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**Media Representation of Center and  
Periphery in the  
Israeli Social Protest of 2011**

Course: Approaches and Theories in Political Science

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## **Abstract**

*Although geographically they are close, the cultural distance between the center and the periphery in Israel could sometimes be more eminent. In this paper we tested this premise as it was reflected by the media during the period of the 2011 Israeli social protest. A content analysis was employed to 191 articles in two Israeli newspapers, YediotAhronoth and Ha'aretz. We tested four issues: (1) negativity and positivity; (2) level of salience in each subject; (3) the common topics and (4) representation of the protesters. Finally we compared the two newspapers in light of these issues. Results show that during the protest, media coverage of the center and the periphery was relatively similar. Moreover, the protest commonly received a positive coverage in both newspapers.*

## **Introduction**

The literature often refers to Israeli everyday media coverage as one which alternates when dealing with different locations and different ethnic groups. However, last summer's protest's media coverage, which was also held responsible in its advancing, is referred to as unified, comprehensive and compatible with "the people". But was it really so? The current worldwide literature lacks research regarding the influences of recent social movements and protests on everyday media coverage.<sup>1</sup> This article focuses on the protest's media coverage of two main newspapers in Israel, and examines whether peripheral and center media coverage was influenced by the protest and in what way was it done. Examining the relation between the protest and the media coverage of center and periphery was accomplished by using quantitative content analysis. The results of this article show significant differences between everyday periphery and center media coverage and the protest's periphery and center media coverage. We will suggest several optional explanations to this differences, among else, the identity of the majority of media agents in Israel and their agenda regarding the protest, alongside with the evolving of the Israeli society in a manner which reduced differences between center and periphery.

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<sup>1</sup> An example can be found in the leading protest's chant- "the people demand social justice".

In the middle of July 2011, a group of young students from Tel Aviv moved tents to Rothschild Boulevard in a protest against the high living and rental accommodation expenses. The somewhat bizarre and eccentric act eroded hundreds of people to the same and started what became known as “The 2011 Israeli Social Justice Protests”- Thousands of people from all over the country joined the protest in a demand for numerous social and economic changes.

Numerous commentators from a vast range of fields were trying to explain and make sense of the protest. The academic research has dealt and dealing with issues regarding the protest and its outcomes since its ending. In this research, we wish to examine the Israeli media share in the tents protests, and find out if and in what manner, did the protest affect the media coverage of periphery and center? We will first describe media roles in society, the relations between media and social movements and the everyday media coverage of center and periphery areas. Then we will analyze various articles regarding center and periphery that were published in Israeli newspapers throughout the protest. Finally, we will confront our findings with previous findings and literature.

## **1. Theoretical Background**

The Israeli protest did not strike the world with a great surprise. Numerous persistent protests had already emerged all over the world- from New York to Spain, through the "Arab Spring" in Syria, Egypt and Libya. Scholars that tried to conceptualize the phenomenon found that the common ground for all of the protests was a failure of representation of the people which “expressed a dissatisfaction with the existing structures of political representation” (Hardt, Negri; 2011).

The role played by the media in the various protests was repeatedly emphasized as one of the main ingredients for the protest occurring, lasting, and succeeding. But in what way was the media coverage instrumental to the protests? Can we specifically characterize its role in it? And was it a reciprocal influence between the protest and the media?

### 1.1 Media and Society

Within the current literature on mass communication, there is an ongoing debate about the definition of the media's role in society. The debate revolves around the question "Does the media mediate and connect between fragments of society, or does it serve and perpetuate ideological positions?" (Avraham., 1993). On one hand, mass communication helps to establish existing order in society and political and economic dominant interest (Marton and Lazarsfeld:, 1951). On the other hand, mass media is viewed as part of the dominant power, preserving harmony by mediating between different interests and voices (Bagikian, 1982).

According to Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci, media is another function in the hegemony, where the dominant class governs society by causing the decision makers to adopt their conception of reality (Gramsci, 1971). In addition, scholars Miliband (1969) and Hall (1977) claim that the media infiltrates existing values and presumption into society, contributing to preserving the status quo within society, and furthermore, mass communication determines what is normative or not in a given society. This approach could be useful when society consists of a defined hegemonic ideology and the mass media functions as the distributor of hegemonic values, as was the case with the Israeli media until the late 1970s(Pape, 1997,Liebes, 1997). The current role of the contemporary Israeli media is more controversial. From the late 1970s until 2000 major changes<sup>2</sup> were taking place in the Israeli media, shifting to privatization and a multi-channels system, which abolished the government's hegemony over media content, and as the result consumers were suddenly exposed to numerous news channels from Israel and the wider world. As a consequence, some scholars (Calhoun, 1999:218, Liebes, 2003, Kats, 2009:7) claim that news coverage loses its ideological character in favor of individuals and global perspectives, while other scholars point out content similarity and lack of variety in media coverage (Avraham& First,2004:23, Uren,2001), strengthening the notion that media communication channels with all their changes still serve their role as ideological tool by defining the public discourse borders and providing accessibility (Gamson and Wolfsfeld ; 1993).

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<sup>2</sup>The main changes: 1. The entry of the cable TV channels at the beginning of the 1990s ,2.The entry of the commercial second TVchannel (until then 90% viewed "Mabat" in Channel 1),3. Privatization of media channels and newspapers, 4.The internet revolution and its implications, see: Sofer :2011, Dror:2011, First & Avraham:2004,Talbot:2007.

In contrast, the functional approach treats mass media as a main factor in preserving harmony in society, with three main roles: supervising society, connecting society subcultures and passing on social heritage to all of society's members (Laswell; 1960). Also, the mass media is often perceived as a central institution in maintaining some of the main values of democracy: freedom of speech and public access to information. The mass media should criticize the status quo, expose shortcomings, failures and corruption, being the main targets of free mass media within democratic society (Avraham; 1993). This approach represents ideal expectations regarding the media's role in society, but do these expectations correlate with the existing reality in Israel? In his film "The Shakshuka System", journalist Miki Rosenthal demonstrates the effects of the privatization of Israeli media newspapers and TV channels, proving how important issues do not get the appropriate report and exposure because they conflict the media owners' interests. His film portrays Israeli reality as the opposite of the functional approach, thereby strengthening the ideological approach.

In conclusion, existing research stresses the significance of media in society. Media frames our knowledge by defining issues. Not only do certain players receive more exposure than others, but certain ideas and language are given a more generous welcome, while others are marginalized. In this study, we will explore media coverage in Israel without adopting one approach in advance. It will be more interesting to remain open-minded regarding the different approaches, enabling us to be more objective in analyzing the results, not trying to match them to one approach or another and investigating which approach is relevant to contemporary Israeli media coverage.

### *1.2 Protest and the Mass Media*

When addressing the matter of the media coverage of social activism, Gamson and Wolfsfeld's claim takes on a vivid meaning, for the power balance, if it ever existed, is obviously violated. Social movement coverage can lead to fundamentally asymmetrical relationships between the media and the social movement, and as a result, to an exchange of services in an unequal power relationship, since movements are generally much more dependent on media than the reverse. As a result of this

dependence, this fundamental asymmetry implies the greater power of the media system in the transaction.

Furthermore, social movements need the media for three major purposes: mobilization, validation and scope enlargement. As for the media, social movements provide drama, conflict, action and color. Furthermore, from the social activists' perspective the media plays a dual role: on one hand, the media constitutes a target, since it represents the dominant structures in society, and on the other hand it is needed by the social activists, as media is the most effective channel of communication.

Mass media and social movement research has<sup>3</sup> three main perspectives or scholarly approaches:

- A. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) addresses the relationship between mass media and social movements as an interaction: analyzing usage of metaphors, key sentences, photos and symbolic measurements.<sup>4</sup>
- B. Ryan Charlotte (1991) looks at the relationship between mass media and social movements from the social movement activists' standpoint<sup>5</sup> using comparative perspectives on social movements and activists, exploring their motives, aims and activist goals regarding the media usage.
- C. Avraham Eli (1993)<sup>6</sup> tries to understand the relationship between mass media and social movements from the media's point of view. Avraham investigates the eradication – the process of sorting elements perceived as reality and assembling them in a way that emphasizes a problem or exclusion and de-familiarization of “the other” in a specific socio-symbolic context, variant contextualizing position in the text. We would mention that in this inner field of research there are different and competing views.<sup>7</sup>

In this study we will analyze the relationship between media and social movements from the media perspectives, since it is more relevant to our research target and methods.

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<sup>3</sup>Avraham&firat, 12-13

<sup>4</sup>Gamson&Wolfsfeld, 115-116.

<sup>5</sup>Other scholars such as Holtzman.K. (2000), Media Messages, M.E Sharp, Inc Armonk New York.

<sup>6</sup> Other scholars such as: Schudson M. (2009) Why Democracies need an unlovable press, Polity Press, UK, Bell A and Garrett, P. (1998) Approaches to Media Discourse. Blackwell Publisher, Massachusetts, USA., Bell A (1991) The language of News media, Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, UK

<sup>7</sup>Avraham& first p.13-14

### 1.3 Media and Center-Periphery Relationship

In the study of center-periphery media coverage, Eli Avraham observes gaps within Israeli society: “Centers are the focus for decision makers, the sources of innovations and new norms. The center is perceived as institutional and morally meaningful and functions as an inspiration, representation and interpreter of values and legitimate behavior codes“(Avraham; 1993). In short, "center" refers to core institutions and the elite who represent them. "Periphery" is a sphere which is geographically and culturally remote from the center, or marginal to it.

Avraham's research and conclusions show that the public image of a place is the result of several factors; one of the important is the media's representation. The media in many countries delineates the center, provides it with widespread attention, and by doing so excludes peripheral regions, leaving them with little coverage. As a result, these regions are “framed” via various means as “unimportant”, “marginal”, or “negligible” at the best and in general described as neglected up to violent. The media coverage of “the others”--whether religious, gender, national or ethnic "others"-- was found to be full of generalizations using prejudices and stereotypes, ignoring the reasons, political-socio-economic contexts and specific background of “the other”, whoever it may be (Avraham, First ;2004).

Avraham also claims that the information flow in the world is divided into dominant versus passive areas, and hence information, values, norms and rules flow from the center to the periphery and not vice-versa, exacerbating inequality between regions. Journalist and editors are committed to the norms and interests of the center and this is reflected in the news-making process and the content of the reports, in a way that establishes and reinforces the center's status.

Avraham's terminology and model of periphery and center can easily be criticized using pluralist and psychological approaches<sup>8</sup> disregarding the existence of a defined center and periphery in the postmodern society.<sup>9</sup> In this paper, we concluded that the pluralist and psychological approaches can help us to better understand how to use

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<sup>8</sup> For elaborations, see Simmel: 1905, Wirth:1938, Gans:1968, T.Wilson:1985, Wilson:1995.

<sup>9</sup>Macionis, J.J (1999). Sociology. Ramat Aviv: The Open University of Israel. P.568-571

media coverage as a social construction of reality and not necessarily to abolish Avraham's center periphery model in regard to Israeli society<sup>10</sup>.

Israel's unique history, its national psyche and institutions, such as: the army, the Supreme Court, the Knesset, as well as formative historical events like the Holocaust, seem to symbolize Avraham's model of centers and periphery insofar as they represent interactions between minorities and majorities, i.e. centers and peripheries. Furthermore, scholars who investigated the relationship between mass media and minorities in Israel( such as Barzel: 1976:17, Avraham and First: 2004:15, Liebes: 2006:68) all make use of the terminology and definition of center group versus periphery, despite differences in their topics. In addition, since our research emphasizes the differences between socio-geographical backgrounds of different groups within the Israeli Social Justice Protest as it was described by the media, Avraham's research and conclusions provide us with a strong empirical base<sup>11, 12</sup> to establish our research and to compare our finding.

Thus, if media coverage in the Israeli case is well established in the research as biased, especially regarding periphery-versus-center relations, why is it important to examine the media's coverage of the 2011 Israeli Social Justice Protests?

It seems that the 2011 Israeli Social Justice Protests unified the periphery and the center of Israeli society around the same demands. Suddenly, it did not appear as a "periphery versus center" struggle, but as a middle class protest against economic difficulties, a protests with which the lower classes identified and joined. What happens when the borders between periphery and center start to blur? What happens to the media coverage when the content of the messages coming both from center and periphery unite? Will it affect the media coverage in a way that will blur the conceptual, cultural and geographical center-periphery borders?

Rachel Sharabi, in her research about the "Mimuna" held in 2008, claimed that the borders between periphery and center, starting from the 1990's are moving toward syncretism. Hylbroner and Levin, in their book "Between Sderot and Rothschild

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<sup>10</sup> Avraham&Lahav :2008, Davis: 1990,Schudson: 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Avraham 132-152.

<sup>12</sup> Avraham&Lahav (2008) "Public relations for peripheral places and their national media coverage patterns: The Israeli case"Public Relations Review V.34p, 131.



Boulevard”, deal with an interesting question: Is Israel a state without a periphery or a periphery without a state?

Among the different approaches presented in their book we found a few scholars who claim that the dichotomous structure of center and periphery is no longer relevant to Israeli society. In general, in their view, the postmodern world operates according to parallel, diverse centers who conduct a dynamic dialogue between them around power and domination (Hylbroner & Levin: 2007). If this is the case regarding center and periphery – can it be the case regarding media coverage? It appears that this question is the essence of our entire theoretical debate.

In this study we analyze the media coverage of center and periphery during the days of the Israeli 2011 protest, and examine whether this specific protest influenced the media coverage, and we will formulate in what forms it was done.

## **2. Method**

In the analysis we looked for differences or similarities between the media coverage of the center and the peripheries during the 2011 social protests. In order to do so, we divided the research question into several more specific questions, as followed:

1. To what extent did the media's coverage of the protests in the center and periphery of Israeli society vary in terms of tone and scope?
2. Are there any differences in the scope of the coverage between articles focused on the center and articles focused on the periphery?
3. Are there any differences in the covering of the center and the periphery found in the content and issues discussed in the stories?
4. Are there any differences in the ways the protesters are represented in terms of how they are referred to (a sectorial group or "the public")?
5. Are there any differences in the coverage of the protest between the two newspapers, *Ha'aretz* and *Yediot-Ahronoth*? How are the issues above manifested in each newspaper?

News stories were sampled from two daily newspapers, *YediotAhronoth* and *Ha'aretz*. Up until recent years – and before the rise of the free distributed newspaper *Israel Ha'Yom* – *YediotAhronoth* was the most widely read Israeli newspaper. Today *YediotAhronoth* still enjoys popularity with exposure rate of 35.8% of the Israeli readers in 2011 (According to Target Group Index survey). As oppose to it, in the same survey *Ha'aretz* newspaper received a lower exposure of only 6.6% of the newspapers reading population. With its low ratings, broadsheet format and high standards for articles *Ha'aretz* is considered as an elitist news outlet.

*Ha'aretz* and *YediotAhronoth* were both created as private newspapers and exist since before the establishment of Israel. According to several researches there is a noticeable difference between the readership of the newspapers, reporting style and their ideological stances. *YediotAhronoth* readers are characterized as: coming from middle class and lower middle class backgrounds, low education, “*Mizrahim*” and youngsters (Sofer, 2011; 83-86), avoids the adoption of a political stance and tries to appeal to the widest possible audience (Tokatly, 2000; 63-64). Its style of coverage enhances the emotions by using a lot of photos, creating “sensational-yellow atmospheres” (Leiman, Vilzig, 1999 ;7), bringing the common people’s voices with lightweight reporting.

In contrast, *Haaretz's* readers are characterized by people from a high educational background, “*Ashkenazim*”, mostly politically leftwing and economically neo-liberals in accordance with *Ha'aretz's* ideological stances (Kama, 2005; 17). *Ha'aretz's* content is less visual, uses a higher vocabulary, brings the voices of the dominant establishment<sup>13</sup>, remains estranged and restrained from the topics and issues covered (Caspi&Limor:1992:62-63). To summarize, *Ha'aretz* is considered to be a high quality newspaper aiming to the elite audience while *YediotAhronot* preserved as a simpler, more popular newspaper which targets both the geographical and social periphery as well as the majority of the Israeli society.

The headquarters of both newspapers are located in Tel Aviv, the city considered the Israeli cultural center and the place where the social protests began. Many of *Ha'aretz* and *YediotAhronoth's* reporters also live in Tel Aviv, while covering stories about the protests nationwide. A further reason for choosing these two newspapers is

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<sup>13</sup> Unless its contradicts his ideological stances such as: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

because it seems that by combining their respective audiences together gives us coverage of almost all facets of Israeli society (elite, periphery, low, middle and upper class). Furthermore, since *YediotAhronoth* is considered to be more periphery-oriented we expected to find differences between each newspaper's coverage of the protest, possibly similar to the prevalent differences between both newspapers in their coverage of other issues, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict (Avraham& First:2004:78,Liebes& Frosh:2006:44-45).We expected these differences (cultural, political, educational, etc.) to have an impact on the reports and articles written about the peripheries' protest and protesters.

The research method we used was content analysis of news related to the protest. Data was collected from the beginning of the media coverage of the protest on July 17<sup>th</sup> 2011 (the first protest tent was set up on the 14<sup>th</sup>), to the day the central tent area in Rothschild Boulevard was disassembled, at the end of September 2011. From this period we sampled various news articles that were published on three days a week: Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

The sampled articles were divided into three categories: (a) articles whose main focus was set on the central protest (Tel Aviv's Rothschild Boulevard and Jerusalem's GanHa'Suss); (b) articles that mainly focus on the peripheries (in this study, any other place that is not mentioned in the previous category) and (c) articles where the center and periphery are mentioned equally or neither of them is mentioned in a general context. The coding page includes general information about the articles (e.g., date, author, title) and other information regarding the research questions (e.g., negativity or positivity, article's size, number of photographs). The reliability of the coding page was assessed out of 20 articles from the dataset, as coded by two independent coders. Cohen's Kappa shows an average of 81.1% agreement between the coders.

### **3. Results**

The database consists of 191 sampled articles that covered the national tents protest. In terms of the main subject of the news stories, the distribution was as expected. The majority were news stories covering the center protest (84 items). Secondly, a large portion of articles we coded as 'neutral' or 'equally covered' (51 items). Finally, the

smallest part in the articles database was coded as periphery focused, with only 38 items.

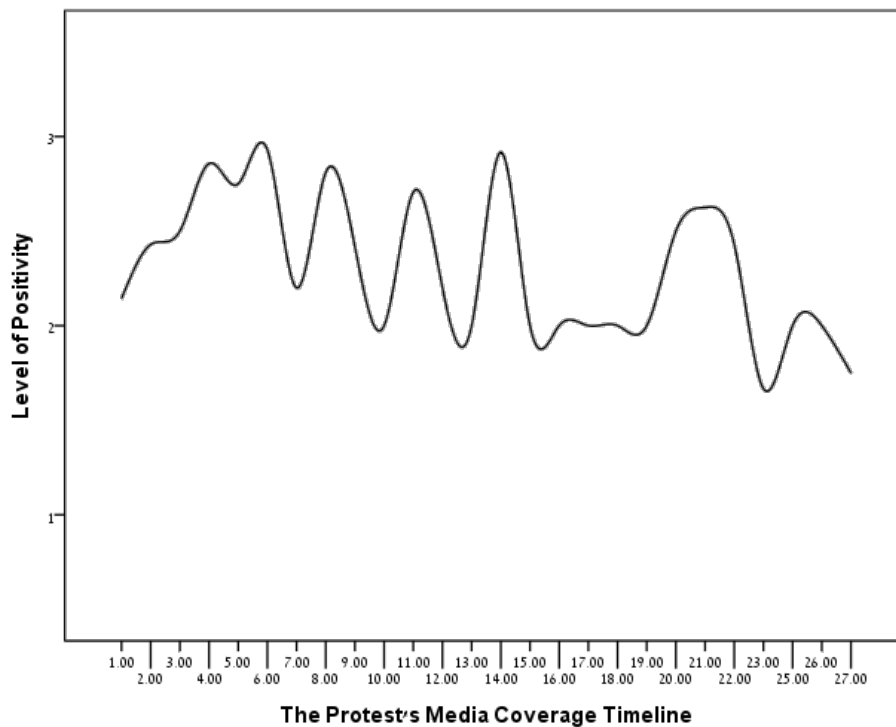
In the analysis we focused on four central issues: the relations between positive and negative coverage; salience of each subject in the total news coverage; distribution of topics and, finally, the media presentation of the protest's subjects as sectoral groups or the society as a whole. In the analysis of each theoretic issue we also paid attention to changes in coverage during the time of the protest. The sampled days are numbered for the purpose of the analysis, starting from the first day of news coverage of the protest (day "1") and ending at the last covered day of September (day "27").

### 3.1. Positivity and Negativity

The articles were ordered based on their level of positivity, where the code "1" being the lowest and "3" the highest. In order to determine the positivity of an article, we took into consideration expressions of support and optimism (e.g., "justice", "awakening" and "revolution"). An article was considered low on its positivity with expressions of disrespect to the protest or the actions that were chosen (e.g., "spoiled", "they want a protest not a solution" and "the protest might harm the struggle"). This code was also our general evaluation of an article's tone and presentation of the protest.

Figure 1 demonstrates the changes in positivity of coverage during the sampled period. In most of this period the tone of news stories was either positive or negative. It is also shown that the days July 24th and August 14th (days 14 and 20 of the sampling period) are the peaks of the news coverage in their level of positivity. These are the days that followed the biggest demonstrations, when ten thousands of people all around the country participated.

*Figure 1: Level of positivity in news stories published during the social protest (the sampled days are numbered).*



Differences were also found between the news coverage of the protest at the center and at the periphery. Out of the 84 sampled articles that were center focused, nearly half of them (48.8%) were coded as positive, whereas only 13% articles were labeled as negative. The distribution of positive and negative tonality in periphery focused news articles was different: The vast majority of articles was positive (68.4%), and not even one article about the periphery's protest was coded as negative.

### 3.2 Salience of the Subjects

In order to measure the salience of an article we used three scales: (a) the location of an article in relation to the total number of pages; (b) the relative size of the article and (c) the number of photographs in the article. Salience of an article is thus expressed if (a) it is located close to the front page and therefore receives a low value in the scale (values vary between 0-1); (b) the relative size of the article is large and

(c) it contains a large amount of photographs. Each category of articles (center, periphery and neutral) was examined and coded in light of these scales.

In general we found that news stories covering the protest were quite prominent in the newspapers. The average article reporting the protest is large, close to the front page and very graphic. The mean location of a news story in a newspaper is 0.19, which means the fifth page in the average *Yedioth Ahronoth's* issue, or the second page in the average *Ha'aretz's* issue. The articles' mean size is 0.5 of a page, and the mean number of photographs per article is 1.34. Moreover, at the peaks of the protest the number of articles covering it reached an average of six per newspaper, and the three scales reached the most extreme values.

**Table 1: Level of salience in center focused news stories compared to periphery focused news stories (in average).**

<b>Characteristics of an article</b>	<b>Center Focused News Stories</b>	<b>Periphery Focused News Stories</b>
Location	0.18	0.2
Size	0.52	0.45
Number of photographs	1.23	1.66
Total	84	38

\*The results are not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

In table 1 are data regarding the mean level of salience in the news stories categorized either as *center focused* or *periphery focused*, with respect to the general mean of the sample. When the main issue is the protest in the Israeli center, the location of the article is closer to the front page, larger and contains fewer photographs than an article covering the protests in the peripheries.

There are some noticeable changes in the scales during the sampled time period. The number of photographs in a story covering the peripheries is the highest after large

demonstrations (between 5 to 11 photographs in peak times), while in between them the numbers are much lower (two photographs max). The same trend was found in center focused articles, with even greater gaps between peaks and routine times.

Similar results were found in the location of the articles: the closer the article is to a large event or demonstration, the closer it gets to the front page. The location of periphery focused article during peaks is between 0.4 to 0.05, and between 0.47 to 0.19 in the weeks after. Articles covering the center protest mostly received low values, especially towards the end of the sampled period. This means that in most of the sampled period these events were the first to be covered in the newspapers.

Finally, the size scale is less clear in the covering of the periphery. Again, the highest values were received in the protest's peaks, but the differences are not as significant as in the first two scales. The number of times where extremely large articles appeared was higher in center related articles than in the ones dealing with the periphery.

### 3.3 Topics of News Stories

In this part of the analysis we used a list of frequently used topics in the media coverage of the social protest, which was designed in an explorative research. Every news item was coded according to the main topic that was covered or discussed about. We used the following four topics: the shortage in accommodation, public housing as a demand or a solution, general discontent from the economy (low wages, employment, high living expenses, etc.) and general coverage of the protest's routine (life in the tents, conflicts between the protesters).

Table 2 presents the distribution of topics in both center focused news stories and periphery focused ones. Most of the media coverage of the protest, both in the center and in the periphery, is a general depiction of the daily routine. The portion of this topic in center focused news stories alone was exceptionally large: 64.3% of the articles were just a general coverage of the protest's routine. This is as oppose to the portion of this topic in periphery focused articles, which was much smaller (42.1%).

*Table 2: Distribution of topics in the media coverage of the social protest (in percent).*

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Center Focused News Stories</b>	<b>Periphery Focused News Stories</b>
The shortage in accommodation	26.2	31.6
Public housing	1.2	10.5
General discontent from the economy	8.3	15.8
General coverage of the protest's routine	64.3	42.1
Total	100.0 (84 items)	100.0 (38 items)

\*The results are not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Both in center focused articles and periphery focused articles the order of topics was similar. The second most popular topic in the media coverage of the protest was the problem of shortage in accommodation that received a similar level of coverage both in center focused news stories (26.2%) and in periphery focused ones (31.6%). In the other two topics, public housing and the general discontent from the economy, the differences are more eminent. Stories where the main topic is the people's frustration from their financial state received twice as much coverage in the periphery protest's stories than the coverage of the center's protest. Furthermore, in the periphery's coverage of the protest there were ten times more stories about public housing than in center focused stories.

### 3.4 Sectoral Groups or "The People" in the Protest

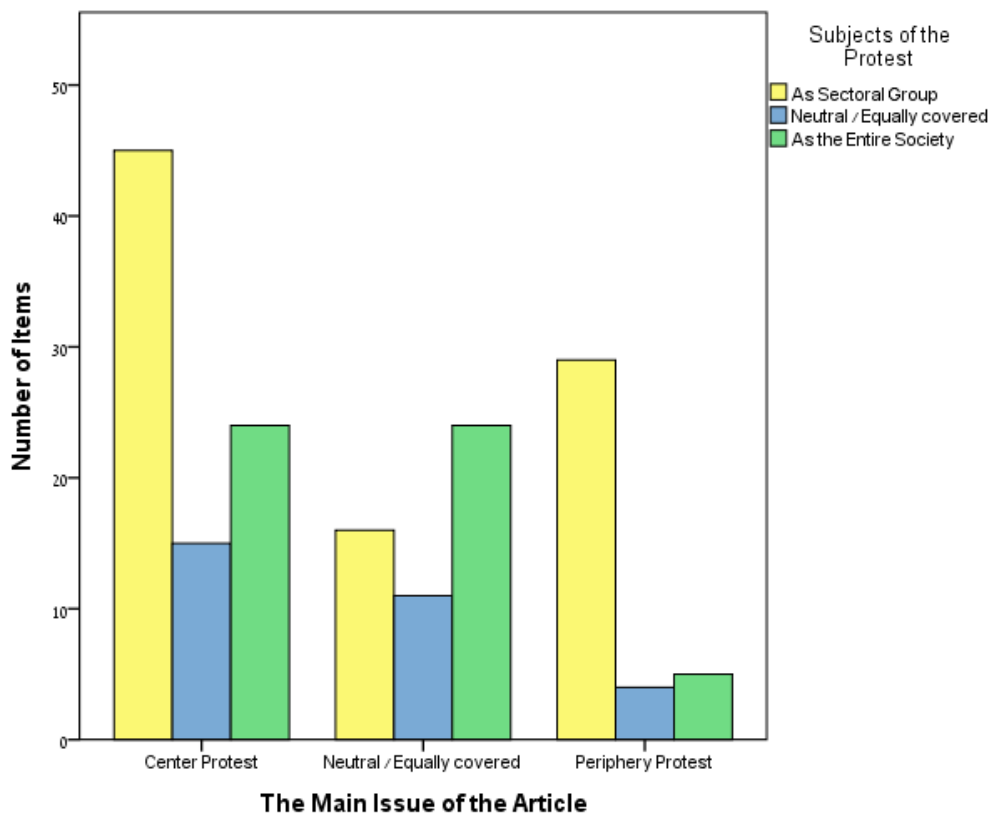
In the fourth and final issue of investigation we looked for the way the subjects of the protest were presented: weather they were presented as a group of a particular sector in society or they represent society as a whole. We define a sectoral group as a group of individuals with particular characteristics, goals and interests that distinguish them from other groups (e.g., students, single mothers, the homeless). As opposed to it, the



subjects in an article can be referred to as the entire society in a way that most individuals in society can be related (e.g., "the people", "the nation", "the Israelis"). Since our goal in this section was to examine the unification as a contrast to the separation of the society, we did not refer to the inner differences of specific groups. Instead we neutralized the substance of each group and examined how they were represented.

Figure 2 demonstrates how articles covering the center protest and articles covering the periphery protest refer to the subjects, which are the protesters. In both center focused articles and in periphery focused articles the majority of items the protesters were referred to in terms of individuals. Another interesting finding is the small amount of periphery focused articles that define the protesters as the entire society – five times smaller than the amount in center focused articles. Finally, we found that during the course of the sampled period there have been some changes in the presentation of protesters. Most of their coverage as the entire society (both in center and in periphery focused articles) occurred after mass demonstrations.

**Figure 2: Reference to the protesters as a sectoral group or as the entire society within each type of issue.**



The impact of mass demonstrations on the protesters' presentation was more emphasized in center focused articles than in the periphery ones. In other words, when the article referred to the center, mass demonstrations drove the media to present the protesters as "the society" or "the people" much more than when the article referred to the periphery protest.

### 3.5 Differences in Coverage between Ha'aretz and YediotAhronoth

In the final section of analysis we tested the differences between the two newspapers according to the previous four issues of investigation. In terms of political-economic views, *Ha'aretz* is known for his non-socialist stand, whereas *YediotAhronoth* is commonly known to be more moderate. With the well-known difference in political perspective between the newspapers, some prominent differences in coverage of the protest were expected to be found. Table 3 presents a comparison of all the research issues in the two newspapers.

Results show that during the sampled period, the social protest appeared more time in *YediotAhronoth* than in *Ha'aretz*. In both newspapers, about half of the articles covering the protest were center focused. As opposed to it, we found a greater difference in the portion of periphery focused articles: *YediothAhronoth* dedicated almost twice as much articles to the periphery protest than *Ha'aretz* did (26.9% and 16.3% respectively).

**Table 3: A summary of the differences in media coverage in the newspapers *YediotAhronoth* and *Ha'aretz* (the numbers are rounded).**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>YediotAhronoth</b>	<b>Ha'aretz</b>
Articles distribution in the sample (in percent)	48.7	41.9
Center Focused Articles (in percent)	43	55
Periphery Focused Articles (in percent)	26.9	16.3
Level of Positivity	2.5	2.5

Variable	YediotAhronoth	Ha'aretz
Saliency:		
Location	0.2	0.2
Size	0.6	0.3
Number of Photographs	1.8	0.8
Distribution of Topics (in percent):		
Public housing	0	6.3
The shortage in accommodation	31.2	17.5
General discontent from the economy	22.6	11.3
General coverage of the protest's routine	46.2	65
Representation of the Protesters (in percent):		
As a Sectoral Group	72	28.8
As the Entire Society	23.7	38.8

\*The results are not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

There have also been found some differences in the research issues. First, the coverage of the protest in both newspapers was mainly positive. The level of positivity in the sampled articles was relatively high and identical in both newspapers (2.5). Second, although there was a difference in style (*YediotAhronoth* has bigger articles with more photographs than *Ha'aretz*), we found that the level of saliency was relatively similar between the news outlets. The average article in both newspapers was located close to the front page (0.2% of the newspaper's number of pages).

Third, we found that the two newspapers were very different in their way of distributing the topics of the protest's coverage. While 6.3% of the protest coverage in *Ha'aretz* was about public housing, *YediotAhronoth* did not discuss this topic at all. The topics "shortage in accommodation" and "general discontent from the economy" were both covered almost twice as much in *YediotAhronoth* than in *Ha'aretz*. We also found that *Ha'aretz* was more interested in the general covering of the protest's routine than *YediotAhronoth*, although they both paid most of their attention to this topic. Fourth and final, results show a different representation of the protesters in the two newspapers. Surprisingly *YediotAhronoth* chose to present the protesters as a

particular group of individuals in 72% of the articles, while *Ha'aretz* portrayed them as such only in 28.8%. They both referred to the protest as representatives of the entire society in a small part of the articles.

#### **4. Discussion**

In this study we attempted to unveil differences in the Israeli media's coverage of periphery and center in Israeli society. We have found interesting and quite different results than one would expect in light of former studies. In the next section we will first address each of our five hypotheses and then suggest possible explanations for these findings.

Our first hypothesis concerns level of negativity and positivity of coverage, in each of the geographical and cultural different spheres. Based on the findings of previous studies, we expected to find a significant difference in the media representation of the center and the periphery in Israeli society, specifically a negative tone in the coverage of the periphery. However, our research findings show that during the protests there was no such difference - both the center and periphery were covered by the media in a similar manner. This raises some questions about difference between our findings and the findings of previous research.

Similarly, in the second research subject, salience of subject, the findings were also remarkably different from those of previous studies. While tracking salience of stories of center and periphery in the media, we discovered that the differences are not as significant as one may have expected. In some days, stories about the periphery's protests were much more prominent than the main protests in the center.

We therefore suggest that in days of protest - perhaps as an attempt to depict an image of a nationwide protest - the newspapers increased the number of articles and photographs covering locations outside the center, and neglected their usual negative sides. Images of peripheral protests joining the center confirm the idea of a unified front and a national consensus which according to the functional approach the media wishes to maintain, as we will further elaborate below.

The third subject we addressed, a comparison between the content of stories from both spheres, appears to match the existing literature. As detailed in the results, while center-focused stories were about various issues such as attainable accommodation and general coverage of the tents, periphery-focused stories were the only ones dealing with lack of accommodation, although to a smaller extent. All in all, we found that the media was especially interested in stories about the protests and the protesters themselves, and less in the political and economic issues that motivated them. Where the issues stop being political and the reporting becomes 'softer', the differences between the stories about the center and the stories about the periphery become smaller. The headline and the story remain the same; it is the location that changes.

In the fourth question we aimed to examining the representation of the protesters themselves. The results show, as expected, that the coverage of the periphery tends more to represent the protestors in terms of specific groups of people than the coverage of the center does. It was rare to find in a story about a town outside the center that the protesters were referred to in general inclusive words, such as "the public" or "the people". Protests in the center were more often described as specific groups of people, perhaps in a way that disconnects the public of the center, their characteristics and specific demands from the rest of the Israeli public. Yet the closer the articles dates' were to large demonstrations, the media presented all protests-related stories as concerning the entire Israeli public, regardless of the location of the protests covered. This, we assume, using the ideological perspective is another part of the media's 'rallying around the flag' and reinforcing a false unified and flattering image of a people's protest, and by doing so subvert the periphery to the center located in Tel-Aviv, Rothschild Boulevard.

Finally, we examine the differences between both newspapers. As noted, both newspapers have high amount of coverage of the center focused, but *YediotAhronoth* has significant bigger portion of articles focusing on periphery. It could be explained by the character of the two newspapers- the more populist stand *YediotAhronoth* is assumed to take and *Ha'aretz*'s elite orientation. Also, although the coverage of the protest in both newspapers was mainly positive, the topics were not quite similar. An explanation for it might be that *Ha'aretz* was less interested in the

substance of the protest than *YediotAhronoth*, and more in the public commotion it stirred.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, all of the findings above outline a picture somewhat different from our initial expectations, while relying on similar literature. We would like to offer several explanations to this puzzle: one involves the sampled articles and the chosen criteria and methods of research, and the other explanations will address the 2011 tents protest as an intervening factor which had a meaningful impact on the coverage.

We chose to narrow down “media coverage” to written journalism, and more specifically to two daily Israeli newspapers only, “Ha'aretz” and “YediothAhronoth”<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the stories we covered were the ones to be published on the news sections only, throughout three days of the week- Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is not unlikely to assume that an expansion of the corpus to include a articles from other newspapers or television and radio coverage, would have resulted in different findings than the ones presented above.

In addition to the above restrictions, one cannot but wonder whether this particular protest had certain features that might have affected these findings. For example, it is common to name and address the protest as the “peoples’ protest”. The main slogan written on signs and being shouted by many protestors was “the people demand social justice.” Some of the articles' headlines emphasized that “suddenly the people rose”, “30,000 people shout- the government is detached from the nation” and “we are the new Israelis”.<sup>15</sup> Although some groups, such as Israeli-Arabs and orthodox Jews, were excluded from “the people”, the media, judging by our findings, appeared to be more than eager to diminish disagreements and create and recreate “the new people” as a homogenous entity which can be explained both by using the functional or the ideological approach<sup>16</sup>. In addition this finding at first glance seems to stand in

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<sup>14</sup> Only the news section not the financial section, which excluded: The Marker and Calcalist.

<sup>15</sup> YediotAhronoth, 07/08/2011, pp. 14; Ha'aretz, 07/08/2011, pp. 1; Yediot-ahronoth, 04/09/2011, pp.4

<sup>16</sup> The Ideological approach will claim that this false image of the unified protest is an evident to the center dominancy, subverting the periphery to his needs while the Functional approach will claim this

contrast to the existing research regarding center and periphery, especially if in using the term “center” we are referring to the dominant institutions, but It seems that in the 2011 summer social protest "center" and "periphery" became more problematic and relative concepts. To better understand our findings, we interviewed two of the leading journalist we found in our research to be of the most active journalists in the coverage of the protest: Lior El-Hai from *YediothAhronot* and Lior Ilan from *Ha'aretz*. We wanted these interviews to shed more light on our finding and to bring new insights to better inform our conclusions.

El-Hai is 44 years old, married with three children and lives in the Carmel neighborhood in Haifa. El-Hai works for Yediot for the pastnineteen years as a municipal reporter covering Haifa and the Krayot areas. In the past few years he is the head of the northern section within *Yediot*.

Ilan is 26 years old and lives in the center of Tel-Aviv (near Ha'Bima). He started to work in *Ha'aretz* two years ago, covering the “Gush Dan” area.

Following the interviews combined with our study we could not find a single explanation for the apparent discrepancy between our various finding and the literature background. It would seem that both the interviews and our study reveal a few possible explanations.

First, According to our literature background the “center” is characterized as being “institutionally and morally meaningful and inspirational” (Avraham;1993). But what happen when the “center” is only “institutional” or only "morally meaningful and inspirational"? Can we still define it as “center”? Or furthermore when we are facing a reality that offers us two centers of this kind: one center is the institutional legislator and formal legal center located in a specific geographical location and the other center located is all around the country and perceived as morally just and a source of inspiration nationwide – which of the two could be defined as the real "center"? We would like to suggest that during the Israeli social protest the center was no longer institutionally located in Jerusalem but was a moral, imaginary center diverse all around the Israeli society. As a result, since the government perceived as semi “periphery” to the “center” located in Rothschild Boulevard and other locations in

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unifying protest to be the reality and the media coverage as a tool in bringing this reality to the public and preserving society harmony.

Israel the media coverage was in accordance, emphasizing the moral center during the coverage instead the institutionally one. The media coverage reflected the morally just dominant center as was reflected in the summer protest.

This explanation correlates to other literature characterizations of center and periphery claiming that periphery responding to the center and followed it (Hylbroner: 2007; 30-33) as happened to the government when it tried to meet the demands of the protesters by establishing the “Trachtenberg committee” and other formal mechanisms. This explanation seems even more logical when we take into account that in democratic states the institutional ruling center should reflect the will of the majority of the people. But when the majority of the people stand in contrast to the ruling center, the ruling center loses its legitimation hand in hand with its privilege to represent the people and as a result it seems as semi periphery to society.

During the interviews both journalists emphasized that this was the protest of all Israeli society. Ilan mentioned that “according to a survey published in *Ha'aretz* 90% of the Israeli society was in favor of the social protest”. El-Hai observed that “homeless and criminals elements were took advantage of the protest, together with that it was the protest of the middle class in Israel and the lower classes joined them and it felt that all the country went out to the streets”.

Another explanation evolves from alternative studies suggested that the borders between periphery and center, started to blur and moved toward syncretism. (Hylbroner, Levin; 2007, Sharabi; 2008). Both journalists mentioned that during the first days “it started as something that came from Tel-Aviv, being a Tel-Aviv issue and we didn't know how big it will grow to be and engulf all Israeli society”. So the content of the message coming from the center-represented by "Tel Aviv State" – was relevant to all of Israel periphery. El-Hai mentioned that “he saw religious people and Arabs who joined the mass demonstrations held in Saturdays nights”. Ilan explains that although during daily life he covers only “Goosh Dan” there “soon appeared more and more protest centers all around Israel such as Jerusalem, Sderot etc. and in the main tents on Rothschild Boulevard. It wasn't just Tel-Aviv's citizens but also people from all over the country such as Ashdod, Kfar-Saba etc.” He soon found himself “traveling around Israel in order to cover the protests. *Ha'aretz's* editorial decision to choose Ilan as the main reporter covering the protest is unusual regarding



media daily work procedures. this can be viewed in this study as evidence to the hypothesis that the borders between periphery and centers was melting as was professional borders blurs between Ilan normal coverage areas “Gosh Dan” and him suddenly covering all Israel during the social protest.

Another possible evidence for the blurring of borders between periphery and center from the media's perspective is the fact that El-Hai was found in our research to be among the leading reporters of the social protest. El-Hai isn't the typical reporter we were expecting to find. In contrast to Ilan from Haaretz he isn't located in Tel – Aviv, his coverage area is Haifa which even in his worlds “considered as periphery to Tel-Aviv” not only from his perspectives but also from Yedioth main editorial (located in Tel-Aviv) point of view. “How come that periphery reporter received so much coverage in the front pages of the daily news?” we asked him. He told us that he himself was surprised to hear it and asked us repeatedly “are we sure about it?” because to his feeling and based on his experience the reporters in Tel-Aviv receiving maximum coverage. He told us that he doesn't know exactly how to explain this result “maybe because the organizer of the protests in the north in general and Haifa in specific were more organized then the Tel-Aviv team. At a certain point the Tel-Aviv team started to split and maybe it was easier to work with the northern protesters organizers”. El-Hai's explanation correlates with our literature finding- Gamson and Wolfsfeld(1993) claiming that one of the important features of media coverage of social activist depends on their organizational skills. Those examples could support the hypothesis that as the borders of center and periphery blur it is reflected in the media coverage not only in lack of defined periphery and center in the coverage, but also from the media's internal structure and working formation: the borders between center and periphery are melting. This explanation correlates with the Functional approach.

However, Instead of viewing the borders as blurring we can use the same examples to propose a third explanation. For the success of the social protest the “center”-youngsters, from middle socio-economic class and upper-middle socio-economic class, most of them located in Tel-Aviv, coming from the reporter's milieu (located in the same coffee shops and parties) and sharing the same economic struggle - needed the periphery for their protest. In addition, it seems only sensible -following the Ideological approach- that the media role as serving the dominant elite is to provide

this unified formation. Newspapers editors and writers, consciously or unconsciously, rallied around the flag, and gave their friends and the people what it want- the appearance of a single united and cohesive people. In this case, the sampled coverage is by no means an evidence of progress in the media-center-periphery relations, but rather a very illusive fig leaf.

When we confront this notion with the journalists, we received less than consenting feedback. Ilan told us repeatedly that he kept neutral reporting- “It isn’t my job to express my opinion when I’m covering a story. My goal is to report news to my readers. If my readers want opinion or interpretation, they can read it in the relevant section, op-ed columns etc. I remained objective in my reporting. I didn’t give instruction to my camera man as in what frame to take the photos and I focused mainly in trying to understand who were the protesters and what were their demands and emphasized their political goals and the organizational aspects of the protest in my reporting”. Ilan's description is not fully in accordance with our finding but it was synchronized with *Ha'are'ts* perception and image as found in the academic literature.

In contrast, although El-Hai was not the average prototype of Tel-Avivian reporter we described, his answers confirmed the notion that the media's active involvement in the protest was crucial: “if I wasn’t a reporter during the summer social protest I believe I would have joined the Saturday night demonstration as a citizen. There isn’t an objective coverage; the summer protest was my personal protest. I wanted Netanyahu to understand that this protest is a serious one so I gave my camera man instruction to climb on the tallest building to emphasize the amount of protesters in Haifa streets and I believe Netanyahu was strongly affected from Saturday night demonstrations as reflected from the media. I was in favor of the protest and it affected the questions I asked, the way I was reporting and the quotes I used. I focused my reporting on personal stories of the protesters and their economic struggles”.

El-Hai's answers correlates with our notion regarding the media's involvement in the protest: his reporting was in accordance with Yedioth's image as we described it (see page 10).<sup>17</sup> When asked about the editorial approach to the protest and the media's involvement in the protest's success, both journalists mentioned that during the

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<sup>17</sup> even the fact that El-Hai was taking a stance when Yedioth usually doesn't do so matched our literature background – Yedioth doesn't make a stance in order to match as many readers as possible but when 90% of the Israeli society in favor of the protest El-Hai stance was equal to Yedioth strategy to match his readers.

summer the protest was the editorial main priority. It seems that both newspapers' main editorial offices were in favor of the protest, although both explained that this position was not expressed in guidelines received from their editorial offices. Both of them mentioned that "Except specific demands there was no editorial instruction". Both of them believe that without the media's coverage and support the summer protest would not evolve as it did. Ilan replied "look what's happening now, they are trying to bring the protests back to the streets but without the media's support and coverage it's not working".

The media did not appear as a site of dominance and elite, but as a part of the protesting public and as an instrument for voicing their claims. In the beginning of the protest, when only a few students from Tel Aviv decided to take action and put tents in Rothschild Boulevard because they felt like they could not afford renting apartments in Tel Aviv, many judged the protest as a spoiled Tel Aviv-centered one. And so, until the very end of it the most loud demand was for to the middle class, mainly that in the center. In order to protect its interest, and truly be able to achieve its goals, the center group, represented by the newspapers, was ought to include more diverse groups in its battle, even if for appearance only. El-Hai mentioned that in the beginning of the protest he felt that Haifa protest secondary to the Tel-Aviv's and only after Tel-Aviv organizing team started to split he received more coverage. Ilan told us that in the beginning of the protest the editorial regarded it as a Tel-Aviv protest and only after a while they sent him to cover more areas. Until the end he spent half of his time in Rothschild Boulevard compared to other protest locations.

After Taking all of the above into account, it seems that media in Israel are created, edited, written and printed by and for the "center" or what perceived as "center" and adopt its point of view as well as interests. As such, one must question the motives, both hidden and apparent, for media to act as it does. Comparing our findings to the literature discourse on media's dual role- the first role is being a symbol of hegemony and social dominance and the second as a horizontal mediator for the civil society- we might say that during the protest this duality was less apparent. Considering the results that show a relatively positive view of the protest and a unified image of the

protesters, we may claim that during the protest the media neglected their first role<sup>18</sup> and were more focused on mediate.

## **6. Summary**

The content analysis we have conducted in this paper, as well as the two interviews with journalists who had covered the 2011 summer protest, paint a complex picture. In light of our findings, it would seem that the geographical distinction between center and periphery is somewhat elusive and confusing. While the existing literature categorizes center and periphery relations in geographical, cultural and economic terms, we conclude that the distinction is mainly a matter of consciousness. As a result, the discussion about center and periphery relations depends on the researcher's perspective.

Furthermore, when we attempted to determine which approach contributed the most to understanding the media's role in the summer protest we were unable to reach a decisive conclusion. It would seem that both the functional and ideological approaches provide good explanations to many of our findings, and if both approaches have good explanatory powers than an accurate analysis of the protests is to a large extent in the eye of the beholder. All in all, it seems our research provide interesting theoretical finding.

While we were unable to determine which approach was more suitable for explaining the media's role in the coverage of the protests, this paper exposes the complexity of examining center and periphery relations in Israeli society as reflected in the media coverage of the protests. Since this paper examined the issue of the media coverage of center and periphery in a limited scope of time and only in two daily newspapers, further research could examine these issues over a longer period of time and expand the analysis to additional media categories in Israel.

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<sup>18</sup> Representing the Institutional center located in Jerusalem

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אביב

## Appendix: Coding page

קוד	הוראות לקידוד	שם הקוד	
קוד פתוח (בין 0-1)	מספר העמוד מתוך מספר העמודים הכללי בעיתון, למשל עמוד 5 מתוך 30 עמודים בעיתון, או 5/30 יצוין כך: 0.167	באיזה עמוד מופיעה הכתבה	6
קוד פתוח (לציין במספרים)	לציין את מספר העמודים שהוקדשו לכתבה זו.	מה החלק היחסי שמוקדש לכתבה	7
הרוב מרכז = 1 אף אחד או סיקור מעורב = 2 הרוב פריפריה = 3	האם הכתבה מתארת את מחאת האוהלים במרכז (תל אביב-רוטשילד, ירושלים- גן הסוס) או מחאות פריפריאליות (תל אביב- שכונת התקווה, יפו, באר שבע, קריית שמונה ועוד)	מרכז או פריפריה	8
1= בעיקר רלוונטי לקבוצות ספציפיות 2= מגוון 3= בעיקר רלוונטי לכלל האוכלוסייה	אם הכתבה מתארת את הסיפור כקשור ורלוונטי לקבוצות ספציפיות (סטודנטים, אמהות חד הוריות, נזקקים ועוד) או לכלל האוכלוסייה (ישראל, העם, כולם)	קבוצות ספציפיות מול האוכלוסייה הכללית	9
1= שלילי 2= נייטרלי/אמביוולנטי 3= חיובי	האם באופן כללי הכתבה מציגה את המחאה ואת המאהל באור שלילי או חיובי? שליליות למשל: למפגינים יש כוונות טובות אבל אין להם מדיניות, נראה בינתיים כהפנינג נחמד לקיץ. חיוביות למשל: ישראל מתעוררת, פתאום קם העם, ניצחנו).	שליליות מול חיוביות	10
קוד פתוח (לציין במספרים)	לציין את מספר התמונות שקשורות לכתבה זו.	האם קיימת תמונה לכתבה	11
1= רמה פרשנית גבוהה ביותר 2= רמת פרשנות בינונית 3= רמת פרשנות נמוה	מה מידת הפרשנות האישית של הכותב? ברמה הנמוכה ביותר כמעט ולא ניתנת התייחסות אישית, לא ניתן כלל הסבר להתנהגויות ופעולות של השחקנים. ברמה בינונית לא מדובר בכתבה נטולת פניות לחלוטין, אך גם לא בדעה מובהקת. קיימת פרשנות לא בולטת, כדרך של הוספת "צבע" לכתבה, הסברים אישיים לפעולות השחקנים ("תחת לחץ מסיבי של נתניהו", "אין ספק ש..."). ברמה הגבוהה ביותר מדובר בכתבה פרשנית לחלוטין, כמו טור דעה, או כתבה רגילה שרובה הוא הבעת דעה ולא סיקור התרחשויות.	מידת פרשנות של הכותב/ת	12
1= מחסור בדיוור 2= דיוור ציבורי	מהם התחומים המרכזיים בהם עוסקת הידיעה? דוגמאות:	תחומי הסיקור המרכזיים בכתבה	13



<p>3 = אי שביעות רצון מהמצב הכלכלי</p> <p>4 = סיקורים כלליים על המחאה</p>	<p>1. כתבות על מחוסרי דיור, דיור ציבורי</p> <p>2. התייחסות לבעיות דיור של אנשי מעמד בינוני, מחירים גבוהים של נדל"ן, למשל זוג צעיר ומשכיל שאין ביכולתו לרכוש או לשכור דירה.</p> <p>3. שכר נמוך, בעיות תעסוקה, חינוך יקר, הוזלת מוצרים בשוק</p> <p>4. הווי במאהל, סיקור ההפגנות, סכסוכים בין ראשי המאהל</p>		
<p>1 = כותרת ראשית</p> <p>2 = כותרת משנית</p> <p>3 = פסקאות 1-2</p> <p>4 = המשך הידיעה</p> <p>5 = לא מוזכר</p>	<p>מתי מוזכר שם המאהל בידיעה? ניתן למלא יותר מתשובה אחת</p>	<p><b>אזכור שם מאהלי המרכז בידיעה</b></p>	<p>14</p>
<p>1 = כותרת ראשית</p> <p>2 = כותרת משנית</p> <p>3 = פסקאות 1-2</p> <p>4 = המשך הידיעה</p> <p>5 = לא מוזכר</p>	<p>מתי מוזכר שם המאהל בידיעה? ניתן למלא יותר מתשובה אחת</p>	<p><b>אזכור שם מאהלי הפריפריה בידיעה</b></p>	<p>15</p>