

Framing Rationality and Emotionality in Wet'suwet'en Protests

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Abstract. On January 7, 2019, the RCMP confronted anti-pipeline protesters of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation near Houston, B.C. in a military-style raid. The confrontation took place over the contested Coastal GasLink (CGL) pipeline project which proposes to carry gas from Dawson Creek to Kitimat but must cross traditional and unceded land in order to do so. This study seeks to answer the question: How does the media depict the Wet'suwet'en protests, including protesters and government agents, using frames of rationality/emotionality, and how frequent are these frames? Scholars of social movements have long argued that the media is biased in reporting social movements (Giorgi, 2017; Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, 2012; Grenier, 1994; McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod and Detenber, 1999; Smith et al., 2001; Gilchrist, 2010). One way the media does this is by representing protesters as irrational and emotional while simultaneously depicting figures of authority like the police and governmental officials as the opposite—rational and objective (Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, McCluskey et al., 2009; Grenier, 1994). This study uses a feminist deconstruction approach to analyze how the media frames Wet'suwet'en protesters using frames of rationality and emotionality. I present my research on how three Canadian news publications framed the Wet'suwet'en protests using frames of rationality and emotionality and explore the feminist implications of this framing. The research shows that while media publications generally tend to frame protesters as rational, protesters are still framed as more emotional than government agents. In some cases, the frame of emotionality may latently suggest that protesters lack rational judgment and credibility. Some types of media tend to frame protesters as more rational or irrational than others. Indigenous publications may tend to overemphasize the rationality of protesters compared to other mainstream publications, perhaps to counter or undo the dominant narrative in mainstream publications.

Introduction

On January 7, 2019, the RCMP confronted anti-pipeline protesters of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation near Houston, B.C. in a military-style raid. The confrontation took place over the contested Coastal GasLink (CGL) pipeline project, which proposes to carry gas from Dawson Creek to Kitimat but must cross traditional and unceded land in order to do so. Protesters aimed to stop the expansion by blocking access on their traditional land to which the RCMP responded by attempting to thwart protest for the project to continue. The conflict between the RCMP, Coastal GasLink and Indigenous protesters is part of ongoing debates not just related to the CGL pipeline, but also Indigenous land claims and sovereignty.

This study seeks to answer the question: How does the media depict the Wet'suwet'en protests, including protesters and government agents, using frames of rationality and emotionality, and how frequent are these frames? Scholars of social movements have long argued that the media is biased in reporting social movements. Research shows that the media tends to marginalize social movement activists and protesters (Giorgi, 2017; Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, 2012; Grenier, 1994; McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod and Detenber, 1999; Smith et al., 2001; Gilchrist, 2010). One way the media does this is by representing protesters as irrational and emotional while simultaneously depicting figures of authority like the police and governmental officials as the opposite—rational and objective (Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, McCluskey et al., 2009; Grenier, 1994).

The idea that rationality is better than emotionality is rooted in sexist, Western ways of thinking that have been used to oppress women (Oliver, 1991). One does not have to look too far to come across many stereotypes in society of the rational and objective man and the emotional woman to see that rationality/emotionality are social constructs and ideologies rooted in oppressive power dynamics (Oliver, 1991). While this hierarchized binary is rooted in sexist ways of thinking, it has also been used to marginalize other groups of people, like protesters who are stereotypically framed as irrational, emotional, and thus delegitimize (Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, Grenier, 1994; McCluskey et al.)¹.

This study uses a feminist deconstruction approach to analyze how the media frames Wet'suwet'en protesters using frames of rationality and emotionality. First, I draw on feminist literature that outlines the process of deconstruction and how it is a useful framework for feminist research. Second, I outline the literature on newspaper framing and the 'protest paradigm'—a term used by scholars to refer to the phenomenon of the media marginalizing social movements. Third, I present my research on how three Canadian news publications framed the Wet'suwet'en protests using frames of rationality and emotionality. Lastly, I explore the feminist implications of this framing. The research pre-

¹One can also imagine the ways that a protester who is a woman, or a protester who is both a woman and racialized, may face more stereotypical labels of irrational and emotional.

sented in this study shows that while media publications generally tend to frame protesters as rational, protesters are still framed as more emotional than government agents. In some cases, the frame of emotionality may latently suggest that protesters lack rational judgment and credibility. Furthermore, some types of media tend to frame protesters as more rational or irrational than others. Indigenous publications may tend to overemphasize the rationality of protesters compared to other mainstream publications, perhaps to counter or undo the dominant narrative in mainstream publications. By exposing the oppressive hierarchized binary opposition of rational/emotional and how it works in the media, scholars and bystanders in society to social movements can perhaps move towards dismantling the sexist idea that emotions and logic are not only mutually exclusive, but incompatible. While not all emotions are always good, the presence of some emotions that promote justice, like passion, anger, and even grief, may actually encourage individuals to act in logical, rational ways by protesting inequalities in society.

Literature Review: Deconstruction, the Media, and Rationality/Emotionality

Feminist Deconstruction of Rationality

Deconstruction is a feminist mode of knowledge-seeking which interrogates “western systems of thought which produce hierarchized binary pairs” like masculine/feminine or rational/emotional (Potts, 2000, p. 57). For example, rationality is favoured more in society than emotionality. The evidence for this abounds in the stereotypes in history of “men as rational, and women as irrational and therefore inferior” which have been used “in myriad suppressive and oppressive ways to indict women’s practices” (Oliver, 1991, p. 344). The feminist deconstruction approach starts by exposing hierarchized binary pairs by first tracing how they are socially constructed. Next, an analysis follows of how the binary pair has been used to “establish, legislate, and maintain oppressive systems of hierarchy” (Mumby and Putnam, 1992, p. 468).

Oliver (1991) traces the social roots of the rational/emotional dichotomy to the period of the Enlightenment. She argues that the Enlightenment viewed “rationalist humanism” as a “liberating force” (p. 340), which entrenched rationality in society as a superior ideology and value system. As rationality became the superior ideology in society, at the same time, emotionality was constructed as its binary opposite. Oliver argues that “the ideology of rational thinking assumes... that rationality and emotionality are, if not mutually exclusive, certainly incompatible” (Oliver, 1991, p. 343). Furthermore, the binary pair of rational/emotional became gendered as rationality is associated with men and emotionality with women.

The logic of rationality being superior rests on the idea that emotions are bad because they supposedly hinder the ability for one to think clearly. Readers who are woman-identifying may draw on their own lived experiences as examples of moments when their display of emotions were used to claim that they are unable to think logically or rationally. Indeed, the idea that emotions are a hindrance to objective thinking is quite ‘irrational’ in the first place. This is what Jasper (1998) calls the “specter of irrationality”, which is “when we assume that emotions—whether conceived as momentary ‘passions’ or stubborn loyalties—lead us to do things we normally would not do or do not ‘really’ want” (Jasper, p. 421). In other words, Jasper suggests that people assume that those who act out of emotions are always impulsive and never deliberate or well-thought out in their actions. The idea that emotions are a hindrance to objective thought also assumes that humans are, in some way, not sentient beings—which is not the case. It also suggests that human beings can seemingly turn off their emotions to be more objective. This is something that may be possible but is certainly difficult as biases, even if subconscious, can always manifest in behaviours and actions.

While stereotypes of emotionality are usually applied to women, the same stereotypes have been used to “disparage other oppressed minorities, rationalize their inferiority, and justify their subordination” (Oliver, 1991, p 353). One can think of colonial stereotypes of the ‘savage’ or primitive ‘Indians’ in comparison to the logical white man to illustrate this. While the rational/emotional binary pair is historically traced as a sexist phenomena, it certainly has evolved to become a race issue as well. And while there is indeed valid praise of rationality and sound critiques of excessive emotions, the problem with this binary pair lies in the fact that it has been used to dismiss, invalidate, and subsequently oppress groups of people.

Media Frames

The sociology of social movements has had consensus for several years that newspapers use frames to influence the public’s understanding of social movements (Giorgi 2017; Rholinger, 2002; Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, 2012; Grenier, 1994; McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod and Detenber, 1999; Gilchrist, 2010; Smith et al., 2001). The concept of “framing” is used to refer to this phenomena, framing simply meaning “the process of constructing and defining events for an audience through the control of the agenda and vocabulary” (Rholinger, 2002, p. 480). Just as one frames a photo or picture, the process very literally involves selecting and manipulating what is seen by the audience. Frames are studied by scholars of social movements because they can “direct audience action” meaning they can affect how an audience or reader is interpreting an event (Giorgi, 2017, p. 713). For example, Gilchrist has argued that because Canadian newspapers report on missing and murdered Indigenous women less often than white women, more police attention and resources are dispensed for white women than Indigenous women

(Gilchrist, 2010, p. 385). This results in more public empathy and compassion for white women. Frames, then, have wide social consequences and can reproduce inequalities (i.e. Indigenous missing women not having as many resources as their white counterparts).

Visual framing can be just as important as textual or linguistic framing. Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes (2012) argue that “images, like texts, serve to create meaning about actors and events and convey messages about the extent to which actors and their claims matter” (p. 225). The images that a newspaper uses or does not use to represent a social movement can also affect public understanding and action.

Protest Paradigm

Many scholars argue that the media tends to marginalize social movements through the “protest paradigm” (Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, 2012; Grenier, 1994; McCluskey et al., 2009; McLeod and Detenber, 1999; Gilchrist, 2010). The protest paradigm refers to the phenomenon of the media marginalizing social movements by emphasizing the “negative, violent, and irrational elements of protest and protesters while legitimating figures of authority by quoting them and therefore tacitly supporting their accounting of events” (Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes, 2012, p. 224). In a study of Canadian news coverage of the Oka Crisis, Grenier (1994) finds “that native Indians (as well as some other minority groups) tend cross-nationally to be portrayed by mass media as strange, as unpredictable threats to social order, and as heavily engaged in emotive and largely deviant forms of conflict” (p. 313). This study suggests that marginalized groups like Indigenous people participating in protests may receive more biased coverage because of the stereotypes and assumptions about them in Canadian society: they are seen as deviant, emotional, and as threats to the status quo (for an examination of theoretical explanations of why media bias occurs, see Smith et al., 2001).

Theorizing Rationality

While scholars of social movements seem to be aware of the problems of the media framing protesters as irrational and emotional, theories of social movements also tend to reaffirm this binary opposition. Couch (1968) noticed this problem among social scientists in the late 60s, when he saw scholars propagating stereotypes of irrational, emotional, and violent crowds. Many social movement theorists have tried to argue that social movement actors are highly rational (see McCarthy and Zald). However, these theories, while trying to reject the stereotypes of emotional protesters, reaffirm the idea that emotions are undesirable and pejorative. Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2001) note that “once at the centre of the study of politics, emotions have led a shadow existence. . . with no place in the ratio-

nalistic, structural, and organizational models that dominate academic political analysis” (p. 2). Feminist deconstruction, however, can enable scholars of social movements to be critical of how the binary opposition of rational/emotional has been reaffirmed. The point is not to argue that emotionality is more ideal than rationality—for this would recreate the same inequality we seek to interrogate. However, the aim is to discover how both rationality and emotionality can work alongside one another in positive ways. In other words, we can recover ‘emotions’ as a sort of dirty and pejorative word from mainstream literature and society by showing its value in rational decision-making.

Data and Methods

My main research question is: How does the media depict the Wet’suwet’en protests, including protesters and government agents, using frames of rationality/emotionality? How frequent are these frames? Sub-questions include: How does coverage in alternative and Indigenous publications of Wet’suwet’en protests compare to mainstream coverage? Are emotions framed as positive or negative traits for protesters? Government agents in this study are conceptualized as both the RCMP and Coastal GasLink because these two parties were both working with each other (i.e. the RCMP arrested protesters at the blockade so that GasLink could advance the pipeline, and GasLink relied on the RCMP to do this) and both were also the targets of the protesters. Data was collected from three online newspapers, one ‘mainstream,’ one ‘alternative,’ and one Indigenous: *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Georgia Straight*, and *Windspeaker*. While *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Georgia Straight* are both Vancouver-based newspapers, *Windspeaker* is a national Canadian Indigenous newspaper published in Alberta. *Windspeaker* was selected because it had the greatest number of articles on the topic of the Wet’suwet’en protests (compared to the alternative British Columbia based Indigenous newspapers *Salish Sea Sentinel* and *Lexey’em*). The advantage of comparing data from three different news sources is to differentiate how mainstream, alternative, and Indigenous news sources reported on the Wet’suwet’en protests. In total, 20 articles were examined.

Articles from each newspaper were selected if they: 1. Were written on the topic of the Wet’suwet’en protests or the conflict in general; and, 2. If they were published the week of and/or two weeks after the conflict which occurred on January 7th, 2019. Articles that were published immediately following the protest event were selected because, as Smith et al. (2001) notes, “both print and electronic media regularly focus upon selected issues for intensive and continuous coverage over a sequence of days” in what scholars refer to as “issue attention cycles” (p. 1401). The objective is that by selecting articles published during the issue attention cycle, articles that were read most by the public are the ones being selected. This makes the research more salient.

Methodology

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. This methodology analyzes latent content, which is “the underlying meanings of the text” (Patterson et al., 2016, p. 3). A qualitative content analysis approach is inherently a subjective process, as it relies on the coder to interpret the text and decipher meaning (Patterson et al., 2016, 3).

The step-by-step process of coding used in this research is based on Currie’s (2018) approach. First, a priori codes were created from the literature review. This process involves reading literature and creating keywords and sub (related) keywords that are relevant to the research question. Second, after the a priori codes were created, I did an initial run through of the data, noting down instances whenever a priori codes appeared as well as writing down the example in which it did (i.e. the sentence, or the photo). In this process, emergent codes appeared; codes that were unexpected but still relevant to the research question. Third, with the list of a priori and emergent codes, I coded the data multiple more times with the objective to find: 1. Frequencies (counts); and, 2. Types (categories). Finally, with all the coding of the data completed, I organized the findings into a table to enable a count of frequencies and an analysis of categories, in order to answer the research questions at hand.

In addition to text being coded, pictures were also coded for this project. Both the manifest features of photos, like “which individuals are shown and what these individuals are shown to be doing” as well as the latent features, like “camera angle, whether the subject is looking at or away from the camera, and the relative size of the subject in relation to other subjects” were analyzed (based on the analyses of Corrigall-Brown and Wilkes, 2012, p. 225-226).

Conceptualizing Codes

A priori codes, or keywords created from the literature before an initial run through of the data, included: irrational, rational, positive emotional, and negative emotional.

Irrational was conceptualized as violent or disruptive. Couch conceptualized rational action as “that action which represents the most effective means for achieving some goal” and that “is supported by the established institutions of the day” (Couch, 1968, p. 315). Using this definition, violence was created as a sub keyword for irrationality. This is because violence is not a supported method of achieving a goal by established institutions like the Canadian government or RCMP. Furthermore, violence in general is not seen as favourable to the general public, especially when social movements actors are inflicting disruptiveness. Couch (1968), for example, lists violence and disruptiveness, as two of the many negative stereotypes that sociologists have of crowds. In contrast, rational was

conceptualized as calm and peaceful, whereas irrational, was conceptualized as violent and disruptive.

Negative emotional was conceptualized as upset or angry. By ‘negative’ emotions, I mean the emotions that are ascribed to actors to delegitimize them. In these instances, negative emotions is a keyword that is, in some ways, used to describe irrationality. Mumby and Putnam (1993), for example, argue that “emotion... becomes a deviation from what is seen as sensible or intelligent” and “is also linked to the expressive arenas of life, not the instrumental goal orientation” (p. 36). Further, negative emotional aims at finding instances of emotional reactions which Mumby and Putnam (1993) argue make social movement actors appear “‘disruptive’, ‘illogical’, ‘biased’ and ‘weak’ (p. 36). For example, if an image of a protester looking visibly angry was found in an article where the bias is against the protesters and in favour of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, the emotion is coded as ‘negative emotional’.

Positive emotional was conceptualized as passionate. As mentioned above, the purpose of this category is to find emotions from protesters or government agents that were deemed positive in the general tone of the article. If the emotion of anger or being upset was presented in a positive way, then it was coded as passionate, which fell under positive emotional. For example, if an article is generally critical of the RCMP and Coastal GasLink, as well as generally in favour of the protest, instances of emotions like anger on the part of a protester would be coded as ‘passionate’.

Emergent codes included: 1. Rational keywords (empathetic, non-violent action, following orders, and worthiness); 2. Irrational keywords (Inconsistent, incompetent, non-cooperative); 3. Positive emotional (strength, joy); 4. Negative emotional (aggressive); and a new category, 5. Neutral emotional (somber, afraid). See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the coding schema.

Results

The total number of times that protesters were framed as rational was 30 times. The total number of times that government agents were framed as rational was 10 times. In total, the protesters were three times more likely to be framed as rational compared to government agents (see Table 1). Interestingly, while protesters were framed 30 times as rationally, 16 of those came from four *Windspeaker* publications, two of which were articles with multiple photos from protest events. *Windspeaker* thus contributed 53% to the total times that protesters were framed rationally. If we were to not count *Windspeaker*, the protesters were framed 14 times as rational compared to government agents who were framed 9 times as rational. protesters were framed 1.55 times more rationally than government agents in both *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Georgia Straight* (see Table 6).

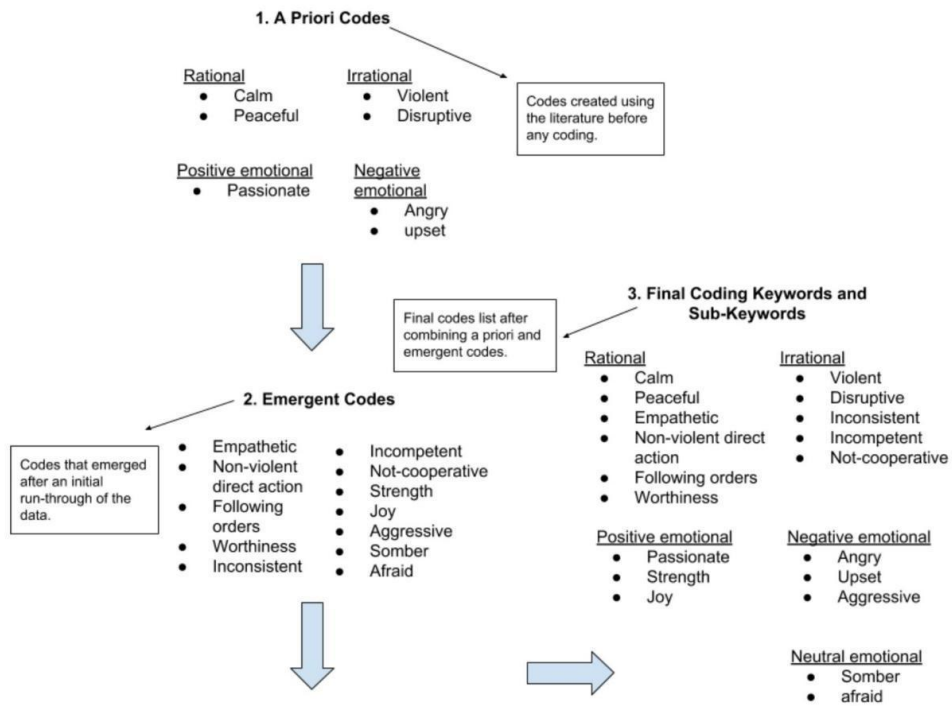


Figure 1.

The total number of times that protesters were framed as irrational was 9 times. The total number of times that government agents were framed as irrational was 14 times. In total, government agents were framed as 1.55 times more irrational than protesters (see Table 2). Excluding *Windspeaker* did not yield any significant differences (see Table 7).

The total number of times protesters were framed as emotional, in any capacity, was 17 times. The total number of times government agents were framed as emotional, in any capacity, was zero times. protesters were framed six times as positive emotional (see Table 3), six times as neutral emotional (see Table 4), and five times as negative emotional (see Table 5).

Windspeaker

Having discussed the frequencies of codes, I now move on to discuss the themes and main categories that emerged from each publication in order to answer the research question. Starting with *Windspeaker*, only four articles were selected from this publication. Of those four articles, the main theme that emerged was the rationality of protesters. This

was achieved mainly through depicting the protesters as calm and peaceful. For example, in a quote from an Indigenous protester, the protester says: “I remain calm inside because I know we’re doing the right thing for the right reasons” (“Police action imminent”, 2019). This quote serves to contradict the protest paradigm, which is what scholars call the media’s tendency to “marginalize movements for social change” by emphasizing the “negative, violent, and irrational elements of protest and protesters while legitimizing figures of authority” (Corrigall-Brown and Wilkes, 2012, p. 224). By emphasizing the calmness of the protester and their rational explanation for acting for the ‘right reasons,’ the quote does the opposite by legitimizing the protester.

Table 1: Comparison of times protesters and government agents are framed as rational

Newspaper	Protestors	Government Agents
Windspeaker (4 articles)	16	1
The Georgia Straight (5 articles)	6	3
The Vancouver Sun (11 articles)	8	6
Total	30	10

Table 2: Comparison of times protesters and government agents are framed as irrational

Newspaper	Protestors	Government Agents
Windspeaker	0	2
The Georgia Straight	3	8
The Vancouver Sun	6	4
Total	9	14

Table 3: Comparison of times protesters and government agents are framed as positive emotional

Newspaper	Protestors	Government Agents
Windspeaker	3	0
The Georgia Straight	1	0
The Vancouver Sun	2	0
Total	6	0

Table 4: Comparison of times protestors and government agents are framed as neutral emotional

Newspaper	Protestors	Government Agents
Windspeaker	3	0
The Georgia Straight	1	0
The Vancouver Sun	2	0
Total	6	0

Table 5: Comparison of times protestors and government agents are framed as negative emotional

Newspaper	Protestors	Government Agents
Windspeaker	1	0
The Georgia Straight	3	0
The Vancouver Sun	1	0
Total	5	0

Table 6: Comparison of times protestors and government agents are framed as rational using only *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Georgia Straight*

Newspaper	Protestors	Government Agents
The Georgia Straight	6	3
The Vancouver Sun	8	6
Total	14	9

Most of the photos from *Windspeaker* also contradict the protest paradigm. Pictures that may demonize protestors would perhaps include images of protestors holding weapons, looking visibly angry or engaging in violence. In contrast, *Windspeaker* framed the protestors as rational by highlighting their calmness, somberness, and peacefulness. Figure 2. demonstrates an example of this. In the picture, an Indigenous elder holds a mic while speaking. This picture was coded as somber, which falls into the category of positive emotional. Somber was included in the category of positive emotional because it is an emotional response that does not fall into the traditional protest paradigm. For example, the emotional displays of anger or frustration may serve to delegitimize protestors by showing that they are acting in aggressive or violent ways. The emotion of sadness, or of being somber, is quite different because it is more passive. Further, the way the elderly woman is holding the mic with two hands, as well as the hood of her coat covering the top of her eyes, depicts her as small and perhaps even frail. This serves to create a feeling

of empathy for the elderly woman, which again contrasts the protest paradigm.

Another photo that demonstrates the opposite of the protest paradigm is Figure 3. In this photo, two protesters hold a sign with the hashtag “#WetsuwetenStrong” and a drawing of an Indigenous woman. The woman on the right side of the photograph is smiling, which contradicts the stereotype of the negative and angry protesters.

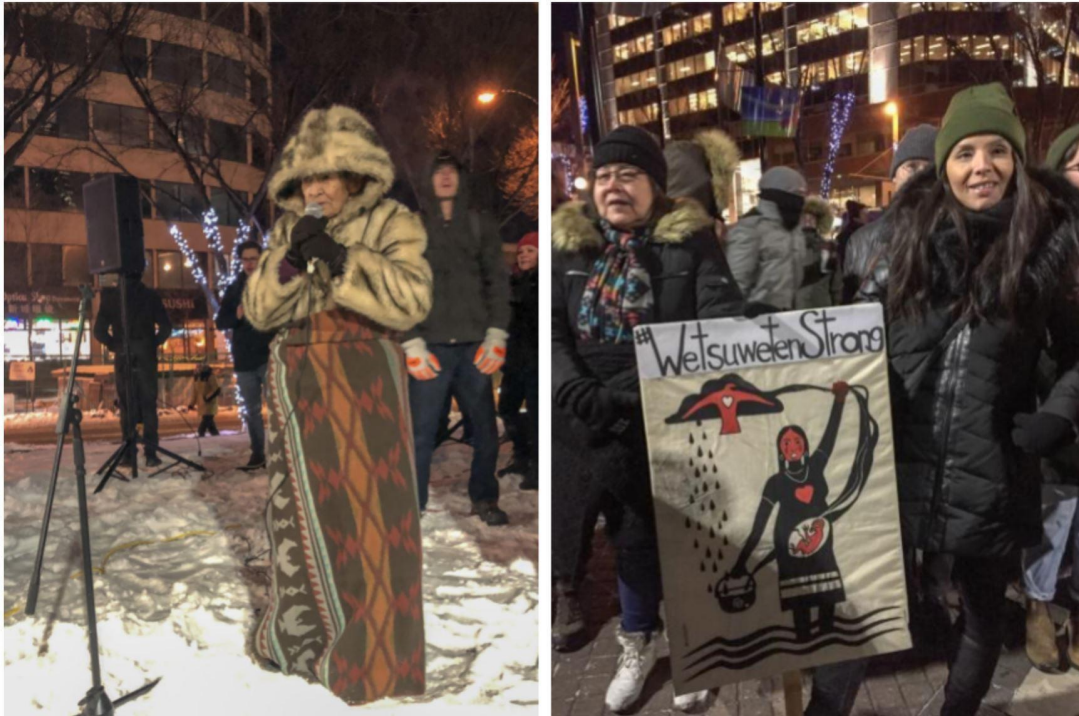


Figure 2 (left) and 3 (right). Images of protesters from a protest event in Edmonton. From “Edmonton demonstration in support of Wet’suwet’en”, <https://windspeaker.com/gallery/edmonton-demonstration-support-wetsuweten>.

The Georgia Straight

The Georgia Straight articles overall also contradicted the protest paradigm by not only showing the protesters as more rational than the government agents, but also by showing the government agents as more irrational than the protesters. While *The Georgia Straight* had more quotes from government agents than *Windspeaker*, which used no quotes or sources from government agents, *The Georgia Straight* still demonstrated the irrationality of the police and Coastal GasLink. Mainly, this was done by framing the police as violent by quoting Indigenous protesters or by including Tweets from protesters. For example, one Tweet from an article reads ““The @CoastalGasLink crew has been willfully

destroying our traplines, and today denied an #Unistoten matriarch from entering her own territory” (Smith, 2019).

While government agents were framed often as violent and disruptive in *The Georgia Straight*, there were also instances of them being framed as rational. This was often achieved through quoting the RCMP: “The RCMP has insisted on its website that it’s ‘impartial and we respect the rights of individuals to peaceful, lawful and safe protest’” (Smith, 2019). In this quote, the RCMP are framed as rational because they are depicted as following orders and respecting protesters.

While the articles from this publication overall represented protesters as rational, a recurring image in *The Georgia Straight* articles sampled for this study frames the RCMP as rational and a protester as angry (see Figure 4). This photo reaffirms the protest paradigm. The gender dynamics of this photo are also relevant. Oliver (1991) calls this the “equation rationality”, which is when rationality is linked with “logic, objectivity, and masculinity” (p. 340). Figure 4. in many ways appears to be an ideal type visualization of the ideology of rationality and emotionality. The male police officer is constructed as a calm and objective figure in relation to the angry and upset woman.



Figure 4. An RCMP officer and a protester conversing. From “Tensions rise over pipeline project” by Smith, 2019, <https://www.straight.com/news/1193306/tensions-rise-over-pipeline-project-following-truce-between-wetsuweten-hereditary>. Sub.Media.

The Vancouver Sun

Of all the publications sampled in this study, *The Vancouver Sun* had the most articles selected. Of the eleven articles used, protesters were framed paradoxically as both more rational and irrational than government agents.

From all three publications, protesters were framed most irrationally in *The Vancouver Sun*. I attribute this to the fact that the only two ‘opinion’ or ‘op-ed’ articles sampled in this study come from *The Vancouver Sun*. These two articles contained numerous instances of the irrational frame and were evidently pro-pipeline. Specifically, the protesters were framed in these articles as ineffective and inefficient. For example, in one of the articles, the author writes about the lack of unity or consensus among the protesters at a march. The following quote from the article stands out for its condescending tone in critiquing the protesters:

”There are no orcas on Wet’suwet’en territory.... There were those talking about diluted bitumen. There were those talking about eradicating capitalism. There was a whole bunch of discontent on display for Canadians to see yesterday.” (Palmer, 2019).

Of all the publications, *The Vancouver Sun* was most ‘unbiased’. This is evident in the fact that for frames of rationality and irrationality, protesters and government agents were only separated by two points each. The other publications had wider disparities between these figures. This can be in part owed to the fact that this publication tried to quote both parties to remain impartial.

Discussion

Overall, the framing of the Wet’suwet’en protests in some significant ways contradicted the traditional protest paradigm. In all three publications, the protesters were framed more often as rational than government agents. Interestingly, *Windspeaker* had the most instances of framing protesters as rational. This is perhaps because they wanted to show their support and solidarity with protesters. Another explanation is perhaps that the editors were aware of the stereotypes of irrational protesters and attempted to offset this by emphasizing the rationality and thus credibility of protesters. Further, only in *The Vancouver Sun* were protesters framed more irrationally than government agents. However, in total, government agents were still coded as more irrational than protesters. These findings contradict some aspects of the protest paradigm, which would predict the protesters to be framed as more irrational.

Yet, the protest paradigm was also affirmed in other ways. For example, Corrigan and Wilkes (2012) note that “the protest paradigm would suggest officials are more likely to be presented in a rational and unemotional way, whereas challengers are more likely to be presented as irrational and emotional” (p. 230). This was reaffirmed in the research, as protesters were framed as much more emotional than government agents, who were never framed as emotional. However, it is important to note that protesters being framed as emotional often had a neutral or positive impact, like when a protester was photographed somber or smiling.

Conclusion

Protesters often are represented in negative ways in the media and newspapers because of the protest paradigm. However, instances of framing protesters and social movements as irrational and emotional are not just confined to the media. Couch (1968) argues how the stereotype of the irrational and emotional protesters is found within social sciences as well. Further, Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2001) argue that while emotions were once “at the centre of the study of politics” they have since been abandoned by scholars in the “rationalistic, structural, and organizational models that dominate academic political analysis” (p. 2).

This research aims to challenge and expose the binary pair found in the media, society, and the field of sociology by grounding itself in feminist deconstruction theory. For feminists, deconstruction is a process that “exposes the political nature of categories”, that “challenges dichotomous, oppositional thinking”, and exposes the “practices and structures that establish, legislate, and maintain oppressive systems of hierarchy” (Mumby and Putnam, 1992, p. 468).

While some literature exists on deconstructing rationality and emotionality, these works are confined largely to the feminist theoretical sphere. Thus, this project aims to broaden the existing theory on framing by prodding researchers to consider the social roots of frames and how those frames may be problematic in the first place. This research also hopes to further sociological research and texts on social movements that have reaffirmed the problematic binary of rational/emotional.

Overall, protesters were framed as more rational than government agents, like the RCMP and Coastal GasLink. Government agents were also framed more irrationally than protesters. However, while protesters were often framed as emotional, government agents were not framed as emotional at all. This research suggests that while the media may not be reaffirming the protest paradigm by delegitimizing protesters through frames of irrationality, protesters are still framed as more emotional than government agents. This can mean several things for social movement actors, sometimes manifesting in advantageous

or disadvantageous ways. In other words, the framing of emotions is not always negative. Further, the Indigenous publication sampled in this paper contained the most instances of protesters being framed as rational, despite having the least number of articles sampled. This suggests that perhaps Indigenous editors are aware of the stereotypes of irrational protesters and attempted to counteract it.

While this research investigates how the media uses frames of rationality and emotionality, the point is not to reaffirm these concepts. Rather, the aim is to problematize these frames and ideologies in the first place and to further the research that investigates this relationship. As such, this research is grounded in feminist methodologies that aim not just to understand the social world for the purpose of research, but to also enact social change. The goal is that this research will further the conversation in society about how and why we frame certain individuals as irrational and emotional. Once we question these stereotypes and ideologies, we can understand just how ‘irrational’ it is in the first place to assume that human beings are anything less than sentient, emotional beings.

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