Storytelling techniques in protest reporting

A comparative analysis of narratives on the Ferguson unrest by AJE, BBCW and RT

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What is the whole world watching?

A comparative analysis of storytelling techniques in protest reporting in AJE, BBCW and RT

Madeleine Ceder

Abstract

In a global media environment characterized by change and conflict, narratives are especially useful to understand how the media form and distribute shared understanding of how the world works and who the important actors are. As the borders between local and global politics are blurred in the digital media landscape, protesters are in increased rate turning their placards to global broadcasters’ cameras, especially when political movements such as the U.S.-based Black Lives Matter movement get international counterparts. The scholarship concerned with the framework through which the media report protests argue the protest paradigm offers useful variables for the study of protests, while problematizing the lack of research on global broadcasting media. Global broadcasters, International Relations scholars argue, need to be understood as resources of soft power that distribute strategic narratives, but they have yet to develop a methodology for how broadcasts can be empirically studied. With this research gap as a point of departure, the chosen case study is the unrest in Ferguson in August 2014. A quantitative mapping and a comparative narrative analysis focusing on the narrative structure were conducted on 16 days of news bulletins from Al Jazeera English, BBC World News and RT. The results show several differences in the reports, the first concerns the amount of attention that was given to Ferguson by each broadcaster, where RT gave almost twice the amount of attention as the other two broadcasters. Further differences were found in the sources each broadcaster used and how they used violence as an entry-point to what their narratives where about, which in the case of AJE was the effects violence has on a society; BBCW’s narrative was of a political issue of high importance that concerns people of color; whereas RT’s narrative was about the militarization of the U.S. police force. The results imply the global broadcasters offer distinctive narratives, which through different storytelling techniques convey different attitudes and morals.

Keywords: Strategic narrative, protest, Ferguson, protest paradigm, global media, Al Jazeera English, BBC World News, RT
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List of Acronyms

AJE  Al Jazeera English
BBC  British Broadcasting Corporation
BBCW  BBC World News
CCTV  Close-circuit Television
CCNI  CNN International
GBN  Global Broadcasting Networks
RT  (formerly known as Russia Today)
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1. Introduction

We turn to news for confirmation of our beliefs, and explications of how things work and who makes them work. It is more than information we seek – we want comprehensive stories that structure reality. For this reason, narratives are especially relevant providers of shared understandings, values and culture in a world that is characterized by rapid change and chaos (Roselle et al 2014). Conflict is closely connected with power as it often takes form as a disruption of the status quo. As such, scholars interested in the relationship between power and media reporting have been keen to study conflicts in general and protests in particular as their mediated representations imply how politics are at play in and through the media. One such disruption took place in the suburb of Ferguson in August 2014 when Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer, and people took to the streets to protest. In the wake of Brown’s death and the weeks that followed, a lot of information was circulating in the news and on social media, but also different stories on what had happened and what was happening. Consequently, views on the issue appeared worlds apart1 and “Ferguson” has since become more than the name of a suburb in Missouri as it today is associated with Twitter hashtags, police brutality, violent conflict and the political movement Black Lives Matter.

Long before ‘black lives matter’ was heard at demonstrations, ‘the whole world is watching’ resonated at street protests in the U.S. First uttered 60 years ago, it communicates the conviction of protesters that the corporations or governments would be held accountable in the eyes of the world. It became the title of an influential book on the media and protests (Gitlin 1980), which pioneered in using framing analysis to study how the media presented protests. The resulting body of scholarship is associated with the concept of the protest paradigm. According to the paradigm, media coverage of protests relies on reporting techniques that delegitimize the protests and promote the perspectives of elites defending the status quo (see e.g. Gitlin 1980; McLeod & Hertog 1999; Chan & Lee 1984).

Over the past decades, and especially since the Arab Spring in 2011, it has become increasingly obvious that protesters raise their placards and voices not only to their own governments but also to cameras of media reporting to people all over the world. Roselle et al (2014:74) argue that the increase in international broadcasters and other institutions that promote globally shared cultures, point toward an increase in the importance of soft power.

Soft power is practiced through forming and distributing shared culture, values and understandings of international systems, political actors, and policies. As the new media ecology transforms ways of communication, so does the ways in which soft power moves in the global world. There are several cases where global broadcasting networks that claim to provide autonomous narratives, have been accused of “spreading propaganda” or “extremist narratives”. The latter was said of the global broadcaster Al Jazeera English (AJE), part of the Qatar-based and funded media network Al Jazeera, which is receiving threats of blockade from Gulf State and Israel that turn against the network for how they report and who their sources are, especially in terms of how they provided a voice for the voiceless in protests during the Arab Spring. Another global broadcaster is RT, the Kremlin-funded news provider, that is accused of being a propaganda device for Russian strategic narratives. It is also found to report on protests to destabilize western democracies (Robertson forthcoming), and known for a diversity in sources albeit sources’ inclination towards anti-Western point of views. Alongside these two controversial broadcasters is the well-established BBC World News (BBCW), the commercially financed extended arm of the British Broadcasting Corporation, reaching out with a global outlook on news, although reportedly with a thick British accent, speaking on behalf of UK interests and using elite sources (Dencik 2013).

What these broadcasters do is convert events and issues into plot to make them understandable and manageable. In structuring actors and actions into news stories, choices of what the story is and how it should be told are laden with political convictions of understandings and values. What makes these narratives so powerful is that compelling narratives can influence and persuade audiences that what is told is how events are to be understood. To what extend do global media report protests in faraway places – like Ferguson – in ways that may have more to do with soft power and strategic communication than with democratic representation? And how helpful is the protest paradigm in this setting? Will different elites and different status quos lead to different representation than previous studies? With this research gap as a point of departure, this study will use the protest in Ferguson in August 2014 as a case study of how strategic narratives are at deployed in the global media ecology.

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3 [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/world/europe/russias-rt-network-is-it-more-bbc-or-kgb.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/world/europe/russias-rt-network-is-it-more-bbc-or-kgb.html)
1.1. Research aim and research questions

This study is interested in how policies move in global media. With the events in Ferguson as a point of entry, the study will build on the theoretical framework of the protest paradigm, global media, and strategic narratives; and the empirical material of two weeks of news bulletins by AJE, BBCW and RT. The aim of the study is to analyse storytelling techniques by comparing reports of Ferguson by AJE, BBCW and RT in order to gain insight into the use of strategic narratives by global broadcasters from different political settings, and thereby contribute with empirical work to the body of research concerned with politics and communication in the contemporary media ecology.

To reach this aim, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How much attention was given to Ferguson by each broadcaster?

RQ2: Who were the participants in the reports? What sources were given the power of definition in the reports?

RQ3: How was the problem defined by the broadcasters?

RQ4: What are the narratives about in regard to the political/social concerns raised in the reports? What similarities and/or differences can be found in the attitudes towards the narratives?

As the element of comparison is crucial for this study, it will be central to locate similarities and/or differences in the broadcasters’ reports.

1.2. Expected outcome and limitations

To answer the first research question, a quantitative mapping will be conducted on all bulletins by the broadcasters within the chosen timeframe (explained in section 3.1.). The second, third and fourth RQ will be answered by conducting a narrative analysis on the news items on Ferguson. Given the cultural and institutional differences of the broadcasters in
focus, it is expected that their attitudes toward the narratives will differ, especially seeing as the unrest took place in the U.S., which both Britain (BBCW) and Russia (RT) have special relationships with. As narratives constitutes of components structured to make sense of events, and not mirror reality, narrative analysis was chosen to lay bare how structural choices of language (visual and verbal) work to convey a certain moral through the strategic narratives.

Based on research on protests (Robertson forthcoming), it is expected that BBCW, the mainstream broadcaster, will have more variables of the protest paradigm in their reporting, while AJE, “giving voice to the voiceless”, are expected to present a nuanced account of the events, emphasizing the protest issue. As RT reports from a “Russian perspective” it is expected that RT’s narrative will take the side of the protesters.

Due to the limited time and extent of this study, the role of race in the protests will not be premised in this study, that is, it will not be studied how race was presented in the narratives. However, as the protests following the killing of Michael Brown were critical for the realization of the Black Lives Matter movement, and because the concept of race has an essential part in the American discourse (Wasserman 2011), it is expected that race will be considered in all three narratives.

1.3. Outline of the paper
In the next section the theoretical framework of the study will be presented to provide further understanding of the connections between protests, global media, and strategic narratives, which this study builds on. Then comes a section presenting the material of the study, followed by an account of the methods and the analytical procedure. The results are then presented in five parts, each part concerning one research question (two parts on RQ4). Following, the results of the analysis will be discussed in relation to the literature on protest reporting and soft power. Finally, the concluding section will discuss the main points that can be drawn from the study, and their implications for the field of media studies.
2. Theoretical framework and literature review

This section will present the theoretical framework on which this study is built. The scholarly interest lies in how political actors in the global media ecology produces and distributes understandings of contentious events such as protests and what suggests about how power and communication align under globalization. Opening this section is a presentation of literature on protest and the media that will explore how protests have been mediated and consequently what previous research suggests about how Ferguson was reported. Following is a section on global media and broadcasting, to understand how power and communication can be studied in the global media ecology. Then comes a part on strategic narratives, which deliberates how strategic narratives can be used by political actors to gain power through communication and how narrative analysis is useful to understand how the structuring of narratives have power. Closing this section is a summarizing conclusion on what the literature tells us about how narrative of protests in a global media ecology can be studied.

2.1. Protest and the media

The interest of this study lies in power and communication, and protests makes a stimulating topic to study as protests are ways in which groups try to disrupt the political order. This section of the thesis will deal with what previous research say about how the media report on protest and what aspects of the reporting are significant. A focus on the protest paradigm and the function of violence will lead this section.

Studies on the relationship between protests and the media are often built on Habermas’ concept of the public sphere, which he defined as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (Habermas 1974/1964:49). Access to the public sphere is crucial for democracy, as it mediates between civil society and the state (DeLuca & Peeples 2002). The imagined space of the public sphere where matters of general interests are deliberated is to large extend mediated. The media is thus ideally considered to represent the public opinion, and to act as an arena where public opinion and the political order can voice their concerns. As such, the question of who is represented in the media concerns how the media distributes power, and whether it reinforces or challenges the status quo. Political movements out to challenge the status quo have thus come to rely on the media’s efficiency in telling and spreading stories which can provide space for movements to be heard. It is therefore in the power of the media to determine the public significance of the movement by either providing airtime for their events or by blanking them out (Gitlin
2.1.1. Protest frames and the protest paradigm

The media are not mirrors that reflect the real world, but rather it constructs the world from fragments, and through “selecting, presenting, structuring, and shaping” the media give these fragments meaning (Gitlin 1980:29). Therefore, the media hold power in politics as they both create and distribute meaning and can thereby form and limit the public’s understanding of events and their attitudes toward politics (ibid:9). For the world to be presented, events must be identified (named, defined, related to other events known to the audience) and assigned to a social context. The process of identifying and contextualizing is one of the most important through which events are made to mean by the media (Hall 1978:54). In his 1980’s book *The whole world is watching*, Todd Gitlin pioneered in using the concept of framing to study how the media presented protests. Building on Erving Goffman’s concept of framing, he argued that what makes the world understandable is a media frame. His definition of frames is “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (Gitlin 1980:6). It is in the way protests are covered by the media that they are framed, and that the amplification of the media frame can determine the public significance of the movement and eventually, the movement’s fate (ibid:3). This suggest that the closer a protest issue is to the core interests of the political elites, the more likely it is that their message is muted by the media or that media frames their message in a delegitimizing way.

Building on the idea of frames through which the media present protest, a large body of research suggests a protest paradigm that constitute “routinized patterns or implicit template for the coverage of social protests” (McLeod & Hertog 1999:319), which results in news media often weakening the protests’ legitimacy or obscure the social/political issues raised by the protests (Weaver & Scacco 2013:64). Chan and Lee (1984) argued that “journalists cover protests through a coherent ideological worldview” that becomes apparent with the analysis of how protests are reported. Accordingly, Weaver and Scacco found that right-leaning newspapers reported in favour of the status quo, while left-leaning outlets emphasized the protester’s perspective (Weaver & Scacco 2013:64).

Dardis (2006) developed a typology of devices that the media use when covering protests. These include focus on protesters engaging in violence and vandalism; emphasis on the conflict between protesters and the police; emphasis on “childlike” behaviour of the protesters or on how protesters dress/look; suggestions of public opinion polls that suggest
support of the protesters; *generalization* of public perception without statistical support; quoting *eyewitness accounts* to underline the deviance of the protesters; and relying on *official sources* such as “government agents, police, business leaders, lobbyists, bureaucrats, and public relations managers” for opinion rather than the protesters (Dardis 2006:121).

In a study from 2016, Shahin et al did a comparative analysis of different media systems to distinguish structural factors in which the protest paradigm was employed. Their study gave three conclusions. The first one is that if a nation has a history of legitimizing “informal political negotiations”, its news media was less likely to adopt the protest paradigm. The second conclusion was that it is the “ideological affiliation” of the government of the day that influences whether news organizations follow the protest paradigm. Their third conclusion was that there are some key features of the protest paradigm that are universally relevant elements of media coverage of protests, such as use of sources, referencing to protest issue, focus on violence and who is responsible for it (Shahin et al 2016:159). Based on these conclusions, they argue that the protest paradigm offers valuable features on which media content can be measured and analysed, rather than as marginalization devices. They urge scholars to study several of the key features of the protest paradigm, especially that of eyewitness accounts and public opinion which could be used in favour of the protesters, and the of violence accountability which can be blamed on the administration.

### 2.1.2. Previous research on police brutality and race

This study is limited to not study race or any of the issues that were raised in the protests in Ferguson. However, a few words need to be given to previous research of protest-related police brutality and protests concerned with racism. As mentioned above regarding the newsworthiness of violence, the police force connotes the opposites to violence (Hall 1978:68). It is thus difficult to report on the police as it has strong connotations to crime, and as such, the protest paradigm is legitimized in its tendency to report in favour of the police. Scholars concerned with the attribution of responsibility in crime and protest reporting have found that there are cases where the media can turn their report in favour of other groups. Such was the case in Argentina when protests on police brutality were presented in the media in favour of the protester by attributing accountability on police abusing their violence monopoly (Bonner 2009). In another case, the death of a protester by a police officer during protests against the police force in Italy turned the narrative from focusing on the violence performed by the protesters, to the institutional violence of the police. However, the focus in the media remained on the violence, and as the killed protester had been seen vandalizing a
car, he was partly blamed for his own death (Juris 2005).

The media has much power in attributing who should be held accountable and who is responsible for conflict or societal issues (Bonner 2009). Nevertheless, when race is part of the issue, the media and consequently the public opinion, tends to still act in favour of the oppressors rather than the oppressed (Hunt 1996). After the Rodney King beating in the early 1990’s, riots and violent protests tore the streets of LA. In a study of the televised news of the LA riots, Hunt found that by only having black people comment the events, the issue was framed as a black issue and consequently gained less public awareness and significance on the national agenda (ibid). An interesting contrast is found in Cottle’s study of the murder of Stephen Lawrence in the UK, where the police’s inadequate handling of the murder case evoked questions of institutional racism in the law enforcement, and in doing so made the media lift the issue of racism to the first page news (Cottle 2005). This suggests there are different ways to handle variables such as race, which could be connected to either national or issue-specific circumstances.

2.1.3. Protests in global media: screening violence
To reach a mass audience, activists engage in a struggle for visibility (Juris 2005). In his study on protests in the 1960’s, Gitlin found that as the media finds violence newsworthy and the movement is in need for attention, it resulted in the movement “playing into the hands of the media” by submitting to a growing need for militancy and violence in protests (Gitlin 1980). Subsequently, images of violence and violence clashes have been movement tools to attract the media, while at the same time, violent performances can be decontextualized and reinserted into hegemonic narratives, that seek to marginalize protesters as criminals or “deviants” (Gitlin 1980; Hall 1978). Images of violence are in these narratives icons of destruction and the protesters are reported as “the savage other” (Juris 2005). A focus on violence can thus contribute to a “distinction between the legitimate peaceful protests and the criminal violence of the radical minority”.

DeLuca and Peeples (2002) introduce the term “public screen” as a supplement to the public sphere, which they claim is necessary for understanding the political scene of the global media ecology. The term “public screen” is used to emphasize that the most important public discussions take place via television or computer screens (DeLuca & Peeples 2002:131). They argue activist of today recognize the TV screen as “the contemporary shape of the public sphere”, where images and spectacles produce everyday life. The public screen is meant to help scholars account for the “changes that have transformed the rules and roles of
participatory democracy” (DeLuca & Peeples 2002:127). Furthermore, significant for the public screen is how it allows violence to function as a type of communication, which was ruled out in the public sphere (ibid). Their study focused on symbolic violence, which is directed toward property designed to attract media attention, in the Seattle WTO protests (ibid:138). Following the idea of “if it bleeds, it leads” (Kerbel 2000 in DeLuca & Peeples 2002), the news is about what is new and out of the ordinary, and as such, the public screen offer productive possibilities. Symbolic violence and uncivil disobedience worked together to draw the attention of the media to the protest site, encouraging heavy police response, which makes “compelling images” for the screen. Mass-mediated representations of violence are crucial to protest dynamics, as mass media are in constant search of sensational stories and images. While everyday protests go unnoticed, the images of burning cars and militarized riot police are instantly broadcasted through global networks (Juris 2005:416). Violence is considered by Juris (2005) to be a “historically developed cultural form of meaningful action”. Since the 1960s, activists have learned the importance of images, and protests are seen as an “occasion not for warfare but for imagefare” (DeLuca & Peeples 2002). DeLuca and Peeples argue that the tactics of performative violence are necessary ingredients for compelling the whole world to watch (ibid).

2.2. Global media and broadcasting

Technological developments in recent decades have resulted in changes in all aspects of society as technologies “physically shrink the world while simultaneously mentally expanding it, producing a vast expansion of geographical consciousness” (DeLuca & Peeples 2002). This expansion and process of complex change is often characterized as interconnectedness and is studied in different disciplines with different focal points. Although there is disagreement on what these changes are leading to, there is consensus on that the globalization of communication has had a central role in creating this sense of interconnectivity. As Roger Silverstone argue “if it can be said that we live in a global world (…) then it is because we can see and hear the global world on our screens and speakers on a daily basis” (Silverstone 2007:136). This section concerns what global media is, why global media should be studied when one’s interest lies in power and communication, and what the main challenges of studying global media are.
2.2.1. The global media ecology

What drives globalization is technological developments that have resulted in an *interconnectedness* where politics, institutions and actors connect across borders (Thussu 2007:1). The global world is characterized by movements, or flows, of people, power and information. The concept of *media ecology* describes how technologies shape the media landscape and media climate, which “exist in a complex set of relationships within a specific balanced environment” (Miskimmon et al 2017:10). The term global media ecology will be used to describe the media climate in the contemporary environment as a result to these technological developments. How power and information moves in society is tied to the media ecology, and since the media ecology has changed so have power relations (ibid). The global media ecology consists of multiple channels and flows of information that move in high speed and in individualized manners (Thussu 2007:1). Technologies enable a plurality of images that can diversify cultures and bridge distance between the local and the global, but some scholars (see e.g. Wasserman 2011) fear this ecology can lead to homogenization that dismantles bridges.

Since the global media ecology is blurring distinctions between what is local and global, scholars (see e.g. Dencik 2013; Wasserman 2011) argue a global focus in media research is needed to understand the contemporary world. As the material that is being study has changed, previously gained knowledge needs to be tried for its universal importance. The field stands with the important task to empirically try previous concepts and paradigms on the new media ecology to test their validity (Sparks 2013). Overall, the lack of empirical studies on global media is the prevailing stance of the field. Additionally, as some studies show Western hegemonic relations of race and gender are still being reproduced in global media (Parameswaran 2002:312 in Wasserman 2011), it is essential that scholars have a critical approach to examine global media.

2.2.2. Global broadcasting networks

Central to both globalization and power is television, which stands out in reach, imagery and cultural impact (see e.g. Höijer 2004; Thussu 2007:18; Robertson 2012). Television, Dencik (2013) argues, has been crucial for narratives of political space, and Robertson (2015b) adds that in the global media ecology television has become essential to how people connect to news (Robertson 2015b:14). The media’s presentations of reality are by most people considered reality itself (Höijer 2004), and as such, scholars of global media study television
to see how the world “watches, writes and reads about itself today” (Cheah 2013).

The digital technologies that defines the global media ecology has enabled a wider range of television news networks that distribute (mainstream) flows and contra-flows of narratives which constitute the battlefield for soft power to be manifested (Robertson 2015a:24). Scholars were optimistic about these contra-flows that promised to empower marginalized cultures (Thussu 2007:3), but recent studies of these young networks imply their approach might not be so neutral after all (see e.g. Robertson 2015a). Again, empirical and comparative research on how broadcasting networks present news is exceedingly sought-after.

This study will look at three different broadcasting networks that represent different positions on the map of global news providers: Al Jazeera English, BBC World News, and RT. All three are transnational actors who report in English, but they come from distinct political and institutional backgrounds. A declaration of why these three were chosen will take place in section 3.1. but a short presentation of each broadcaster will now follow.

*Al Jazeera English* (AJE)

In 2006, AJE joined the growing Al Jazeera Media Network of news channels that had started ten years prior with Al Jazeera Arabic, which was the first independent news channel in the Arab world. The network claims to be a “truly global network” with its 70 bureaus around the world, staff from over 70 nationalities, and its broadcasting that reaches over 130 million households in more than 100 countries. The Al Jazeera network announces its principles and values inspire its staff “to be challenging and bold and to provide a voice for the voiceless”. It aims at challenging the “established narratives” and to offer global audiences an “alternative voice that put people back in the centre of the news agenda”. Claiming AJE is reshaping global media, its websites argues Al Jazeera correspondents find stories that matter and are “the voice of the people”\(^4\).

With its clear code of ethics, AJE is said to “recognize diversity” and to “report every news item as a local story, rather than foreign news” (Robertson 2015a:29-30). This, perhaps, is why scholars call Al Jazeera a “prominent example of contra-flows in global media” (Thussu 2007:22-23). Robertson (2015a) interviewed several Al Jazeera correspondents and found that a key strategy of their work to “reverse the flow” is to talk to people on the street about issues, rather than having elites give their view on ongoing events (Robertson 2015a:30.

The English channel is funded with state grants, and is regulated by Ofcom (the UK Office of Communications) (ibid:29).

**BBC World News (BBCW)**

BBCW is one of the four ways in which audiences around the world can encounter BBC internationally. BBCW is “the BBC’s commercially funded international news and informational television channel”. Broadcasting runs 24/7 and is available in more than 200 countries and 300 million households worldwide, with hourly bulletins broadcasting “a diverse mix” of news, business, sport and weather information. With an estimated weekly audience of 84 million it is the BBC’s biggest television service. Funded in 1991, BBCW is “at the heart of the BBC’s commitment to global broadcasting”, claiming BBCW not only delivers in-depth analysis of breaking news but looks at what and why the stories behind the news are happening. BBCW is based and broadcasts from London⁵.

As one of the world’s oldest global broadcasters, BBCW claims to report news with a global outlook and to cover news from a global perspective. Often positioned and mentioned together with its U.S. equal, CNN International, BBCW is considered an extension of BBC in terms of being a mainstream broadcaster as its values, credibility and relevance is shaped by its British base (Dencik 2013). Set in a specific cultural context, a BBCW correspondent said the differences between the domestic and the global channels are merely cosmetic, and that the BBC speaks in a collective voice (ibid). What differentiates BBCW the most from AJE and RT is that it is known to be centred around elites’ point of view, and is driven by the newsworthiness of conflict and violence (ibid.). Like AJE, BBCW is regulated by Ofcom.

**RT**

RT, formerly known as Russia Today, launched its first international news channel in December 2005, and is a “global, round-the-clock news network”. It has news channels in English, Arabic and Spanish that broadcast from Moscow, with an American hub in Washington DC for RT America, and one in London for RT UK. RT is available in more than 100 countries and reaches 70 million people weekly. Its largest regional audience resides in Europe, with approximately 36 million people watching each week, and was one the first news channel to reach one billion views on YouTube in 2013. Its profile claims RT creates “news with an edge for viewers who want to Question More”, and covers stories overlooked

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⁵ [http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/whatwedo/aroundtheworld](http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/whatwedo/aroundtheworld)  
by mainstream media, offering its audience alternative perspectives on current affairs with a Russian viewpoint on major global events⁶.

The Russian president Vladimir Putin has claimed that RT is a project that initially aimed to “break the Anglo-Saxon monopoly on the global information streams” (Robertson 2015a:27). Today, its correspondents claim to work on “improving the Russian image abroad” and to “offer a Russian perspective on global events” (ibid:26). In view of some scholars (see e.g. Roselle 2017:56-57) this aim to provide a Russian perspective resonates with the “great power narrative” that the Soviet Union projected during most of the 20th century as Russia and the U.S. claimed great power status in a bipolar world. The two nations were competing over ideological differences and much of this competition was fought through each nation’s power narratives (Roselle 2017:57). Claiming, however, to be an autonomous non-profit organization, RT is considered to provide a contra-flow to the mainstream flows coming from Western networks such as CNN and BBCW (Thussu 2007:12). RT is financed by federal funding (Robertson 2015a:26).

2.2.3. Politics in global media – a soft power era

Following the notion that global media could reproduce hegemonic ideologies of the west, the relationship between politics and global media will now be further discussed. As news broadcasters are central actors in the production and provision of shared meanings, global news broadcasters are equipped with the power to provide a sense of belonging in the world. Included in this task is also providing a political space and the possibilities that that space can offer. The concept of hegemony is helpful here as it explains the struggle of ideologies where groups try to win dominance over other groups by reinforcing their policies and practices on them (Gramsci 1971 in Hunt 1996:17). The media is a primary provider of an arena where such struggles can take place. Again, the changes in the media ecology have changed the process of democracy as a “global space of politics” has emerged (Dencik 2013). Consequently, scholars argue politics can no longer be contained within national borders (Robertson 2012), which further urges scholars who are interested in politics to study how meaning is made and shared in the global media ecology.

The global media ecology has scholars of international relations shifting their focus from hard power (using military and economic means influence others) to soft power, which is a set of resources that has “the ability to influence other through the attraction of culture,

⁶ https://www.rt.com/about-us/
values and policies” (Roselle et al 2014). This has to do with media as soft power concerns “the ability to create consensus around shared meaning” (ibid), and the media sets the stage for that. Roselle et al (2014) argue that the concept of *strategic narratives* (which will be further discussed in section 2.3.) is highly relevant and helpful to understand how soft power is displayed and distributed in the global media ecology. Narratives, they argue, is a universal way of making sense of the world and the actors in it (ibid), and it is in the story-telling techniques used by soft power resources that scholars can gain knowledge on how the political struggle of meaning-making in the global media ecology is played out.

### 2.3. Narrative analysis and strategic narratives

Following up on the notion that global broadcasting networks are political actors in their own right, and that soft power is manifested through these broadcasting networks, this section will deal with narratives, and strategic narratives specifically, as scholars argue it is through strategic narratives the complexity of political and social relations are organized and distributed (see e.g. Miskimmon et al 2017:viii). Storytelling is a universal way of making sense of society, and many argue that we understand the world as narrative creatures (De Fina & Johnstone 2015). Narratives, Robertson (2017) argues, are made in context and the study of narratives and can thus provide insight into both societal power dynamics and into how actors make meaning of events and actions (Robertson 2017:124). Connecting to the how struggle of hegemonic knowledge, strategic narratives is where power and communication align in a global world: it is through the use of strategic narratives that political actors try to win over counter-narratives by forming and distributing understandings of the world, of policies, and of other political actors (Miskimmon et al 2017:1).

Before further discussing the concept of strategic narratives and how studying them can be useful to understand politics in the global media ecology, the concept of narratives as structures of meaning and power will first be presented.

### 2.3.1. Narratives: structures of meaning and power

A narrative can be any kind of text that appears in storied form, that is, with sequence and consequence as events have been selected, organized, and connected (Riessman 2005). Additionally, as narratives answer to a stimulus in the social context within which it occurs, narratives serve the function of evaluating events as meaningful and to establish some point of personal interest (Labov & Waletzky 1997/1976:29).
How narratives are viewed by scholars today is inspired by Vladimir Propp’s (1968) important work on the narrative functions of folktales. Building on Propp’s work, Labov and Walenzky’s (1997/1976) structuralist approach to narratives and narrative analysis lead the structuralist tradition of narrative analysis. Central to this approach is the assumption that researchers must distinguish between the series of events (the fabula) and the story told by the author (the syuzhet) (De Fina & Johnstone 2015:153). A narrative, defined with this distinction, is a specific text where a sequence of clauses is said to recapitulate a sequence of events that have occurred (Labov & Waletzky 1997/1976:12-13).

Scholars speak of a “narrative turn” (see e.g. Riessman 2005:1; Miskimmon et al 2017:5) that has led to an increased interdisciplinary interest in narratives as vital in constructing identities (both individual and institutional) and creating shared understandings of their place in the world. For scholars within the structural approach, this means a focus on how stories are told and what can be learned from the story-telling techniques or narrative structures behind the stories. Labov and Walentzky (1997/1976) have isolated the elements of narratives and present them as an analytical framework for analysis of narratives, which builds on their main argument that clauses can serve two functions: referential or evaluative. Referential clauses tell what the story is about by referring to events and actors as perceived by the narrator, and evaluative clauses tell why the narrator is telling the story by highlighting the point of the story. The overall structure of narratives includes an abstract that informs of what is coming; an orientation informing of the place, time, setting and participants; a complication/complicating action describing the series of events; the evaluation explaining the importance of the narrative; a resolution informing of the results of the narrative; and the coda, which ends the narrative.

Robertson (2017) uses Chatman’s (1978) distinction between story (the content of the narrative, “the narrative what”) and discourse (how the narrative is told, “the narrative how”) to separate the referential clauses that constitute the content (story), and the evaluative clauses that convey meaning (discourse). The focus of Robertson’s narrative approach lies on the narrative how: how the world (as viewed by the narrator) is structured and how it suggests the relations of things and who makes it work (Robertson 2015a:7). Miskimmon et al (2017:7) add that focus on the narrative structure helps identify actors and actions as well as how past (orientation/setting), present (complicating action) and future (resolution) construct a temporality that reinforces the narrator’s evaluation of events.

The evaluation of the narratives reveals the narrator’s attitude towards the narrative and is told to establish a point of personal interest in relation to what is being told. To achieve
certain understandings, narrators structure narratives according to their recount of the past – which stresses the important point that narratives refract the past, not mirror it (Riessman 2005). Hence, narratives must be understood as produced understandings of reality as political actors use narratives to manifest their interpretation of the past and present, and consequently, their interpretations of the world, its actors and how policies are to be understood. Therefore, Miskimmon et al (2017:6) argue, to study how narratives are formed and projected can provide understanding of the complexity of persuasion in international politics.

2.3.2. Strategic narratives

It is the idea that narratives can integrate facts and values in strategic persuasion that makes narratives power resources (Snyder 2015:171 in Miskimmon et al 2017:4). Price (2015) argues that political actors engage in strategic narratives because they genuinely believe narratives can have power (in Miskimmon 2017:25), and similarly, narratives can be used to challenge power (Steele 2010 in Miskimmon 2017:5). Compelling narratives, scholars argue, are soft power resources as they can draw people to certain actors, events and policies, and as such, strategic narratives address the flows of ideas in the international system (Roselle et al 2014). Robertson (2010) emphasises the central role of news broadcasters as distributors of powerful narratives as the ritual of consuming news are universal and central to how people make sense of novelties as well as confirm what they already know (Robertson 2010:17). Political actors use strategic narratives as sense-making devices to promote their interests, values and aspirations for the world order, and thereby strategic narratives can forge shared meanings of “who we are” and “what kind of world order we want” (Miskimmon et al 2017).

The concept of strategic narrative is thus argued to help scholars understand central issues connected to soft power and communication in international relations today (Roselle et al 2014). Miskimmon et al name three main forms of strategic narratives through which political actors attempt to create shared meaning: strategic narratives about international systems; strategic narratives about policies; and strategic narratives of identity (Miskimmon et al 2017:2). System narratives are about the international order, how the world is structured and how the system works. Policy or issue narratives seek to influence developments of polices and set political actions in a context, explaining who the important actors are, what the conflict is, and how the issue can be solved. Identity narratives try to project identities on political actors or organizations, as well as define their values and what their goals are. These strategic narratives function on different levels, but are inextricably linked. For example, a policy narrative can support a system narrative, and an identity narrative can lend credibility
and reinforce to issue narratives. It is important to remember that these narratives are in constant negotiation and contestation, but that to study strategic narratives can offer a point of entry into understanding how these power struggles work in a complex media ecology (Roselle et al 2014).

There are different approaches to analyse strategic narratives, with the structuralist approach being described as the one that goes deepest. Scholars from this approach argue it is not enough to study what is being said, but that it is in the techniques of storytelling that structures and creates narratives that appear natural (Robertson 2017:136). To understand how power and communication align in the global media ecology, it is therefore crucial to study both the narrative story, which carries themes and values, and the narrative discourse, which structures actors and temporality in a way to convey preferred understandings of systems, issues and identities. What is more, to understand how different political actors use strategic narratives to persuade their audiences, comparative analysis is crucial.

The literature review has showed scholars interested in protest reporting problematize the lack of how devices identified as the protest paradigm are used by global broadcasters when reporting protests (see e.g. Weaver & Scacco 2013:65). It is primarily the devices of problem definition, focus on violence and the use of sources that is expected to be universally used to represent protests in news. These same elements – problem definition and speaking actors – are used by scholars interested in international relations to describe how power moves in strategic narratives in the global media ecology. While these scholars argue that global broadcasters are tools for strategic narratives, they provide very little methodology to how these narratives can be studied. This study will therefore take the protest reporting devices suggested by the body of research invested in the protest paradigm and apply them to a structural narrative analysis approach in order to study how global broadcasters use strategic narratives to report protests.
3. Materials and method

With the theoretical framework and literature reviewed, this section will present and discuss the material, methods and analytical procedure of the study at hand. First off is a presentation of the primary material, which constitutes of television news bulletins broadcasted by AJE, BBCW and RT (earlier presented in section 2.2.2.). Following the material, the methods will be explained and a walk-through of the analytical procedure will be obtained. This section will close with reflections on the choice of methods, and the question of validity and reliability in a qualitative study.

Before moving on to the study it needs to be stated that this study has been conducted as part of the Screening Protest research project. The author was an intern in the project while this study was conducted, and this study is therefore independent yet part of the context of the project. The code book of this study builds of the code book of the project, for both coding the items and the narrative analysis, but the code questions were modified to suit the operationalization of the aim and research questions of this study. While contributing to the larger project, this study reflects independent methodological and empirical work.

3.1. Material

As the literature shows, the media is a powerful institution that distributes strategic narratives that shape our perception of conflicts, and as presented above, television is essential for disseminating images and narratives in a global world where audiences routinely look to news broadcasters for explanations of what the world looks like and their role in that world (Robertson 2010:17). For this reason, three well-established global broadcasting networks were chosen for their role as distributors of narratives, to constitute the empirical material of this study. As the research on protest and media has shown that mainstream media is more likely to report protests in favor of the elites and the political order, it was important that one of the chosen broadcasters was from the tradition of mainstream media, and BBCW was thus chosen. On the other hand, the research on global media and politics argue the flows of information coming from the younger broadcasting networks could challenge the mainstream media with different narratives, and consequently it was important that these new media outlets were represented in the material. Furthermore, as scholars argue these challenging

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7 The project is funded by the Swedish Research Council and directed by Professor Alexa Robertson at Stockholm University (IMS). The official website is to be found at http://screeningprotest.com
networks are perhaps more different from each other than from the mainstream (see e.g. Robertson 2015a), two different networks from this category were chosen; AJE and RT. The literature on global media narratives suggests it likely that the profiles of the distributors of narratives will prepossess the narrative structure. As it is argued that these broadcasters may be outlets of strategic narratives and soft power resources for the nations with which they are connect, these three broadcasters were specifically chosen as they represent different relations with the U.S. These are broadcasters that report in English, but nevertheless come from different cultural, economic and institutional positions. Thus, the broadcasters were chosen as AJE is allegedly reporting from the perspective of people, that is, a non-elite perspective in regard to protests as a legit form of disruption; BBCW as is comes from a long social, economic and political close bond with the U.S. and thereby supposedly the U.S. elite as well; and RT because it is said to report from a Russian perspective and is as such likely to provide a non-elite perspective against the U.S. government, and offer a non-elite perspective for different reasons than its counter-mainstream peer AJE.

The primary material of the study is the news program from the main evening broadcasts for European viewers: AJE’s 8PM broadcast, BBCW’s 8PM broadcast, and RT’s 7PM broadcast, from August 10 to August 25 of 2014. Table 1 shows the proportion of the primary material. Broadcasts were retrieved through the Media Library used in the Screening Protest project.

**Table 1. Distribution of material on AJE 8PM, BBCW 8PM and RT 7PM from 10-25th of August 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total # of bulletins</th>
<th>% bulletins of total sample</th>
<th>Total # of items</th>
<th>% of all items</th>
<th>Total length of all bulletins (hh:mm:ss)</th>
<th>% length of all bulletins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>45,53</td>
<td>14:18:46</td>
<td>51,73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBCW</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>24,85</td>
<td>06:04:03</td>
<td>21,93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>29,62</td>
<td>07:17:07</td>
<td>26,33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>27:39:56</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In total there were 48 bulletins, one bulletin per day and broadcaster. AJE’s 8PM bulletin is twice the length of the other broadcasters’, but as it is their main news hour for their European audience, it was decided that it would be used in this study. Similarly, BBCW shares its weekend 8PM bulletin with sport news, which shortens the bulletin concern with world news to its half.

The period to analyze was decided based on the significant dates which frame the August unrest of 2014: protests started on August 10 in the direct aftermath of Michael Brown’s death, unfolded and escalated until August 25, the day of Brown’s funeral, which marks the end of the August unrest. The pilot study conducted prior the present study showed that while items on Ferguson continued to be aired during the year after the chosen time frame of this study, the 10-25th of August is the period with the highest density of items. It was decided to choose a small sample as it allows a detailed and in-depth analysis of all items (Robertson 2016), which aligns with the purpose of the method chosen for this study that will soon be discussed. First, however, a short but necessary note on Ferguson. Ferguson is associated with different understandings of what the protests and the protest issue were about. Throughout the study and this thesis, Ferguson is used as a placeholder for the events that are being studied, but at the end of the study the ambition was to answer what “Ferguson” was about according to the broadcasters. As this study is interested in conflict, the Ferguson unrest of August 2014 was chosen as the object to be studied since it is a controversial event in contemporary history that caught global media attention. In this sense, it is considered to be a case study of protest reporting as a case study means to choose the object to be studied based on the fact that it represents “an integrated system” (Stake 1994:236). Therefore, it is the questions of what the narratives of Ferguson are about and how these narratives are structured that binds together the two theoretical anchors of this study: how protests as a form of disruption of the political order is presented in the media, and from which point of view global broadcasters present these news stories.

3.2. Methods
The research questions concern how much attention was given by the broadcasters, who the participants were and what sources were used, the problem definition, and what attitudes were embedded in the narratives. For the numbers required to answer the first research question, a quantitative mapping was chosen. Following up on the concept of narrative as events turned into plots, the main method chosen for this study is narrative analysis, which is an approach to
analyze “diverse kinds of text which have in common a storied form” (Riessman 2005). As meaning is made in context, studying narratives describe how the world is structured and how it structures “the wider play of power, culture and contention” (Robertson 2015a:7).

Quantitative mapping
As opposed to the qualitative nature of narrative analysis, the method chosen for the material overview was a quantitative mapping. To get technical answers to answer how much attention was given to Ferguson by each broadcaster, this quantitative mapping built on research techniques often associated with content analysis, which is considered ideal for structuring and quantifying elements of unstructured media texts (Krippendorff 2013:46). To look at the material in the context of the bulletins, a quantitative mapping was considered helpful to provide details on the coverage.

Narrative analysis
Analyzing narratives offers in-depth qualitative-oriented analyses of social issues (De Fina & Johnstone 2015:160), helping the analyst seeing nuances and “the particular and the specific” which would be overlooked using quantitative method (Robertson 2017:124). As the literature in section 2.3. shows, the power of narratives lies in how it suggests the relation of things and who makes it work, and thus that the study of how narratives convey these suggestions reveal the narrator’s attitude towards the narrative and what the strategic aim of the narrator is. Because there are great variations of how the attitude is manifested, from overt to covert (Robertson 2017:125), an approach that focuses on the narrative how will be helpful to attune to nuances and details which would be difficult to detect using other methods. Another benefit of a structural narrative analysis is the possibility to engage with the text on several levels, both the denotative and connotative, by posing questions to the text.

The limitation of narrative analysis is that it is time-consuming and thus limits the researcher to a smaller sample. However, as this study is interested in the nuances in the narratives which differentiates (or show similarities) the broadcasters from each other, an in-depth analysis is preferred. Therefore, narrative analysis was chosen over framing analysis which has been the common choice among media scholars who are interested in how the media present protests. While framing can evoke narratives (Miskimmon et al 2017), framing analysis is better suited for larger samples of material which the researcher wishes to generalize.
3.3. The analytical procedure

Before explaining the analytical procedure, a comment must be made on the research strategy of this study, which is an abductive strategy to retain answers from the material. The abductive strategy is different from other strategies in that it can answer both “what” questions, aimed at finding a description of the studied, and “why” and “how” questions, aimed at finding a deeper understanding of the studied (Blaikie 2010: 89). This strategy is used to “investigate the social world and social actors: their construction of reality, their way of conceptualizing and giving meaning to their social world” (ibid: 19). Further, it uses a “bottom up” approach in trying to present answers that reflect the social actors’ point of view (ibid: 92). The task of the researcher is to discover the reality embedded in the language provided by the social actors, and then re-describe their motives and meanings in social science discourse.

Now the analytical procedure will be explained. Code questions and code sheets for both the quantitative mapping and narrative analysis can be obtained in Appendix 1.

Coding the bulletin

To find how much attention was given, the reports on Ferguson needed to be put in context of the entire bulletins. This is done as it says something about how each broadcaster has valued the event in Ferguson, given that all broadcasters had access to the same images at the same time and made an active choice whether to present Ferguson or not. All bulletins from the chosen timeframe, broadcasters and news hours are watched to find the items and headlines, if any. This level codes for information about the bulletin and the item: length, headline, number of items in bulletin and in which order the item on Ferguson is in (if any).

Decoding the narrative

The structure of the narrative analysis followed the analytical framework presented by Labov and Waletzky (1997/1976), with the added focus on the narrative how as suggest by Robertson (2017) to enable the decoding of the evaluation. When the items on Ferguson had been sifted out from the bulletins, they were transcribed with each sentence numbered for transparency in the coding procedure, and comments on the footage of the items were noted alongside the transcript. Throughout the coding, comments on whether an act, participant or setting was shown or described was noted to aid the analysis of the evaluation. Appendix 1 provides the code sheet which is how the transcript with numbered lines were then compartmentalized into narrative components based on the lines’ narrative function.
Headlines were written down as they are considered important indicators for the preferred meaning, and as such they replaced abstract from Laboy and Waletzky’s structure as their function is similar. The orientation of the narrative concerns segments and sentences that set the conflict in context regarding the place of the conflict, the participants involved and the setting/equilibrium before the conflict. The question of place was asked for to see if Ferguson was about the suburb in Missouri or used as a placeholder much like in the present study. The participants recognized in the narratives informs of who the issue concerns and of how these actors should be perceived and understood in relation to the issue and each other.

How the setting of the conflict is described has implications on whether the protest issue is legitimized or not as it provides explanation of the protest issue. The setting further implies the nature of the conflict or issue in terms of it being a cultural, social or economic issue, and whether it concerns the local community or the world. Segments concerning the acts that destabilized the equilibrium where coded as complicating actions, and as the reporting covered the same events over several days, an additional question of what happened next was asked. Connected to the complicating actions are the element of violence and the protest issue that, as discussed in 2.1.1, are important variables through which the media can delegitimize the protests. The resolution implies the purpose and goal of the conflict, but can also suggest who should be held accountable for the issue or conflict. As such, the resolution informs of whose aim the narrative conveys. Whose voice aim or voice is heard is further suggest in sources (speaking actors), which is coded for every person who was seen speaking or quoted by the anchor/reporter. As Hunt (1999) had found ethnicity/race to be an important aspect of the sources used in reporting on racial issues, all speaking actors were coded for their ethnicity (further discussed in 3.4. and explained in appendix 1).

The point of view, or evaluation of the narrative is consciously analyzed last. Although the evaluation rarely is expressed explicitly in narratives there are several ways through which it can be inferred. This was done by looking at the notes commenting how content was mediated, that is, the narrative discourse, which could include direct statements, repetition, symbolic action, statistics, and the juxtaposition of verbal and visual communication. Here, the comments on whether components were shown or described were helpful as who is shown or described and who shows or describes has been given the power of representation and/or definition. Accumulated, these structural choices privilege certain understandings of the narrative, and thus suggest the attitude of the narrative.

As narratives are diverse in nature, not all items contained all narrative elements, nor did they necessarily occur in the sequence presented here. However, Labov and Waletzky
(1997/1976) argue that because there is no uniform narrative structure, variations in the narrative structure can say a lot about the function of the narrative.\textsuperscript{8} Once the items had been coded, all items were analyzed together as an overarching narrative and it is the results of the final analysis that will be presented in the results section.

3.4. Reflections on validity, the methods and the material

Qualitative research is often criticized as producing results that are biased to the researcher’s subjectivity and not able to generalize. As the analysis is conducted on a small sample, both in terms of broadcasters and in number of bulletins, the results from this study cannot be generalized. However, generalizability is seldom the aim with qualitative research as qualitative methods tend to focus on the deep meaning and structure of one case, rather than finding a sample characteristic of a phenomenon. Rather, Robertson (2017:127) argues, narratives are endlessly diverse. Labov and Walentzy (1997:37) argue narratives are not uniform, and although enough studies on the functions of narrative elements have created a “norm” for the narrative structure, it is the small, often deeply embedded, differences and significances in which narratives are manifested, which is what scholars of narrative research are interested in.

One problem with narrative analysis is that the in analysing narratives, the researcher creates its own narrative in selecting what should be highlighted in presenting the results (Robertson 2017:140). To avoid subjectivity, consensual validation was sought in discussion with the supervisor of the thesis and in discussion with two double-coders who did a small coding of selected Ferguson items from each broadcaster. Due to the length of the items, the coders were asked to code only two of the three different items. A codebook (appendix 1) was designed to provide reliability. After their coding, a discussion was held between the coders and the author where differences in the analysis were deliberated. The analysis of the narrative structure (the complicating action, setting and resolution) was mainly the same by all coders, however, some differences were found in what the coders found the narrative content to mean. However, as the author anchored certain understandings of the content with previous research, consensus between the coders was found. This further shows that it is important that the results are discussed in context with previous research.

\textsuperscript{8} The narrative function of \textit{coda} was left out of the analytical procedure due to the limited time given to the study. The choice was made as the test coding (that is, the testing of the code book on some few items) found that the \textit{coda} added nothing to the narrative on protest but was rather a structural feature used to signal the end of an item.
Discourse analysis is often chosen to analyse how journalists structure reports. Admittedly, this method is well-established among scholars who study print (Robertson 2017:135). However, some scholars argue that for the study of multimodal media such as television, or “new media” which seldom uses one medium, narrative analysis has a better chance at seeing the deep structures which conceals the politics behind the structuring of visuals and audio in one way rather than another (ibid.). The pilot study tried a discourse analysis on the preliminary material which was print press, but as the results showed that the juxtaposition of image and text was stronger than the effects of the text alone, the material was changed to television news and the method was changed to something better suited for the multimodal medium. Admittedly, different methods give different results, and the choice of studying narratives came from the research aim and questions with lead the entire study.

A comment on the ethical problems raised in having “race/ethnicity” as variable must be made. This study is grounded in the understanding of race and ethnicity as socially constructed, and Ferguson is certainly a case where the effects of such constructs are being displayed. By coding the race/ethnicity of speaking actors, this study is reproducing these constructions, but the results can hopefully show how these constructions are used to produce certain narratives and thus preferred readings of events. Further, if the race/ethnicity of a speaking actor was not stated (as in “African American police officer”) it was coded as “white person” or “person of colour”. The problem with that dichotomy is that it suggests “white person”standing out from the coloured bunch⁹, and as this study exist in a context where being white is the constructed norm, the dichotomy further reproduces that norm. However, as Hunt (1999) found white people were more often in the position of outsiders not affected by race issues, and people of colour are the insiders whose problem it is, it is important to make the distinction of who speaks about race, in what position they do so, and what they are saying about it.

Lastly, a note on the primary material must be made. CNN International, which is often counted among the larger global broadcasting networks, was chosen to not be part of the primary material for this study. There are two reasons for this. First and foremost, while BBCW and RT have special relations with the U.S. and AJE supposedly are prone to protest reporting, CNNI is based and at large in the U.S. Whilst it would be interesting to add the domestic perspective into the comparison of global narratives, there was not time nor space to conduct such an analysis. Thus, to avoid an additional layer of analysis – that of domestic vs.

⁹ A distinction which connotes goodness of white and savage of colour (Hall 1997).
foreign news – CNNI was excluded. Secondly, previous research comparing global broadcasters has found that CNNI to large extent contains of “talking heads” (Robertson 2012) rather than the reporter-on-site reportages which dominate AJE, BBCW and RT’s reporting. Taking these two reasons into account, CNNI was ultimately dropped as primary material.
4. Results and analytical discussion

Presented here are the results of the analysis of all Ferguson items each network broadcasted during the studied period of the 16 days following the killing of Michael Brown by a police officer. As previously explained, throughout the present study Ferguson has functioned as a placeholder for the chosen timeframe and the events that took place in relation to Brown’s death during those days. In this part of the paper, it is time to answer how Ferguson was presented by the broadcasters: what happened in Ferguson, who the important participants were, what the problem was and how it should be solved. The results will be presented in five parts. The first part presents how much attention was given to Ferguson by each broadcaster. Next, the headlines will be presented as how the broadcasters set the tone of the reports. Then come the results of who the people (participants and speaking actors) in the reports were. Following are the results of the problem definition, that is, how the broadcasters created an explicatory temporality from setting, complicating action and resolution. The final part of the results will present the narratives as a whole, and what these overarching narratives suggests about the attitudes the broadcasters have embedded in the structure. Closing this section is a discussion that will place the narratives in relation to the protest paradigm and strategic narratives.

As discussed in the method section (3.2.), one of the benefits of narrative analysis is that both the narrative itself and the analysis of it work on several levels. Although each item was analysed individually, the results presented henceforth will concern the overarching narratives (i.e. the narratives derived from all items) if nothing else is stated.

4.1. Attention given to Ferguson

The amount of airtime covering Ferguson was retrieved from the quantitative mapping that was the first step of the analysis. Each broadcaster had 16 bulletins during the studied timeframe. Table 2 shows the number of headlines, items and average item time that constitute each broadcasters’ coverage of Ferguson, as well as the percentage of the broadcasters’ 16 bulletins that was about Ferguson. Out of the 16 bulletins AJE had 11 items and 7 headlines on Ferguson; BBCW had 6 items and 4 headlines on Ferguson; and RT had 15 items and 13 headlines on Ferguson. Consequently, the first difference found between the broadcasters is in how much attention they gave to Ferguson.
Table 2. Number and percentage of headlines, items and average time on Ferguson in AJE, BBCW, RT between August 10-25, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total # of items</th>
<th># of Ferguson items</th>
<th>Ferguson % of all items</th>
<th>Ferguson average time (min)</th>
<th>Ferguson items time % of all bulletins time</th>
<th>Total # of headlines</th>
<th># of Ferguson headlines</th>
<th>Ferguson % of all headlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJE</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,8 %</td>
<td>3,36</td>
<td>4,31%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10,94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBCW</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,8 %</td>
<td>4,33</td>
<td>7,14%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7,14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10,07%</td>
<td>4,65</td>
<td>15,95%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23,64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RT stands out in having the double percentage of headlines (23,64 to AJEs 10,94 and BBCWs 7,14) and in giving more time to items (average time 1,29 minutes over AJE, and 0,32 minutes over BBCW). There is also a difference in how much time the overall coverage of Ferguson got by each broadcaster, RT gave Ferguson close to 16% of all broadcasting time during the studied timeframe, compared to AJEs 4,31% and BBCWs 7,14%.

The difference in attention indicates a difference in how the broadcasters value the importance of Ferguson, which is further sustained in when the broadcasters started reporting on Ferguson. RT started covering Ferguson on August 11 reporting events that had occurred the night before, that is on August 10, which is the day the protests in Ferguson began. AJE had a reporter on site on August 12, airing the first item live that day. BBCW started reporting on August 14 with a reporter on site. A full account on the length of the items and when they aired can be found in appendix 2.

Another indicator of attention is whether reporters were on site of the events. The broadcasters differed in this aspect. BBCW had a reporter on site in two of its Ferguson items (33%); AJE and RT had a reporter on site almost all the days (90% for AJE; 93% for RT). AJE anchors often spoke live with their reporters on site, and showed recorded footage with reporter on voice-over; BBCW conducted interviews with sources via Skype as well as showed recorded footage with reporter on voice-over; and RT had recorded footage of the reporter in the streets and segments with the reporter on voice-over. While RT’s reporters varied from standing in the streets at night and during daytime, AJE’s reporters were only in
the suburb of Ferguson during the day which can be explained as the time-difference between Missouri and London forces the reporter to be out during day hours to have live-calls with the anchor in London. BBCW’s reporter appears live on the first day of reporting Ferguson, but the second time in recorded segment. The role of the reporters and anchors will be further discussed as speaking actors in section 4.3.2 below.

4.2. Setting the tone

Part of the attitude conveyed in the narratives are the headlines that indicate what the issue is and can be frames of report. As the items were coded in the quantitative mapping, headlines on Ferguson were noted down, and this section will present the initial reflections on the tone of these headlines. All headlines can be obtained in Appendix 3. Headlines were coded as they have been found to be strong indicators of the topic of the following item. It also informs of the urgency of the topic in the item as only 3-4 out of 8-10 items get mentioned in the headlines. The headlines were often read by the anchors on voice-over to footage from the night-time protests in Ferguson. A “title” is used in the headline, which often reappears during the item, and can therefore be considered titles of the reports. The titles given by the broadcasters differed in two main aspects: in that AJE’s and RT’s titles contained both emotions and actions (Anger in Missouri, Missouri protest in AJE; Fused fury, Shooting to kill in RT) while BBCW’s titles focused on action (Missouri rioting), and in that AJE’s and BBCW’s titles often mentioned location (Missouri in both) while RT’s titles did not emphasise location (“Ferguson” in 3/13 titles). The latter suggest the location of the protests are important to the narrative of AJE and BBCW, and less so to RT’s narrative.

There is an important similarity in that the broadcasters’ headlines all constituted of footage of night-time protests, with people in groups chanting or running from clouds of gas and heavy-armed police. Visually, all headlines focused on the protests and violence, but on voice-over the anchors said different things. The main difference in the headlines is that AJE and BBCW have developments in the headlines, while RT only have small variations in their headlines. This indicates the headlines in AJE and BBCW work as summaries of the reports whereas the headlines in RT function as a frame to overall coverage.

On a first encounter, the headlines in AJE concern ongoing events in Missouri, where Michael Brown being killed by a police officer has led to an ongoing investigation and protests against the police.
 AJE Aug 15: **Anger in Missouri** *The footage police in Missouri say shows Michael Brown robbing a store shortly before he was shot and killed by one of their officers. (ongoing investigation, “police say”)*

 AJE Aug 17: **Anger in Missouri** *Protests against the police go on for an eighth evening despite the curfew in the U.S. city of Ferguson. (protests connected to police and Brown, ongoing)*

 AJE Aug 20: **Missouri protests** *Protests continue in Ferguson over the shooting of a black teen as the U.S. attorney general arrives to address the unrest. (ongoing protests and investigation connected to killing)*

 Missouri continues in the title, but the headlines develop with ongoing events. Reusing Missouri in the title connects the events and developments.

 The headlines in BBCW focus on the investigation of Brown’s death and on the violence in the protests.

 BBCW Aug 15 **Missouri shooting** *CCTV footage is released by Ferguson police of an incident at a convenient store on the day unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed.*

 BBCW Aug 19 **Missouri rioting** *The arrival of the National Guard in the Missouri town of Ferguson fails to stop another night of violent protests. (Speaking from press conference, Ron Johnson, captain of Missouri Highway patrol) “I am not going to let the criminals that have come out from across this country or live in this community define this neighbourhood and define what we’re going to do to make it right.”*

 The title of BBCW’s headlines remain on Missouri, which (as with AJE) ties Brown and the protests together. As BBCW only had four headlines, it is not possible to say they presented developments in the ongoing story. Rather, headlines seem to appear when police have taken action that develops the events.

 RT’s headlines are repetitive and focus on the violence that the police bring to the streets of
Ferguson.

RT Aug 12 ‘Killer cop’ clash Teargas and rubber bullets. The US police responds to crowds demanding justice for the killing of an unarmed black teenager by Missouri cop.

RT Aug 16 Fury in Ferguson Armored vehicles and sniper rifles primed but not for a military operation, US authorities use them to disperse rioters demanding justice for a teenager shot dead by police in the US town of Ferguson.

RT Aug 22 Law on the ropes The nationwide debate over racial profiling and police brutality in America intensifies after the killing of Michael Brown and almost two weeks of riots in Ferguson.

Although the title changes, the headlines concern the same event throughout the 13 headlines on Ferguson in RT’s bulletins. There is a clear connection between the killing of Brown and the protests, and the focus is the police’s response to the protests.

Overall, the headlines of the broadcasters suggest somewhat differences in what is to come: AJE has focus on the protests and developments in Ferguson (both Brown investigation and protests); BBCW has focus on the violence and developments in police action; whereas RT repeats the message, suggesting the issue is still current events.

4.3. The people of Ferguson

To present actors in a certain light gives indications of not only whose problem it is but also who should be listened to when problems occur, who explains why it has happened and who suggests the solution. This section concerns how actors in the narrative were presented in the reports and who was given the power of definition. A table summarizing this section can be found under 4.3.2.

4.3.1. The participants

This part will present the participants in the narratives, that is, who it involved and whom it happened to according to the broadcasters. “The participants” is an umbrella term that can be people (named, acting for themselves), characters (e.g. “a protester” representing actors in the narrative), groups (e.g. groups mentioned in the narrative, such as “the community”),
representing groups of people), and institutions (e.g. “the police force”). In strategic narratives, the participants can be attributed agency or certain characteristics that tell the audience who the important actors in the problem are. As the results present the overarching narratives, only actors who are involved in the over-arching narrative will be presented. For the distinction between the participants, find them in Appendix 1 (Code questions).

The first participants to be mentioned in the broadcasters’ reports are the police and Michael Brown. Brown was presented as “an unarmed black man” by all broadcasters. Most common was that he was mentioned on voice-over to footage of the protests, but there were some instances when he was shown as well. On BBCW, Brown was frequently shown by repeating the CCTV footage from the day of his death when he walks out of a store, pushing the store owner (picture 1), followed by a close-up of Brown wearing headphones (picture 2).

**Picture 1. Footage allegedly showing Brown in convenience store on day he was shot (BBCW Aug 15)**

Michael Brown is given less attention by AJE in comparison to RT who give him a background story, “about to start first day of college on Monday”¹⁰ (RT Aug 11) and the reporter calling him “Mike Brown”, which is much more familiar than the other reporters. AJE showed the CCTV footage of Brown in the store, but it is not repeated unless the incident

¹⁰ he was shot on a Saturday, two days before.
at the convenience store is mentioned. More common is a close-up photo of Brown wearing headphones, which is used by all broadcasters on several occasions.

**Picture 2. Michael Brown wearing headphones (used by all broadcasters)**

RT used footage from when Brown is dead in the street with blood running from his head. This scene is seen from two different angles and is used throughout the broadcast narrative when Brown is mentioned (e.g. RT Aug 12, Aug 25).
Besides how Michael Brown is shown there are not many differences in the how the broadcasters show the participants. In connection to Michael Brown is Darren Wilson who shot and killed him. Wilson is given almost no attention by AJE and BBCW – both broadcasters mention him once, saying he was white and nothing else – while RT mentions him in several items, starting in their first item on the 11th of August saying he is on paid leave, which is repeated several times, and further that he was white and 28-years old. No footage of Wilson is shown. An AJE reporter explains that details on the police officer who shot Brown is kept secret for his own safety (AJE Aug 12).

The police are important participants in all three narratives and figure in different constellation: as the abstract local institution mentioned in “police say”; the abstract state institution told in “state police enter Ferguson”; and the largest organ of the three, the National Guard. There are never differences made when police are mentioned, or shown either, in almost all instances the reporter or anchor would say “police” without further specification to which kind they are referring. Two spokespersons for the police figure in AJE, Thomas Jackson (Ferguson police chief) and Ron Johnson, but only Ron Johnson in BBCW, and none in RT. The state governor Jay Nixon is seen in AJE’s report but not in the other two broadcasters’ reports. This will be further elaborated under the part discussing Speaking actors below (4.3.2.). Beyond representation, the narratives deal with the police differently as a well. While RT declares the police are doing warfare on their own soil (RT
Aug 17), AJE and BCCW label it “a militarized police” (e.g. AJE Aug 16; BBCW Aug 18). Again, the visuals are different between the broadcasters. Besides the night-time footage which is the similar in all three reports, there is additional footage that presents the police differently. AJE has footage of police movement and activity in Ferguson during the day, showing SWAT vehicles driving around the nearby mall (AJE Aug 14) or police standing by calm protests during the day (AJE Aug 20). RT shows close-up still footage of the National Guard gear (e.g. RT Aug 22) and goes through each of the weapons and items on the guard, explaining what they are used for. BBCW has no additional footage on the police.

People on the streets of Ferguson (and elsewhere) are addressed as protesters and demonstrators interchangeably in all three reports. The footage of the protesters is similar in all reports: they are seen in both day- and night-time, either in still images of people (with their hands up) or in moving footage, often running towards the camera with smoke chasing them or standing in clusters, chanting different protesting cries. The difference lies in how close the news crew is to the protesters. AJE’s and RT’s reporters are often standing on the street with protesters (AJE during the day and RT during the night) while BBCW has the reporter on voice-over during the footage of protesters. The protesters are described similarly, as well: they are “calm”, “angry”, “frustrated”, and “demanding justice” in all three narratives.

Another important actor is “the community”, which refers to a different community in each report. AJE’s community is the people in Ferguson, and to some extend people in the U.S.; BBCW’s community is first the African-American community of Ferguson, then people of colour in the U.S.; and RT’s community is undefined, but implied to include everyone who is not U.S. police officer or government official. The community can therefore be understood as an abstract group in all three narratives, although sometimes with stronger indications of who are included in this group, as when the reporter is standing among people in the street (AJE and RT). Included in the community but also mentioned separately are the locals and residents in Ferguson who participated in the protests. Protest participants are further divided into peaceful people “wanting change” (AJE), “protesters” (BBCW), “wanting justice” (RT) and people involved in vandalism; “looters” (AJE; BBCW) and “people wanting trouble” (RT). All three broadcasters show footage from shops being looted, and both the AJE and the RT reporter stand outside a looted convenience store in one of their reports.

Lastly, the “people of America”, and in RT’s case people of the world, were addressed by the broadcasters. In AJE’s narrative, a larger community than Ferguson residents are concerned in features discussing the issue of police misconduct in general (e.g. AJE Aug 17)
or urban segregation that affects cities all over the U.S. (AJE Aug 22). BBCW mention the bigger community in “These images are shocking many Americans” (BBCW Aug 16) and in “this affects black and brown people in America” (BBCW Aug 18). RT talk about the ongoing protests all over the U.S. and show footage of these protests in several items (e.g. RT Aug 15; 19), and above all explicitly say police target U.S. citizens in general and black people specifically (RT Aug 21). “People of the world” are participants in RT’s narrative when a map of the world shows a Twitter hashtag heat map of how people around the world tweet about Ferguson. Further, tweets from Palestinians who share tips on how to deal with teargassed eyes are shown from the studio, where the anchor says there is “global support for Ferguson” (RT Aug 16).

Overall, the biggest differences regarding the participants in the narratives are how Michael Brown is shown when he is mentioned, and who’s included in the “community”. AJE shows a neutral photo of Brown with headphones on, and refer to a dynamic community, leaving both open for interpretation. BBCW repeat the CCTV footage of Brown in the store as well as the photo of Brown with the headphones, which evokes a sense that the issue has to do with criminality. BBCW’s community is closed to the African American community in Ferguson and in the U.S. RT’s repeated footage of Brown lying dead in the street provokes discomfort and makes his dead more substantial. The community in RT’s narrative is the most inclusive as it varies from the community in Ferguson to protesters in Palestine.

4.3.2. The speaking actors (sources)
The speaking actors are actors whose voices get heard, who get asked to define, explain or comment on what the issue is. This concern who gets quoted as well. The power of definition is an important element of protest reporting as it concerns who gets represented and whose agenda is carried in the narrative.

AJE has a mix of people whose voices get heard in their reports. Police press conference is common in AJE, whereas BBCW only has one press conference and RT has none. People speaking are prepared to speak and do so in the role of citizens living their everyday life. Both police statements and statements from people on the streets are in the reports. During segment on the streets of St Louis about the racial segregation, black and white residents comment on the issue and a professor comment as well.

BBCW has one speaking actor per item who explains the events to the anchor in their role as experts. The anchor speaks to a political writer, a civil rights attorney and another person connected to civil rights, always with the anchor in the studio and the speaking actor
on Skype or likewise. Asking for their definition and analysis of the events implies BBCW considers this a civil rights issue; the anchor turns to “insiders” to get the expert opinion.

RT has the biggest variety in speaking actors, from a 90-year-old Holocaust-surviving political activist who claims she was arrest by police in Ferguson, to a former Ferguson police officer who gives an account of everything the police force of Ferguson has done wrong in the days since Brown was shot. All RTs items are recorded and filled with snaps of footage from similar cases of police misconduct, and there are often several people speaking in the items. The speaking actors are all in favour of the protesters. Regardless of their role, they criticize the government and the police. Police statements are mentioned in passing, often read by the reporter over images of armed police and calm protesters.

Both BBCW and RT show clips from the press conference U.S. president Obama had on August 14, but Obama is heard on different dates and in different light. In BBCW a clip from the press conference starts their first report of Ferguson on August 14, while RT shows a few seconds from the press conference on August 21. This way of using speaking actors turns out to be characteristic of the broadcasters: BBCW starts an item with Obama’s statement on the issue, signalling Obama is an important source and that his statement is the news. RT on the other hand uses the segment from the press conference a week after, and then imbedded in the report to reinforce the argument that the item builds.

Compared to AJE and BBCW whose anchor or reporter presented all their speaking actors, RT has actors who appear on screen with a name tag and title, who say a couple of sentences on the specific issue just discussed in the item, and then they are off. Another aspect of RT’s speaking actors is that the footage with statements is reused in the weekly program that summarizes the week’s top stories.

An illustrative example of how speaking actors were used by the broadcasters is in the items on August 18 when the autopsy report was released. AJE showed footage from the press conference where the attorney appointed by Brown family presented the results of the report, followed by a live report by the reporter in Ferguson of how the people are feeling; BBCW had a professor in forensic science at the same press conference explain the results, followed by a four-minute long interview with a political writer from Washington explaining what had been said; and RT had the reporter and anchor give accounts of what had been said, claiming the police had only shared the bare minimum of what had to be part of the report in attempt to hide what really happened, the reporter claiming “they are supposed to protect you, instead they’re hurting people”. A similar situation occurred on August 25 when AJE and RT had a reporter on site, speaking to their respective anchor about the funeral and the overall state of
things in Ferguson, while BBCW’s anchor spoke to a Ferguson Committeeewoman about what
the political actions ahead would be.

There were distinct differences in the results of speaking actors. AJE has a balance
between officials and people on the street who comment on both the ongoing events, but also
on what has caused the conflict and how it can be solved. AJE’s sources speak on behalf of
the police; the protesters; as eyewitnesses supporting the protests or eyewitnesses not
supporting the protests; and people involved with the issue that is being raised by the
protesters (human rights organisations, professor in urban planning).

As expected, BBCW turns to officials to get an explanation of what the issue is, what
has caused it and how the conflict can be resolved. Two protesters comment on the night-time
protests, but only in one item. An important aspect of BBCW’s sources is that BBCW only
has people of colour as sources, while AJE and RT also had white people as sources. This
emphasis the understanding that the issue concerns people of colour as people of colour are
“insiders” to the issues and thereby explain it to people outside. This important detail will be
further discussed in section 4.5.

As the results of the participants showed, RT differentiates itself from the other two
broadcasters. RT’s reports are filled with comments from a variety of sources but they only
comment on what the issue is and deeply rooted causes to the issue’s existence, whereas the
anchor or reporter define how the issue can the solved. As expected, all RT sources are in
favour of protests, or rather, all sources are anti-police. Not all speaking actors comment on
the protests, some speak only on the police ( e.g. RT Aug 23, “racism and white supremacy of
course, play so much into that because that’s why these white officers can kill black people on
a massive, massive scale”).

A comment must be made on the role of the reporters and anchors as they differed
between the broadcasters. AJE’s reporter acts as a representative on site, speaking on behalf
of participants, e.g. Brown’s family who never spoke in public during the events (AJE Aug
15), and summarizing the ongoing developments as well as inform of how the community is
feeling. Live features where anchor and reporter speak, bring a sense of immediacy to the
reporting. AJE’s anchors work as representatives for the audience, they are finding out what is
happening by asking questions on behalf of the people watching the news.

BBCW’s anchor and reporter appear on voice-over as they navigated the audience
through the footage from the protests at night. The protests are only visited by a reporter in
one item (BBCW Aug 14), but after that the reporter comments on the events and
developments on voice over. Compared to the other broadcasters, BBCW’s anchor does most
of the navigating through the developments, as well as interviewing sources via Skype from the studio. The sources are asked for their expertise, answering in their role as professionals, and the anchor represents the outsiders wanting information.

RT’s reporter is mostly found standing among people and protesters in the street. The reporter is either standing with the protesters at night, commenting on ongoing events, speaking very loudly into the microphone to be heard over the noise of honking cars and chanting protesters, or seen in daylight speaking to people, affected by racial profiling, on the site where Brown was shot dead (RT Aug 22). RT’s anchor adds to the reporting from the studio by explaining details on the National Guard’s gear, or connects the audience to social media. As such, the anchor informs the audience rather than represent it, and the reporter acts as an insider as well as representing the audience in asking the questions on behalf of the viewers.
| Table 3. Participants and speaking actors in the Ferguson items of AJE, BBCW and RT. |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                | AJE                             | BBCW                            | RT                             |
| Participants                   |                                 |                                 |                                |
| Michael Brown                  | Michael Brown                   | Michael Brown                   | Michael Brown                  |
| (unarmed black teenager)       | (unarmed black teenager)        | (unarmed black teenager)        | (unarmed black teenager, about to graduate from high school) |
| (police officer who killed Brown) | (police officer who shot Brown) | (police officer who killed Brown, on paid leave) |
| The Community                  | The African American community  | The Community                  | The Community                  |
| (of Ferguson; undefined)        | (of Ferguson)                   | (of Ferguson)                   | (of Ferguson)                  |
| The police                     | The police                      | The police                      | The police                     |
| (Ferguson; state police)        | (Ferguson; state police)        | (Ferguson; state police)        | (Ferguson; state police)       |
| National Guard                 | National Guard                  | National Guard                  | National Guard                 |
| People of America              | People of America               | People of America               | People of the world            |
|                                |                                 |                                 |                                |
| Speaking actors                |                                 |                                 |                                |
| Officials press conference     | Attorney (giving views on the issue) | Protesters (on police response to protesters) | Protesters (in Ferguson, protesting) |
| (Governor Jay Nixon; Captain Ron Johnson – on developments in the events) | Political writer (on the autopsy report and Obama’s involvement) | Protesters (in New York, protesting death of Eric Garner) | Activists (from other movements (Occupy)) |
| Protesters                     | Protesters (on police response to protesters) | Autopsy expert (on the autopsy report) | Attorneys (defenders of victims of racism) |
| (why they are in the street)   | Political writer (on the autopsy report and Obama’s involvement) | Committeewoman (on future political actions) | Former police and military (on the militarization of the police, and misconduct by law enforcement) |
| Business owners (their view on the looting) | Obama (press conf. addressing protests, looting, police misconduct and arrests) | Obama (on letting journalist do their job) | Journalists (on difficulty of reporting in Ferguson) |
| St Louis residents (on segregation) |                                 |                                 |                                |
| Professor urban planning (on segregation) |                                 |                                 |                                |
| Brown family’s lawyer (on autopsy report) |                                 |                                 |                                |
4.4. The problem: past, present, future

Together with determining what actors are relevant in the issue, identifying the problem (present), setting it in a context (past) and suggesting a solution (future) is how narratives shape understandings of how systems work, how policies should be understood, or how identification should be applied. This part of the thesis concerns the structure and techniques which makes a problem definition seem compelling. The problem (present) is stated by anchors, reporters or speaking actors as complicating actions that disrupted the order or as ongoing events. The setting (past) was found in how anchors, reporters or speaking actors ascribe historical, political or social contexts to the problem, which explains why something has happened. The setting can also be described as the equilibrium that preceded the problem or that which the conflict disrupted. The resolution (future) is suggested or implied by any speaking actor and can be short-term solutions to alleviate the problem or long-term solutions of how the system/order of things ought to be. Together, setting, action and resolution form a temporality that is strategically structured to convey a certain understanding of the problem which will reinforce the morals of the narrative (which will be discussed in 4.5.). Setting, complicating action and resolution was analyzed in all 32 items of Ferguson. Once they were coded (see Appendix 4 for example of filled code sheet); setting, complicating action and resolution of each item were analyzed as part of an overarching narrative. The results presented here are consequently the narrative function of setting/action/resolution of the overarching narrative. A table summarizing the results presented in this section is found under 4.4.4.

4.4.1. Complicating action (present)

In news reports, the complicating action is often the focus of what is covered. As the reports dealt with ongoing events, there were several additions to the present situation as developments occurred. Complicating action and developments were found in asking “what is the problem” and “and then what happened?”. The results found two main issues that were reported in the Ferguson narratives: the investigation of Michael Brown’s death by a police officer, and the unrest between the police and protesters during protests in Ferguson that followed Brown’s death.

It was possible to construct a timeline of the conflict and the developing events with the reports by the broadcasters, although not all developments were covered by all three broadcasters. The protest in Ferguson began on August 10, the day after Brown had been
killed. The protests, that then continued for over two weeks, were first reported by RT on August 11. AJEs reporter got to Ferguson on August 12 and reported live that day. The protests were addressed by Obama on the 14th, which is the first report on Ferguson in BBCW. On August 15, the police released CCTV footage from August 9 allegedly showed Michael Brown stealing a box of cigars in a convenience store and then pushing the store owner as he leaves (only reported by AJE and BBCW, see picture 1.). 30 minutes after Brown was seen in the convenience store on August 9, Brown met Darren Wilson a couple of blocks away from the convenience store, where unknown events unfolded that lead to Wilson fatally shooting Brown (reported by all three). The following days that led up to Brown’s funeral on August 25, which marked the end of the protests and thus the reporting) included a curfew imposed on August 16 by the governor of Missouri to keep protesters from getting violent at night (reported by all three); the National Guard (which “provides trained troops to the states”11) being deployed on the 18th as the autopsy report is released (reported by all three).

There were surprisingly few differences regarding which developments were covered in the reports, instead they are similar in what developments led the narrative forward, besides the fact that RT did not mention the CCTV footage until August 24. The differences are found in how the broadcasters filled the reports once the recent developments had been covered.

AJE had a couple of features (Aug 20; 21; 22) that treated the effects of the protests on everyday life in Ferguson. In one item a girl spoke about her school closing and people not being able to go outside, and in another two men spoke of their businesses being looted. AJE also spent time on the second man that was shoot on August 22 in St Louis (which was only mentioned in short by the other two broadcasters) and another in-depth feature dealing with urban segregation and racism in St Louis, which was described as another symptom of institutional racism.

BBCW’s items remained focus on the events in Ferguson. Although speaking to people outside of Ferguson, the topic was always developments in the Brown death investigation (e.g. BBCW Aug 18) and how the violent conflict could be solved (BBCW Aug 15).

RT’s items were filled with side-stories concerning the context that the problem existed in, and these stories eventually accumulated to reinforce what RT reports as the real issue of “police brutality and racial profiling”.

Based on when the broadcasters started covering the events in Ferguson, their main interest is Ferguson is implied. As mentioned above, RT started covering Ferguson on the day

11 [http://www.nationalguard.mil/About-the-Guard/]
after the protests began; AJE followed with a live report on the third day of protests; whereas BBCW started covering Ferguson after President Obama had made a statement. This suggests that while developments in the investigation is reported and is what leads some items, it is the ongoing protests that are why the broadcasters keep checking in with Ferguson to see how the events are developing (AJE), to see how politicians address the issue (BBCW), or to display to which extent the U.S. police is violating its citizens (RT). The issue is that there are protests that are violent and consequently disrupt the order in Ferguson (AJE); and should therefore gain more attention from the president (BBCW); and sheds light on the real issue of police brutality and racial profiling (RT). It is the protests in Ferguson and the police response that caught their attention, and what has destabilized the equilibrium.

There was a focus on the violence in the protest, all three broadcasters called it violent protests. Violence in the protests came from the police firing teargas and rubber bullets; from the looters and from the response to the protests by the police as protesters defied curfew.

4.4.2. The setting (past)
The setting concerns the political and social situations that are given as explanations as to why the problem has occurred. The results from analyzing the setting concern how the issue was set in a political and social context, and was found by asking what the starting point was, and looking for statements on events that happened prior the ongoing events.

In the reports, context was given to two issues: to address the protest issue, i.e. why people were angry; and to discuss why Brown was shot. There was little context given to why Brown was shot, which mainly is due to the fact that the investigation into the course of events of his death is ongoing. BBCW has one speaking actor who claims the police officer had an intent to kill (BBCW Aug 18), and RT report police saying Brown had reached for the police officer’s gun while witnesses claimed he had his hands up, saying “don’t shoot”\(^\text{12}\). AJE does not mention any reason to Brown’s death. Instead, the general issue of police violence is discussed. AJE argue there is an institutional problem with law enforcement, which is manifested in militarised policing and racially motivated mistreatment. BBCW discusses the general issue of “overreaction” and “paramilitarization of police” as the reason to both Brown’s death and the police response to the protests, and that there are clear “racial undertones to the way police departments behave with young black men in America” (BBCW Aug 15). RT claim the militarization of police and racial profiling is the reason to why Brown

\(^{12}\) Which is why the protesters in Ferguson chanted “hands up – don’t shoot”. The chant is still used as a slogan in many protest against police brutality.
and so many black men are “targeted” by police (see e.g. RT Aug 14). While all broadcasters mention Trayvon Martin, at least once, as an example of an event similar to the Brown case, RT uses historic examples as a reoccurring feature in their reporting either in reciting recent events of police misconduct (RT Aug 11) or to claim Brown was one out of five black men to be killed by the police in the last month (RT Aug 11). RT shows footage, often taken by the mobile phones of witnesses, of people who are harassed by police, and makes a couple of minutes on elaborating what happened to Eric Garner who was killed by police only a month earlier in New York City as they show footage of a man being choked to death. Garner is also mentioned by an attorney speaking to a BBCW anchor (BBCW Aug 15), but only told in passing. As such, all broadcasters, but especially RT, discuss the Michael Brown’s death as something bigger than a one-time event.

Besides Brown’s death and the police response to protests, all broadcasters say race was part of the protest issue. How race is addressed varies from BBCW’s “racial undertones” (BBCW Aug 15) to describe the motive of the police who shot Brown, to RT’s “this is apartheid in America” (RT Aug 14), “240 years of slavery” (RT Aug 21) and “this is white supremacy” (RT Aug 23). AJE discusses race from several perspectives, from “racial divide” (AJE Aug 15) between police and locals in Ferguson to an “institutional racism” in the police force (AJE Aug 16). Race is further used to explain other factors to the anger in Ferguson. AJE has a feature on urban segregation which is tied to race issues, which also involves class issues as a variable to their suggested “racial divide”.

4.4.3. The resolution (future)

The resolution concerns the suggested solution that is given by the broadcasters. Resolution can also suggest how society/the world ought to be. It is often stated explicitly at the end of a broadcast, and was found by looking for suggestions of how the conflict could calm down or how the problem could be solved. Overall, there were two kinds of solutions discussed in the broadcasters’ narratives: the immediate solutions and the long-term solutions. There were several Ferguson items that did not present a resolution. The absence of solution provides a sense of hopelessness and uncertainty which sustains the idea of violence as a non-order, see e.g. “they are preparing for more confrontation tonight” (BBCW Aug 17).

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13 Trayvon Martin was a 17-year-old unarmed black teen who was shot and killed by a police officer in 2012.
14 Eric Garner was the other black man who sparked the BLM movement in the summer of 2014.
Common and reoccurring resolutions in the broadcasters’ reports are getting Darren Wilson charged and having state police and National Guard sent home. BBCW seek response from U.S. president Obama in three of their items, while AJE only mentions Obama in passing and RT ask for the U.S. government to react. All three broadcasters mention government involvement to address the issues raised by the protesters. A BBCW source argues that Obama and the government has the power to end police militarization; people interviewed on RT claim the government must change for the issue to go away; and AJE says a systemic change of law enforcement is needed for black people to stop dying by the hand of police (AJE Aug 18).

The last items on the day of Brown’s funeral (Aug 25) were the most similar items of all: all three items were resolution-orientated, focusing on “what’s next?” as the funeral seem to present a calmer Ferguson. The anchor of AJE spoke live to a reporter on site, RT had a recorded feature with their reporter in Ferguson, and BBCW spoke live to a committeewoman who spoke at the funeral. The funeral item looked at the bigger picture issues as well: BBCW spoke of legislative action; RT spoke of up-coming protests and a walk-out; and AJE focused on education and more diversity within the police force. All three broadcasters discussed the upcoming trial of Darren Wilson.

4.4.4. What Ferguson was about: summary of the problem

The problem defined by all three broadcasts is violence: violence in the death of Michael Brown, violence associated with the law enforcement, violence as the protest issue, and violence during the protests. While all three focused on violence and had it as a point of departure to develop their distinct narratives, their reports resulted in different stories of violence. Table 4 summarizes the setting, complicating action and resolution in each broadcaster’s report.
Table 4. Problem definition: setting, complicating action and resolution in AJE, BBCW and RT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AJE</th>
<th>BBCW</th>
<th>RT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td>Friction between black population and police</td>
<td>How black men in U.S. are treated</td>
<td>Police brutality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 out of 53 police in Ferguson are black</td>
<td>Police brutality</td>
<td>Racial profiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional racism in U.S. law enforcement (not ethnic but political)</td>
<td>How police treat people of color and poor people</td>
<td>240 years of slavery, 90 years of legal segregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban segregation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Systemic racism – apartheid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zero accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low income – economic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Racism and white supremacy (and a system that backs it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complicating</strong></td>
<td>Michael Brown shot dead by police</td>
<td>Obama addresses Brown was shot dead by police</td>
<td>Fury over police shooting of unarmed black man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>action</strong></td>
<td>Protests following death</td>
<td>CCTV footage connecting Brown to robbery</td>
<td>Police meet protesters with military equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police response to protests</td>
<td>Protests triggered by death</td>
<td>National guard sent in: war on dissent in U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looting</td>
<td>Police violence</td>
<td>Journalists arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closing of schools</td>
<td>“People wishing to make trouble”</td>
<td>Protesters arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Businesses closed</td>
<td>National guard</td>
<td>Unveiling of bigger issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National guard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Another man shot dead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td>Community meeting in churches</td>
<td>Justice = arresting and charging Darren Wilson</td>
<td>Justice for Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End police brutality</td>
<td>Body cameras on all police officers</td>
<td>Public awareness – education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police force need change and recruit black people</td>
<td>Legislative action</td>
<td>Accountability for police misconduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police conduct (connected to race)</td>
<td>Education and voting</td>
<td>Political statement about accountability and an independent investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Put money on education instead of weapons</td>
<td>Obama addressing issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charge Wilson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change through education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The broadcasters’ focus on violence is both visually and verbal. The word “violence” is used by all three broadcasters in every item on Ferguson, but unlike the expectation of the reporting, the usage is vague and often the footage is clouded with smoke and difficult to make out. Instead, it is the violent environment – the tension – that comes with a large gathering of people and law enforcement trying to control them that is the violence the broadcasters refer to. Although they to large extent use the same footage of the night-time protests, the results show that to the broadcasters, violence is problematic for different reasons. The problem in AJE’s report concerns how violence affects a society and, by balancing the reports between police accounts and speaking to people on the streets, show the complexity of violence. The problem in BBCW is about violence as a political issue, and that the violence in Ferguson is connected to racial issues and is chaotic. The problem in RT is how violence is an integrated part of how a government treats its citizens.

It is remarkable that the greatest similarity in the broadcasters’ problem definition is in how they reported the looting, which was the few times there were clear visuals of physical violence. These images, however, do not appear interesting to the broadcasters. In AJE it is explained in passing when CEO of colour of change (Aug 17) says that people will take advantage of situations like this, which happens in sports events as well. Footage of the looting is seen on Aug 15 and 16, but not after that. The looting is barely present in BBCW, only mentioned once in passing by Ron Johnson on Aug 18. RT mentions the looting as coming from deep frustration, but clarify a clear distinction between protesters and the looters in several items (see e.g. RT Aug 13). Interesting is also one man saying “if it wasn’t for the looting, no media would be here, am I right?” (RT Aug 17).

4.5. The narratives of Ferguson

Although many of the participants, much of the footage and the focus on violence as the problem was similar in the broadcasters’ reports on Ferguson, the narratives offered by the broadcasters told different stories. What has been presented thus far has concerned the referential function of narratives, and now the evaluative function will be presented to see what political/social concerns were raised in the narratives, and what attitudes or values the broadcasters had embedded in the narratives. As evaluation in narratives seldom is explicit, comparing evaluation was made possible by posing questions to the material and by analysing both denotative and connotative elements of the texts. The result is three overarching narratives that propose three difference understandings of Ferguson.
AJE’s narrative was about how a nation’s complex relation to race and class has effects on law enforcement to the extent that an unarmed black man is shot by a police officer, and how the aftermath of that incident is played out in a community: at night through clashes between protesters (claiming Brown was a case in point of an unjust system targeting people of colour) and the police (claiming the amount of upset people out in the street at night pose a threat to the general safety of the community), and at day seen in the disruption of everyday life of the community (no school, closed businesses). In short, AJE’s narrative is about a society – any society – where conflict is played out. As studies have found (see e.g. Robertson 2012) and the AJE website claim, AJE report issues relevant to people and consequently the AJE narrative of Ferguson is about how the protests are affecting the community at large. The ongoing events are presented first-hand by having reporters on site, reporting back developments in the conflict as understood by both sides (often one side right after the other) while also deliberating on claims made by either side by running it by other people (i.e. the claim “the issue is white police officers in Ferguson” which is compared with police in NYC where statistics show a diverse police force still targets black men to a higher extent than other demographics) or by discussing the protest issue in an everyday context through features with local business owners and school students. The result is a strategic narrative of universal unity that focuses on the complex nature of the protest issue and how it affects communities. There are no heroes or villains in this story, only people who could be anyone.

BBCW narrates Ferguson as a political issue concerning the African American community. The Ferguson story was about a killing of an unarmed black man by a police officer which resulted in disturbance of the order in Ferguson during two weeks. Protesters and police met during violent protests (at night) and the issue is political in that the US president Obama is sought for comments. There are two main issues in the story: that there are “racial undertones” to why Michael Brown was killed suggesting it was racism is still an institutional issue in the U.S., and that the police response to the protests is a national issue (and should be commented by Obama as such). The sources in the BBCW narrative are all officials (attorneys or political commentators) and they are all people of colour, which suggests elites who are people of colour are the required sources to share insight on the political issue. When the anchor asks them for their understanding, they are being asked as qualified to answer which makes the issue seem difficult to understand without professional expertise or without being a person of colour. The result is a strategic narrative of a complicated race-related political issue in the U.S.

RT’s narrative is of an issue bigger than Michael Brown’s death, where “the bigger
story that began was the militarization of the police in the U.S.” (RT Aug 25). RT’s narrative is about the U.S. law enforcement and how they work in the American society. The narrative structure suggests US law enforcement is fighting a war on dissent in its own country, and by putting the audience in the place of the community when saying “they are supposed to protect you, instead they treat you as the enemy” (RT Aug 18), the RT narrative suggests the world should be aware of the threat the US law enforcement makes. The narrative is about the militarization of the police force and US law enforcement, which is motivated through racism and contractions of speech rights and freedom of press and oppression of right to dissent. This bigger issue was unveiled as Brown was shot and killed by a white police officer, and the police’s response to the protests that followed, where teargas was used and protesters and journalists were arrested every night. RT’s narrative was thus different from AJE’s and BBCW’s narratives on several accounts: in attention given to events (which emphases the immediacy of the conflict), on its clear favouring of one side of the conflict, and on the geographical scale of the issue. What is more, the roles of the anchor and the reporter are different in that they appear to be providing a truth, that is, they provide a narrative with a fixed understanding as it is so one-sided. The result is a strategic narrative that forges the understanding that the militarization of the police force is enabled by the American government that provides local law enforcement with arms “as if to invade another country”, and the effect of this behaviour is a contraction of speech rights and freedom of press.

4.6. Discussion

Having established the results of the study, what they suggest about how protests are reported and how strategic narratives are used by global broadcasters will now be discussed in relation to the literature. The results are in line with previous studies suggesting that the ways global broadcasting networks report are different from each other. As argued by Robertson (2010; 2012) and Wasserman (2011) it is also clear that it is in how they report they differ the most, rather than in what they report. Though the complicating actions, participants and to some extent the context of the narratives showed similarities, the broadcasters’ narratives of Ferguson conveyed different understanding of the conflict.

While the results of this study suggest that the protest paradigm is not suited for studying narratives given by global broadcasting networks, the variables that protest-media scholars argue constitute the paradigm (see e.g. Dardis 2006; Shahini et al 2016) were found
helpful to detect in what way the broadcasters offered different representations of protests. Although BBCW’s narrative structure contains some of the variables that constitute the paradigm (such as having elites define the issue, see section 4.3.2.), these variables never worked against the protesters. Similarly, RT’s narrative used several paradigm variables, but they were used to produce the opposite effect: in favor of the protesters and to demonize the U.S. law enforcement.

As discussed above, violence was given the function to call attention to what the broadcaster claimed was the main issue in the events. In neither of the narratives is violence used to delegitimize the protest issue or the movement, but rather to draw attention to the protest issue and emphases its urgency. The protest issue is presented and legitimized by (to varying degree) thoroughly situating the protests in a historical, political and social context. The emphasis on violence on behalf of the protesters is legitimized as the broadcasters in one way or another give voice to the protesters and their anger is explained either by themselves (as in RT and to some extent AJE); represented by the reporter (AJE, second-hand in BBCW) or in being told by (civil rights) experts/elite (all broadcasters). The protests in Ferguson are further legitimized by the ongoing investigation of Michael Brown death, which was the trigger to the protests but also part of the protest issue. The setting contextualized the protests as each item provides more information on the historic and ongoing situation that has led to the conflict. This function of the narratives is particularly what makes them so powerful (Miskimmon et al 2017:6).

Contrary to what Juris (2005) and DeLuca and Peeples (2002) found, the performative or symbolic violence was never focused on, but rather looting and vandalism was explained as natural. Instead, as claimed by Bonner (2009), the focus was on attributing accountability on the police and question why they were so heavily armed. What is line with DeLuca and Peeples’ conclusions, however, is the important impact of the “public screen”. The loud night-time protest scenes are visually intriguing as silhouettes are seen in clouds of smoke. Similarly, the powerful rhetoric in the protest chant “Hands up, don’t shoot!” paired with footage a group of people standing still with their hands up while an impenetrable line of geared up police point their weapons at the group argues the claim that violence, or the threat of violence, make for both verbally and visually compelling news.

The second finding is that the differences in the narratives suggest the formation is done with a clear strategic aim. Although the narratives are not supporting or reproducing the political equilibrium by delegitimizing the protests, the narratives are actively tied to political agendas and structured to convey a specific understanding of the conflict. The concept of
Strategic narratives have been helpful to show how the narrative structure creates different ways of how a conflict can be presented. Further, the differences in the narratives regarding their attitudes confirm that the comparative element of the study was crucial in finding valuable results. Studying and comparing narrative has offered a deeper understanding of how strategic structural choice convey certain politics through news media. Additionally, the in-depth analysis has shown nuances in the function of violence that would perhaps have been lost conducting a traditional framing analysis. Regarding the different forms of strategic narratives presented by Miskimmon et al (2017), the results imply RT creates a systemic narrative and an identity narrative where the intention is to identify the U.S. as a violent nation that tries to restrict freedom of expression, and thereby imply that the U.S. is a dangerous nation in the international system. AJE and BBCW on the other hand offer policy narratives that suggest how the issues are to be understood. Unexpectedly, the results suggest that AJE and BBCW are more similar to each other than either of the two is to RT. This problematizes the dichotomy of mainstream and contra-mainstream flows of information. Rather, it seems, the research benefits from seeing the broadcasters as political actors in their own right, without ties to previous notions of how they should be understood. However, as Roselle (2017) suggests, RT truly challenges the concept of Western mainstream narratives with its own biased power narrative. It just turns out that the case of protests of racial issues forces the mainstream to get on the right side of history and legitimize the protests.

An overall point of the results is that racism and civil rights make politicized topics in the global public sphere, and suggest the studied broadcasters can provide an arena for civil and human rights protests to be displayed in favour of the protesters with deliberation on the protests issue, albeit presented within a framework with a specific political agenda.
5. Conclusion

It is important to state that the results from this study are not possible to generalize, nor are they representative for all kinds of protests or all the global broadcasting networks. The material was chosen from only three broadcasters, and it is possible that other broadcasters paid less or more attention to events in Ferguson. Similarly, protests raising issues on racism or state violence in other parts of the world would perhaps not gain as much recognition as protests in the U.S. The unrest in Ferguson took place in the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement, which has since 2014 gained international followers who organise protests all over the world. Consequently, the results of this study are not even representative of global coverage of police brutality in the U.S. as an increase or reduction of attention might have been given by global broadcasting networks since the studied timeframe. Nevertheless, the results of the present study are in line with the results that previous studies on global media and politics have produced, and as such, the results will now be discussed in the context of that scholarly field and leave speculations of general ways of reporting police brutality to future research.

The point of departure of this study was the research gap problematizing how protests are reported by global broadcasting networks when they are arguably tools for strategic narratives concerned with soft power rather than reproducing previous paradigms of Western hegemony. The case study conducted set out to explore how the controversial conflict in Ferguson was reported under such circumstances. The broadcasters chosen as primary sources come from different political background, as there is a need for comparative empirical research on these news networks. The main findings showed the broadcasters’ narratives present the conflict in Ferguson from different points of view. What is similar in all narratives is the substantial presence of violence that all broadcasters use to catch attention and use as an opening to convey what they consider to be the important elements of the issue. The protests are legitimized mainly due to the recognition of the protest issue, which all broadcasters voice as a political issue. The results suggest the global media ecology provides different social realities and different narratives of conflict.

Considering the global media ecology, the results suggest global broadcasting networks can provide an arena for disruption of the political process, and that civil rights issues and injustices seemingly tied to a specific nation do concern the world. An interesting task for further research is to follow the developments of global narratives on how race-related issues are politicizes and reported now that the Black Lives Matter movement is operating in
countries around the world. What storytelling techniques are deployed when these soft power resources are to report on issues in the nation where they are based? How is their “global outlook” manifested then?

The method used in this study was an attempt at using in-depth analysis to compare how the broadcasters structure contemporary history and consequently our understandings of it. The results imply it is fruitful to use qualitative methods when studying the suitability of previous paradigms, as they let nuances and details to speak for the material. Further, the concept of narratives is a rewarding in trying to understand and engage with texts on several levels. It allows the researcher to be methodologically creative, which is perhaps needed when results are difficult to predict in a rapidly changing media ecology. Future studies would also benefit from developing methods for studying how broadcasters engage their audience with their narratives on different media platforms, as at least RT seems to integrate social media into their broadcasts to emphasis the relevance of their narrative.

To conclude: the results suggests AJE, BBCW and RT offer an arena that can present dissent in favour of the protesters, while also indicating different political agendas embedded in the narratives strategically forge certain understandings of the events. Although there are distinct differences in what the narratives were about and how they were narrated to a global audience, more research on different kinds of protests and different kinds of protest issues is needed to understand how narratives of dissent are broadcasted in the global media ecology. While the results problematize the dichotomy of information and policy flows, they nonetheless suggest there is power in newsrooms where narratives are structured.
References


Websites:


BBC History http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines, last accessed: 2017-08-14


United States National Guard http://www.nationalguard.mil/About-the-Guard/, last accessed: 2017-08-14

Primary Sources:

Screening Protest Project Recordings Archive
Appendices

Appendix 1. Coding questions + coding sheet for analysis

Code sheet for quantitative mapping, first level of analysis

- File and program name, i.e. “BBCW_kl20_20140814”, stating the channel, time of airing, and the date the program aired.
- Broadcast length. Start time is when the news anchor says the first word in the broadcast (usually right after the program jingle), and stop time is when the anchor signs off.
- Start and stop time of item (Duration). Start time when Ferguson item starts, and stop time when item is over.
- Number of items in the bulletin. Count of items in the broadcast, regardless of length. Put in parenthesis the order in which Ferguson item is read. (If it is not read, put none.)
- Headlines/top stories (Ferguson in headlines). Number of headlines/top stories presented, with Ferguson headline in parenthesis if existing.

Sport items and/or sport headlines were not counted.
**Code sheet for narrative analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Headline</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complicating action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then what happened?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Actor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code questions for items**

Difference between telling and showing. Telling: who has the power to define.

When coding for something, note if it was shown or told. If told: by whom? If shown: how?

When coding for telling: Writing “told” if person saying it is in frame, write VO and what is shown if the statement is told on voice-over over another image.

For transparency: All items where transcribed and each line was numbered so that “evidence” can be given when something is answered, e.g. what the issue is, thus stating that in item X, the issue is said to be “a systemic problem (12)”, with the number of where it was said.

**Headline**: or “top stories”, present at the beginning of bulletin as a “what’s to come”. If not in headlines, put none.
Orientation:
Place:
Where do the events take place?
If different, code for place of protest and other. E.g. “protest Ferguson, “Washington DC press conference”.
Was reporter on site?
Participants:
Actors: real people (named), abstractions (state or collectives), characters (e.g. “protester”)
Are we told or shown these participants?
Setting:
What is the starting point? (agency)
Institutional and political context.
Cultural, social, economic issue?
Does it concern the local community, the nation, or the world?

Complicting actions:
What has changed the situation?
What is new in the situation?
Then what happened: (new developments in the ongoing story)
Protest issue:
What are they protesting? What do they want? Whom are the protesters addressing to solve the problem they raise?
Violence (denotive & connotive):
Denotive: Who is violent and why? What is the target of violence?
Connotive: Who defines what is violent? How is violence depicted? How are we situated in relation to the site/source of violence? Is the source of violence given voice? Is the target of violence given voice?

Resolution:
How is the complication solved? What is suggested as the solution to the issues (both in terms of the ongoing event and the deeper issues)?

Speaking actor:
Who is given voice to state definitions, emotions, thoughts? Anchor and reporter coded here
to show who says what. Ethnicity coded here, e.g. African American, if stated. If not stated, code as “white person” or “person of colour”.

**Evaluation: How is the story to be understood?**

Look for: Direct statements, lexical intensifiers (including process statements (describing/showing participants/actions), repetition, symbolic action, judgement of third person, statistics

Sides of the conflict representation: are both sides heard visually and in terms of voice? How?

Language used: how are participants referred to? (use of metaphors and symbols?) What roles are assigned to each side?
### Appendix 2. Items of Ferguson

#### Al Jazeera English: Items, length, headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Broadcasting length</th>
<th>Ferguson start</th>
<th>Ferguson stop</th>
<th>Ferguson items length</th>
<th>Number of items (F in order)</th>
<th>Top stories (F in order)</th>
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| Total all items | 14:18:46            |                             |                           | 229                     | 64                           |
| Total Ferguson  | 00:37:03            |                             |                           | 11                      | 7                            |
| Total minutes   | 858,77              |                             |                           | 37                      |                              |
| Average time min| 53,67               |                             |                           | 3,37                    |                              |
| Ferguson % of all| 4,31 %              |                             |                           | 4,80 %                  | 10,94%                       |

**Footnotes:**
1. 20140815 Bulletin is cut at 49:00 "no or bad signal"
2. 20140816 from doha, bulletin cut after weather at 00:33:58
3. 20140823 broadcast cut at 33:50
4. 20140824 broadcast from Doha
### BBC World News: Items, time, headlines

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<th>Broadcasting length</th>
<th>Ferguson start</th>
<th>Ferguson stop</th>
<th>Ferguson Items length</th>
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**Footnotes:** 20140810, 20140816, 20140817, 20140823 and 20140824 Sport, short bulletin
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<td>00:01:45</td>
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| Total all items      | 07:17:07            | 149            | 55           |
| Total Ferguson       | 01:09:43            | 15             | 13           |
| Total minutes        | 437                 | 69,72          |
| Average time minutes | 27,31               | 4,65           |
| Ferguson % of all    | 15,95 %             | 10,07 %        | 23,64 %      |
Appendix 3. Headlines in AJE, BBCW and RT

10/8-25/8

In bold letters is the screen text (“title”) of the headlines. Marked none if there was an item but no headline on that date. If other than the anchor is speaking in the headline, it is put in brackets who is speaking (if stated) and what they are saying is in quotation marks.

AJE

14/8 None.

15/8 Anger in Missouri The footage police in Missouri say shows Michael Brown robbing a store shortly before he was shot and killed by one of their officers.

16/8 None.

17/8 Anger in Missouri Protests against the police go on for an eighth evening despite the curfew in the U.S. city of Ferguson.

18/8 Anger in Missouri (Man at press conference) “We believe that given those kind of facts, the officer should have been arrested”.
An independent autopsy on the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown reveals the teen was shot at least six times including twice in the head.

19/8 School disrupt We talk to the pupils of Ferguson, Missouri, who are joining the protests as classes are cancelled.

20/8 Missouri protests Protests continue in Ferguson over the shooting of a black teen as the U.S. attorney general arrives to address the unrest.

21/8 Shooting video As tensions remains in the U.S. after the shooting of a black teenager, police release video of the moment a second man as killed.

22/8 None.

25/8 U.S. teen shooting We’ll report from St Louis, Missouri, where the funeral of the black teenager Michael Brown has been an emotional affair.

BBCW

15/8 Missouri shooting CCTV footage is released by Ferguson police of an incident at a convenient store on the day unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed.

17/8 CCTV footage The Governor of U.S. state of Missouri says it was wrong to release CCTV footage, which apparently shows shooting victim stealing.
18/8 **Missouri rioting** Our top story – the ongoing violence in Missouri after police kill an unarmed black teenager. An independent autopsy suggests Michael Brown was in a defensive position when he was fatally wounded. 
(Man at press conference) “At least six. At least six shots. Could be more, but at least six.”

19/8 **Missouri rioting** The arrival of the National Guard in the Missouri town of Ferguson fails to stop another night of violent protests. 
(Ron Johnson from press conference) “I am not going to let the criminals that have come out from across this country or live in this community define this neighbourhood and define what we’re going to do to make it right.”

25/8 None.

---

**RT**

11/8 **Teenage target** SWAT teams are deployed to stop looting and street violence in the US state of Missouri after the killing of an unarmed black teenager by a police officer.

12/8 ‘**Killer cop’ clash**’ Teargas and rubber bullets. The US police respond to crowds demanding justice for the killing of an unarmed black teenager by Missouri cop.

13/8 None.

14/8 **Crackdown fault line** Militarised police forces in Missouri unleash their heaviest crackdown on protesters yet during a forth night of unrest over the fatal shooting of an unarmed black teen by a cop.

15/8 **Ferguson: fused fury** The U.S. government deploys armed to the teeth security officers to contain country-wide protests demanding justice over the police killing of a teenager.

16/8 **Fury in Ferguson** Armoured vehicles and sniper rifles primed but not for a military operation, US authorities use them to disperse rioters demanding justice for a teenager shot dead by police in the US town of Ferguson.

17/8 **Flame of fury** Unrest escalates in the US town of Ferguson with police using teargas, military weapons and the power of arrest. Protests over an unarmed teenager shot dead by an officer has lasted almost a week.

18/8 **Crowd rage** The U.S. suburb of Ferguson becomes even more militarised as the National Guard is employed to help heavily armed police tackle protesters outraged over the shooting of a teen by an officer.

19/8 **Ferguson fury** Militarised police forces are stepping up their crackdown on largely peaceful protests in the US city of Ferguson as the unrest continues 10 days after the shooting of an unarmed teen by a police.

20/8 **Shooting to kill** A dozen more protesters are arrested in Ferguson, Missouri after US police shoot dead another black man. The suspect was wielding a knife but had not attacked the officers.
21/8 **Justice jolt** More arrests are made in Ferguson as protesters continue their calls for justice over the police killing of Michael Brown and other black Americans.

22/8 **Law on the ropes** The nationwide debate over racial profiling and police brutality in America intensifies after the killing of Michael Brown and almost two weeks of riots in Ferguson.

23/8 **Justice call** Fear of more street violence in the U.S. city of Ferguson as a jury deters over whether murder charges should be pressed over the police man that shot dead an unarmed black teenager.

24/8 **Police rage** Calls for the justice over the killing of unarmed black teenager in the U.S. city of Ferguson were applied to by teargas and rubber bullets. Even journalists were harassed by security forces.

(Reporter in street, following police officers) “Captain Johnson, what’s the reason for ordering the press out?”

25/8 None
### Appendix 4. Example of filled code sheet

**BBCW August 15, 2014: BBCW_kl20_20140815**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>MISSOURI SHOOTING “CCTV footage is released by Ferguson police of an incident at a convenience store on the day unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed.”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Grainy CCTV footage of two men in a store. One man in red cap and light shirt picks up at package. From another angle: same man pushes a small man who is trying to stop him from leaving the store. Anchor VO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>US state of Missouri Ferguson America (Dallas) (Location of Elahi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Ferguson police Police in Missouri Michael Brown (victim/suspect) Darren Wilson (police officer) Riots Protests America Travyon Martin President Obama American police force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Systemic problem (12) Issue between police departments and young black men in America Local police with paramilitary equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicating action</td>
<td>Michael Brown was shot and killed by police officer. Elahi: “another black teenager who was unarmed was shot by a police officer” (9) “There is a huge racial undertone to the way police departments behave with young black men in America. There is no question about that, statistics back it up completely. Just this week, you know, there was an unarmed death in Dallas, by the hand of a police officer - another black man. It is happening in New York last month, over selling a cigarette, so these things keep happening.” (18-21) Told by Elahi. “A lot of paramilitary equipment has been given to local police forces by the Defense department, and by the Federal government”(23) Told by Elahi.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Then what happened? | Police release CCTV footage allegedly connecting Brown to | Shows CCTV footage from convenience store. Anchor: “Police has named the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protest issue</th>
<th>People upset after Brown’s death, came out to the streets</th>
<th>Elahi VO people running down a street chased by smoke/teargas (15)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police force “overreacting to every given situation”</td>
<td>Elahi VO people running down a street, armed police with helmets, shields and masks in smoke, “fireworks” shot from group of police (15-16, 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>“unarmed black teenager shot and killed”(1, 2, 9, 11)</td>
<td>Told (by anchor and Elahi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“confrontation with someone”</td>
<td>Footage of Brown (allegedly) pushing a small man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“several nights of violent protests and riots” (6)</td>
<td>Told (anchor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Paramilitary response” (15)</td>
<td>Footage of people running down a street, first running towards us, then past us, smoke grenade rolling down the street, chasing them. while discussing what the issue is: footage of armed police and clouds of smoke, what looks like fireworks are shot from the group of police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>President Obama to help with federal government</td>
<td>Told by Elahi (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body cams and police cars with dash cams</td>
<td>Told by Elahi (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State police stopping riots</td>
<td>Anchor VO to Elahi (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State police stopping riots and African American police officer only “band aid on deep wound”(26)</td>
<td>Told by Elahi (26-29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Actor</td>
<td>Anchor Shayan Elahi, “a civil rights attorney, Pakistani American”</td>
<td>Via Skype, Elahi in office in Dallas, BBCW anchor in London studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>There are protests in Ferguson with violence involved, related to the death of Michael Brown who might have been a criminal. The real issue might be between police and black men. President Obama’s involvement for solution.</td>
<td>Civil rights attorney Elahi explains his view of the events. His focus is America rather than Ferguson, suggesting the issue is national rather than local. Much dialogue and little footage suggest the issue needs expertise to be understood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>