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Media discourse, movement publicity, and the generation of collective action frames: Theoretical and empirical exercises in meaning construction

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The Netherlands has the reputation of having one of the best social security systems in the world. Part of this system is the Disability Insurance Act (WAO). It rules that everybody who is physically incapable of continuing to work on his or her own level of education and work experience is entitled to a benefit of 70 percent¹ of his or her last-earned income.

Since 1968, the year the Disability Insurance Act was implemented, work disability in the Netherlands has grown at an epidemic rate. At the time of the Act's conception it was projected that the number of people receiving a disability allowance (DA) would never exceed 200,000. But the number of people on a disability allowance (DA) rose from 160,000 in 1968 to 900,000 in the early 1990s. The "disease of worker disability" is potent only in the Netherlands. In comparable countries such as West Germany, the United States, and Sweden the number of recipients of disability benefits per 1,000 members of the labor force remained fairly stable over a 20-year period from 1970 through 1989 (oscillating around 55 in West Germany, 40 in the United States, and 70 in Sweden). In that same period figures rose in the Netherlands from 55 in 1970 to 152 in 1989 – an increase of almost 300 percent (Burkhauser 1991).

With 900,000 persons on DA, an estimated 21 billion guilders per year, or 6 percent of the country's gross national product, is spent on disability allowances (as compared to 2.3 percent in France and 3.5 percent in West Germany). During the 1980s it became more and more clear to the experts that the number of people on DA was growing so rapidly that, in the long run, it would bring insurmountable problems to the national economy.

Indeed, the key agencies – government, employer organizations, and labor unions – agree that the growth of the number of people on DA ought to stop. Agreement on the ultimate aims, however, does not necessarily imply agreement on the way to achieve those aims. The government and employers,

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on the one hand, want to change the allowance system itself in order to reduce the costs and to make it less attractive to individual workers. The unions, on the other hand, want to maintain the allowance system in its present form, but want to introduce regulations which make it more likely for an individual to continue or return to work. Profound changes in social policy do not take place overnight and are accompanied by struggles among social actors over politics and people. The disability allowance is no exception to the rule, and since 1990 unions, the government, and employers have been engaged in confrontational politics. From a generally accepted principle, DA has become a major controversy in domestic politics.

The observer of the DA controversy is intrigued by at least two questions. The first question obviously is: Why did work disability in the Netherlands grow at such a rate? In answering this question we will draw on a paper by Hooijberg and Price (1992). These authors point to the interplay of widely shared cultural values and institutional actors for an explanation. Although this may explain the difference between the Netherlands and other industrialized countries, it does not provide an answer to a second question: How did DA, despite its embeddedness in widely shared cultural values, become controversial?

Borrowing from the literature on meaning construction we will describe the DA controversy in the next few paragraphs as a collision of two different "icons." In a fascinating study of the emergence of the hazardous waste issue in the United States, Szasz (1994) introduces the concept of "political icon" to describe a specific kind of political communication, "carried by images rather than words, so that the meaning or signification takes place more through nonverbal spectacle than through narrative." In Szasz's view, claim-making rhetoric increasingly takes the form of iconography. Especially important for our discussion are his observations regarding the reception of iconic political messages and the collision of icons.

Szasz observes that the attitudinal change produced by iconic communications is shallow and evanescent. Media coverage of an issue produces an immediate, rapid increase in expressions of concerns about that issue in the polls, but the issue's importance evaporates as quickly as it forms and nothing guarantees that even widespread political discourse will have staying power. Media coverage does produce an increase in expressions of concern about an issue, but those expressions of concern fade just as quickly when coverage wanes. But in Szasz's opinion this does not mean that this kind of attitude formation is essentially hollow or politically meaningless. Attitudes and beliefs persist in some form and the right stimulus will ignite an experiential connection and vividly bring those latent attitudes alive. One of those stimuli is a collision with another icon, such as the collision between the deregulation and the hazardous waste icons under the Reagan administration that revitalized the hazardous waste issue.

We will use these ideas in our analysis of the DA controversy in the Nether-

lands and describe the clash of two icons: "Disability allowance as an entitlement" versus "Disability allowance as a problem."

THE DA CONTROVERSY IN THE NETHERLANDS

The disability allowance as an entitlement

In their paper on the "great Dutch work disability epidemic" Hooijberg and Price (1992: 8) refer to the important value in Dutch society "that income security is not a gift, but an entitlement, a right. . . one does not need to be grateful when receiving some form of allowance. As a citizen of the Netherlands one is entitled to income security." This entitlement is further extended by the views concerning "suitable work." These views hold that one cannot be expected to accept work that is below one's level of education and work experience. The law states that if a disabled person cannot find "suitable" work, that person must be considered 80–100 percent work-disabled and paid a full allowance, even if the person would be capable of doing other than suitable work. The authors then continue to describe how each of the actors involved – the government, employers, and labor unions – made the DA system work to their advantage and, by pursuing their own goals and responding to their immediate demands, set the conditions for the confluence of forces that triggered the work disability epidemic. The DA system is much more favorable to the workers than the unemployment system. Therefore, individual workers prefer DA over unemployment money. This helps to explain the policy of the government and the labor unions. The government had an interest in keeping unemployment figures low and unions had an interest in allowing their members entrance to the financially more favorable DA. To employers the DA system had the advantage of making it easier to get rid of less productive workers.

The disability allowance as a problem

How, then, did DA become a problem? It seemed as if the system worked to everybody's advantage. Yet, the actors in the socioeconomic arena came to agree that the system had to be reconsidered, the main reason, of course, was the costs of DA to the nation's economy in terms of both money and loss in productivity. Van Voorden (1992) mentioned three reasons why at the end of the 1980s time was ripe for a change: (1) the extremely high proportion of people not working (in 1989 20 percent of the labor force, including unemployment), (2) the expected intensification of international competition with the opening of the European market in 1992, and (3) the necessity to reduce the national deficit. This led to an agreement between the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, the two political parties entering office in 1989

to drive the appeal on DA back. The intent to change the Disability Insurance Act, triggered the "DA as a problem" icon. In public discourse, the Disability Insurance Act was no longer the final piece of the country's social security system but a regulation employers, unions, and individual workers were exploiting to advance their own interests. Instead of something disabled workers are entitled to, disability allowance became a national problem.

Public opinion

This did not leave public opinion unaffected. We observe dramatic changes from 1989 through 1991. Table 14.1 summarizes some public opinion data over a ten-year period. Until 1989 there was an increasingly positive attitude toward social security payment in general and DA in specific. In the eighties the majority of the population felt that social security payment including DA could increase more than incomes in general. Moreover, not more than one third of the population thought that the Disability Insurance Act was frequently abused. Unfortunately, data are missing for 1987, 1988, and 1989 but if we assume that the same trend as in the other indicators would appear there, we may expect in 1989 even less than one third of the population being concerned about abuse of DA. Then, in 1991 a dramatic shift takes place. Admittedly, part of it is due to a general concern about the economic situation as witnessed by the changing figures regarding the desirable income development. But these changes are small in comparison to those with regard to social security payment. This is further underlined by the fact that by then 56 percent of the population believes that the Disability Insurance Act is frequently abused.

On the one hand, such changes in public opinion result from the public debate in response to the projected intervention in the DA system. On the other hand, it are these very changes in public opinion that made intervention possible.

Mayer Zald emphasizes in his essay introducing Part III of this book that social controversies almost always draw on the larger societal definitions of relationships of rights and of responsibilities. Mobilization, Zald argues, often originates from "two or more cultural themes that are potentially contradictory [that] are brought into active contradiction by the force of events." Indeed, the DA controversy resonates on a fundamental dimension Gamson (1992a) identifies in the relationship between individual and society: self-reliance versus mutuality. Self-reliance, in the sense that the individual citizen got to understand that society cannot take responsibility for everything, is an important aspect of "DA as a problem," whereas mutuality, in the sense of the responsibility society has for its less fortunate members, is a key element of "DA as an entitlement." Indeed, the DA debate seems to be part of a more fundamental debate in Dutch society about the welfare state. Mutual-

Table 14.1. Changes in public opinion on social security

	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1991
<i>Desirable development of income in view of economic situation</i>							
increase	15	34	43	39	47	51	41
stabilize	52	58	54	56	50	48	52
decrease	29 (1.870)	8 (1.833)	4 (1.844)	4 (1.800)	3 (1.779)	2 (1.716)	7 (1.731)
<i>Desirable development of social security payment in view of economic situation</i>							
increase	21	34	43	46	48	57	35
stabilize	50	53	49	45	42	36	49
decrease	30 (1.800)	13 (1.829)	8 (1.801)	9 (1.817)	10 (1.793)	6 (1.744)	17 (7.717)
Disability Allowance insufficient	23 (1.600)	46 (1.600)	47 (1.500)	48 (1.475)	50 (1.450)	50 (1.400)	39 (1.400)
Disability Insurance Act is abused frequently	49 (1.820)	34 (1.745)	36 (1.746)				56 (1.624)

Source: SCP, 1992.

ity for a long time defined the rules, but it was discredited, perhaps not only for financial reasons but also as part of the more general collapse of communism and socialism as ideological frameworks. The emphasis in the debate right now is on the individual's responsibility to take care of himself and to not rely too much on society. There is no theme without a countertheme, Gamson argues, and the DA controversy only demonstrates this assertion.

Two icons in collision

From 1989 to 1993 the DA controversy has dominated Dutch national politics. The government opens the confrontation when it announces that it wants to reduce the number of people on DA and the benefits paid. In addition it wants to reduce absenteeism (seen as the first step to disability) by introducing negative incentives such as turning in holidays or no payment for the first day of absenteeism. The unions respond by indicating that they will demand compensation in contract negotiations if the government pushes that through. The government in its turn threatens to prepare a law to give the secretary of social affairs the right to cancel contracts that are detrimental to the countries economy.

Then the exchanges continue with a consent. On October 2 the so-called autumn consultations among government, employers, and unions close with an agreement. The unions agree to accept negative incentives on absenteeism on the agenda of future contract negotiations and the government withdraws the proposed law to cancel contracts. A quiet period follows until summer 1991, when the government publicizes its plans on DA. Within a few days every union official who is not on vacation is up in arms and some of those who are on vacation are called back home. The government proposes the following regulations:

1. A reduction of benefits after the first year on DA
2. A sacrifice of holidays and income in case of absenteeism
3. The first six weeks of absenteeism to be at the employer's cost
4. Employers to pay a penalty if they send an employee on DA

In the weeks that follow the unions prepare for a "hot autumn." During September and the first week of October they organize a whole array of different collective actions (short work stoppages, protest demonstrations, meetings of their members during working hours, extended luncheon meetings, short strikes, and so on). The government is not really impressed and supported by a parliamentary majority; it is determined to implement the new regulations.

Spring 1992 the next round takes place. In the context of the annual contract negotiations, the unions attempt to compensate for the governmental regulations. Occasionally, they meet resistance from employers, but on the

whole they were indeed fairly successful in compensating some governmental regulation – in fact, even before regulations are implemented.

Autumn 1992 the new DA regulations are subject of debate within the Social Democratic Party and between that party and its partner in government the Christian Democratic Party, which brings the governmental coalition between the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats near to a breakdown. January 1993 the government's proposal is approved by Parliament, but there is still a final round to go.

In the 1993 contract negotiations the unions try to compensate for the new regulations. This time employers are much more reluctant to meet the unions' wishes. Nevertheless, except for a few industries – among others engineering – agreements are reached without any strikes or other forms of industrial action. In general the unions and employers' organizations agree on some system of additional insurances workers can enter either collectively or individually, depending on the contract arrangements. Four years of intense societal debate have come to an end.

There are many different ways of studying the development of societal controversies. This chapter adopts a social cognitive approach to answer two questions: (1) How do collective action frames regarding complex socioeconomic issues such as DA develop? (2) What is the role of media discourse in this regard and to what extent are actors such as unions capable of influencing media discourse?

MEDIA DISCOURSE, MOVEMENT PUBLICITY, AND THE GENERATION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES

The preceding section described how in public discourse DA transformed into a societal problem and how unions – forced on the defense – were confronted with the problem of generating collective action frames. In this context it was only logical for the unions to rely on the countertheme "DA as an entitlement" – the result being a collision in public discourse between the two icons. In Zald's words an active process of strategic framing by issue entrepreneurs took place. Journalists, columnists, experts, politicians, and conflict parties alike tried to define the issue. Mass media played a crucial role in this regard, but, as Zald argues and we will see in this chapter, media are not neutral. The unions faced the question of how to influence the beliefs of their constituencies in the context of public discourse as it evolved. This question concerns the impact of public discourse on individual beliefs and in this context the capability of an individual social actor to influence public discourse and the beliefs of its constituency. In this section we try to master this thorny issue conceptually by developing a theoretical framework for the study of media discourse and the generation of collective action frames. We will develop our argument in three separate steps: We will first discuss media

discourse as a reflection of public discourse. We will then discuss attempts by actors to influence media discourse, and finally we will elaborate on the generation of collective action frames. Each section will provide both theoretical argumentation and empirical illustration.

Before embarking on discussion of the impact of public discourse on individual beliefs, let us briefly describe the kind of beliefs that constitute collective action frames. Gamson (1992a) defines collective action frames as consisting of three components: (1) injustice, referring to moral indignation, a so-called hot cognition laden with emotion; (2) agency, or the consciousness that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action; and (3) identity, referring to a "we" in opposition to some "they" who have different interests or values.

In terms of the DA controversy a collective action frame means anger over the proposed restrictions, the belief that collective action would be effective, and the belief that it is "we" workers or "our" unions against the government and/or employers. To what extent did such a collective action frame develop among union members and to what extent were the unions capable of influencing their constituencies in that regard? In order to answer this question, let us first elaborate on media discourse and the influence unions can exert on it.

Media discourse

Social issues are debated in arenas of public discourse and action (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Rucht 1988). Media discourse constitutes a crucial element in this process. Because we believe, like Gamson (1992), that it is a good reflection of public discourse, we will concentrate our discussion on media discourse. Although we are eventually interested in the impact of media discourse on individual beliefs, media discourse is a meaning system that can be studied in its own right and it is to this meaning system that we give our attention first.

Kielbowicz and Scherer (1986) indicate that the media are instrumental for social movements in at least three different ways: (1) Media are important means of reaching the general public, to acquire approval and to mobilize potential participants; (2) media can link movements with other political and social actors; and (3) media can provide psychological support for members. Obviously, media are not always instrumental for social movements. Van Zoonen (1992), in her study of the women's movement in the Dutch media, concludes that the media provided a biased and ridiculed picture of the movement, obstructed mobilization, and induced conflicts within the movement. In her view, this was not so much a deliberate strategy to undermine the movement as a consequence of the way media work: emphasis on events rather than issues, analysis, and background information; events reported as

isolated incidents; preference for persons over issues and preference for simple issues with identifiable pros and cons.

A few years earlier, Van Dijk (1988a) concluded that in media discourse on social conflicts the dominant interpretation of the conflicts receive the most attention of the media. The views of the strikers, protestors, or contenders receive a much less prominent place. The main actors that feature in the news belong to the political elite – government officials, political parties in office, employers' organizations. Unions, oppositional organizations, and movements receive much less attention. Moreover, he demonstrates that negative, short-lived, or spectacular events receive more attention than background information.

In short, mass media do not transmit information without transforming it. Space limitations alone introduce selectivity in the production of media discourse. Mass media select and interpret available information according to principles that define news value. In so doing they produce a transformed reality which diverges from the reality as a social actor defines it.

From this characterization of the media one would expect media discourse to comprise predominantly elements that discourage the generation of collective action frames. This is, indeed, in general what Gamson (1992a) found in his study of media discourse in the United States. In terms of each of the three components of collective action frames, however, media discourse sometimes played a facilitative role. But more important, Gamson also discovered that media discourse is far from the only source individuals draw on in their conversations. His focus groups sometimes developed injustice frames, adversarial frames, or agency irrespective of whether media discourse had discouraged the generation of such beliefs or not. Gamson explains this by referring to other sources of knowledge individuals have at their disposal – experiential knowledge (direct or vicarious) and popular wisdom (shared knowledge of what everyone knows). He claims that frames based on the integrated use of all three sources of information are more robust, and that using an integrated resource strategy facilitates the development of collective action frames.

Analyzing news discourse. Van Dijk (1988 a, b) developed a theoretical framework and a methodology to examine news discourse. Its objective is to reveal the in-depth structure of a text based on rules that help to reduce information to a small number of so-called macropropositions. Macropropositions are different from categories in content analysis. The latter refer to a concept (a crime, an accident, social welfare); the former always consist of complete propositions (the man robbed the taxi-driver; the pedestrian was hit by a car; the government wants to cut back on social welfare). Together the propositions in a text constitute the *semantic macrostructure* of that text. Macropropositions can be put in a hierarchical order, that is from core propositions to

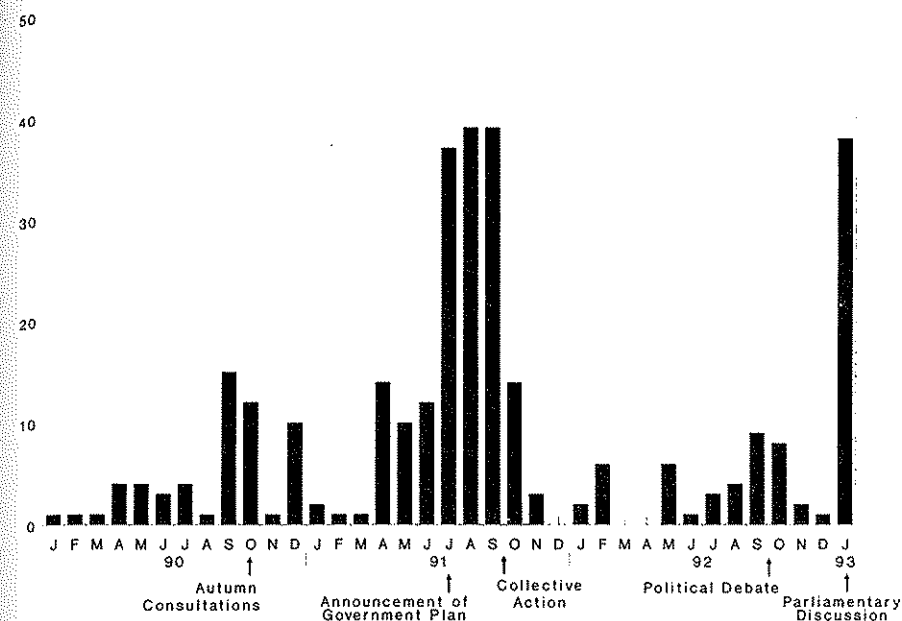


Figure 14.1. Media coverage of DA: number of articles in two national newspapers.

subpropositions and can be displayed as tree diagrams. The rules that govern hierarchical ordering are called the *syntactic macrostructures* or superstructure. The significance of the macrostructure of a newspaper article lies in the fact that there is reason to believe that it is the macrostructure that is recollected best (van Dijk 1988a).

Icons and actors: News discourse on DA

Public debate on DA peaked several times in line with the key events singled out for this study. News discourse as it took place in two national newspapers (*NRC-Handelsblad* and *Volkskrant*) reflected the intensifications of the debate by increases in coverage (Figure 14.1). In 1990 in the three-week period from September 20 through October 10, coverage of DA in these two newspapers goes up from four articles in the first week, to ten in the second, and back down to five in the third. A period of relative silence follows until an outburst of media coverage takes place in July–September 1991, when the government announces its plans and the unions stage collective actions in response to those plans. Compared to the attention of the newspapers for the DA controversy in this period, coverage of DA in the spring of 1992 with regard to the contract negotiations is rather modest. The autumn of 1992

brings the debate within the Social Democratic Party and between the Social and Christian Democrats, and in January 1993 parliamentary debate takes place.

In order to give an impression of news discourse on the issue we will present some data from the peak period – that is, July through October 1991. For this analysis we selected news articles from two national newspapers (*Volkscrant* and *NRC-Handelsblad*). Altogether 45 articles were analyzed. We applied van Dijk's (1988 a, b) method of reducing each article to a few macropropositions. We then reduced these propositions to a new set of macropropositions characterizing news discourse on DA in this period in the two newspapers. Schema 1 presents the propositions.

If we may assume that news discourse in these two newspapers is representative for news discourse in that period, Schema 1 gives us an impression of the information on the DA controversy individuals could have obtained from the newspapers. Most propositions in Schema 1 appeared over and over in the newspapers of those days. Remember also that supposedly macropropositions are the elements of news discourse that are best recollected.

The picture that emerges is relatively simple: The government has developed a plan on DA that reduces the costs of DA by limiting the duration of the allowances and the number of eligible people. There are doubts about the effectiveness of the plan and public opinion is not favorable. The political parties are divided. The employers are on the government's side. The unions are dead set against it and threaten to take any kind of action to prevent the plan from being implemented. The unions' alternative proposals have not been taken seriously. The government will hold on to the plan. The government condemns the collective actions announced by the unions.

Except for the key elements of the government's proposal little information on the content of the plan is provided in news discourse. This is even more the case regarding the union's proposals or the debates within the political parties. Of the two icons "DA as a problem" is the only one being featured. In a way the message in these newspapers in that period boils down to "The government has a plan to fix the problems with the DA system, which is supported by employers, debated by politicians, and opposed by the unions." It is clear who the actors are; it is clear that government and employers are on one side of the controversy and the unions on the other; it is much less clear what exactly the controversy is about.

Influencing media discourse

Media discourse may be but one of the tools individuals use in their attempts to make sense of an issue, for the unions it is of crucial importance to be able to influence such discourse. Admittedly, unions have their own journals, but at best these periodicals appear once a week and more usually every other

Schema 1. *News discourse in macropropositions: July–October 1991*

Government's plan

Plan implies limitation of the duration of DA.
Plan intends reducing the number of people on DA.
Plan intends reducing the costs of DA.
Plan implies punishment of employers for sending workers on DA.
Several actors express doubts on whether plan will achieve its goals.
Public opinion is opposed to plan.

Unions

Unions are against limitation of the duration of DA.
Unions will compensate via contract negotiations.
Unions threaten to mobilize for collective action.
Unions feel that their proposals have not been taken seriously.
Unions will put pressure on political parties.
Unions will explore opportunities for juridical action.

Employers

Employers are pleased with DA plan.
Employers are against punishment for employers.
Employers will resist compensation via contract negotiations.
Employers feel victimized by collective action.

Government

Government will hold on to DA plan.
Government is willing to take the edge off DA plan.
Government is not convinced by the unions' proposals.
Government condemns collective action.

Political parties

Parties in office are in favor of DA plan.
Opposition parties are against DA plan.
Social Democratic Party wants to amend DA plan.
Christian Democratic Party wants to hold on to DA plan.
Commotion within Social and Christian Democratic Party is growing.

week or every month. On many an occasion, then, mass media are the only way for a union to reach its membership, let alone those situations in which a union wants to address a general audience. Consequently, in their attempts to influence the formation and transformation of beliefs in society, unions have no choice but to rely on mass media. This is not to say that mass media are at the unions' disposal. On the contrary, unions are confronted with the same rules that apply to every social actor in its dealings with the media (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986).

This made unions in the Netherlands not only create publicity departments within their organizations, but established elaborated arrangements with the

press and radio and television networks. Indeed, publicity is among the most professionalized part of Dutch labor unions. The same holds, by the way, for the government and employers' organizations. On their part, press agencies and media have their specialists on industrial relations, who usually cover the unions. As a consequence, media discourse on the subject is to a large extent "written" by a relatively small set of people, who know each other and meet at news events such as press conferences, briefings, and the like.

Much of what Kielbowicz and Scherer (1986) mention in terms of practices that allow movement organizations to establish more effective relationships with the media is, indeed, applied by Dutch labor unions. Unions carefully adapt their news events to the rhythm and cycles of the media; they are very creative in staging events to draw the attention of the media; they have established relationships with some media or some journalists; they meticulously prepare ready-made documents that journalists can use (if they wish) in the preparation of their news item. All this is, of course, aimed at influencing media discourse.

Yet, despite all these precautions there is no guarantee that media coverage will be to the union's satisfaction. In spite of all carefully framed press releases, press conferences, interviews, and the like the union's message will not be transmitted without bias and the media's biases will not always favor the union. Even the most carefully orchestrated publicity does not assure that the union's message will come across intact.

One of the studies in our DA research program can serve to illustrate this point: A couple of weeks before the autumn consultations in 1990 took place the National Christian Union Federation (CNV) presented its policy vis-à-vis the consultations to the media at a press conference. We collected (1) written texts of all press releases issued by the CNV and observations of the press conference held by the CNV and (2) newspaper articles based on the press releases and the press conference.

The CNV had formulated a stand on each of the four issues on the agenda of the autumn consultations: (1) reduction of the number of people on DA; (2) unemployment among ethnic minorities; (3) long-term unemployment; and (4) education and labor market. As far as the DA issue was concerned, the CNV offered a number of proposals either to limit the influx of new people on DA (e.g., proposals to reduce absenteeism by improving the working circumstances and by punishing companies for high levels of absenteeism) or to encourage reentrance to the labor market for those who were already on DA (e.g., retraining, replacement, fixed quota per company of partly disabled workers). In addition to these policy items, the CNV president mentioned five major pitfalls that could easily jeopardize the consultations' chances of success.

Which of these aspects of the press conference made it into the newspapers that evening or the morning after? Schema 2 shows in the first row which

Schema 2. Proportions of press release and newspaper articles on the five themes of the press conference

Agenda	1	2	3	4	"Pitfalls"	Total
CNV press release	32% 553	9% 158	15% 248	22% 369	23% 387	100%
Newspapers						
AD	100% 240					100%
NRC	100% 257	30% 30%			70% 613	100%
Parool	30% 263					100%
Trouw	92% 515	8% 47				100%
Volkscrant	100% 257					100%

proportion of the CNV press release was devoted to each of the four issues and to the pitfalls. The remaining rows describe which proportion of the coverage of the press conference in five national newspapers was on each of these five subjects. Note that three of the five newspapers only refer to the DA issue and do not mention any other subject. Two other newspapers mention one additional item. If apparently the DA issue is so important to the newspapers, which aspect of the union's press release do they transmit?

Schema 3 presents data relevant to that question. Twelve different aspects of the DA issue were mentioned by the union president at the press conference. These aspects appeared in the press release as well. Obviously, none of the newspapers provided the complete picture. Indeed, in order to acquire a complete picture of the union viewpoint on the DA, one would have to read all five newspapers.

Use of own media

Obviously, newspapers are not unbiased transmitters of information. One strategy employed to circumvent the mass media is the use of the organization's own media. Of course, the union journals of those days attempted to persuade the union membership of the rightness of the unions' stand. We conducted content analyses on the June through November issues of the journals of the nine largest unions of the same federation.² Each article dealing with the DA controversy was coded on a number of dimensions related to

Schema 3. Elements of CNV plan in DA mention in newspaper articles

Point of view	AD	NRC	PAR	TRW	VLK
<i>A: Prevention</i>					
1	+				+
2	+	+	+	Headline	
3	+				
4	+	+	+	+	
5	Headline		+	+	Headline
6					+
<i>B. Integration</i>					
1				+	+
2				+	
3					+
4	+	Headline	+	+	Headline
5	+	+	+	+	+
6	+		+	+	+
"Union plan"	+	+	Headline	+	+

Note: Abbreviations refer to the five national newspapers that covered the press conference.

the three elements of collective action frames: injustice, identity, and agency.

As far as the identity dimension was concerned, the union journals presented a plain "us" versus "them" frame: only negative and no positive statements about the government, only positive and no negative statements about the unions, only positive and no negative statements about people on disability payment. This was in sharp contrast to the pictures drawn in the newspapers. In the union journal, a story was told about the unions taking the side of disabled workers, while government was represented as unjust authority, responsible for rank injustice to those who are on DA. Nowhere does government appear as a reasonable counterpart with whom it is possible to confer. Hardly any differentiation was found. No mention is made of possible abuse of DA, nor of budgetarian problems. Clearly, DA is defended as an entitlement of the workers offended by the government.

Moral indignation is perhaps the best typification of the union journals' accounts on DA with regard to injustice. Through interviews with and stories about people on DA the impression evolves of workers on DA as victims of unjust politics. Emotional language abounds, apparently aimed at evoking compassion for disabled workers and anger about villainous politicians.

As the events evolve, a growing proportion of the content of articles in the union journals concerns the agency dimension. This development coincides with the turn of events toward collective action. Action appeals first and enthusiastic reports on collective actions that took place later fill the columns of the journals during the last couple of months of the period under investigation.

The generation of collective action frames

Gamson demonstrated the impact of media discourse on group conversations. Such an impact is also relevant in this context of our research, because information is processed not by individuals in isolation but by people interacting with other people in informal circles, primary groups, and friendship networks. Much of what goes on within these networks concerns the formation of consensus (Klandermans 1988). People tend to validate information by comparing and discussing their interpretations with significant others (Festinger 1954), especially when the information involved is complex. People prefer to compare their opinions with those of like-minded individuals. As a rule, the set of individuals interacting in one's social networks – especially one's friendship networks – is relatively homogeneous and composed of people not too different from oneself. These processes of social comparison produce collective definitions of a situation.

The impact of media discourse on individual beliefs, then, implies an interplay of media discourse and interpersonal interactions. Although the mass media play a crucial role in framing the themes and counterthemes of public discourse, the actual formation and transformation of beliefs take place in exchange within the groups and categories with which individuals identify. Such groups may be small, composed of people whom one encounters in daily life (colleagues, friends, carpoolers), or large generic categories (e.g. whites, workers, farmers, Europeans, union members). Obviously, these informal structures of everyday life play an important role in movement mobilization as discussed in McCarthy's introductory essay to Part II of this volume. The themes and counterthemes that arise in media discourse may, to a greater or lesser degree, harmonize with the collective beliefs of these groups or categories and depending on whether they harmonize or not they have an influence on these beliefs.

Individual beliefs, according to Gergen and Semin (1990: 11) "may properly be viewed as the internalized by-products of publicly shared discourse." Gamson (1992a) concludes that media discourse is an important tool people have available in their conversations when they try to make sense of issues. Whether they make use of this tool and of other sources of information depended in his focus groups on such dispositions as proximity of consequences and engagement with the issue. Coming from an information-processing

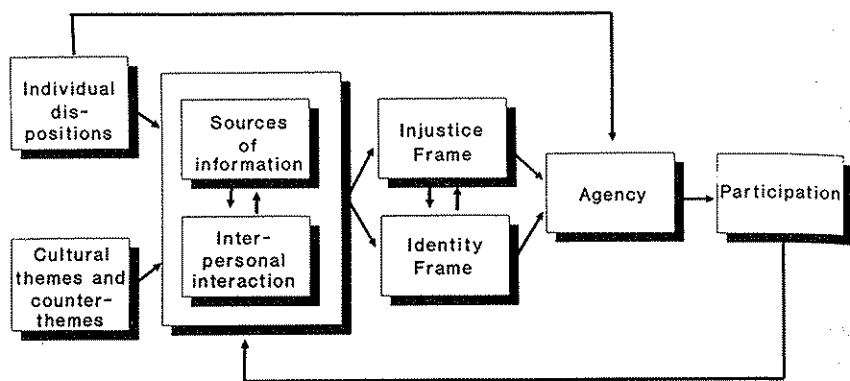


Figure 14.2. The generation of collective action frames.

angle, Petty and Cacioppo (1986) arrive at a similar conclusion: the likelihood that information will be thoroughly elaborated increases if the individual is already familiar with the subject, has an interest in the subject and is involved in the subject. This implies that any dispositional factor that increases familiarity with the issue, involvement in the issue, or commitment to social actors who are speaking out may increase the likelihood that information is elaborated. In conclusion, then, we may theorize that the key determinants of individual beliefs are (1) use of sources of information such as media discourse, experiential knowledge, and popular wisdom; (2) interpersonal interaction; and (3) individual dispositions.

In Figure 14.2 we have tried to summarize our theorizing thus far. The model comes down to the following: Participation in collective action depends on the extent to which an individual adheres to a collective action frame.

Over the years, the senior author has developed an elaborated model for the explanation of collective action participation (Klandermans 1984; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Oegema and Klandermans 1994). This action participation model starts from the point where individuals already belong to the mobilization potential of a movement (that is, adhere to a collective action frame) and conceptualizes the process of activation. In this essay we roll theorizing further back, by elaborating the formation of mobilization potential or more precisely the formation of beliefs that define mobilization potential. We follow Gamson (1992a) in taking adherence of injustice frames, identity frames, and agency frames as crucial elements of mobilization potential. Such frames develop in interpersonal interaction in which different sources of information are employed: be it media discourse, experiential knowledge, or popular wisdom. What sources individuals use and the kind

Table 14.2. Knowledge of government proposal on DA

	1990 ^a			1991 ^b	1992 ^b
	Week 1 (102)	Week 2 (99)	Week 3 (100)	(213)	(213)
Knows at least one item of government proposal	17%	40%	23%	88%	60%

^aThree random samples in a separate sample design.

^bOne random sample in a panel design.

of information they process depends on the cultural themes and counterthemes that dominate public discourse and personal dispositions that increase the individual's engagement with those themes. In addition to their indirect influence, personal dispositions are supposed to have a direct influence on the agency component. For instance, commitment of workers to their union not only influences agency through its impact on sources of information used, information processed, interpersonal interaction, it will also have a direct impact on agency if the union mobilizes for collective action. Finally, participation in collective action will have a profound influence on interpersonal interaction and usage of sources of information.

Generating collective action frames

To what extent did the DA controversy generate a collective action frame and which factors accounted for individual variation? In the course of the four years that DA dominated domestic politics, we conducted telephone surveys at five different points in time. In the autumn of 1990 three separate random samples of 100 union members each were interviewed successively in the week before the autumn consultations, the week after the consultations, and again one week later. In the autumn of 1991 and the spring of 1992 we applied a panel design and interviewed a random sample of 213 union members at both points in time. It would exceed the space limits of this chapter to present results in great detail, but a few outcomes will be discussed to illustrate our argumentation regarding individual beliefs.

Not surprisingly, individual levels of information rise and fall with the cycles in news discourse. In response to an open question respondents were encouraged to mention as many items of the DA proposals as they could remember. Table 14.2 presents percentages of union members who are able to mention at least one item correctly. The question in 1990 concerned the DA proposals in the autumn consultations and the questions in 1991 and 1992 the DA proposals of the government.

Table 14.3. *Regression of media usage, interpersonal interaction, and dispositions of knowledge – autumn 1990: standardized regression coefficients*

	All	27-9-90	3-10-90	10-10-90
Media usage	.18*	.11	.27*	.15
Interpersonal interaction				
on socioeconomic matters	.12*	.12	.09	.15
on DPA	.20*	.25*	.22*	.15
Dispositions				
level of education	.27*	.26*	.21*	.38*
interest in union affairs	.12*	.13	.10	.07
R ²	.29	.33	.26	.32
n	246	85	80	81

*Significant beta.

Autumn 1990. Obviously, the level of information in the autumn of 1990 was far below that in 1991 and 1992. Indeed, in 1990 DA as an issue is hardly salient to the average union member – a finding that reflects the limited presence of the issue in news discourse before we conducted our first measurement. The day after the consultations brought a lot of media attention and it will not come as a surprise that levels of knowledge increase – although less dramatic than one would expect in view of the attention the agreement got in the mass media. A week later knowledge is reduced substantially. Apparently, people forget rapidly when an issue is no longer prominent.

The limited salience of DA is also witnessed by one other result from our 1990 interviews. Whereas 36 percent of the respondents reported to having talked “frequently about socioeconomic matters with colleagues,” only 11 percent reported having talked with colleagues about the DA issue. Even more severely limited is the union members’ knowledge of the union’s standpoint on DA. Only 7.5 percent of the members know at least one element of their union’s stand on DA, two-thirds of whom agree with it.

Variation in knowledge of the DA issue could reasonably well be accounted for by the relevant factors of our conceptual schema. (See Figure 14.2.) For this assessment, measures of individual disposition, sources of information and interpersonal interaction were entered in a number of regression analyses. Without going into too much detail, let us briefly summarize some of the findings that are relevant for our discussion.

Table 14.3 presents the betas for the sample as a whole and for the three points in time. For the sample as a whole each of the variables in the equation contributes significantly to the variation in knowledge about DA. Hence, media usage, interpersonal interaction, and dispositions are not only useful

but necessary for the explanation of cognitions on DA (knowledge in this case). As far as the three points in time are concerned, we observe some significant differences in the pattern of determinants. There are two interesting changes to be noted: The day after the autumn consultations differences in knowledge are to a much larger extent controlled by media usage. This is, of course, what one would expect in view of the increased media attention that day. The week after the consultations knowledge is to a large extent dependent on level of education. In other words, if an issue disappears in media discourse, dispositions that are related to recollection of information gain in importance.

These results suggest that in 1990 the DA issue was still to a large extent an issue among experts and social actors involved, rather than a subject of large-scale public debate. Indeed, mass media paid attention to it, but because public opinion was not yet mobilized at that stage the issue did not yet produce any “hot” feelings. Altogether, there is little evidence that a collective action frame emerged in 1990. Knowledge of the issue is limited and nothing signifies the presence of an injustice or adversarial frame.

Autumn 1991. A year later the situation has dramatically changed. No longer is DA a dispute among experts, but an issue of mass mobilization. The persuasion machine of the actors involved operates in its highest gear and mass media coverage reaches high tide. Unlike a year before this time a collective action frame does develop at least among reasonable parts of the union membership.

As indicated in Table 14.3 the level of information in October 1991 is very high. Indeed, the key aspects of the government’s plans are known by almost everybody. The little remaining variation in knowledge is related to differences in level of education and in usage of union journals as sources of information. Variation in usage of mass media as an information source did not explain any variance in knowledge at this point. Apparently, the mass media provided everybody with information on the key aspects of what the government proposed, whereas reading the union journals added some more details.

A fair proportion of the union members formed cognitions on the DA controversy which may be identified as elements of an injustice or adversarial frame. Table 14.4 presents the relevant percentages. These figures suggest the combined presence of an injustice and adversarial frame. Strong agreement with the union goes together with strong disagreement with the government; trust in the union as a source of information, with distrust in government. The government’s DA plans are defined as an infringement on workers’ rights, and according to one-third of the union members, not the workers but the government and the employers are to be blamed for the problems with DA. Note, however, that the majority of the union members *do* believe that the costs of DA are too high. This finding underscores our earlier assess-

Table 14.4. *Injustice and adversarial frames: percentages (n = 213)*

Positive attitude toward the union's stand	70
Negative attitude toward the government's plan	62
Costs of DA are too high	84
DA plans are an attack on workers' rights	64
Government and employers are to be blamed, not workers	36
Unions are reliable source of information	87
Government is reliable source of information	33

ment that the unions had no choice but defending "DA as a right." Denying "DA as a problem" would have been self-destructive. These beliefs are, of course, correlated, except for those about the costs of DA. Factor analysis reveals that with the exception of the beliefs about the costs of DA they load on a single factor. Empirically, it appears to be difficult to separate the injustice and adversarial frame.

Knowledge of the government's plan and commitment to the union were the two factors relevant in the explanation of these cognitive frames. The better the union members knew the plans *and* the more they were committed to the union the more likely for them to develop an injustice and adversarial frame.

To what extent did an agency frame develop? Remember that theoretically agency is not only determined by feelings of injustice and adversity, but by individual dispositions. Two such dispositions seem to be relevant: first, the belief that in case of a conflict industrial action should not be avoided; second, the preparedness to take part in various means of action. Obviously, these two cognitions are strongly correlated, but as we will see both have an independent impact on agency.

Table 14.5 presents the means on action preparedness at different points in time. In the table a distinction is made between general and specific action preparedness. The first concerns an individual's willingness to take part in collective action irrespective of the situation. General action preparedness can be defined as the point around which specific action preparedness oscillates depending on circumstances (Van der Veen 1992). In our panel study we were able to measure general action preparedness at an earlier point in time than we conducted our DA interviews. Therefore, we are able to relate specific action preparedness measured in the context of the DA controversy to independently measured general action preparedness. Theoretically, this means that we are able to distinguish the general tendency among union members to participate in industrial action from their preparedness to take action in the DA controversy, and to predict the latter from the former.

Table 14.5. *Agency frames: general and specific action preparedness (means and standard deviations)*

	General	Specific	
		October	May
Demonstrations	3.29 (1.02)	3.87 ^a (1.04)	3.16 (1.03)
Work stoppages	3.54 ^b (.96)	3.03 (1.15)	3.01 (1.02)
Strikes	2.36 (.97)	2.60 ^a (1.14)	2.36 (1.02)

Ns ranging from 175 to 202, means $n = 192$.

On a scale from 1 = "not prepared at all" to 5 = "very much prepared."

^asignificantly different from GAP and SAP in May.

^bsignificantly different from SAP in October and May.

The figures in Table 14.5 are interesting in more than one way. They indicate a clear increase in action preparedness in October but not across the board. Whereas the preparedness to participate in demonstrations and strikes increased, that for work stoppages declined, and while the former two go down again to the level of the general action preparedness the latter stays as low as it was in October. Obviously, the fact that the government is the adversary explains the increased preparedness to take part in demonstrations. Neither work stoppages nor strikes are very useful for putting pressure on the government. Strikes at least have the advantage that they get more publicity and have more of an impact, which may explain their distinctiveness from work stoppages.

Turning back to our question of the generation of action frames, we can conclude from regression analyses with specific action preparedness as the dependent variable that the cognitive frame of the individual (that is, knowledge of the DA plan and the combination of feelings of injustice and adversity) and individual dispositions can account reasonably well for the variation in specific action preparedness (Table 14.6).

As one may expect, general action preparedness is a significant predictor of preparedness to take part in actions regarding DA as is true for the belief that in case of conflict action should not be avoided. However, knowledge about the DA plans and support of the union's standpoint contribute independently to the explained variance in action preparedness. This is the more important because support for the union's standpoint is correlated to the belief that the DA plans are an infringement on workers' rights and that employers and government rather than workers are to be blamed. These findings tell us that the more union members define collective action as a legitimate response in case of conflict and the more they are prepared to take part

Table 14.6. Regression of cognitive frame and individual dispositions on specific action preparedness in October (standardized regression coefficients)

Media usage	.14*
Dispositions	
In case of conflict action should not be avoided	.23**
General action preparedness	.39**
Cognitive frame knowledge	.23**
Union's standpoint	.23**
R ²	.55
n	213

* $p < .01$.** $p < .001$.

in such action, the more they are prepared to take action with regard to the DA controversy, particularly when they know about that controversy and support the union's stand. Note, that media use has a direct impact on specific action preparedness. This is not how we mapped it in our model, which only accounted for an indirect impact of media use via the generation of an injustice and/or adversarial frame. This relationship holds when control variables such as level of education, political party preference, and commitment to the union are in the equation. Hence, the impact of media use is specific for the DA controversy rather than an aspect of general interest in socioeconomic or political issues. A possible explanation for this finding could be that increased action preparedness feeds back into increased media use.

Interestingly, in May 1992 when there is no mobilization taking place action preparedness is not only lower than in October, as we saw in Table 14.5, but no longer related to the DA controversy. In May action preparedness is determined by the two dispositions – the belief that action should not be avoided and general action preparedness, plus political party preference and being a union-militant or not (together these variables explain 38 percent of the variance in action preparedness). In short, in May we are indeed back to base-line action preparedness including the erasure of any connection of such preparedness with DA. As far as the union members are concerned the issue is no longer embedded in a collective action frame. This is underscored by the finding that only in the opinion of one-third of the respondents are DA-related issues the most important issues in the 1992 annual contract negotiations. The remaining two-thirds mention other issues (55 percent) or do not know what issues were at stake.

Table 14.7. Logistic regression of individual dispositions, cognitive frame, and specific action preparedness on action participation

	Model 1	Model 2
Media usage	-.41 (.44)	-.81 (.48)
Dispositions		
in case of conflict action should not be avoided	.21 (.52)	-.10 (.57)
general action preparedness	.99 (.59)	.47 (.64)
Cognitive frame		
Knowledge	.40* (.19)	.25 (.22)
Union's standpoint	.69 (.40)	.50 (.41)
Specific action preparedness		1.44** (.56)
Constant	8.78 (2.44)	-9.05 (2.66)
2 log likelihood	95.88	96.91
Improvement	21.80***	7.94**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; $n = 141$.

The final step in our model brings us to actual participation. Altogether 14 percent of our respondents participated in some form of collective action – two-thirds in a national one-hour demonstrative break to listen to the queen's speech at the opening of the parliamentary year, which included this year the DA plans of the government,³ one-third in the national demonstration in The Hague, and one-fifth in a strike or other work stoppage. Theoretically, action participation is a function of action preparedness. All other factors have their impact indirectly via their influence on action preparedness. Our data support this reasoning. Table 14.7 presents results from a logistic regression analysis of those variables that predicted action preparedness (see Table 14.6) on action participation. Indeed, the second model not only implies a significant improvement, but entering specific action preparedness renders all others variables insignificant.

CONCLUSION:

CONSTRUCTING A COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAME ON DA

The debate on DA is a debate on one of the four dimensions of cultural themes Gamson (1992a) distinguished in *Talking Politics*: "self-reliance" versus "mutuality." These themes are like icons – sets of latent opinions and beliefs, which can be brought alive. "DA as a problem" and "DA as an entitlement" are both latently present in Dutch society and in the minds of individual members of that society. Essentially, they are two sides of the same

coin: On the one hand, DA *is* an entitlement; on the other hand, DA *is* a problem.

When, in 1990, the social actors arrived at an agreement in the autumn consultations, neither theme was very much alive. When asked, one-third of the population believed DA was abused frequently, but it wasn't a major concern. The issue drew some media attention related to the autumn consultations, but union members were not alarmed. Indeed, actors – unions, government, and employers' organizations – did very little to mobilize their constituencies. This changed dramatically in 1991 when the government publicized its proposals. Themes and counterthemes that had been latent so far moved center stage. Social actors took positions in the debate and that, of course, added enormously to the salience of the issue.

Because media discourse intensified, knowledge among the population increased, but not only did familiarity grow, engagement with the issue increased as well. Resonance with "DA as an entitlement" made for strong feelings even in the absence of detailed knowledge. Such feelings are based on the theme that is activated, rather than on factual information on the issue. This is reinforced by the way the media work: information about actors who disagree, but much less information on *what* they disagree about. Consequently, the story the average union member got from media discourse is: *My* union opposes the government and employers on the DA issue. Under these circumstances, we may expect individuals to take the side of the actor they identify with, without having detailed knowledge about the controversy and the stand of different actors. Unions naturally will appeal in their campaigns to "DA as an entitlement." Consequently, the more union members define DA as an entitlement rather than a problem, the more likely that they develop an injustice frame.

Unions have a repertoire for conflict situations. While strikes were the traditional means of action, action repertoires expanded over the last decades (Van der Veen 1992). Union members may be more or less prepared to use collective action in case of conflicts. Such general preparedness is determined by past experience and political consciousness. Union members who in general are prepared to use collective action in case of conflicts, are more likely prepared to use collective action in a specific conflict situation as, for instance, the DA controversy. This is not to say that the DA controversy did not matter as far as action preparedness was concerned. In October when the unions mobilized their constituencies, action preparedness *did* increase and this increase *was* related to beliefs about the DA controversy.

To conclude, let us return to our original questions: (1) How do collective action frames regarding complex socioeconomic issues such as DA develop? (2) What is the role of media discourse in this regard and to what extent are actors such as unions capable of influencing media discourse?

To begin with, let us conclude that our union members did develop collec-

tive action frames. Whereas in the autumn of 1990 virtually no "hot" feeling could be tapped, a year later people not only had a general idea of what the DA controversy was about, but more important, they had a clear view on where they stand: by their union! When this combined with an already existing preparedness to follow their union if it decided to stage collective action, a collective action frame was generated.

For several reasons news discourse played a limited role in this regard. In the first place, news discourse provided a limited narrative. It informed the readers about who are the actors, rather than what are the issues; about who opposes who, rather than what is it that they disagree about. In terms of the generation of a collective action frame this is not necessarily a disadvantage. As long as it is made clear – as in the case of the DA controversy – that there is a conflict, it may be enough of a signal for dedicated union members to support their union. In the second place, in October 1991, in the heat of the debate it seemingly was not so much the news media as the union journals that made the difference. Apparently, the union journals compensated for the lack of substantial information in the newspapers. For the committed union member this meant becoming converted to the union's standpoint; that is, the government is tearing down our DA system, is planning an infringement on our rights.

In a way, the limited role of the news media in the generation of collective action frames may comfort the unions, because their efforts to influence news discourse turned out to be a moderate success. Even carefully prepared press conferences do not guarantee that the union's viewpoints make it into news discourse.

This is not to say that news discourse was irrelevant. Obviously, news discourse provided information on the key elements of the government's plan, which were known indeed by almost everybody. But more important, it clearly placed the unions in opposition to the government and thus helped to generate an adversarial frame, just as Gamson (1992a) suggested in his discussion of the role of the mass media. The union journals – we may assume – added to the framing of injustice and adversity. For as it turned out, reading the union journal increased knowledge of the government's plan, and this in combination with a higher commitment to the union made the generation of an injustice and adversarial frame more likely.

- 7 Our statement is a truncated version of the "propaganda model" as outlined by Herman and Chomsky (1988).
- 8 Following this logic, we would expect that if such issues do get on the media agenda, the description of them will more likely be focused on specific events rather than on the underlying causes or dimensions of social problems (cf. Iyengar 1991).
- 9 This may be particularly true in countries with multiparty electoral systems (cf. Klandermans 1991).
- 10 Even movements whose interests conflict with administrations' aims can sometimes find bureaucratic allies. For example, Cortright (1993) shows how peace activists worked with municipal bureaucrats who opposed on logistical grounds Reagan's attempt to involve the Federal Emergency Management Agency in its attempts to develop a system for protecting urban populations from nuclear attack. Also, Dieter Rucht observed that some European authorities have sought greater cooperation with environmental organizations in their efforts to prevent regional integration from lowering national environmental standards (personal communication).
- 11 Many of the tactics we include here may be motivated by a variety of considerations beyond simple frame dissemination. Nevertheless, each of them can serve at least this SMO purpose, among others.
- 12 For presentation purposes, we have omitted some frame dissemination tactics which fit into our four arenas such as: nonviolence training, boycott, citizen exchanges (public), running a media news service or media research service (media); running for political office or working for a political party (electoral); and strategizing with or advising executive officials (governmental).
- 13 Peace movement organization data in Table 13.2 represent the percentages of groups with budgets above \$30,000 using each tactic. Within the peace movement, we find a similar "insider-outsider" pattern as groups with budgets under \$30,000 used more low-cost tactics such as letter-writing, vigils, and op-ed campaigns while they were less likely to use more costly strategies such as litigation and cultivating relations with members of the media.
- 14 The SMOs in the several studies we have examined tend toward the resource-rich end of the social movement sector, but there is enough range among them to allow us to speak of such variation.
- 15 The peace movement electoral activity may be atypically high, given that the data were collected in a presidential election year just following the mass electoral mobilization around local and national nuclear freeze issues.
- 16 Everett and Dearing conclude their "review of policy agenda-setting research with three generalizations: (1) The public agenda, once set, or reflected by the media agenda, influences the policy agenda of elite decision makers, and, in some cases, policy implementation; (2) the media agenda seems to have direct, sometimes strong, influence upon the policy agenda of elite decision makers, and in some cases, policy implementation; and (3) for some issues, the policy agenda seems to have direct, sometimes strong, influence upon the media agenda" (Graber 1994: 91).
- 17 We know that many SMOs purchase aid in crafting their messages.

Chapter 14: Media discourse, movement publicity, and the generation of collective action frames

- 1 Initially this percentage was 80. But in a not too successful attempt to reduce the costs of the Disability Insurance Act the percentage was cut back to 70 in 1987.

- 2 This section is drawn from Silvia Bunt, "The Social Construction of Protest: CNV-journals on the DA Action," Autumn 1991, unpublished master's thesis, Free University, Amsterdam.
- 3 The queen's speech at the opening of the parliamentary year is the official statement of the government in office's policy for the year. The speech is drafted by the prime minister and its content is the government's responsibility. That year part of the speech was devoted to the government's DA plan. The union called on their members to take a break from their work and to listen collectively to the queen's speech.