2 | How Do Street Protests Differ in Their Level of Politicization?

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Abstract
This study aims to improve our understanding of protest politicization—i.e., the extent to which a street protest epitomizes a power struggle. Although scholars have implied that demonstrations may differ in their degree of politicization, we are unaware of any systematic research on the topic. We begin our study with a conceptualization of protest politicization. Then, we operationalize the concept as the extent to which demonstrators are angry and fight for a collective good; an opponent is identified and vilified; and a claim is specific and combatively made. To test whether these indicators hold, we use a dataset of two Dutch protests: a reactive protest against the Russian anti-gay law and the ritual Pink Saturday parade. These events were selected, because we believed them to differ in their level of politicization. The reactive protest was considered far more politicized. So, we expected the six indicators to manifest themselves here more prominently. These indicators were measured in various ways. Demonstrators reported their sense of anger and motives to participate in questionnaires. Researchers observed whether an opponent was identified and a claim was made. In addition, we interviewed the protest organizers about their opponent and claim, and assessed media reports. Our results confirm our hypotheses. Therefore, we propose that the six indicators constitute a model to study how protests differ in their level of politicization. We conclude by discussing our findings and suggesting avenues for future research.

Keywords
Protest politicization
Demonstrators
Opponent
Claims-making
Street demonstrations are political by definition. For instance, Fillieule (1997: 44) defined a demonstration as ‘any temporary occupation by a number of people of an open place, public or private, which directly or indirectly includes the expression of political opinions’ (our emphasis). Favre (1990: 15) conceptualized a demonstration as ‘a collective movement organized on a public road to produce a political effect by the peaceful expression of an opinion or claim’ (our emphasis, and translation). Social movement scholars also explained what makes protest political: demonstrators make claims that bear on the interests of their opponents (e.g., government actors) (Franzosi, 2004: 29-61; Klandermans, 1997: 16-21, 37-44; Lindeklde, 2013; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 3-37; Tilly, 2008: 1-30; Van Stekelenburg, Van Leeuwen, and Van Troost, 2013; Wada, 2004). Although scholars have found that demonstrators’ collective identities may differ in their level of politicization (Turner-Zwinkels, Van Zomeren, and Postmes, 2015, also see Klandermans, 2014; Simon and Grabow, 2010; Simon and Klandermans, 2001)1, we are unaware of any research that systematically differentiates between demonstrations’ politicization levels. This deficiency is striking, given that some scholars consider politicization the single most important characteristic of a protest event (e.g., Fillieule, 1997: 42). In fact, by being politicized, demonstrations distinguish themselves from other collective gatherings, such as hooligan meetings and suburban riots (Fillieule, 2012: 235-236).

Admittedly, a few scholars have implied that demonstrations may differ in their degree of politicization. For instance, Klandermans, Van Stekelenburg, Damen, Van Troost, and Van Leeuwen (2014) distinguished between ‘protests’ and ‘parades’ (e.g., May Day, Gay Pride parade). Seemingly, the latter were considered less political, as the authors said: ‘almost always […] parades have moments of politicization to it’ (Op cit.: 705, our emphasis). Inclán and Almeida (2014) made a similar distinction between ‘spontaneous protests’, which ‘are reactive and […] [relatively] rapid responses to political, social, and economic changes’ (Op cit.: 3), and ‘commemorative protests’, which are ‘ritual anniversaries of different social [movement] causes’ (Ibid.). Differentiating between such reactive and ritual protests proved relevant, as they drew different crowds. For instance, Inclán and Almeida (2014: 34) found that reactive protesters identify significantly more with other participants and the protest organizers than ritual protesters do. And Klandermans and colleagues (2014: 707) found that participants of ritual protests (‘parades’) are significantly more likely to be a member of protest organization(s) than participants of socio-cultural protests, but significantly less likely

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1 Worth noting is that these scholars conceive of politicization as a (within-person) process.
than those of anti-austerity protests. These results, however, cannot be automatically attributed to protest politicization, because the supposed difference between the protests’ politicization levels has not been empirically tested.

This paper is one of the first attempts to examine how street protests differ in their level of politicization. To do so, we first conceptualize protest politicization as the extent to which a demonstration epitomizes a power struggle. Then, we operationalize the concept as the extent to which demonstrators are angry and fight for a collective good; an opponent is identified and vilified; and a claim is specific and combatively made.

We test our assumptions by comparing two demonstrations: the ritual Pink Saturday parade (2012), and a reactive protest against the Russian anti-gay law (2013). These events were selected as we considered them to differ in their degree of politicization, the latter being far more politicized than the first. As the demonstrations were not assumed to differ much otherwise, given that they were staged by the same social movement, in the same country, and in the same period of time, this constitutes a ‘most similar systems’ design (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 31-46). With such a design, we can maintain with some degree of certainty that any differences between the two events are related to their level of politicization.

To measure the protests’ politicization levels, we asked participants of the two events to report their anger and protest motives in questionnaires (n = 234 and 202, respectively). Researchers observed whether an opponent was identified and a claim was made, and, if so, in what way. In addition, we interviewed protest organizers about their opponent and claim, and assessed whether (and how) these were mentioned in media reports.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we introduce the concept ‘protest politicization’. Then, we report theorizing on three demonstration characteristics that are expected to manifest such politicization: (1) demonstrators’ emotions and motives; (2) adversarial attributions; and (3) claims-making. After having summarized our research question and hypotheses, we describe our dataset. Subsequently, we test whether the hypothesized indicators of protest politicization were more prevalent at the reactive protest, as we expect. We end our paper by discussing our findings and suggesting avenues for future research.

**INTRODUCING ‘PROTEST POLITICIZATION’**

We define ‘protest politicization’ as the extent to which a demonstration epitomizes a power struggle. Our conceptualization consists of two premises. First of all, a demonstration...
comprises a power struggle. This assumption is based on Tilly’s (2008: 11, 22) statement that a demonstration is a form of ‘contentious politics’, which involves ‘episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants (McAdam et al., 2001: 5). The fact that demonstrations are political events has also been underlined in the previously mentioned definitions by Fillieule (1997) and Favre (1990). Fillieule (2012) even argued that politicization is the characteristic that distinguishes demonstrations from other collective gatherings, such as hooligan meetings and suburban riots.

The second premise of our conceptualization is that street protests do not equally manifest a power struggle. In other words: we expect that some demonstrations are more politicized than others. This assumption ensues from the way that social movement scholars have categorized protest events. Klandermans and colleagues (2014) distinguished between ‘protests’ and ‘parades’. And Inclán and Almeida (2014) differentiated between ‘spontaneous protests’ and ‘commemorative protests’. Similarly, Tartakowsky (2004, in Tilly, 2008: 84) discerned ‘politically initiated demonstration[s]’ from ‘politically tinged parades’. According to Tarrow (2011: 113), ‘[political] performances’ differ from ‘ritual political performances’. Finally, Blake (2014: 8, 11) suggested that ritual protests may differ in their level of politicization as well, by saying: ‘unlike, say, Fourth of July parades in the United States, all loyalist parades in Northern Ireland are […] intimately political’. This is also what Klandermans and colleagues (2014: 705) meant to say when they stated that parades usually ‘have moments of politicization to it’.

Although most of these scholars did not explain why they distinguished between demonstrations in this way, we believe that they all aimed at different levels of politicization. For instance, ‘politically initiated demonstrations’ (Tartakowsky, 2004, in Tilly, 2008: 84, our emphasis) seem more politicized than ‘politically tinged parades’ (Ibid.). Tarrow (2011: 113), who devoted a few words to the matter, seems to concur with this premise. According to him, ‘ritual political performances sometimes evolve when [political] performances lose their original meaning but are preserved for symbolic reasons’. As an example he lists May Day, which ‘began as a day of protest but evolved into a ritualized festival of labor’ (Ibid.).
STUDYING PROTEST POLITICIZATION

To study how street protests differ in their level of politicization, we focus on two actors—demonstrators and their opponent—and the activity in which the first engage: political claims-making (see Franzosi, 2004: 29-61; Lindekilde, 2013; Tilly, 2008: 1-30).

**Demonstrators**

Generally, demonstrators are aggrieved about the way the authorities or other power holders treated a social problem (Klandermans, 1992, 1997). A grievance—‘a feeling of having been treated unfairly’ (Merriam-Webster, n.d. (a))—is considered ‘the linchpin’ of collective action (Jasper, 1997: 113). After all, without discontent about some state of affairs, what would there be to protest about? Besides, a feeling of injustice induces a powerful protest emotion: anger. This ‘intense and short-term feeling of displeasure, hostility, or antagonism toward someone or something, [which is] typically combined with an urge to attack or change another person’s behavior’ (Miron-Spektor and Rafaeli, 2009: 153) is considered powerful for protest (Jasper, 1998: 412), especially when it is group-based (Smith, 1993). This is because group-based anger stimulates individuals’ willingness to participate in collective action, either directly (Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, and Leach, 2004) or indirectly (Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, and Van Dijk, 2011).

We assume that a demonstration’s politicization level is positively related to demonstrators’ sense of anger (H1). So, the more politicized the event, the angrier we expect demonstrators to feel. This is because the more a power struggle epitomizes, the more salient demonstrators’ grievances must become. After all, by engaging in ‘an open power struggle’ (Simon and Klandermans, 2001: 326), demonstrators make their grievances known. And grievances induce anger. Next to that, we theorized that protest politicization manifests itself by adversarial attributions (see next section), which are known to induce anger (Op cit.: 325).

Next to anger, we expect a demonstration’s politicization level to relate to demonstrators’ motives to participate. These motives are a function of the perceived costs and benefits of protest participation (Oberschall, 1980), and may range from collective to entirely individual (i.e. selective). Collective motives ‘are related to the achievement of the collective goal’ (Klandermans, 1997: 26), such as human rights, or environmental protection. At a first glance, collective motives seem to be inherent to protest, given that such events are typically staged to redress a ‘collective problem’ (Toch, 1965) 2014: 5). However, protesters often also have selective motives to participate, which may be either social or non-social in nature.
(Klandermans, 1997: 24-29). Social motives ‘involve the reactions of significant others—spouses, friends, or colleagues—to the individual’s participation’ (Op cit.: 26), which may range from ridicule to admiration (Simon et al., 1998: 647). Non-social or ‘reward’ motives are ‘such matters as the amount of money and time one will spend’ (Klandermans, 1997: 26), and ‘making new friends’ (Simon et al., 1998: 647). For someone to be willing to participate, the expected benefits of protest participation should outweigh the costs.

Expectedly, the more politicized the event, the more demonstrators have collective motives to participate, rather than social or (especially) reward motives (H2). This is because we gather that the more a power struggle epitomizes, the more salient demonstrators’ grievances become. The more demonstrators are aware of shared grievances, the more likely we consider it to be that they participate because of collective motives rather than individual ones.

**Opponent**

Demonstrators generally blame an opponent (e.g., the authorities or other power holders) for the social problem that they are aggrieved about. Blaming—‘an act of attributing fault’ (Dictionary, n.d.)—is considered ‘crucial to protest’ (Jasper, 1997: 118), because it induces a feeling of injustice, and, consequently, anger (Gamson, 1992: 32; Simon and Klandermans, 2001: 325). Especially the type and specificity of the blame are important. So, if the social problem is devoted to human action (e.g., budget cuts), we tend to feel more angry than if it is caused by nature (e.g., flooding). And when a concrete and specific person is identified (e.g., the Prime Minister), we generally feel more angry than if an abstract social force (e.g., society) is considered responsible for our grievance (Gamson, 1992: 31-58; Jasper, 1997: 118-121; Jasper, 1998: 410-412).

As a result of such anger, opponents are generally not only identified, but also vilified (Holmes, 2004; Jasper, 1997: 356-358).\(^2\) As Holmes (2004: 214) puts it: ‘When angry with someone, we are likely to call them belittling names and wish to ‘cut them down to size’’. Although ‘vilification is pervasive in social movements rhetoric’, as Vanderford (1989: 166) maintains, research on the topic is rare. Based on a few extant studies, we hold that vilification may range in severity from ridiculing (Ferree, 2004: 90-91) to hate speech (Tarrow, 2013: 165-189; Vanderford, 1989). We provide a few examples. On November 14, 2014, the *International Business Times* reported that ‘hundreds of protesters took Bondi..."
Beach in Australia to literally bury their heads in the sands to mock Prime Minister Tony Abbott for not putting climate change on the agenda at the G20 summit’ (Payne, 2014, our emphasis). Then, on March 1, 2015, New Yorkers protested against Putin for the alleged murder of Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov. These protesters carried banners that said: ‘Putin Plague of 21st Century’, and ‘Stop Dictator Putin—Stop Murderers’ (Channel News Asia, 2015). Clearly, Putin was more severely vilified than Tony Abbott. Research revealed that severer types of vilification—what Jasper (1997: 121; 1998: 412) refers to as ‘demonization’—further increase negative emotions, such as anger.

We assume that at a more politicized event, demonstrators identify their opponent more clearly (H3) and vilify their opponent more severely (H4). After all, the more a power struggle epitomizes, the more demonstrators must know who (or what) they oppose. As reported, the specification of blame indirectly generates villains, whom (or which) may be defamed more or less pronouncedly.

Claims-making
Demonstrators do not only aim to express their grievances to the identified opponent, but also make a claim (Benford and Snow, 2000: 616; Jasper, 1997: 120; Simon and Klandermans, 2001: 325). A claim is ‘a demand for something due or believed to be due’ (Merriam-Webster, n.d. (c)). If the opponent complies with this claim, it is expected to solve the social problem (Simon and Klandermans, 2001: 325). Examples are manifold. For instance, on January 21, 2011, a platform of Dutch student organizations staged a protest in The Hague to oppose the announced budget cuts on higher education in the Netherlands. These protesters demanded from the Dutch government that this bill would be withdrawn. As one of the banners succinctly said: ‘Fuck off with your education plans!’ (CCC dataset, 2011, our translation). And on February 28, 2015, Chicagoans protested against alleged unconstitutional abuse by police officers at a facility called ‘Homan Square’. These demonstrators made a call for official investigations into the facility. Also, one of the organizers publically said: ‘We demand that you [Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel] shut down this facility’ (Stafford, 2015).

As the previous cases exemplify: claims-making suggests some specificity, just like blaming does. After all, ‘claims-making entails […] the formulation of a political demand with a specific content (the claim)’ (Lindekilde, 2013: 201, our emphasis). Still, not all claims are equally specific. For example, Tarrow distinguishes between ‘substantive’ claims, which are made on ‘rights, benefits, and policies’ (1989: 123-128), and ‘expressive’ claims, which
are staged for 'symbolism, solidarity, and opposition' (Ibid.). Clearly, the first type of claim is more specific than the latter. Still, Tarrow (1989: 124) found that, during the Italian protest cycle of 1965-1975, ‘people used highly expressive actions when they made demands, but relatively few protests lacked substantive claims altogether’.

Claims-making also implies combativeness. After all, a demand is ‘a forceful statement in which you say that something must be done or given to you’ (Merriam-Webster, n.d. (d)). Yet, we presume that not all claims are made in an equally combative way. To the best of our knowledge, research on the topic is scarce. Yet, perhaps, Tilly’s (2008: 6) statement says it all: ‘claims range from timid requests to strident demands’. His systematic categorization of ‘action verbs’ (Op cit.: 51) exemplifies this. For instance, claimants are more combative when they ‘resist’ or ‘condemn’ than if they ‘beseech’ or ‘negotiate’ (Op cit.: 5, 51-52).

We expect that at a more politicized event, demonstrators have a more specific claim (H5) and make their claim in a more combative way (H6). After all, the more a power struggle epitomizes, the more demonstrators must know what they want. In line with previous research, which revealed that the specificity of blame induces anger (e.g., Jasper, 1998: 410-412), we expect that the specificity of a claim induces more combative claims-making.

In Sum: Research Question and Hypotheses

In this paper, we examine how street demonstrations differ in their level of politicization. To do so, we focus on two actors—demonstrators and their opponent—and the activity in which the first engage: claims-making. In specific, we hypothesize that at a more politicized event, demonstrators feel angrier (H1), and have more collective motives to participate than social or (especially) reward motives (H2). At a more politicized event, we also expect that the opponent is more clearly identified and more severely vilified (H3-4), and that the claim is more specific and more combatively made (H5-6).

METHODS

Protest Events

For this research, we studied two demonstrations that were staged by the Dutch Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) movement. On July 7, 2012 we covered the parade of an

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annual LGBT rights event called ‘Pink Saturday’, which was staged in Haarlem. This event was organized by the ad hoc foundation ‘Haarlem Pink City’. From now on, we refer to this parade as the ‘ritual protest’. Then, on April 8, 2013, we covered a rally against the Russian anti-gay law, which was staged in Amsterdam. This event was organized by the Dutch association for Integration of Homosexuality (COC) during the state visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Netherlands. We refer to this rally as the ‘reactive protest’.

We selected these two protests as we considered them to differ in their degree of politicization, the reactive protest being far more politicized than the ritual event. As the demonstrations were not assumed to differ much otherwise, given that they were staged by the same movement, in the same country, and within a year’s time, this constitutes a ‘most similar systems’ design (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 31-46). With such a design, we can be fairly certain that any differences between the two events are related to their level of politicization.

**Sampling Protesters**

At both events, we sought to gather a representative sample of demonstrators by using the sampling procedure of the international research project ‘Caught in the act of protest: Contextualizing Contestation’ (CCC). This means that at both events participants were sampled by a team of researchers, which was spread over the protest area and used a count ratio to select respondents (Van Stekelenburg, Walgrave, Klandermans, and Verhulst, 2012; also see Klandermans *et al.*, 2011). However, participants of the two events were questioned in a somewhat different way.

Reactive protesters were asked to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire during the demonstration. Of the approximately 180 demonstrators that were approached, 164 agreed to complete the questionnaire. Ritual protesters were questioned in two ways. First of all, these protesters were asked to accept a postal questionnaire, which they were to fill out at home and send back to the university in a prepaid envelope. Of the 368 people who accepted this questionnaire, 101 completed it and sent it back. Then, a subsample of these demonstrators was also asked to participate in a short, structured interview during the event. Seventy-four demonstrators agreed to this. We discuss the potential response bias that this differential sampling strategy might have generated after we have introduced our measures.

**Measures**

To measure demonstrators’ *sense of anger*, we asked: ‘Thinking about the atmosphere of this protest event, to what extent do you feel angry?’ This question comes from the paper-and-
To assess demonstrators’ motives to participate, we asked: ‘Please tell us why you participated in this protest event?’ This question comes from the paper-and-pencil questionnaire and the postal questionnaire for the reactive protest and ritual protest, respectively. For both events, we excluded all respondents that self-proclaimed to be a bystander. Such respondents, for instance, answered to the above mentioned question: ‘I have not participated in the parade, but as an onlooker I saw it passing by from the side of the road’.4 After this exclusion, data proved to be missing for 25% of the reactive protest sample and 7% of the ritual protest sample.

Clearly, missing data are relatively high for the reactive protest sample. Worth noting, though, is that the missing cases have not biased this sample to any considerable extent. We draw this conclusion based on our assessment of two variables that are known to relate to demonstrators’ participation motives: their sense of anger (see, e.g., Van Stekelenburg et al., 2011) and their level of education (e.g., Hall, Rodeghier, and Useem, 1986). Firstly, reactive protesters who did report their motive(s) to participate felt slightly more angry than those who did not, but the difference was not significant (motive $M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.27$; no motive $M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.18$; $t (158) = 1.06$, $p = .29$). Further, demonstrators who did report their motive(s) to participate were as highly educated as those who did not: 78% and 77%, respectively, had a college or university degree. So, we feel confident that the reactive protest sample will give a valid account of demonstrators’ participation motives.

To construe demonstrators’ motives to participate, we performed a ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which is a method for identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within data. Procedurally, this meant that we carefully read all answers and tentatively coded them based on our interpretation of their meaning. For example, ‘Freedom of sexual orientation I find very important’ was coded as ‘sexual freedom’. Answers that contained multiple meanings, being the case for 26% of the reactive protest sample and 50% of the ritual protest sample, were given multiple codes. For instance, ‘visibility LGBT’s + sense of belonging’ was coded as ‘visibility’ and ‘unity’. After all answers were coded, we repeatedly checked the codes against each other. This comparison led to the merging and splitting of several codes. For instance, ‘sexual freedom’ was incorporated

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4 These and subsequent quotes from questionnaire respondents, interviewees, and media reports were translated from Dutch to English by the first author.
into the overarching code ‘support gay rights/LGBT acceptance’. Eventually, fourteen codes were identified (see Table 1 on page 35).

We then categorized these codes as either collective, social, or reward motives (see Klandermans, 1984, 1997; Simon et al., 1998). During this exercise, we found that one code (‘solidarity’) did not fit in well with either of these motives. This code was given to answers such as: ‘to encourage Russian LGBT’s’ and ‘[…] gays are (often) colorful, lovely people and they can use all the support they can get’. While these people had a social motive, they did not seem to participate because of the anticipated reactions of their significant others, but to achieve a collective good. This good would, however, not benefit them personally. So, in fact, these respondents were ‘conscience constituents’ (McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1222). Following this reasoning, we decided to create a fourth motive category, which we called ‘solidary’.

Response Bias
Our two questionnaire measures—sense of anger and motives to participate—may be biased, given that these measures were posed somewhat differently at the two events. However, in both cases, we gather that the response bias is insignificant.

Demonstrators’ sense of anger was reported during both events. Given that emotions are transitory, this consistency is vital. Of course, ritual protesters may have been more prone to social desirability than reactive protesters, given that the first reported this emotion during an interview, whereas the latter filled out a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. However, we gather that the response bias in the ritual protest sample may have gone either way. On the one hand, these protesters may have tempered their anger, as people—and especially oppressed groups—are generally ‘encouraged to suppress their anger’ (Holmes, 2004: 210). On the other hand, respondents may have heightened their anger if they saw the interview as an opportunity to voice their grievance. Expectedly, these biases balanced each other out.

Our sample on demonstrators’ motives may be biased as well, because of the time lag. After all, reactive protesters reported their motives during the event, while ritual protesters did this afterwards. As a result, ritual protesters’ answers may have been influenced by their protest experiences, while for reactive protesters this was only possible up to a certain point. As a result, we gather that collective motives may be overrepresented in the ritual protest sample. However, as we expected participants of the reactive protest to report these motives more extensively, such a deviance will not have distorted our results in a meaningful way.
Interviews, Observations, and Media Assessments

In the following ways, we assessed whether (and how) an opponent was identified at the two events, and a claim was made:

Before both events, we interviewed the protest organizers. For the reactive protest, we interviewed an organizer of the COC, whom had been actively involved in the preparations of the event. For the ritual protest, we interviewed five active volunteers of Haarlem Pink City. All interviews were semi-structured, and took place face to face or on the telephone. These conversations lasted in between 20 and 63 minutes each. When face to face, they were taped and transcribed verbatim. When on the phone, the interviewer made notes, which were elaborated immediately afterwards.

Researchers observed both events. These researchers—three at the reactive protest and two at the ritual protest—made field notes, which were elaborated immediately afterwards. At each event, one of these researchers also taped the speeches that were held, and took pictures of claims-making performances, such as demonstrators’ costumes and protest banners.

We gathered media reports of both events, which included newspaper articles, and messages on the organizers’ web pages and Facebook sites. In addition, one of the organizers of the ritual protest, whom we had interviewed before the event, sent us a copy of the action plans for the various activities of the day. Also, after the reactive protest, we received a copy of the speech that the chairwoman of the COC had given.

RESULTS

A collective power struggle consists of two actors—demonstrators and their opponent—and the activity in which the first engage: claims-making. As we considered the reactive protest to be more politicized than the ritual event, we expect to find that reactive protesters were angrier than ritual protesters (H1). Also, reactive protesters are assumed to have had more collective motives to participate than ritual protesters did (H2). Further, at the reactive protest, we expect that the opponent was more clearly identified and more severely vilified (H3-4), and that the claim was more specific and more combatively made (H5-6).

Demonstrators

Sense of Anger

Figure 1 portrays to what extent demonstrators’ sense of anger diverged between and within the two events. Most reactive protesters (59%) felt angry, at least to some extent. At the ritual
protest, to the contrary, only two participants (representing 3% of the sample) felt angry. An independent samples t-test confirmed that participants of the reactive protest felt significantly angrier than participants of the ritual protest did (reactive $M = 2.79$; $SD = 1.25$; ritual $M = 1.20$, $SD = .64$; $t (229.43) = 12.84$, $p < .001$). This finding confirms our first hypothesis.

**Figure 1**: Demonstrators’ Self-reported Sense of Anger for Reactive and Ritual Protest (in %)

$n = 160$ for reactive protest. $n = 74$ for ritual protest.

**Motives to Participate**

At both events, participants had collective, solidarity, social, and reward motives to participate (see Table 1). However, these motives were not equally important. At the reactive protest, nearly all participants (93%) had a collective motive, such as supporting gay rights, opposing the Russian anti-gay law, or opposing Putin. Nearly a third (32%) participated out of solidarity with Russian LGBT’s. Social and reward motives were hardly mentioned. Only one participant had a social motive: she had been asked to participate by her friends. Just two participants (2% of sample) reported a reward motive: one was an event organizer, and the other represented a political party.

At the ritual protest, the tables were turned. Here, nearly all participants (94%) had a reward motive, such as enjoyment, experiencing a sense of unity, or empowerment. Nearly a sixth (16%) had a social motive. These respondents had been asked to participate by their friends or family, or aimed to reunite themselves with other LGBT’s. Nine percent participated out of solidarity with the (Dutch) LGBT community. More than half of the participants (55%) had a collective motive, such as promoting the visibility of LGBT’s, or supporting their acceptance.
In conclusion, reactive protesters mainly participated to fight for a collective good, whereas ritual protesters mainly aimed to have a good time. This finding confirms our second hypothesis.

Table 1: Demonstrators’ Self-reported Motives to Participate in Reactive and Ritual Protest (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Reactive</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>collective</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support gay rights/LGBT acceptance</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promote visibility LGBT’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oppose Russian anti-gay law/delayed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation transgender law against opponent (Putin)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solidarity</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solidarity with Russian/Dutch LGBT’s</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asked by friends/family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reunion</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reward</td>
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<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoyment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>unity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>local event</td>
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<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>empowerment</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event organizer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>represent political party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100, as multiple answers could be given (mean answers per person = 1.3 for reactive protest and 1.8 for ritual protest). 

Opponent

The reactive protesters clearly identified their opponent, being Russian President Vladimir Putin. For example, before the event, the protest organizers created a Facebook site to mobilize for the event. This site was called: ‘LGBT NL against Putin’ (Facebook, 2013a). Further, the Dutch Broadcast Foundation (NOS) headed on March 16, 2013: ‘Gay protest during visit Putin’. During a pre-event interview with one of the organizers, Putin was also clearly targeted. In fact, to address him, the organizers had chosen to stage their protest on the Amsterdam ‘Oosterdok’, a square just across from the National Maritime Museum where Putin would attend a banquet. As the organizer put it:
Emotionally, it makes a very big difference for everyone who will be present […] if, let’s say, Putin is in the palace on the Dam Square and we are on the Oosterdok, or if he is in the National Maritime Museum, within fifty meters’ reach.

During the event, Putin was identified as the group’s opponent in various ways. All public speakers mentioned Putin. For example, drag queen Dolly Bellefleur performed the ‘Putin protest song’. Protesters also targeted Putin by repeatedly booing, whistling and chanting (e.g., ‘Putin go home!’) in the direction of the National Maritime Museum. Also, nearly all protest banners mentioned Putin (e.g., ‘Putin go homo!’), or displayed him (see Picture 1 below).

Picture 1: Tsarina Putin

As the protest poster makes clear: Putin was not only identified, but also ridiculed. By depicting Putin with make-up on, and calling him an empress (‘Tsarina Putin’), the protesters implied he is effeminate. Such suggestions were made throughout the event. For instance, another protest poster of Putin, on which he was depicted with rainbows instead of eyebrows, said: PUTINARAINBOW.COM. Worth noting is that this heading refers to a website that catalogs ridiculing protest posters of Putin. For instance, on one of the posters, which is called ‘my little Putin’, Putin is depicted riding on a ‘my little pony’ (i.e. a girl’s toy). Also, at the
end of the protest, an inflatable doll of two Delft blue, kissing men sailed by the dock. These men were holding a banner that said: ‘Just Putin a penis’.

A few referrals to Putin were downright demonizing. For example, protesters held banners that said Putin is a dictator (‘Putin, just another dictator’), or a monster (‘The sleep of reason produces monsters’). Further, Dolly Bellefleur’s song lyrics described Putin as ‘an evil man’, ‘a czar’, and ‘a wicked puppeteer’ (Tienkamp, 2013).

The ritual protesters, however, did not clearly identify an opponent. For instance, before the event, the organizers only reported their grievance in a general way:

If we […] oversee the public debate in the Netherlands, we can hardly escape the impression that the Netherlands is rapidly changing from an open society into a hard and closed society. […] Imposed conformism and uniformity lead to the exclusion of individuals and groups, because they would no longer […] fit within the dominant standard (Haarlem Roze Stad, 2012a).

Although the reader may deduct from this quote that the organizers aimed to address intolerant Dutch men and women, they did not pinpoint any specific individuals or organizations that brought them together.

During a pre-event interview with one of the organizers, we specifically asked whether the protest targeted a particular opponent. This is how she replied:

No…no…no… There might be people who are angry about certain things… I believe that […] there is something going on with a Transgender law, which hasn’t passed yet this week. […] So, on social media Fred Teeven is being called names, but as an organization we do not turn against anything.

Worth mentioning here, is that Fred Teeven, who was State Secretary of Safety and Justice at the time of the protest, had drafted the ‘Transgender Bill’ in 2011 (Rijksoverheid, 2011). This bill would enable Transgenders to have the have their gender changed in their passport as well as other official documents without having to undergo sex reassignment surgery and sterilization (Ibid.). Although Fred Teeven had indicated that the law would be presented to the House of Representatives by mid-2012, this had not happened (Facebook, 2012).
So, the organizers of the reactive protest did not oppose a particular person or group. In fact, the ritual protest organizers aimed to address Dutch society at large. This is illustrated by the following statement, which was included in the organizers’ action plan for one of the event’s activities:

Pink Saturday […] aims to show society with how many we are, and how different we are, and also to strengthen the solidarity between LGBT’s in the Netherlands, and especially in Haarlem (Haarlem Roze Stad, 2012b, our emphasis).

To reach Dutch society, the organizers had chosen to parade through Haarlem’s city center. As one of the organizers put it:

It [Pink Saturday] is about the visibility of homosexuality […] [so] we do not only want to march through the Waarderpolder⁵, and an industrial area, or something like that.

Interestingly, though, a handful of people identified three different opponents during the event. Two small groups of protesters (of approximately four and 15 individuals) targeted the Pope and Fred Teeven, respectively. Besides, during a speech at the end of the event, the chairman of Haarlem Pink City made some requests for ‘the next government’.⁶ Only the first group ridiculed their opponent (the Pope) by wearing a habit. The other group and the chairman made their demands without portraying their opponents in a negative way.

All in all, these findings indicate that the reactive protesters identified their opponent more clearly than the ritual protesters did, and that they vilified this opponent more severely. These findings confirm our third and fourth hypothesis.

Claims-making
The reactive protesters had a specific demand: the Russian ‘anti-gay bill’ had to be renounced. By calling the protest ‘stop the anti-gay law’ (www.stopdeantihomowet.nl), the organizers made this demand quite clear. Newspapers reiterated this demand, by using headlines such as: ‘Protest against anti-gay law Russia during visit Putin’ (Van Vuure, 2013).

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⁵ The ‘Waarderpolder’ is a polder located northeast of Haarlem, which accommodates, inter alia, a business area.
⁶ Presumably, the chairman addressed the future government, rather than the current government, as general elections were scheduled for September 12, 2012.
Also, during a pre-event interview with one of the protest organizers, this demand was clearly phrased:

A nasty anti-gay law has been drawn up, which has already been accepted in the first meeting [of the State Duma] \(^7\) […] and we think that law just needs to be thrown out.

Also during the event, this demand was clearly articulated. Most specific were some of the public speakers. For instance, the chairwoman of the COC said: ‘Mister Putin, that anti-gay law has to be thrown out!’ (COC, 2013). Some banners aligned with this demand (e.g., ‘Love is not illegal’), but most of them opposed Putin (see previous section).

Also the rainbow flag visualized the protesters’ opposition to the anti-gay law. ‘Russia is about to prohibit [the] use of the rainbow as a symbol of LGBT pride’, the organizers stated on their Facebook site (2013b). To refute this, they made sure that the ‘international symbol of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders around the globe’ \((Ibid.)\) was omnipresent at the event by asking demonstrators to dress up in a rainbow color \((Ibid.)\). In addition, the protest area had been decorated with rainbow balloons, and the organizers distributed 3,000 colored flyers. Further, at the end of the event, a large rainbow flag was rolled out over the crowd. All of these rainbows made for a, as Nederhof (2013) put it, ‘colorful reception for Putin’.

The reactive protesters’ demand was not only specific, but also quite combatively made. For instance, the chairwoman of the COC said during her speech:

As president of Russia you should be there for ALL your people. […] Your police should protect gays, instead of standing by carelessly when they are beaten up. […] But you propose a ‘gay-prop-a-gan-da-law’. A vile name that is meant to disguise what it really is: an ordinary anti-gay law (COC, 2013).

The previously mentioned banner texts, and the behaviors in which demonstrators engaged, also exemplify combativeness.

The **ritual protesters** did not have a specific demand. For example, on their website, the organizers only reported their aim for the event, being: ‘anchoring the right of ‘being different’ in the public domain’ (Haarlem Roze Stad, 2012a). Clearly, this aim was quite

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\(^7\) The State Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia (Wikipedia, n.d. (a)).
generic. During a pre-event interview with one of the organizers, the goal of the event was phrased in an equally generic way:

The most important goal of Pink Saturday is the visibility of Pink Dutchmen and women, asking attention for their position, and by being together it is at the same time also a very special day for a minority to be a majority for once.

What these quotes exemplify is how Pink Saturday aimed to promote a cultural shift. Therefore, raising awareness and promoting empowerment appeared to be more relevant than making a particular claim. The latter, however, did happen in a few instances, with regard to issues that were affecting LGBT’s at the time. For instance, the small group of protesters that opposed Fred Teeven demanded a swift implementation of the Transgender law. Their banners, for instance, said: ‘Teeven! Where did our transgender law go?’ and ‘We transgenders demand: Self-determination and respect instead of compulsory treatment’. Also the chairman of Haarlem Pink City made a few specific demands during his speech:

We ask the next government to end the ‘refusal civil servant’\(^8\), to start compulsory education on homosexuality in our education, with a new transgender law through which transgenders are better protected against discrimination and no-one in this country is forced to get sterilized.

Clearly, the chairman made his demands quite timidly. This was not the case for the protesters that fought for the Transgender law. Yet, these (approximately fifteen) protesters comprised a small minority at the event, which counted some 775 participants.\(^9\)

All in all, these findings indicate that the reactive protesters had a more specific claim than the ritual protesters did, and that they made their claim more combatively. These findings confirm our fifth and sixth hypothesis.

**In Sum**

Our analyses confirm our six hypotheses. As expected, participants of the reactive protest felt angrier than participants of the ritual protest did (H1). In fact, the latter, in general, did not

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\(^8\) A ‘refusal civil servant’ is a civil servant who refuses to marry same-sex couples (see Wikipedia, n.d. (b)).

\(^9\) This demonstration size is the mean of the estimates made by researchers and the Haarlem police forces (CCC dataset, 2011).
feel angry at all. Also, collective motives were more important for reactive protesters than for ritual protesters (H2). The latter mainly participated to have a good time.

Further, reactive protesters identified their opponent more clearly than ritual protesters did (H3). While the first collectively targeted one opponent, the latter sporadically identified a few different opponents. In fact, most ritual protesters merely aimed to raise awareness that LGBT’s were still discriminated against in Dutch society. In line with these results, we also found that reactive protesters vilified their opponent more severely than ritual protesters did (H4). Still, most reactive protesters only engaged in ridiculing.

Lastly, reactive protesters had a more specific claim than ritual protesters did, and made their claim more combatively (H5-6). Whereas reactive protesters had a specific claim, most ritual protesters only had a generic aim. The few claims that were made at the ritual protest differed in content and combativeness.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to improve our understanding of how street protests differ in their level of politicization. To do so, we first conceptualized ‘protest politicization’ as the extent to which a demonstration epitomizes a power struggle. Then, we operationalized the concept as the extent to which demonstrators are angry, and fight for a collective good; an opponent is identified and vilified; and a claim is specific and combatively made. To test whether these indicators hold, we deployed a dataset of two Dutch LGBT protests: a reactive protest and a ritual protest. These events were selected as we considered them to differ in their degree of politicization, the reactive protest being far more politicized than the ritual protest. To measure the protests’ politicization levels, we used questionnaire data of demonstrators’ sense of anger and motives to participate. Researchers observed whether an opponent was identified and a claim was made, and, if so, in what way. In addition, we interviewed the protest organizers about their opponent and claim, and assessed whether these were mentioned in media reports.

Based on our premise that the reactive protest was more politicized than the ritual protest, we expected the indicators to manifest themselves more prominently at the reactive event. The results confirm our hypotheses. Reactive protesters felt angrier than ritual protesters did, and had more collective motives to participate. Also, reactive protesters identified their opponent more clearly than ritual protesters did, and vilified their opponent more severely. In addition, reactive protesters had a more specific claim than ritual protesters
did, and made their claim more combatively. These findings suggest that our six indicators of protest politicization are valid. Therefore, we propose that these indicators constitute a model to study the degree to which street protests differ in their level of politicization.

Our research unites various strands of research on protest participation: demonstrators’ emotions and motives, adversarial attributions and claims-making. Admittedly, these features have already been identified by other social movement scholars, such as Franzosi (2004), Lindekilde (2013), and Tilly (2008). Yet, we believe that we have taken their research one step further by arguing that protests may differ in their level of politicization, and by proposing a model to study such differentiation.

Understanding how demonstrations differ in their level of politicization is relevant for at least two reasons. First of all, various social movement scholars have implied that some protest events are more politicized than others. For example, Klandermans and colleagues (2014) implied that ‘protests’ are more politicized than ‘parades’. Also, Tartakowsky (2004, in Tilly, 2008: 84) appeared to maintain that ‘politically initiated demonstration[s]’ are more politicized than ‘politically tinged parades’. To the best of our knowledge, this premise had not yet been tested. Possibly, this is because, as Fillieule argued, ‘the political nature of a demonstration is […] the most difficult to isolate’ (1997: 42, our translation). Now, we believe we have found a way.

Studying the (relative) politicization of street protests is also worth the effort, because it may help to explain differential protest participation. This assumption is based on research by Inclán and Almeida (2014) and Klandermans and colleagues (2014), which revealed that demonstrators’ group identification and organizational membership may differ between reactive protests and ritual ones. We can now verify whether these differences are related to the degree to which a protest is politicized, as they implied. In addition, we could, for example, test whether more politicized events attract less politically embedded protesters—i.e. protesters that are members of organizations that are more closely connected to the political establishment. After all, Blocq, Klandermans, and Van Stekelenburg (2012) found that members of less politically embedded social movement organizations (SMOs) are generally angrier than members of more politically embedded organizations. This is, they argue, because ‘less politically embedded SMOs emit more radical or confrontational frames than more politically embedded SMOs’ (Op cit.: 330). Also interesting would be to analyze whether more politicized events attract more experienced protesters. After all, research revealed that such ‘stalwarts’ may be more politically engaged (Saunders, Grasso, Olcese, Rainsford, and Rootes, 2012: 274).
Although we consider our research to be relevant for social movement scholarship, it is not without flaws. First of all, our data on demonstrators’ sense of anger and motives to participate were measured in a slightly different way for the two events. Reactive protesters reported these data during the event on a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Ritual protesters, however, reported their sense of anger during the event by participating in a structured interview. After the event, these demonstrators reported their motives to participate on a postal questionnaire. This different methodology may have generated a response bias. Although we gather that this bias is small, future research should verify whether participants of a more politicized protest indeed feel angrier than members of a less politicized event, and if the first have more collective motives to participate than the latter.

A second limitation of our study is that we tested our hypotheses on two events only. Although these events comprise a ‘most similar systems’ design (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 31-46), which is a valid way of performing an exploratory study, the results should not be generalized without further independent research. Our study is based on current social movement’s research, and our hypotheses are supported without exception. Still, future research may identify other, perhaps more valid, indicators of protest politicization.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we believe that our research provides important new insight into protest politicization, and how this could be measured. We hope that we have stimulated scholars to take up the challenge of studying how protests differ in their level of politicization, given that politicization is intrinsic to protest, but understudied. Insight into protests’ politicization levels may help us to better understand collective gatherings, and the people that take part in them. Perhaps, more importantly, insight into protests’ politicization levels may lead us to reassess these events, to some extent. Currently, some protests are rarely studied, perhaps because we do not consider them to be political enough. For example, Tartakowsky (2004, see Tilly, 2008: 84) decided to exclude politically tinged parades (e.g., May Day, Bastille Day, and Armistice Day) from her sample of French demonstrations (1919-68). Similarly, in their study of political activism in Switzerland (1945-78), Kriesi and colleagues (1981) did not include ‘politically symbolic celebrations’ (e.g., Bundesfeier) and ‘annual political celebrations’ (e.g., May Day) (Op cit.: 19-20, our translations), amongst others. By reconsidering what makes protest political, we may broaden our scope, and, as a result, increase our knowledge of this interesting phenomenon.
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CCC (Caught in the act of protest: Contextualizing Contestation) dataset. 2011. Will be made publically available by Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS; http://dans.knaw.nl/nl). Also see www.protestsurvey.eu


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