001), so it follows that protesters would be framed in legitimizing ways in multimedia features of stories from these outlets. Also, this finding suggests that videos shared via online platforms could serve as a form of alternative media, offering a space where protest actors normally marginalized by the mainstream media can be portrayed more positively. Video-sharing platforms are designed for users to create and publish their own videos, so it is likely that the more legitimizing portrayal of protesters found on these platforms is related to the fact that protesters can take control of their message by uploading their own user-generated content.

This study's final contributions to the protest paradigm scholarship relate to the public's role in choosing to share stories with multimedia elements that delegitimize protesters and their causes. By examining the number of shares, likes, and comments on Facebook and Twitter, this research examines public reactions to protest coverage, an as-of-yet understudied aspect in the existing literature. Better understanding how the public responds to protest coverage is essential as studies indicate that the

public's perception of protesters influences whether a cause will receive public support (Detenber et al., 2007). This study found that a media outlet's region/country and language were significantly related to social recommendations, and the type of media outlet was significantly associated with Twitter shares: Protest stories with multimedia elements from video-sharing sites received fewer Twitter shares than other types of media outlets. Such a finding suggests that on Facebook, the public passed along Ayotzinapa-related articles regardless of what type of media they originated from. This suggests a consensus: The missing students evoked sympathy in Facebook users across the board, as it seemed to be a cut-and-dried case of corrupt officials orchestrating the murders of students they opposed. Fewer Twitter shares perhaps indicates that Twitter is not an ideal platform for distributing videos, lending further credence to the importance of studying uses of different social media platforms individually, rather than reductively as "social media." Further, results showed that in general users liked, commented on, and shared Ayotzinapa protest-related stories from English-language and United States/Canadian media outlets significantly more than stories from other languages or regions. In part this could be due to having more stories from English-language and U.S./Canadian media outlets in the sample, which is a result of only looking at stories shared on social media, and most social media and Internet content in general is published in English and originates from the United States. These findings also add support to the idea that social media have become a fundamental news source (Hermida et al., 2012), as this study shows that across the globe, consumers of all types of media shared news on Facebook and Twitter.

It also is worth highlighting the value to users of multimedia features. Media producers struggling to attract audiences in this age of information overload and shortened attention spans should take note that protest-related stories that included multimedia content received significantly more social media recommendations. The type of multimedia feature also was significantly related to the number of social recommendations, with users sharing stories with multiple multimedia features more than stories with photos only. This suggests that users want multimedia content, but they're not too picky about what kind.

When it came to the number of social recommendations and whether the multimedia elements adhered to the paradigm, this study indicates a slight departure from extant research. While results showed the delegitimizing confrontation frame received more social recommendations, the riot and spectacle frames did not. Further, data also revealed that the debate frame received significantly more interaction on social media. Even as multimedia elements that focused on the violence of protesters received significantly more social recommendations than those that did not focus on violence, so, too, did multimedia features that emphasized peace. Such a finding indicates users liked, commented on, and shared protest-related stories with multimedia elements regardless of whether the stories adhered to the paradigm. Additionally, this study's findings about the debate frame and peaceful portrayals of protesters suggests a rupture of the paradigm as users perhaps express a preference for more legitimizing coverage of protesters. Future research should explore this possibility further. If news

consumers truly are tired of the negative portrayal of protesters and protests as violent, and are making their preferences known via social media, this could potentially influence how news organizations cover future protest activity.

This research is limited in that it analyzes just a portion of the thousands of Ayotzinapa protest-related articles shared on social media. Still, this study is valuable in that it extends the protest paradigm literature to multimedia and social media, and does so with a bilingual, cross-national comparison that goes beyond mainstream media to consider various types of media organizations. Further, by examining social recommendations, this study offers a unique perspective on the role of the audience in maintaining, and disrupting, the protest paradigm.

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