



**JMG**

# THE PORTRAYAL OF STRIKES

Framing and source use in Swedish news on strikes

**Johannes Malmgren**

---

Essay/Thesis:	30 hp
Program and/or course:	Political communication, Master's programme
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	St/2020
Supervisor:	Mathias Färdigh
Examiner:	Adam Shehata
Report no:	xx (not to be filled in by the student/students)

# Abstract

Essay/Thesis: 30 hp  
Program and/or course: Political communication, Master's programme  
Level: Second Cycle  
Semester/year: St/2020  
Supervisor: Mathias Färdigh  
Examiner: Adam Shehata  
Report No: xx (not to be filled in by the student/students)  
Number of words: 19758

---

Purpose: To describe and explore the portrayal of strikes in Swedish news media

Theory: Frames, the concept of frame sponsorship and theories on source access were used as an interpretive framework in analysis of the findings.

Method: Quantitative content analysis, inductive-clustering approach to derive frames from news content.

Result: Swedish news coverage is dominated by four frames, two emphasizing the role of one antagonist, one emphasizing dialogue and one threats to the economy. Source use and framing of strikes differs considerably from strike to strike.

## Executive summary

The purpose of this study is to describe how labor conflicts are covered in Swedish news media. Strikes are events that receive a lot of news coverage, while also being the most drastic measure available to organized labor. Due to these circumstances, the news coverage of strikes is a promising focus when trying to understand labor journalism, and what consequences such journalism has for the labor movement. The journalistic treatment of strikes has not been studied to a great extent in the Swedish context. Therefore, this study has the ambition to fill this gap in research by exploring the journalistic treatment of strikes in Sweden.

The study is guided by a notion that the portrayal of conflicts may reflect wider power relationships in society as well as between the antagonists. Two main concepts are news frame and source access. The former being interpreted as setting the terms of public debate, the latter as possibly contributing in shaping framing of strike coverage, or contributing in assigning credibility to some sources by giving them privileged access to act as news sources. The overall aim of investigating the portrayal of strikes in news media is specified to a number of research questions. The first two questions address what frames are used in strike coverage, and how the use of frames change with different strike contexts. Another set of questions address what sources that are used in the coverage. The last two questions thus on the one hand address if source selection changes from conflict to conflict, and on the other if certain sources are associated with certain frames.

The method used in this study is quantitative content analysis. This method is of particular usefulness when trying to answer questions that require analysis of quite a large amount of news content. The news coverage that was examined was limited to four newspapers, specifically Göteborgs-Posten, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen, and Aftonbladet. The strikes that were investigated were the four most recent major strikes in the country. Two of these strikes were carried out by pilots, one by dockworkers, and one was a wildcat strike by waste collectors.

Frames are in this study defined by their function, they set the terms of debate by diagnosing, evaluating, and making prescriptions when different events and issues are covered in news. As one of the questions this study sets out to answer is what frames characterize Swedish strike coverage, these frames are derived from content. This is achieved by the use of an inductive method where articles are clustered together based on how homogenous they are with regards to some characteristics that function as elements constituting frames.

Four frames were identified in the strike coverage. The most common frame was that of the aggressive union. Other frames where one were the conflict was framed as about the need for dialogue, and one where the emphasis was put on repression and transgression from employers. Lastly, in line with what could be expected from previous research on labor journalism and strikes, a framing of strikes as a threat to the economy was identified in the coverage. The most central frame varied from strike to strike, with the aggressive union dominating the intensely covered strikes, the repressive employer frame characterizing one strike where news coverage was limited, and the threatened economy dominating the fourth strike.

The strike antagonists dominated news coverage as sources, but employer representatives had more prevalence as sources in two strikes. In one of the pilots' strikes, the employer was largely absent as source, and in the waste collector strike, the lack of a directly involved union led to unaffiliated workers being used as sources. The sources were somewhat more common in articles framed more in line with their interests. However, the opposing forces in the conflicts were also commonly used in articles framed less favorably from the point of view of the sourced actor.

The results give little support for theories of open dominance of some actors in coverage, and mixed support for theories on sources inconspicuously shaping coverage by appearing as main definers. A labor union managed to win in a conflict, where the union received negative coverage, and so did an employer, indicating that the media portrayal may sometimes be of limited importance in labor conflicts. The findings however indicate that the palette of frames used by journalists when covering strikes is limited, and that this may be to the detriment of organized labor.

# Table of content

Introduction .....	1
Why study the media framing/portrayal of strikes? .....	1
Purpose and research questions .....	2
Previous research.....	4
The pervasiveness of negative representation .....	4
Cultural power .....	4
Decline of labor journalism .....	6
The Swedish context .....	7
Summary .....	8
Theoretical framework .....	10
Frames in the news .....	10
Frame sponsorship.....	12
News access and definitional power.....	12
Conclusion.....	14
Method .....	16
Quantitative content analysis.....	16
Procedures .....	16
Frame extraction.....	16
Analysis of results .....	17
Measures.....	17
Reliability .....	19
Strikes .....	19
Media content .....	21
Discussion of limitations of method.....	22
Results .....	24
The characteristics of coverage .....	24
Frame elements: Measure by measure .....	24
How were the four strikes framed? .....	27
The cluster analysis .....	27
Interpretation .....	28
Summary .....	31
How did the framing of the examined strikes differ from strike to strike? .....	31
How clusters align with particular strike conflicts .....	32
Summary .....	33
How did the use of sources differ in the coverage of different strikes? .....	33

Source use .....	33
Dominant sources .....	35
Summary of source use .....	37
How did the main sources used with the different frames differ? .....	37
Sources and frames .....	37
Discussion .....	39
What is reflected in the news portrayal of strikes .....	39
Method and process .....	41
Some suggestions for future research .....	42
Reference list .....	43
Appendix I: Search strings .....	50
Appendix II: Code book .....	51

# Introduction

Labor unions are becoming less visible in the news. In 2007 for every labor union representative in Swedish news coverage there were ten representatives of the corporate sector. In 2018 this number had decreased further, to just one union representative for every twenty representatives of corporations. The decreased share of union sources has been accompanied by a rise in corporate sources, but also by a more prominent role for PR personnel, experts, and politicians (Nygren 2019).

The gradual disappearance of union voices in news media has happened in a context where the power-balance in the labor-capital relationship has shifted in favor of the latter. This is due to several developments. Two important such processes, in Sweden, as well as internationally, being economic globalization and the growing influence of market liberalism on politics. However, the Swedish labor movement remains strong in comparison with organized labor in other countries (Kjellberg 2016).

Changes in how labor issues are covered in the news may have profound implications for the labor movement. Both unions and employer organizations recognize the stakes involved in failing or succeeding in winning public support. The ability to influence public opinion is an important aspect of union power. Unions depend on being able to win support for unifying ideologies about the legitimacy and possibility of collective action in order to grow and mobilize support. Winning such ideological support is tied to being able to exert influence over how people view society, as well as themselves as citizens, consumers, and workers (Kelly 2011).

## **Why study the media portrayal of strikes?**

Who has the power to shape the content of the news? This is one of the most enduring questions of media research. This question is particularly close at hand when conflicts between opposed interests with opposed outlooks are the issue being covered. Accordingly, there is a long tradition of media and communication scholars concerning themselves with the media portrayal of labor conflicts in Great Britain and the United States. This research has tended to support notions of stratified access to news media, unfavorable framing of unions and a decline of labor journalism during the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Despite the societal importance of labor unions, the news treatment of labor is seldom studied in the Swedish context. The Swedish labor movement, as well as the Swedish media system stands in sharp contrast to British and US-American conditions (Kjellberg 2016). It would have interesting implications if, despite the strength of the Swedish labor movement, the news portrayal of organized labor in Sweden follows the pattern observed in Britain and the United States. This would show how far-reaching the consequences of changes in labor journalism has been. Thus, a study of the Swedish situation

would provide one step towards creating an understanding of the global development of labor journalism.

The strike is particularly interesting as an indicator of the power of organized labor because the strike is the most drastic method the unions have available to exercise power (Kjellberg 2016). Strikes also have the benefit of being dramatic events with potentially far-reaching social consequences. This makes strikes more likely of receiving extensive news coverage than many other actions of organized labor. Consequently, strikes are a common focus for research on the media portrayal of labor. Despite strikes having such central importance to unions, they are unobtrusive issues to most people, as few partake in them. This means that the public is dependent on the media for information on strikes. The issue-unobtrusiveness also makes agenda-setting effects of media coverage more likely (McCombs 2018).

One of the main reasons, according to Gunnar Nygren, of the more marginal role of union sources in the news is a shift in the values of society. In Nygren's view, political changes have given rise to more public focus on issues revolving around business interests, and less focus on issues such as working conditions (Dahlgren 2019). Jesper Enbom, when studying the news management of Swedish labor unions, made similar assumptions. In Enbom's study, unions were assumed to have to work against a prevailing hegemony in news media which favors employers. Interviewed press officers of the labor unions concurred with this assumption (Enbom 2009). However, despite the central role of organized labor in Swedish society, there is little research on the characteristics of contemporary Swedish news coverage of labor unions.

As noted above, the portrayal and presence of the labor movement in the news reflect wider social changes. Changes in how labor is covered in news media are of consequence to labor unions and their members. Labor unions depend on news media to mobilize members in conflicts, and the force of public opinion is used to pressure counterparts in labor conflicts (Manning 2001). The labor movement has been shown to have a decisive influence on a wide range of aspects of society, ranging from democratization (Therborn 1997) to the development of the welfare state (Korpi 1983).

## **Purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this study is to describe the media portrayal of strikes in Sweden by use of quantitative content analysis of four newspapers. Strike portrayal is in this study investigated through examination of the four most recent major strikes in the country.

A central question of research on the coverage of conflicts is who has control in shaping the understanding of the issue. This study aims at examining content characteristics theoretically linked to the antecedent conditions possibly affecting coverage. Framing is a concept that is particularly useful in trying to assess both the different understandings available in coverage, while simultaneously allowing for investigating how common these frames are. As there is

little information available about the media framing of strikes in Sweden the first step of the study is to inductively derive the frames of the strike content. The first research question of this study is thus about identifying the frames that were used in news coverage of the four strikes.

RQ1: How were the four strikes framed?

A systematic tendency of labor unions being covered unfavorably by news media has been repeatedly shown by research on labor coverage in other countries (Martin 2004, McColl 1980, O'Neill 2007). There is however disagreement about how universal this tendency is, with some researchers claiming that unions can overcome such negative coverage by using creative media strategies (Manning, Kumar 2008). With this assertion in mind, it is possible that coverage could differ greatly from conflict to conflict. To address this possibility, the second research question of this study explores the difference of framing between different strikes.

RQ2: How did the news framing of the examined strikes differ from strike to strike?

One factor contributing to frame-building processes is the use of sources by journalists. While the full scope of journalist-source interactions is not apparent from article content, persistent use of some main sources in articles framed in certain ways would show a possible influence of these sources on framing. Sources are particularly interesting as source access is commonly used as an indicator of how social power is reflected in news coverage. A very one-sided selection of sources in strike coverage would in this sense indicate a dominance of a limited set of actors in shaping the portrayal of the conflict. Extensive use of actors providing different perspectives would indicate a very different distribution of power. An especially compelling reason to look at this dimension of the frame-building process is that the share of union sources is declining in news coverage.

The third set of questions thus address how the use of sources differed from strike to strike, and what sources that are associated with the different frames.

RQ3a: How did the use of sources differ in the coverage of different strikes?

RQ3b: How did the main sources used with the different frames differ?

## Previous research

This chapter provides an overview of the earlier research relevant to the research problem. The chapter begins with a summary of how researchers have unveiled and interpreted pervasive negative coverage of unions. Then, historical explanations of the decline of labor journalism are considered, and lastly, research on the Swedish context is treated.

### The pervasiveness of negative representation

Studies finding support for anti-union bias in media has been around for a long time. In 1945 Sussman found evidence of anti-union bias in American radio news stories (Sussman 1945, Martin 2019). Patterns of the news coverage disfavoring labor unions in different ways have been repeatedly demonstrated in American and British research. This notion has been successfully supported by applying different methods, concepts, and measures. Including looking at the framing of labor coverage (Cf. Martin 2004, Puette 1992, Brimeyer et al 2016). The systematic negative portrayal of unions has also been supported by an analysis of “tone” in the articles of one American newspaper by combining multiple measures of bias (Bruno 2009). Another example of media disfavoring labor unions is the systematic underreporting of anti-union firings in the American press (Carreiro 2005)

Some studies have partially based claims of negative news treatment of unions on the possible effects of this coverage. One study has shown that the American press has an increasingly unilateral focus on strikes, to the detriment of other previously covered labor-related events. This focus may lead to negative public opinion toward unions (Schmidt 1993) The validity of this latter claim is however disputed. One point of contention between researchers being whether it is the media coverage, or the number of strikes in themselves that leads to increases in public negativity towards organized labor (Jarley and Kuruvilla 1994, Erickson and Mitchell 1996). In an attempt to investigate the effect of media attention to strike duration, Flynn found, when looking at press coverage of American strikes 1980-91, that those strikes receiving pre-strikes coverage lasted longer than those that did not. Flynn argued that this effect of media attention was due to bargaining parties becoming less motivated to compromise the more they had defended their claims in public (Flynn 2000).

### Cultural power

A main assumption in much research dealing with the news representation of unions and labor relations is that this coverage reflects the power relations of society, more specifically ideological power. Ideology here understood as widely held beliefs in support of the social order, or in the words of John B Thompson: “meaning in the service of power” (Thompson 2013: 7). A related concept is cultural power or “the ability to define one's own image rather than having one's image defined by others” (Morley 1976). Having such cultural power is related to being in tune with dominant beliefs in society.

By studying the language of news about labor, some researchers have concluded that the cultural power is unevenly distributed. Beliefs belonging to the common culture of journalists and the audience may disfavor unions. For instance, Morley (1976) argues that strikes are presented in news as self-evidently illegitimate forms of protests disrupting the national economy. The interests of the national economy is in turn assumed to be the interests of everyone.

The Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) has arguably provided some of the most influential attempts at examining the ideology in news coverage of labor unions. By closely examining the language of British television news reports on strikes, the GUMG reached the conclusion that the news is structurally or ideologically biased against labor unions. This conclusion was based on findings that indicated that negative events for the unions are over-reported compared to others, and that offensive union actions are presented as illegitimate breaches of a “social contract” between labor and capital (GUMG 1976).

The GUMG approach has inspired other studies that have arrived at similar conclusions in Britain (O’Neill 2007) and Australia (McCull 1980). The GUMG has however been criticized for being unsystematic and for seeing bias due to its own biases (Harrison 1985, Brown et al 1986).

The idea of media coverage of the labor movement reinforcing, and being an effect of, ideas found in the dominant culture also underpins much research on the framing of labor. In the United States, there are several studies of labor coverage that have found evidence for labor unions being represented in a one-sided, stereotypical way. One example is a study by Puette (1992) examining the framing of unions in movies, TV-shows, television news and newspapers. Another set of examples is a number of studies on the newspaper coverage of strikes that show that labor conflicts tend to be framed in ways that simplify conflicts to their consequences for the consumer-interests of readers (Martin 2004, Lewis and Proffitt 2013). These studies are to some degree inspired by the media criticism of Michael Parenti. The results of these studies are in agreement with Parenti’s critique. Notably, that news coverage of strikes typically gives more room to the corporate side, while worker’s claims are downplayed and that news coverage emphasizes negative economic consequences of strikes (Parenti 1993).

The focus on hidden meanings of language and the reliance on qualitative methods of much of the research on the ideological nature of labor coverage means some limitations of this research. While researchers can often supply interesting and detailed descriptions of the characteristics of coverage it is sometimes not clear how these characteristics were identified. The statistics on the prevalence of different frames tend to be limited.

Already in 1976, Morley noted a tendency of some unions seeking positive coverage by appealing to the assumed values of the dominant culture (Morley 1976). The GUMG is skeptical of whether such attempts could be successful. However, some researchers have

argued that unions may be able to receive more beneficial coverage by using creative communication strategies (Manning 1998, Martin 2004).

Manning has argued that such strategies may disfavor the more radical currents in the labor movement, as these tendencies tend to advocate actions and beliefs less in tune with common culture (Manning 1998). Much of this research focuses on the same strikes, such as the UPS strike in the United States in 1997 (Martin 2004, Kumar 2008, Simon and Xenos 2000).

### **The decline of labor journalism**

In the United States, the amount of news coverage of labor issues steadily declined in national press during the later years of the 20th century (Schmidt 1993, Jarley and Kuruvilla 1994, Erickson and Mitchell 1996). The same tendency has also been noted in Great Britain (Manning 2001). During this period, union coverage was also moved further back in newspapers, and fewer reporters were assigned to covering labor issues.

There are some different explanations for this decline of labor coverage and for the decline of the labor beat available in the research. Martin explains the disappearance of the labor beat from newspapers as a result of economic changes. In the late 1960s, most U.S. cities had become local monopolies of single newspapers. Even though these newspapers were rid of their competitors, circulation tended to stagnate. In order to remain profitable, the newspaper industry began increasingly to focus on upscale audiences to attract more profitable advertising. Newspapers tended to increase coverage on issues related to the private economy and finance. This, according to Martin, meant a gradual disappearance of the issues of the working-class readership from the newspapers. Martin also argues that it is this development that explains the prevalence of consumer-oriented framing in coverage of organized labor (Martin 2019: 47-68).

The same tendency has been noted in Britain, where the labor beat declined in favor of an emerging financial beat during the 1980s. Manning attributes this decline of labor journalism to several factors. Mainly to how Thatcher was successful in weakening the labor movement during the 1980s, thereby making unions appear less influential, and thus less deserving of extensive coverage. Manning also argues that the departments and ministers of the government of Thatcher gave far less information access to labor journalists than the previous governments had given. The Thatcher government also severed ties between labor journalists, unions, and management of nationalized industry, by replacing these managers with personnel from the private corporate sector. This loss of access to sources meant fewer opportunities for labor journalists. (Manning 1998: 215-226).

To briefly summarize, the decline of labor journalism is possible to understand as a result of changes in the relationships between journalists, management, and unions. It is also possible to understand as a result of structural changes in news media organizations leading to changes in what is deemed important by those working in these organizations. While it is reasonable to

expect the loss of source access to limit coverage of industrial affairs, it is less clear how government and other actors could continuously “force the hand” of journalists by denying information. Would not such an approach provoke equally continuous protests from journalists? An advantage of the latter focus on structural change is that it clearly states imperatives that would make journalists conform to the changing focuses in coverage. Specifically, the imperative to keep one’s newspaper in business.

## **The Swedish context**

In 1971 Jörgen Westerståhl submitted a report of the coverage of the highly politicized LKAB miners’ strike in Kiruna to Radio Sweden and the Swedish Labor movement’s archive. Westerståhl interpreted the results as generally exonerating news media from accusations of being biased and subjective (Westerståhl 1971). This, in turn led critics to question Westerståhl’s method as well as his concept of objectivity (Thurén 1997). The debate about the LKAB study did however not lead to a sustained output of research on the news treatment of labor unions and strikes in Sweden. Since the 1970s a number of changes in journalism and the wider society have happened that may be reflected in contemporary strike coverage.

Rahm has analyzed the textual patterns and genre characteristics of Swedish press coverage of strikes between 1879 and 1996. Rahm investigated the coverage of five strikes during this period. One main conclusion from this investigation is that a “dialogic” form of journalism, came to replace the earlier more partisan journalism pre-1945 and permeated the coverage of the miners’ strike at LKAB 1969-1970. The dialoguing journalism strives to cover the viewpoints of all relevant, involved actors in dialogue with each other. This ambition remains in the journalism of 1996, but here Rahm also identifies a “dramatizing” journalism, where journalists use actors’ statements and actions to create scenes and dramatic composition of news stories. According to Rahm, the strike actors seem to have become adapted to the dramatizing style of journalism by trying to receive favorable coverage by presenting themselves in dramatic fashion. Rahm also finds that the nurse strike in 1996 primarily was covered as an economic issue in the economy sections of the newspapers, in contrast to earlier coverage where strikes were covered in the politics or general news sections. Rahm argues that this reflects a general “economization” of journalism (Rahm 2002: 243-245).

That economy journalism has become increasingly predominant in Swedish newspapers, and that this has been to the detriment of labor issues is supported by a number of studies looking at journalistic genres and source use (Hvitfelt and Malmström 1990, Nygren 2019).

One of the tendencies Rahm discerned as emerging in the 1996 strike coverage was strike actors more consciously adapting their messages to the demands of journalistic prioritizations. There is one study by Jesper Enbom on the strategies Swedish labor unions pursue in response to the mediatization of culture and politics. This is examined by qualitative content

analysis of union archives and interviews with press officers. Enbom sees the contemporary hegemony in Sweden as a major constraint on the possible media strategies of unions. Enbom characterizes contemporary hegemony as having two sides, one being a right-wing hegemony in economic life, and one a political hegemony by social democracy. This latter dimension leading to an ideal of consensus in political life (Enbom 2009: 21f). Unions have to adapt to such hegemonic constraint. This is exemplified with the persistent claim by the interviewed press officers that journalism has a middle-class perspective on labor issues (Enbom 2009: 161). Related to this claim is an idea among the press officers that the working-class background of local representatives may lead journalists to portray them in a bad light. The interview material shows that press officers are wary of journalists portraying unions as narrow interest organizations. Further on, that they want positive coverage of labor conflicts, while being cautious that more conflict coverage may lead to more interest in the consequences for consumers and other uninvolved people (Ibid.).

## **Summary**

Patterns of negative bias and systematically unfavorable portrayal of the labor movement have been repeatedly encountered in research on news coverage of labor relations and labor conflicts. This is particularly the case in Britain and the United States. There is support for this tendency of organized labor being treated unfavorable in the news media being quite pervasive. A prominent approach in examining the portrayals of labor unions has been to look at how cultural power is reflected in the ideology and frames used in strike coverage. However, researchers differ on how thoroughgoing and unconditional the tendency is. There is a possibility of labor unions being able to use accommodative strategies when interacting with media to receive more positive coverage.

The decline of coverage of organized labor, as well as the rise of economy journalism, has been observed in Britain, the United States, and also in Sweden. This increasing focus on questions relating to finance and consumer interests has been interpreted as providing an explanation for the focus on negative economic consequences of strikes (Martin 2004). However, research is lacking in Sweden on how these developments may be reflected in contemporary news content about strikes. Understanding the characteristics of news content is vital for gaining an understanding of what role the news media play for organized labor. Without this knowledge, questions about the antecedents and effects of the news treatment of labor relations become meaningless. To the extent that the content of news reflects power relations in society, a study of this content may provide a valuable contribution to advancing the understanding of these relations.

As shown in this review, the performance of news media when covering labor relations can be assessed in several different ways. Some approaches focus on measuring manifest characteristics such as issues and events reported and not reported in articles, or the amount of and classification of coverage. While such approaches give valuable insights into the general contours of labor coverage, they reveal less about what characterizes this coverage.

Approaches trying to examine frames, however, tend to be open to accusations of lacking validity. This is partly due to the degree of interpretation these studies tend to rely on, or otherwise lack of transparency. Research on the news coverage of labor relations would benefit from applying approaches seeking to bridge this gap between measuring manifest aspects of news coverage and describing the contents of this coverage.

## Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theories and concepts informing the strategies used in this study to investigate the research problem are described and defined. This chapter will address frames, how frames are formed as well as the research on news sources. The chapter will end with some central theoretical positions guiding this study.

### Frames in the news

How issues and events are defined and presented in the news may have decisive consequences for how we interpret and understand the world around us. This is an important assumption behind the concepts of frame and framing. When studying the portrayal of conflicts in news content, the concept of framing has a number of advantages to alternative approaches such as the older bias and objectivity paradigm. As Tankard writes, examining the framing of issues allows for going beyond studying whether reporting is biased by measuring negative and positive statements. The framing concept allows for capturing how definitions and presentation set the terms for debate. This possibly leads to the elimination and weakening of some perspectives and the promotion of others without news media showing explicit bias. Another advantage of the framing concept is that it allows for examining the degree of occurrences of different frames in news content, provided valid definitions and measures for these frames are devised. For instance, by counting the presence of textual and visual devices that indicates certain frames (Tankard 2001).

While it is widely agreed that framing has to do with definition and presentation, the concept is used with inconsistency in the literature (De Vreese 2005). A precondition for a text exerting some kind of influence on an audience is that text is imbued with qualities that make it appear to have meaning to the receiver. Underpinning this idea is the notion that making sense of facts entails appealing to culturally resonant meanings and values. A news text is not just reporting of facts. Isolated facts in themselves lack intrinsic meaning. Rather, these facts need to be processed by the communicator to be meaningful. This is achieved by adopting a frame or as Gitlin defines it, a “central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (Gitlin 1980).

Framing occurs both in media content, as well as in the interpretations of receivers of this content. It is thus possible to distinguish between audience frames, and news or media frames, the latter being the focus of this section. Frames are both studied as a dependent or as an independent variable, as a consequence of various antecedent conditions, and as a cause of various effects. Scheufele distinguishes between studies focusing on frame building, that is, the processes involved in forming frames and frame setting, or the effects media frames have on audience frames. Then there are studies focusing on the effects of framing on individuals, and lastly, on “journalists as audience” or how framing processes influence journalists themselves (Scheufele 1999).

As De Vreese (2005) has pointed out, some definitions of framing are broad, while some in comparison are quite narrow. On one hand, there is the quite narrow conception of frames as equivalency frames, used in the work of Kahneman and Tversky (1982). By this definition, framing is the use of some words rather than others when describing identical scenarios. Most news framing research tends to rely on broader definitions of framing, where the concept is about emphasis rather than equivalence. As De Vreese (2005) argues, the kind of political, economic, and social issues that make it into the news are often not reducible to alternative wordings in the description of similar scenarios. Presentations instead tend to differ on how these scenarios are defined.

The diversity of framing research has led some authors to call for more conceptual consistency and clarity (Entman 1993), while other authors find the multi-paradigmatic nature of framing research to be one of its strengths (D'Angelo 2002). There is a variety of definitions of frames available in the research, and a multitude of operationalizations, leading to focus on different content features.

One approach to defining frames is to look at what they do in news texts. As Gamson (1989) explains the function of news frames, it is by being embedded in a certain storyline where some elements are emphasized, other elements downplayed or ignored, and coherence between these elements are established, that facts gain meaning to the audience. Framing in the news is thus fundamentally to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text” (Entman 1993). Entman provides an expanded definition of frames, he states that frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe. Some events, such as wars and other conflicts, are defined as problems, the source to these problems is identified, and then moral judgment, as well as possible solutions can be offered. There are other definitions of frames available, one example being De Vreese defining framing as “emphasis in salience of different aspect of a topic” (De Vreese 2005). In contrast to such general definitions, the definition provided by Entman has some advantages.

One benefit of defining frames based on what they do is that such functional specification allows for clear demarcation from other concepts such as themes and topics, which in turn enables more clarity and preciseness when measuring and identifying frames (Entman, Matthes & Pellicano 2009). The definition provided by Entman also has the benefit of possibly being the most commonly used in quantitative analysis of news frames (Matthes 2009).

As Scheufele and Scheufele (2010) points out, one assumption guiding the conceptualization of frame elements offered by Entman is that all elements are needed to form effective perspectives and arguments. However, different frame elements dominate discourse in different issue-contexts. Scheufele and Scheufele mention disasters as a situation in which causal explanation and responsibility attribution may be of especially central concern in public discourse, while political scandals instead may give predominance to the moral judgment.

## **Frame sponsorship**

There is a lack of systematic research on the direct process of production of frames (Borah 2011). There is nonetheless a number of perspectives available on factors that to some extent contribute to the formation of media frames. Previous research dealing both explicitly with frame building and with the construction of reality in news content in general points to a number of such factors. These range from sources and pressure from various outside actors (Hänggli 2011), the organizational conditions of news production (Boesman and van Gorp 2017) to the professional norms, values, and personal ideology of journalists (Engesser and Brüggeman 2016).

In his study of the media treatment of the new left, Gitlin underpinned his understanding of media frames with the position that the framing of news reflects power relationships in society. Gitlin argued that the assumed ability of the media to shape how the audience understands society makes media a social force. From this understanding of media frames follow that they have consequences for political and social actors, and also that different actors have an interest in shaping media framing, by appearing as sources and sponsoring frames beneficial for their aims (Gitlin 1980).

A number of authors have subsequently criticized trends in framing research where the role of frame sponsorship is either disregarded or simplified. These critics claim that by failing to pay attention to how actors try to influence the framing of news, researchers also fail to appreciate what role power plays in framing. Such failure means limited understanding of how frames are formed and what social and political consequences framing has. What is lost by not considering the role of frame sponsors is for instance how unequal distribution of various resources among social actors is reflected in media frames. Critics also claim that disregarding frame sponsors means exaggerating the degree of autonomy journalists have when framing media content (Vliegenhart and Van Zoonen 2011, Carragee and Roefs 2004). One way of addressing this dimension of frame building in news content is by studying the sources that are used in news content (Manning 2001). While the sources that do appear in content do not reveal the full story of how different actors try to influence news coverage, they do reveal who succeeds in getting access to make definitions in news. The implications of access shall be considered below.

## **News access and definitional power**

There is a number of studies showing that news media tends to attribute great importance to the views of powerful actors, and that these actors have an easier time getting access to the media. Studies differ on how they define elite or powerful actors, and under what circumstances and to what extent such actors are favored. In general, researchers over time

have tended to reject theories on news access deemed too rigid and mechanistic. Instead, while not denying access inequalities, researchers have made efforts to theorize elite dominance as contingent on social circumstances, something actors have to continuously maintain and compete for, rather than already given beforehand.

Journalistic news-production is dependent on the use of external sources. Due to the demand for objectivity journalists link information to sources by use of quotation, thereby using these sources as evidence in news stories. External sources are also in many instances the providers of the information in news stories.

The relationship between journalists and sources has sometimes been seen as symbiotic, a relationship where both counterparts benefit with increased information and increased visibility. The relationship has also been seen as adversarial, a tug of war where journalists and sources perpetually try to gain the upper hand in the relationship.

Over time, the patterns of the information exchange between journalists and sources have social consequences. As Carlson (2009) argues, the news provides the public with an image of the social order by aggregating the visions of its sources. By giving privileged access to some voices and viewpoints, journalists reinforce the legitimacy and authority of these perspectives over others. Long term patterns in journalist-source relationships thus not only give sources definitional power over how individual news stories or issues are framed. These patterns also reinforce the social power of some groups by assigning interpretive rights to them.

The relationship between journalists and sources has been conceptualized in several different ways. A number of approaches with a shared emphasis on the ability of various elites to maintain definitional power in the news have been inspired by Becker's hierarchy of credibility. This notion was originally developed by Becker in the context of sociology of deviance. According to Becker, members of hierarchical systems assume that high-ranking members have a right to define how things are, further on that this assumption derives from the idea that rank and status have to do with moral superiority (Becker 1967).

The study of Hall et al. (2013) on the news media coverage of mugging in Great Britain, is one example of such an approach. A fundamental idea in this study is that despite the ideals and autonomy of journalists, news media tend to systematically "reproduce the definitions of the powerful". Hall et al. attribute this tendency of journalists "over-accessing" powerful sources to the journalistic ideal of objectivity in combination with time-pressure in news production. Some sources are perceived by journalists as giving "authoritative" and "objective" statements by journalists due to their institutional positions. This is notably thought to be the case with official sources from government and authorities. Representatives of resourceful institutions also have the advantage of being able to provide time-constrained journalists with recurrent reportable activity. By giving preference to certain sources, these sources are assigned the role of primary definers by journalists. This means that they are providing the initial interpretative framework that then serves as reference for all subsequent coverage. Journalists themselves then become "secondary definers" in the sense that their

subsequent reporting is framed according to the primary definitions provided by accredited sources. The way Hall et al. conceive news access is quite similar to the views of the GUMG as presented in *Bad News* (GUMG 1976). The GUMG also argued that news access is structured in a hierarchical way to the benefit of privileged groups and people, leading to reinforcement of the viewpoints and worldview of elites. Both the work of the GUMG and of Hall et al. shared an ambition to locate the key to the persistent dominance of some news sources in the conditions of news production. They further on shared an insistence that over-accessing of elite sources contributes to the legitimation of the ideologies of these sources, and they also shared Marxist conceptions of society. However, the work by these groups represented a move away from some earlier Marxist views of news media dubbed “simple conspiracy theories” by Hall. More specifically, Hall et al. reject the view that dominating ideas in the news is simply a matter of capitalists using media ownership to directly control and impose their ideas on news content (cf. Miliband 1969).

The primary definer thesis as conceived by Hall et al. has in turn been challenged by Schlesinger (1990) for having a too static conception of how groups and actors maintain definitional control. According to Schlesinger, primary definer status is something that is achieved, rather than predetermined by structural factors. Different sources with privileged access may for instance be in conflict with each other, the roles of specific sources are subject to changes over time, and Schlesinger also argues that Hall et. al. exaggerate how passive the journalists are in their relationships with sources: In many cases, journalists themselves seek out specific sources and sometimes take an adversarial stance in relation to powerful sources. This notion of primary definer status being achieved rather than given is for instance exemplified by the British labor unions. The demise of labor coverage has been interpreted as leading to these unions losing their primary definer status (Manning 2001).

The indexing theory proposed by Bennett is an illustrative example of how elite dominance may depend on circumstances. According to this theory, journalists tend to “index” the viewpoints of elected and government officials when covering foreign affairs, but when there is dissensus among these officials, journalists become more critical of government positions (Bennett 1990). Another example is the political contest model developed by Wolfsfeld, in which control of the political environment is described as a dynamic, if unequal, conflict between various actors over access and framing in news (Wolfsfeld 1997). In the context of labor conflicts there is a line of research dealing with how definitions are continuously contested by the involved actors. More specifically those researchers aiming to show how accommodative strategies when interacting with media may benefit the labor movement (Manning 1998, Kumar 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Framing is a useful way to investigate who manages to get their views into news because it allows for empirically studying how the terms of debate are set in news coverage. Actors that are endowed with certain qualities and positions have an easier time getting access to news

media than other actors. Just as researchers differ on how thoroughgoing the marginalization of worker-viewpoints is in labor coverage; researchers also differ on to what extent they estimate the media dependence on powerful sources. Some have argued that this dependence is quite constant, while others have argued that it is anything but given, instead conditional on contextual factors. An appreciation for the role of pervasive patterns of who gets to be a source means a possibility to discern how power is reflected in news. Looking at the relationship between source use and framing of news also enables for investigating the ways in which actors seek to use their power to influence media content.

In this study, frames are to be defined by what functions they have in news texts. This definition has the advantage of clear demarcation between frames and other textual characteristics of news articles.

What sources do with news, or what journalists do with sources, is also possible to interpret by reference to a number of different theoretical positions. The different positions outlined above shall in this study be used to evaluate the implications of source use in articles. Source influence on content may be interpreted as an outcome of conflict between competing sources, or dominance of powerful actors over definitions or over news production. Sources' ability to influence content may also be understood as a result of journalists being active or passive in their relationship with these sources. If some actors are deemed more credible and deserving of access than others, then they are expected to receive more access than other actors. If sources have the ability to shape the framing of articles, then use of certain frames should be associated with actors that benefit from these frames being dominant actors.

In this study, news articles are viewed as a final cultural product, that result from the conscious decisions of journalists. A main assumption guiding the study is that journalists draw frames from a shared "cultural stock of frames" (van Gorp 2007), two journalists writing similar articles are thus assumed to have a more or less similar understanding of what they write. The assumption of shared understanding is disputable. For instance, Graber (1989) claims news content is always polysemic, because various recipients of news may make vastly different interpretations of said news. Framing of news articles may also be seen as bi- or multivalent to the extent that two or more frames sponsored by different actors may be present in the same article (Simon and Xenos 2000). Thirdly, journalists may to some extent themselves create multiple framings of an issue in a single news item (D'Angelo 2002). However, as Gamson argues contra Graber, the interpretations of the audience are not accessible through content analysis (Gamson 1989). If an article is dissolved into frames sponsored by sources, then the contribution of journalists goes unnoticed. Journalists do not simply repeat the statements of sources but they use statements or parts of statements in order to construct coherent and holistic stories. Thus, while not rejecting that news items can contain numerous frames proposed by different actors, an assumption made in this study is that articles are framed as a whole with single frames. It is these news frames promoted by journalists that are the frames under consideration in this study.

## **Method**

The method used in this study is a quantitative content analysis of the coverage of four strikes in four different Swedish newspapers in order to describe the framing as well as the sourcing pattern of strike coverage.

### **Quantitative content analysis**

Quantitative content analysis is here understood as procedures and methods of evaluation used to transform unstructured information into manageable data. This method is of particular utility when questions relating to the general characteristics of large amounts of news coverage are asked. The method allows for simultaneously examining the meaning of content as well as for drawing inferences to the context possibly shaping content. Quantitative content analysis offers an approach that allows for making inferences about the role of sources in shaping coverage without having immediate access to the communicators involved in this process. A strength of this approach to investigating the role of sources is that it is unobtrusive (Fico et al. 2019: 10).

Following the definition of quantitative content analysis proposed by Fico et al., this chapter aims at showing the way in which this study is constructed to fulfill the demands of the method. Fico et al. define quantitative content analysis as “the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption.” (Ibid. 2019:19).

### **Procedures**

In order to describe the frames used in strike coverage, an inductive method of frame extraction is used. The frames are derived by cluster analysis of frame elements identified in the content analysis. Having defined the frames used in news about strikes, the study moves on to a stage of examining the patterns of the sources and frames that are used in coverage.

### **Frame extraction**

Frames are identified following the general inductive-clustering approach of Matthes and Kohring (Matthes and Kohring 2008). This approach has become an increasingly common method of deriving frames from news content in recent years (Cf. Geiß et al. 2017, Burscher et al. 2016). In this approach, frames are understood as patterns in texts, made of several components that can be split up and analyzed separately. Instead of coding frames as single variables, frames are divided into their constituent elements and each element is treated as a

variable. The result of the content analysis is then assembled into frames by subjecting the frame element variables to cluster analysis.

This approach has the advantage of providing transparency to how frames are identified. The approach is devised in order to minimize the threats to reliability that arises from subjective judgments of coders, and inconsistencies in coding. By shifting interpretation from one abstract variable, to a number of less abstract variables, the threat to reliability, while not eliminated, is significantly reduced.

Variables are clustered through agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis, Ward's method. In order to allow the clustering of different elements, the categories of each variable are to be recoded into dichotomous variables before cluster analysis is carried out.

Cluster analysis by use of Ward's method begins by treating each case as an individual cluster, then successively merges pairs of clusters until only one cluster remains. the Ward's method progresses from single cases to one cluster by stage by stage merging the clusters that would create a new cluster with as little increase in the sum of squares as possible. In other words, the Ward's method creates clusters with as low deviation from mean values in each cluster as possible. The elbow method is used to determine how many clusters should be derived from the solution of the analysis. With this method, the number of clusters that should be chosen is the number where adding another cluster would markedly increase the heterogeneity within clusters.

## **Analysis of results**

Having identified the frames in the coverage, the collected articles are to be categorized according to how they are framed. This study not only aims at deriving frames from strike coverage but is also guided by an ambition to compare how the framing differed between different strikes. Secondly, the study also addresses the question of whether there are associations between certain sources being used extensively and articles being framed in a certain way. Are for instance news frames more conducive to labor union viewpoints more likely to have union representatives as prominent sources? As some sources have a central role in coverage, and some may be referenced in passing, a distinction is to be made between dominant and secondary sources. The dominant sources are the ones that are to be compared to different frames.

## **Measures**

The variables used to measure the concepts of interest in this study are intended to meet the requirements of classification systems suggested by Holsti. The first requirement is that the variables should reflect the purpose of the research. The operational definitions used to categorize content should reflect the theoretical definitions of the main concepts. In this study, the main concepts for which such definitions are needed are frames and sources. The second

requirement is that variables are mutually exclusive, there should be no ambiguity in interpreting variables. Thirdly, categories used should be exhaustive, there should not be a lot of content that falls outside of categorizations used. Both the second and third requirements indicate the advantages of meaningful but general categorization. Additionally, definitions should be independent in the sense that placing a specific unit in one category does not influence the categorization of others. The fifth criteria is that each variable has a single classification principle. Different levels of analysis are to be separated and not mixed. (Holsti 1969, 101).

The frame elements used are devised from the theoretical definition of frames proposed by Robert Entman (1993). The coding scheme used to operationalize the frame carrying elements included in the Entman definition is similar to such schemes used in previous studies (Matthes and Kohring 2008, Takahashi 2011). The definition provided by Entman has some advantages already touched upon in the theory section. When applied to the inductive-clustering approach to frame extraction, this definition provides elements that are more conclusive building blocks of frames, and gives better construct validity, than for instance use of words (Burscher et al. 2016)

As the questions of this study relate to the framing of strikes, identification of frame elements should accordingly reflect what elements are used to cover the issue of the particular strike. Problem definition is divided into two variables: the topic of the article, defined as the central issue under consideration in the article. The other variable being actor, defined as the central actor(s) in the article, understood as the actor whose actions or statements are presented as prompting the particular article. The headline and the lead of the article are to be regarded as highly likely to contain the article topic, unless this is contradicted by the rest of the article. Moral evaluation is operationalized as the risks and benefits that are suggested by the article as being a result of the strike, its consequences or countermeasures. The frame element causal interpretation is operationalized as the actor(s) that are or might be responsible for risks and benefits according to the views provided by the article. Treatment suggestion is operationalized as recommended solutions to the conflict, or to problems arising from this conflict.

Categories used when coding each frame element should be specific enough to be exhaustive. The frame elements with many different categories are to be recoded into fewer more general categories. These recoded categories should be general enough to be mutually exclusive. For the clustering analysis, variable categories are recoded into dichotomous variables.

Every identifiable actor that is either quoted or referenced in an article is coded as a source. The source variables have the same categories as the actor categories used to define the frame variable. Sources are grouped into categories according to what role they play in the coverage of the strike. A distinction is made between the dominant source and the other sources in the article. The dominant source variable is meant to express the source whose quoted or referenced statements are likely to play the most important role in contributing in shaping the

particular news story compared to other used sources. The *dominant source* is the source that is quoted or referenced more than the other sources, and in cases where this is unclear, the dominant source is instead the source being quoted or referenced first in the article. This follows the notion of Hall et al. (2013) that initially quoted sources have the upper hand in deciding the interpretation of the rest of the news story. In some cases, articles lack sources. This is typically the case in editorials or debate articles but may in some rare instances occur in news articles. In opinion pieces the writer is coded as the source.

## **Reliability**

All articles are coded by the researcher alone. However, for a coding scheme to have basic validity as a measurement instrument, two individuals must be able to use the scheme with similar results (Neuendorf 2002: 235). In order to assess reliability, another coder received an explanation of the code protocol and then coded a subsample of the data that was used to assess intercoder reliability. The subsample consisted of 10,8 percent of the collected articles. The material coded by the researcher and the corresponding material coded by the other coder was then used in a reliability analysis of the variables used in the content analysis using Cohen's kappa. Cohen's kappa is a common technique for measuring intercoder reliability between two coders (Fico et al. 2019: 114). The agreement for the frame element benefit is the highest at 0,9, followed by risk at 0,85, actor at 0,84 and solution at 0,83. The agreement for topic is at 0,82, and risk attribution is somewhat lower at 0,78. The benefit attribution category was coded identically by both coders, which is due to that there was no clear benefit attribution in the majority of articles.

## **Strikes**

The strikes chosen for the content analysis are those related to labor conflicts initiated during recent years in Sweden. Strikes are chosen for study, from the end of 2019 going backward until four strikes were identified. This means that the strikes included happened in the years 2017-2019. During these years, a limited number of labor conflicts entailing strikes occurred in Sweden. In total 7527 workdays were lost due to strikes or lockouts in 2019, mainly in two strikes, one involving the Swedish Dockworkers Union, and one involving the Swedish Pilot Association. A limited number of workdays were lost in political strikes by the syndicalist SAC (Medlingsinstitutet 2020). 2570 workdays were lost in 2017, mainly because of lockouts by Ports of Sweden in response to a conflict initiated between Ports of Sweden and the dockworkers' union in 2016. 150 workdays were lost due to a wildcat strike carried out by waste collectors, and 15 workdays were lost in a dispute involving SAC (Medlingsinstitutet 2017). In 2018 the number of lost workdays was only 50. All of these workdays lost in a strike between the Swedish Pilot Association and Ryanair (Medlingsinstitutet 2019). The

strikes are identified from the yearly reports of the Swedish Mediation Agency. Small strike actions are assumed to have received little media coverage and were thus not included in the study. These small actions are in this study defined as those where few workdays were lost (less than 50), or where the number of lost workdays is unknown.

In 2019, the Swedish Dockworkers Union (SDU) was involved in a strike with the Ports of Sweden. This particular conflict ended in the dockworkers receiving collective bargaining agreement, a demand they had fought for during a period of many years. The conflict of 2019 concluded a more drawn out period of conflict between the SDU and the employer organization.

The other strike in 2019 was between the Swedish Pilot Association (SPA) and SAS. There are some commonalities between these strikes, both SDU and SPA are relatively small unions, independent from the union confederations that the majority of Swedish unions are affiliated to. Both SDU and SPA have strategic positions with regard to their bargaining power. If the dockworkers or the pilots go on strike, then the docks close, or in the latter case, the planes do not fly. These are typical examples of what Silver terms workplace bargaining power (Silver 2003:13)-

Both the SDU and SPA have been involved in comparatively many conflicts and strikes in recent years. Both strikes received a lot of media attention. In the case of the SDU, the strike in the harbor was part of a drawn-out conflict in the harbor of Gothenburg, where many workdays were lost, mainly due to lockouts. In the case of the pilot's strike, public attention was focused on the conflict due to flight cancellations the strike led to.

The only strike in 2018 also involved the SPA. In this case, the strike was directed against Ryanair. This strike ended inconclusively. Finally, in 2017 two labor conflicts including strikes unfolded. At the beginning of the year the SDU initiated minor strikes as a continuation of strikes undertaken in 2016. Later in the same year, waste collectors carried out a wildcat strike against waste-collecting corporation Reno Norden, mainly affecting Stockholm. As the waste collector strike happened later in the year, and being clearly initiated in the particular year, this strike was chosen as the first strike included in the study. Thus, the waste collector strike marks the start of the studied period.

The relatively low strike activity is quite typical for Sweden, which in recent years has had few and limited strikes. That it is small independent unions involved in the strikes is also in line with the situation preceding the recent three years. The latest case of a Swedish Union Confederation-affiliated union carrying out a strike was in 2016. No other major strikes happened between the start of the strike at Reno Norden and the end of the strike at SAS. With this in mind, the journalistic treatment of strikes found by investigating the coverage of these strikes should be representative of strike coverage in recent years. Representativeness in relation to the total universe of Swedish strikes is another matter. As strikes are rare occurrences, the difference between examining four and 40 strikes entails examining events happening during a much longer time during which many of the social conditions of media

and labor would be subject to changes. These changes could potentially have decisive influences on how strikes are portrayed in news media. As it turned out impractical to examine more than four strikes, the most recent were chosen due to their higher social validity. By social validity is here meant social relevance and importance of content (Fico et al. 2019: 134). The social relevance is judged to be higher for recent strikes as they are likely to reflect contemporary news portrayals of strikes, as well as the portrayal of those happening in the near future.

The time periods during which news coverage was to be subjected to content analysis was limited to the period from the day when the union in question issued a strike notice, to the day after the end of strike action. If no strike notice was issued, then the day the strike began is used as the start of the studied period. This limit is meant to contribute to focusing on the strike event. The limit is also meant to contribute in putting less emphasis on never-ending or protracted processes characterizing the conflictual relationship between labor unions and employers. In most cases, such time limits are also quite uncomplicated to apply. In both the case of the SDU and the SPA conflicts in 2019, the conflicts were resolved with an agreement between the employer and the union. The pilot's strike in 2018 and the garbage collector strike in 2017, despite lacking conclusive agreement between employer and employees or union, also both have clear start and end. In these latter cases conflict actions ended leading to an end in the news coverage of the respective conflicts

## **Media content**

News articles are the units of analysis of the study. During the periods chosen for study, all articles about the strike in question are coded from four newspapers. Of these newspapers, two were broadsheets and two tabloids. Of these, the broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter* is a quality newspaper, catering to an upscale readership, with national reach, but with a particular focus on the Stockholm area. The other broadsheet, *Göteborgs-Posten* is focused on western Sweden, Gothenburg in particular. This is of importance as the SDU strike mainly took place in Gothenburg, while the waste collector's strike was concentrated to Stockholm. The tabloids, *Expressen* and *Aftonbladet* both have national reach. *Expressen* however, has local editions in the western and southern parts of the country. These local editions were not included in the study. *Dagens Nyheter*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, and *Expressen* are all liberal newspapers, while *Aftonbladet* has a social democratic editorial policy. *Expressen* has a historical record of making anti-union campaigns.

These newspapers are chosen because they represent a variety of editorial positions and have large readerships. They also have a national reach or covers areas with specific importance with regards to the strike (*Göteborgs-Posten*).

While there are studies examining how strikes and labor issues are covered in many different forms of media (Puette 1992), most previous studies focus on print media. This is especially the case with previous Swedish research, in which newspapers have been in clear focus

(Rahm 2002, Hvitfeldt and Malmström 1990, Nygren 2019). This contributes in making print media attractive as the source of data for this study, as this study has explorative ambitions. If findings are more comparable to findings from previous studies, then the knowledge from these previous studies have more potential to assist the exploration and interpretation of these findings

All articles are identified using the news database Mediearkivet/Retriever Research. Searches used to identify articles about the strikes include words used to describe the worker category engaged in the strike. In most cases, the employer was often mentioned in articles and is thus included as an alternative to workers being mentioned in the search string. In order to limit the articles further, words implying conflict or strike were included in search strings. To exemplify, the search string for the SAS conflict is formulated in this way:

(sas\* or pilot\*) and (strike\* or conflict\*)

For a full list of search strings, see appendix I.

### **Discussion of limitations of method**

While content analysis allows for drawing inferences about communicators without having direct contact with them, this method also limits the knowledge possible to attain. That means that those journalist-source interactions happening behind the scenes, that leave little trace in content, are inaccessible through content analysis. This study is limited to considering content as an end product of previous interactions. Questions of meaning relating to the interpretations of the audience fall outside the limits of the study.

As the content used in this study is purposively selected, the findings cannot be generalized to all media coverage of strikes in Sweden. However, as noted above, the study covers all major strikes in the country that has occurred the most recent years.

The inductive-clustering approach used in this study rests on the assumption shared with some researchers that manifest indicators can be accurately used to represent an underlying latent construct (Neuendorf 2002). This position is in contrast to those that claim that there is something found when looking at frames in news texts as a whole that cannot be assigned to any single or combination of qualities present in the frame. The approach used in this study does miss those aspects that are between the lines. That is, those aspects of texts that need exhaustive interpretative analysis to be uncovered, by means of for instance semiotic investigation. However, quantitative analysis involving meaning is inherently reductionist. The object of (sound) quantitative analysis is never to uncover hidden unmeasurable meanings.

Approaches seeking to improve the reliability of quantitative approaches to framing often risks trading of the gains in reliability with threats to validity. This is for example the case with many attempts at using automated content analysis to identify and measure the presence

of frames in coverage. The problem with such automated approaches is that computer programs lack the distinctly human capacity to attribute meaning to texts. In contrast, the inductive-clustering approach does not eliminate interpretation, it only interprets at a specific level. This means that the problems found in automated approaches due to computer programs lack of capacity for understanding meaning is not shared by the inductive-clustering approach. Further on, the successful use of the inductive-clustering approach is attested by its use in a number of studies. Even further, when compared applied to the same news content, the inductive-method produced concurrent results with the holistic method where frames are coded as single variables according to some criteria (David 2011).

## Results

In this chapter, the results of the content analysis are presented and analyzed. First, the general characteristics of content in terms of how many articles were collected, in which newspapers, sections and about which conflict these articles were. Then, the chapter progresses by in turn addressing each of the research questions.

### **The characteristics of coverage**

A total of 221 articles were collected for the purposes of this study. The SAS strike in 2019 was the most intensely covered strike, with 91 articles collected from the newspapers during the investigated period. The first article collected for this strike was dated April 3, the last May 4. The second most covered strike during the period of investigation was the Swedish dockworkers' strike, for this strike 73 articles were collected. The first articles on this strike were on the date of the strike notice in January 14, 2019. Coverage ended in March 7 the same year. Examination of the coverage of the Reno Norden strike yielded 44 collected articles, while examination of the Ryanair coverage only gave 13 articles. Reno Norden strike articles appeared between July 6 and July 18, 2017. The coverage of the Ryanair strike was from August 1 to August 11, 2018.

Strikes are mainly covered under the economy section in the broadsheets. 79,7 percent of the articles in Göteborgs-Posten are located in this section, and 51,6 percent of the articles in Dagens Nyheter. Strike coverage is more commonly classified as belonging in the general news sections in the tabloids. This is one indication of the broadsheets focusing on upscale audiences. Aftonbladet has 43,6 percent of its coverage in this section and Expressen 22,7 percent. The coverage of the SAS strike was much more extensive in Expressen than the coverage of any other strike in that particular newspaper, with 72,7 percent of all Expressen articles being about the pilot's strike against SAS. Expressen attributed great importance to this strike by tending to cover it under a special "Extra" section. This section makes up 45,5 percent of all Expressen coverage.

### **Frame elements: Measure by measure**

Before moving on to the frames, the general characteristics of coverage shall here be addressed. The frames derived from cluster analysis were derived from the frame elements that were to varying degrees present in coverage. In this section, these frame elements and how common they are in coverage are described and reviewed.

**Table 1: Frame elements**

Topic	Conflict escalation	28,5 %
	Conflict ending	8,1 %
	Economic consequences	32,6 %
	Political implications	4,1 %
	Evaluation of employer	9,5 %
	Evaluation of union or workers	9,5 %
	Mediation or dialogue	7,7 %
Risk	Repressive measures against union	14,9 %
	Escalation of conflict	27,6 %
	Negative economic consequences	39,4 %
	Illegitimate actions of union or workers	8,1 %
	None	10 %
Benefit	Political/legal intervention	3,2 %
	Conflict solution	7,2 %
	Positive economic effects	4,5 %
	Benefit for workers interests	7,7 %
	None	77,4 %
Solution	Employer conceding defeat	3,6 %
	Union conceding defeat	12,7 %
	Countermeasures from employer	6,8 %
	Dialogue	33,5 %
	Political/legal intervention	8,1 %
	Union or worker action	5 %
	Consumer compensation	12,2 %
	None	18,1 %
Actor	Union	26,7 %
	Employer	16,7 %
	Equally employer and union	24 %
	Authorities	3,6 %
	Politicians	4,5 %
	Non-engaged actors	4,5 %
	Workers	10,9 %
	None	9 %
Risk attribution	Union	32,1 %
	Employer	21,3 %
	Equally employer and union	21,7 %
	Authorities	0 %
	Politicians	4,1 %
	Non-engaged actors	1,8 %
	Workers	7,7 %
	None	11,3 %
Benefit attribution	Union	7,2 %
	Employer	5,4 %
	Equally employer and union	4,1 %
	Authorities	0,9 %
	Politicians	2,7 %
	Non-engaged actors	0 %
	Workers	2,3 %
	None	77,4 %

Comment: Percentages express the share of one element within the specific variable. The categories "None" denotes share of articles where there was no clear category of the variable,

One common focus in strike coverage is on what consequences strikes may have to the economy. Economic consequences are most common as topic with 32,6 percent of the articles having this topic. The negative economic effects strikes could potentially lead to is likewise the most persistent risk pointed out in the strike coverage, appearing in 39,4 percent of the articles. In the pilot strikes the threat of cancelled flights dominated the news. The consequence of the waste collector strike on waste collection was a major theme in that particular strike. More general focus on the economic consequences is also commonplace in strike coverage. Though the strike between the dockworkers and the Ports of Sweden had less direct impact on consumer's economic interests, economic consequences were still prominent as theme and topic. The central role of economic issues and focus on risks to the economy is in line with previous research on the journalistic treatment of strikes and labor issues. This emphasis, in addition to the tendency of newspapers to place strike coverage in the economy section, points to a high degree of what Rahm terms economization of Swedish labor journalism (Rahm 2002).

Besides matters relating to consequences for the economy, intensifying or escalating conflict is a problem definition of strikes commonly encountered in news coverage. The conflict escalation topic covers all articles with a focus on how strikes are initiated, are growing, not ending or not being close to resolution. The risk of escalating conflict focuses on how strikes are portrayed as being likely to expand, lead to protracted or worsening conflict. This risk is found in nearly as high share of the articles as the escalation topic.

The evaluation topics deal with articles where the strike is defined as about the moral characteristics of an actor. Typical examples are when an article is about one party criticizing another for being conflict-orienting or for not respecting norms and values of society, or the Swedish model. Another example is when an actor is portrayed as pursuing goals that are portrayed as illegitimate. One example is workers seeking higher wages when already having a high wage, another an employer hiring private investigators to identify union members and sympathizers. Strike coverage tends to be very focused on the actors that are directly involved in the conflict, that is, the union or workers partaking in the strike and the employer that is the target of strike measures. Accordingly, it is these actors that are evaluated in articles about strikes. The evaluation topics are found in a limited but substantial share of the articles. The risks "repressive measures against union" and "illegitimate actions of labor unions or workers" also relate to moral evaluation, but here the emphasis is instead on moral or legal transgression as a potential risk in labor conflicts. The repressive measures of employers risk category is more common than the other elements relating to moral evaluation. This is noteworthy, considering the focus in previous research on the inadequacies of journalists when it comes to covering repression of the labor movement (cf Carreiro 2005). While it falls outside of the limits of this study to assess how capable journalists are when it comes to covering various repressive measures, they at least give considerable room in articles to the idea that employers can and might pursue such measures against employees.

While mediation and dialogue are the topic of a minority of articles, it is more common as a proposed solution to labor conflicts, being the solution with the highest presence in the articles.

Two benefit categories appeared in less than five percent of the articles and are thus not included in the cluster analysis. The categories are political or legal intervention against strikes, that only appeared seven times, or in 3,2 percent of the investigated coverage. This category expresses the idea that strikes can be beneficial in prompting interventions from the state that could preclude future strikes. Positive economic effects only appeared in 4,5 percent of the articles and are thus also excluded from the cluster analysis. When it comes to proposed solutions and topics one category in each variable was excluded due to few articles. Employer conceding defeat was uncommon as a proposed solution, only being suggested in 3,6 percent of the articles. The topic category that did not reach the 5 percent limit was political implications, only the topic of 4,1 percent of all articles.

Considering that it lies in the nature of strikes to be initiated by employees or their labor unions it is unsurprising that the labor union is the most common actor in the strike coverage. A perhaps somewhat more surprising result is that articles where employer and union are portrayed as equally acting or being active are more common than articles portraying the employer as the active party. Besides the share of articles where workers are portrayed as actors, the other actor categories were too uncommon to be included in the cluster analysis.

Risk attribution follows the same pattern as the actor element, with labor unions being most often blamed for risks, followed by employer and union being portrayed as having equal responsibility for risks, employers being responsible, and workers having responsibility for the risks. The attribution of benefits was much rarer in the coverage, reflecting that benefits were rare, with only attribution of benefits to union and employer being found in more than, or in the latter case exactly, five percent of the articles. Authorities were never interpreted as having responsibility for risks. Affected actors were only attributed with risk attribution in 1,8 percent of the articles and politicians in 4,1 percent of articles.

## How were the four strikes framed?

In this section, the question of which frames were found in strike coverage is to be addressed. First, the cluster analysis is reported. Then, the frames-clusters derived from the cluster analysis are described, with the section ending in a short summary.

### **The cluster analysis**

The cluster analysis of all the 221 articles was undertaken following the procedure outlined in the methodology chapter. Applying the elbow method to the agglomeration schedule, an “elbow” was observed on the stage of merging four clusters to three. This means that merging two of these four clusters would result in a cluster that is more heterogeneous than the clusters that were merged in the previous stages. Competing solutions were considered by examining

the five, three and two cluster solutions. The four-cluster solution was deemed to have more interpretative potential than the other solutions.

Following the approach by Donk et al. (2012), discriminant analysis was conducted in order to validate the cluster solution. Discriminant analysis is useful as a way to assess the adequacy of a classification, as it shows the extent to which variables can be used to correctly assign cases to already known groups (Tabachnick et al. 2007). When applied to the four-cluster solution, the discriminant analysis yielded a rate of 95,5 percent correctly identified cases.

## Interpretation

Table 2: Means of the different clusters

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Total
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Risk: Repressive measures against workers	<b>0,53</b>	0,05	0	0	0,15
Risk: Escalation of conflict	0,09	0,48	0,33	0,26	0,28
Risk: Negative economic consequences	0,07	0,26	<b>0,57</b>	<b>0,63</b>	0,39
Risk: Illegitimate actions of union or workers	0,17	0,00	0,10	0,02	0,08
Benefit: Conflict solution	0,02	0,26	0,01	0,06	0,07
Benefit: For workers' interests	0,24	0,02	0,03	0	0,08
Solution: Union conceding defeat	0,07	0,05	0,27	0,07	0,13
Solution: Countermeasures from employer	0,16	0,00	0,01	0,09	0,07
Solution: Dialogue	0,16	<b>0,81</b>	0,42	0,06	0,33
Solution: Legal or political intervention	0,21	0,00	0,04	0,06	0,08
Solution: Union/worker action	0,14	0,02	0,01	0,02	0,05
Solution: Consumer compensation	0,02	0,00	0,09	0,37	0,12
Topic: Conflict escalation	0,31	0,36	0,30	0,19	0,29
Topic: Conflict ended	0,05	0,26	0,04	0,02	0,08
Topic: Economic consequences	0,02	0,17	0,34	<b>0,76</b>	0,33
Topic: Evaluation of employer	0,29	0,02	0,03	0,02	0,10
Topic: Evaluation of workers/unions	0,17	0	0,16	0	0,10
Topic: Mediation/dialogue	0,03	0,19	0,10	0	0,08
Actor: Union	0,19	0,10	<b>0,63</b>	0,04	0,27
Actor: Employer	0,29	0,00	0,15	0,19	0,17
Actor: Equally employer and union	0,19	<b>0,76</b>	0,09	0,07	0,24
Actor: Workers	0,12	0,02	0	0,30	0,11
Risk attribution: Union	0,10	0	<b>0,97</b>	0	0,32
Risk attribution: Employer	<b>0,53</b>	0,00	0,01	0,28	0,21
Risk attribution: Equally employer and union	0,05	<b>0,76</b>	0	0,24	0,22
Risk attribution: Workers	0,09	0,00	0	0,22	0,08
Benefit attribution: Union	0,16	0,10	0,04	0	0,07
Benefit attribution: Employer	0,14	0	0	0,07	0,05
Number of articles	N=58	N=42	N=67	N=54	

Comment: Mean values above 0,5 in bold.

Table 2 provides an overview of the main characteristics of clusters by showing the mean values for all variables in all clusters as well as in all included articles together. As all categories in the table are dichotomous variables the mean expresses the frequency of each category in each cluster. A mean value of 1 meaning the category occurring in every single article, and 0 indicating that the category never occurring in any article in the particular cluster. These mean values are interpreted as suggested by Matthes and Kohring (2008). First, by examining what variables have the highest mean values in each cluster. Second, one variable may have a low mean value when examining the articles in total, but distinctly higher mean value in a specific cluster. Thus, what variables have high mean values in one cluster compared to the same variables in the other clusters is of interest when looking at what makes each cluster distinct. Lastly, it is also of importance for interpreting the cluster solution to identify what variables, if any, that have low mean values throughout the clusters.

The four clusters reflect distinctly different patterns between topics, causal attributions, moral evaluations and solutions. One cluster is about repression and transgressions, mainly from employers. Another cluster gathers categories related to dialogue and conflict solution, the third focuses on the responsibility of the labor union, and the third emphasizes economic aspects of strikes.

#### *Cluster 1: Repression and transgression / Repressive employer frame*

The most characteristic frame elements in this cluster are “Risk: repressive measures against workers” and “Risk attribution: employer”. The variables grouped in this cluster reflects a framing of strikes as being events in which involved parties, mainly the employer, pursue their goals using actions portrayed as illegitimate or repressive. The strike situation is predominantly understood as presenting a risk of repression against employees, and also that the employer is responsible for repressive measures.

It is notably in this context that job action is portrayed as potentially a solution to labor conflicts and further on strikes to some extent portrayed as beneficial for workers interests. “Solution: Union/worker action” is much more common in this cluster than in the other clusters. So is “Benefit attribution: Employer”. Transgressions by the employer side thus could provide a legitimization for more assertive behavior and interpretations from labor unions.

On the other hand, it is also in this particular cluster that calls for political intervention or legislation are found, as well as countermeasures from employer being presented as a possible solution of the conflict. The risk of unions or workers pursuing illegitimate actions is also found in this cluster, if not to the same extent as the risk of employers taking illegitimate actions.

#### *Cluster 2: Dialogue, escalation and de-escalation frame*

The frame elements that are found in a large majority of the articles grouped in this cluster are “Solution: Dialogue”, “Actor: Equally employer and union”, and “Risk attribution: Equally employer and union”. Some frame elements are absent or nearly absent in the cluster. For instance, unilateral risk attribution of one strike antagonist is absent.

This cluster reflects a grouping of articles where dialogue is proposed as solution, while the labor union and the employer are portrayed as equally responsible for risks, in this cluster the main risk being escalation of the conflict. Both the topic of mediation, conflict escalating, and conflict having ended are over-represented in this cluster, indicating that these topics are all often covered with employers and labor unions being attributed equal agency and responsibility for the conflict in question. Further on, these topics are also commonly treated with dialogue being presented as solving the problems at hand. The absence of risk attribution to one counterpart reflects the focus on shared responsibility and dialogue focus. The conflict solution benefit could be contrasted with the benefit for workers interest category. In this latter category, strikes are interpreted as providing a vehicle for advancing workers’ interests, while the conflict solution category is assigned to articles where developments in the strike are interpreted as possibly leading to resolving the conflict. Thus, the conflict solution benefit rests on the assumption that conflict is inherently bad.

This pattern could be argued to reflect the Social democrat dimension of hegemony Enbom (2009) suggests characterizes Swedish society. Reasons for interpreting such a connection being the focus on equal responsibility and consensus emphasis.

#### *Cluster 3: Aggressive union frame*

In this cluster the element “Risk attribution: Union” is found in nearly every article and is thus the most characteristic aspect. “Actor: Union” and “Negative economic consequences” are both distinctively common elements in the cluster.

The general pattern is here the union being the active party in the conflict, and thought to be responsible for its negative consequences as well as for ending the conflict primarily by engaging in dialogue, or simply stopping the strike action and conceding defeat.

The risks that are associated with the aggressive union frame are the most common risks in the strike coverage, except for negative economic consequences, the risk of escalation. The risk of repressive measures against the labor union or workers is notoriously absent in this cluster. This is the largest cluster.

#### *Cluster 4: The threatened economy frame*

In this cluster the economic consequences of strikes are in focus. “Topic: Economic consequences” is the most common element in the cluster, followed by the “Risk: Negative economic consequences” element.

As noted above, economic consequences are common in strike coverage both as the general definition of what strikes are about, and as the main risk posed by strikes happening. This cluster reflects that these views on strikes appear as a unified frame in news coverage. The focus on economic consequences is associated with consumer compensation being presented as a possible solution to strikes and their consequences. This frame is in this sense reminiscent of the consumer-oriented frame that Martin argues dominates American strike coverage, where strikes are primarily defined by what consequences they have for consumers. Yet, a defining characteristic of this cluster is that unions are not attributed with responsibility for the potential negative economic consequences. When labor unions are portrayed as having this responsibility for economic effects, the portrayal is instead in line with the aggressive union frame. In this other frame dialogue and the involved unions stopping strike measures is in focus in contrast to the threatened economy frame where there is little focus on concrete actions of labor unions in the conflict.

## **Summary**

In summary, four frames dominate Swedish strike coverage. Three frames focus on various aspects of the dynamics in the conflict between the opposing forces in labor conflicts. The most prominent such frame defines strikes as about active and aggressive unions. Another common frame focus on the transgressions of counterparts, mainly of the employer side, and the appropriateness of responses to such transgressions. In contrast to this frame is the framing of strikes as about dialogue, as a ground for seeking consensus and conflict solutions. Lastly, there is a kind of frame emphasizing the economic dimension of the conflict and the threats posed by strikes to the economy. This prominence of framings of strikes as threats to the economy is in line with previous research in which strikes are presented as threatening consumer interests or the national economy (Martin 2004, GUMG 1976).

All the frames in one way or another express the belief that conflict and strikes to a high extent are negative events. This is in line with previous research (Schmidt 1993, Jarley and Kuruvilla 1994). Though the interpretation of why strikes and their consequences are negative differs. This provides a definite limitation on the terms of debate for the labor movement. A more positive view of strikes being beneficial to workers are uncommon in news coverage.

## **How did the framing of the examined strikes differ from strike to strike?**

In this section the question of how the framing in the news of different strikes differed shall be addressed. This is to be done by examining the distribution of the different clusters in the different strikes.

## How clusters align with particular strike conflicts

What frames that tended to dominate coverage in the different strikes is described below, as well as in table 3.

Table 3: Cluster prevalence in different conflicts

	SDU /Ports of Sweden	SPA/SAS	SPA/Ryanair	Waste collectors /Reno Norden
Group 1 Repressive employer	28,8 %	13,2 %	69,2 %	36,4 %
Group 2 Dialogue	26 %	24,2 %	0	2,3 %
Group 3 Aggressive union	41,1 %	38,5 %	15,4 %	0
Group 4 Threatened economy	4,1 %	24,2 %	15,4 %	61,4 %

Comment: Percentages express the share of each frame in the coverage of each conflict.

The aggressive union frame is used only two times in the coverage of the Ryanair strike and is absent in the articles on the Reno Norden strike. In the Reno Norden case this is a consequence of the strike being a wildcat strike, that is, no labor union was directly involved in the strike in question. The aggressive union frame is on the other hand the most common frame in the two more intensely covered strikes, being used in 41,1 percent of the dockworkers' strike articles and 38,5 percent of the SAS strike articles. While there are few articles on the Ryanair strike, it is clear that in the little coverage that did occur, the repressive employer frame dominated. The repressive employer frame is otherwise the second most used frame in both the Reno Norden and the dockworkers' strike characterizing 28,8 and 36,4 percent of the articles. It is only in the case of the SAS strike that the repressive employer frame has a less dominant presence.

The dialogue frame is common in the most covered strikes, but absent in the Ryanair strike coverage and only appears one time in the articles on the Reno Norden conflict. As noted in the sources section, the employer side refused dialogue in the Ryanair strike, leaving little room for articles with dialogue and mediation as topics. Again, the Reno Norden strike has diverging characteristics from the other strikes. The small presence of the dialogue frame in this case may have to do with the lack of an institutionally recognized party the employer could pursue this dialogue with.

The threatened economy frame is the most common frame used in the waste collectors against Reno Norden strike. The lack of an institutionally recognized and formally organized counterpart to the employer may contribute to the dominance of the economic frame in the articles on the Reno Norden strike. As noted in the description of the frames, the economic frame de-emphasizes elements related to interests of workers' and employers' in favour of emphasis on consumers and the economy. Articles with threatened economy framing occurs two times in Ryanair coverage, and three in the dockworkers' strike. In the latter case this

points to more focus of the news media interest on conflict dynamics between involved actors, than on consumers and economic matters more divorced from the dynamics of the conflict. Lastly, the economic consequences frame is equally common as the dialogue frame in the SAS strike, thus being a substantial part of the coverage (24,2 percent).

## Summary

The most predominant frame in two of the strikes, namely the dockworkers' strike and the pilots' strike against SAS, were the aggressive union frame. These two strikes were more intensely covered than the two others. In the other pilot strike, this time against Ryanair, the repressive employer frame was very dominant, being found in 69,2 percent of all articles. Lastly, the wildcat strike lacked the aggressive union frame, and instead had a large share of articles framing the strike as a threat to the economy.

## How did the use of sources differ in the coverage of different strikes?

In this section the journalistic use of different sources in strike coverage is examined. First, the total use of sources in the different strikes is investigated, and in the next subsection the dominant sources in articles are examined.

## Source use

When examining all sources used in coverage, actors defined as employer emerge as the most referenced and quoted sources. This is shown in table 4 below. When focus is shifted to individual strikes, employers are shown to have enjoyed advantage in the more intensely covered dockworkers' strike against Ports of Sweden and the pilots' strike against SAS. Though this advantage was much more pronounced in the latter strike. Labor union representatives, while quite far behind employers, are the second most used sources in strike coverage. Just as with the employer representative sources, the share of union sources differs from conflict to conflict.

Table 4: Total source use

	Dockworkers	Pilots/SAS	Pilots/Ryanair	Wastecollectors	Total
Union	34 %	23 %	39 %	6 %	23 %
Employer	39 %	42 %	11 %	16 %	34 %
Affected actors	2 %	12 %	-	9 %	8 %
Authorities	2 %	7 %	-	10 %	6 %
Journalist	11 %	4 %	11 %	10 %	8 %
Ref. media	1 %	2 %	28 %	3 %	3 %
Worker	2 %	2 %	6 %	33 %	9 %
Politician	7 %	1 %	-	6 %	4 %
Expert	2 %	7 %	6 %	6 %	5 %

Comment: Percentages expresses proportion of source category in specific conflict as well as in all the examined conflicts.

Notably, the share of union sources is small in the waste collectors' strike, which is due to that this conflict was a wildcat strike. The results also show that workers, not explicitly sourced as representatives of a labor union, only got a substantial share of source access during this wildcat strike. Because the union did not partake in the strike, journalists had to turn to the individual striking employees directly and give room to more informal representatives of striking workers. When touching upon this matter, it should be noted that the employer share of sources remains larger than the union share, even if the sources used in the wildcat strike are removed. If the sources used in the Reno Norden strike are removed, the most common sources are still employer representatives. The Reno Norden strike is also characterized by a low number of employer sources. This again could be a consequence of this strike lacking an institutionally recognized counterpart for the employer to engage in public discussion with. It fits with the economic frame that dominated in this conflict, in the sense that this frame de-emphasizes the dynamics of conflict between the counterparts.

The source patterns indicate that the struggle over access leads to different outcomes for source use in different conflict contexts. While the difference between the source share of labor union representatives and corporate representatives is at five percent in the dockworkers' strike, the difference is much more pronounced in the case of the SAS strike. The coverage indicates that both the involved labor union and the employer organizations made great efforts in trying to shape public discussion in both strikes. For instance, the dockworkers had mobilizing campaign around collecting money for the strike fund. In the case of the SAS strike both sides for instance ordered public opinion surveys on the strike. The Ryanair strike stands in contrast to these conflicts because the employer pursued a different strategy, refusing to enter negotiations with union representatives and tending to refuse commenting on the strike in news media. This left the room open for the labor union to shape the discussion of the strike. On the other hand, the Ryanair strike was also much more limited, both in terms of strike measures employed by the union and to how much media attention the strike received.

Moving on to affected actors, that is individuals and organizations affected by but not directly involved in the strike, there is also major differences from strike to strike. This source category was common in the SAS strike, due to the coverage of how flight cancellations affected consumers. This source category also had substantial presence in the coverage of the waste collectors' strike, which reflects that this strike had clear effects on waste management in Stockholm, potentially affecting businesses, as well as people living in the area. The source category was not common in the dockworker strike and did not occur in the Ryanair strike. In the case of the dockworkers, this is possibly the result of corporations tending to voice concerns about the consequences of the strike through employer organizations, and such employer organizations cannot be accurately described as not directly involved in the strike, neither are they portrayed as such in news coverage.

The journalist source category reflects articles where the author-journalist of the particular article him/herself acts a source. This source category is only used in editorials, columns and

analyses. The journalist category had at most a share of 11 percent, both in the dockworkers’ and the Ryanair strikes. Referenced media is quite uncommon in the news on strikes, being a source in only 1-2 percent of articles in three of the strikes. The only example of such referenced media receiving a substantial share of space in articles is in the limited coverage of the Ryanair strike. As already pointed out, journalists lacked access to the employer side in this conflict. Further on, the Ryanair strike was coordinated with strike actions of pilots in other countries, and journalists covering the Swedish situation thus had to depend on foreign news outlets for information on the international situation.

Presence of politicians, authorities and experts in strike coverage also vary greatly from strike to strike. The presence of politicians in the dockworker strike reflects that some discussion about politicians pursuing strike legislation occurred in the coverage of this strike. Politicians also commented on the waste collectors’ strike, while they had a very marginal role in the other strikes, being present in one percent of the articles on the SAS strike, and were not present in coverage of the Ryanair strike. Authorities representatives were used in coverage of all strikes except the Ryanair strike. In the dockworker strike, authorities’ representatives played a marginal role, while being more prevalent in the articles about the SAS and Reno Norden strikes. The use of authorities’ representatives and politicians in the coverage of the Reno Norden strike could be understood as reflecting the fact that waste management is a municipal responsibility in Sweden.

Lastly, the number of expert sources also vary from strike to strike. While having an overall share of 5 percent, experts are not used to a high extent in strike coverage.

**Dominant sources**

Table 5: Dominant sources

	Dockworkers	Pilots/SAS	Pilots/Ryanair	Wastecollectors	Total
Union	30 %	14 %	54 %	-	19 %
Employer	34 %	44 %	-	7 %	31 %
Affected actors	1 %	7 %	-	11 %	6 %
Authorities	3 %	11 %	.	16 %	9 %
Journalist	21 %	8 %	15 %	23 %	16 %
Ref. media	1 %	2 %	31 %	5 %	4 %
Worker	1 %	5 %	-	27 %	8 %
Politician	4 %	1 %	.	7 %	3 %
Expert	3 %	8 %	-	5 %	5 %

Comment: Percentages expresses proportion of particular source category in particular conflict, and in all examined conflicts.

The share of dominant sources in coverage of each strike and in total is shown in table 5, above. The sources that had a dominant role in particular articles tend to reflect the sources that had a generally dominant presence in news coverage. For labor unions and corporate

sources this meant some difference in their relative importance as sources from conflict to conflict. In the dockworkers' strike the union and employer side of the conflict had a roughly equal share of articles where they were assigned the role of dominant source. In this conflict labor union representatives had this role in 30 percent of the articles, while corporate sources had the same role in 34,3 percent of the news stories. In the SAS conflict the distribution of dominant sources was very different, with union representatives appearing as dominant sources in only 13,6 percent of the stories, while employer sources managed to have a dominant role in 44,3 percent of the articles. The Ryanair strike is yet again different due to the lack of employer sources, here union sources are dominant in 53,8 percent of the articles. The Reno Norden strike has a completely different pattern of dominant sources, with no dominant union sources, and only 6,8 percent of dominant sources being representatives of the employer side. Articles built around perspectives of workers not portrayed as union representatives being dominant sources only had a substantial presence in the Reno Norden strike, where such articles amounted to 27,3 percent of strike coverage. There were no such articles in the Ryanair strike, only one such article in the SAS strike, and two in the coverage of the dockworkers' strike.

Affected actors again had a somewhat more substantial role in the SAS and the Reno Norden strikes, though the share of articles with affected actors as dominant sources was still limited to 6,8 percent in the former case, and 11,4 percent in the latter. Affected actors had a very limited role as sources in the dockworkers' strike, and no presence as sources in the coverage of the strike at Ryanair.

The number of journalists using themselves as dominant source is identical to the same category when looking at total sources. This is due to this source category only being assigned to articles where journalists themselves stand for the interpretation, with little aid from other sources. Referenced media is seldom used as dominant source, though being assigned this role in the scarce coverage of the Ryanair strike suffices to make referenced media being dominant source in 30,8 percent of the articles. Otherwise, referenced media appears as dominant source in 1,4 percent of the dockworkers' strike coverage, 2,3 percent of SAS strike coverage, and in 4,5 percent of the articles on the waste collectors strike.

Authorities representatives appear as dominant source somewhat more prominently in the SAS and Reno Norden strikes, with a share of respectively 11,4 and 15,9 percent of articles having a representative of the authorities as dominant source. Politicians and experts are rare as dominant sources, having this role in only 3,3 and 5,1 percent of coverage. In the strike coverage where politicians are used as dominant sources, they are used three times respectively in the dockworkers' and waste collectors' strikes. There is only one case of a politician being dominant source in the coverage of the SAS strike. Experts did to some extent play a role as dominant sources in the SAS strike, where they appeared in this capacity in 8 percent of the articles. Such articles built around expert opinions and statements reflect the idea that the public is in need of such expert knowledge. It lies close at hand to connect the prevalence of such articles in the SAS strike with the economic consequences this strike was

framed as having, combined with the extensive coverage the strike received. Experts had a very marginal role as dominant sources in the dockworkers' and waste collectors' strikes, with a share of respectively 2,9 and 4,5 percent of articles having an expert being the most prominent source.

### Summary of source use

The results show that employers in overall enjoy a more prominent position in strike coverage than labor union representatives do. This difference diminishes somewhat when examining who gets to be a dominant source. Access is thus to some degree stratified, and it seems that the employer side can sometimes afford to not use their access to news media when there is no benefit in commenting. In one case, that is in the SAS conflict, the labor union was clearly at disadvantage with regards to source access. Strike reporting gives more room to the opposing forces in the conflict than to any other type of sources. Workers that are not quoted as union representatives are rare in coverage, only appearing persistently when the union is not involved in the conflict. This points to a general lack of interest from journalists in directly covering the perspectives of workers at conflict-affected workplaces.

### How did the main sources used with the different frames differ?

In this section the last research question, what sources that tended to be used with what frames is addressed by examination of what dominant sources are commonly used in articles where the different frames are applied.

### Sources and frames

Table 6: Dominant source use with different frames

	Repressive employer	Dialogue	Aggressive union	Threatened economy
Union	15 (26,3 %)	9 (22, 5 %)	15 (23, 4 %)	1 (1,9 %)
Employer	11 (19,3 %)	16 (40 %)	28 (43,8 %)	11 (20,4 %)
Affected actors	-	-	2 (3,1 %)	10 (18,4 %)
Authorities	2 (3,5 %)	5 (12, 5 %)	4 (6,3 %)	8 (14,8 %)
Journalist	12 (21,1 %)	6 (15 %)	8 (12,5 %)	8 (14,8 %)
Ref. media	3 (5,3 %)	1 (2,5 %)	3 (4,7 %)	2 (3,7 %)
Worker	7 (12,3 %)	1 (2,5 %)	1 (1,6 %)	8 (14,8 %)
Politician	4 (7 %)	-	2 (3,1 %)	1 (1,9 %)
Expert	3 (5,3 %)	2 (5 %)	1 (1,6 %)	5 (9,3 %)
Total	57	40	64	54

Comment: Percentages in brackets. These express the proportion of each source category in each frame.

Table 6 above shows what sources are common as well as rare occurrences in relation to the different frames. Labor unions and corporate sources are the main dominant sources used in all frames of strikes relating to either negative evaluation of one of the counterparts, or to dialogue between them. Employer dominance is most accentuated in the aggressive union frame, while the only framing of strikes in which unions are most common as dominant sources is the repressive employer frame. Thus, there is on an aggregate level some correspondence between one party being dominant source, and framings where the opponent is portrayed in negative light. The results in this sense gives limited support to one aspect of the primary definer thesis. Namely, that particular main sources will be more common in articles defined favorably from their point of view. The support for the primary definer thesis is limited because union and employer representatives do appear reasonably often as dominant sources in articles where they themselves are framed in a negative way. This indicate that journalists do not unconditionally let sources act as primary definers, instead journalists also give the actor against which criticism is levelled the role of main source in news stories. The repressive employer frame also has a substantial share of articles with journalists as dominant sources. Journalists are only assigned this role in this study when the article is an opinion piece, or an analysis largely built around the interpretations and opinions of the journalist. This means that the repressive employer frame is a quite common frame used in opinion journalism.

The threatened economy frame is associated with use of other sources than the other frames. The most striking aspect here is that union representatives are nearly absent as main sources. Labor unions simply does not promote the economic frame, neither does journalists tend to build economically framed news stories around the perspective of union representatives. There is otherwise a more even distribution between a range of source categories, with affected actors, such as consumers and employers, authorities, journalists, experts and workers all being dominant sources in substantial proportions of the articles. This is in line with the economic frame de-emphasizing labor unions and conflict dynamics between the main actors in strikes.

## Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to describe the portrayal of strikes in Swedish news media by examining the framing and the source use in news about strikes.

The first question this study aimed at answering was how strikes are framed in news media. Four frames emerged from analysis of the strike coverage. One frame was about repression and transgressions of employers, another about dialogue between equally responsible antagonists. A third frame emphasized labor unions as being the aggressors and responsible for strikes. Lastly, there was a specific framing of strikes as economic matters, where emphasis was most clearly put on negative economic consequences of strikes.

The second question of this study was how the framing of different strikes differed when compared to each other. This question was answered by examining how the distribution of the four frames differed from strike to strike. The most used news frame in total numbers, as well as in the two most widely covered strikes, was the aggressive union frame. In the wildcat strike at Reno Norden, the economic threat frame instead was very predominant in coverage, while the few articles on the strike at Ryanair instead emphasized the repressive employer frame. This indicates that the framing of strikes in Swedish news is far from uniform but differs considerably when different conflicts are covered.

The third research question was about how the use of sources differed between different strikes. In the two most intensely covered strikes, the opposing forces in the conflict, that is union representatives and employer representatives were the most predominant sources. Employer sources were the most common source category of all categories. These statements are both backed by the total use of sources as well as the sources selected to be dominant sources. Workers not covered as union representatives were uncommon in the strike coverage, only receiving substantial attention when there was no other counterpart to the employer available, that is at the wildcat strike.

The last research question also related to the role of sources, specifically to the possible association between certain sources and certain frames. This question engaged with the notion that certain sources may persistently try to sponsor certain frames and should thus be likely to figure as dominant sources in articles with the preferred framing. While there was some tendency of specific dominant sources to be more common in frames where the counterpart to the source was criticized, this tendency was rather limited. Labor union representatives were nearly absent as dominant sources in the threatened economy frame.

### **What is reflected in the news portrayal of strikes**

With the answers to the last two research questions, the most mechanistic theories of sources defining news are to be rejected. Neither is the somewhat more subtle primary definer thesis (Hall 2013) a fitting way to understand the role of sources in strike coverage. Dominant sources in strike coverage do not unambiguously align with frames conducive to the viewpoints of the sources.

As both sources possibly delivering and being the target of critique are used as dominant sources when specific frames are picked, it seems that journalists shifts between an adversarial and non-adversarial stance to dominant sources. This implies journalists having a quite active role in source use and selection. Definitional control is in this sense not given away from journalists to sources. While there are different frames available, the coverage does point to some emphases being clearly more common than others. Journalists are thus limited by cultural boundaries.

Different conflict contexts lead to different outcomes regarding source use and framing of news. The strike at SAS received the most negative coverage from the labor union perspective, with extensive framing of the union as aggressors, and comparatively little use of news frames where the terms of debate are set against the employer. In this particular strike, union sources got little access compared to the employer side. The Ryanair strike stands in sharp contrast to the portrayal of the SAS strike, with the employer leaving walkover to union sources by not engaging in public debate. The Ryanair coverage was however very limited, and it is doubtful if the portrayal of the strike had continued in the same way had the strike been covered more extensively or the employer eventually chosen to engage in public debate. This is in line with the notion that dominance as source differ between issue and conflict contexts. These two strikes thus lend support to the claim by Schlesinger that primary definer status can be achieved under certain circumstances.

The SAS strike also points to another aspect worth noting about the role of news media in strikes. Even when the union lost the contest over access as well as over the framing of the strike, the union and the employer side reached an agreement. It seems like the pilots' union could depend on the strength of union action, even when met with extensive scrutiny from news media. The dockworkers' strike could be interpreted as a milder indication of the same possibility of labor unions managing to achieve their goals to some extent without having to need the force of favorable news media behind themselves. In this case the strike was contested in the news media, rather than one counterpart being unambiguously more successful in shaping coverage.

When the pilots carried out the strike against the multinational corporation Ryanair on the other hand, despite the conflict being framed in a way more conducive to the union viewpoint than the employer perspective, there was no agreement reached between the opponents. The success of the SAS strike shows that propositions about the role of media where unions are portrayed as victims to a hostile media environment may be exaggerated. It is sometimes argued that such a hostile media environment leads to defeats for unions due to their dependence on news media to get their perspectives out to the public (Manning 2001). This assumed power of the media has led researchers to take great interest in creative or accommodative strategies, where unions are trying to adapt to the values and culture of journalism (Martin 2004, Manning 1998, Kumar). However, the labor unions that were the subject of the coverage investigated in this study were disciplined and committed enough to their goals to not waver when faced with negative public attention.

Even though the occurrence of different frames in news varied from conflict to conflict some elements occur but do so very seldom. For instance, the political dimensions and implications are rarely a part of the news framing of strikes.

Journalism in Sweden has undergone a process of economization (Rahm 2002). The results of this study are in line with findings and interpretations of previous research when it comes to the centrality of economic matters in the journalistic treatment of strikes. The results on one hand support previous studies on Swedish labor journalism that found this journalism to be undergoing economization. That is, a growing focus on the economic aspects of labor issues. The study also supports some of the concerns raised by researchers critical to the quality of labor journalism (Martin 2004). The threat to the economy frame disfavors labor unions, both in terms of strikes being reduced to nuisances and problems to economic interests, and also because union representatives are generally not used as prominent sources when this frame is applied. The threatened economy frame is particularly characteristic of strikes where the strike action could pose a problem to consumer interests, such as the SAS strike. In this sense, the claims of the current of research that has tended to criticize the unilateral focus on economic aspects of strikes holds true to the context of Sweden.

When strikes are framed in ways that presents the issue less contrary to labor union interests, it is either the conciliatory dialogue frame, or the framing of employers as breaking common values and rules by use of repression. There are thus some enduring emphases in coverage at the expense of other possible emphases. If frames are to be interpreted as reflecting culture, then this culture acts as a boundary on public discussion and understanding of frames. There is for instance no prominent frames in the studied coverage where union action was presented as unambiguously positive. It should in this context be noted that these less negative framings of strikes are rarely found or discussed in previous research. In this sense, this thesis contributes in giving more nuanced and full descriptions of strike coverage.

### **Method and process**

Quantitative content analysis with an inductive emphasis has utility as a means to explore and map the general contours of news coverage of strikes. One advantage is that frames can be identified transparently with this approach, another that all included articles are included when frames are derived, instead of a subsample. The method was however not chosen without having to make trade-offs. A more simplified form of content analysis could have provided room for more coverage and longer time periods, also allowing for truly generalizable findings. What would have been possible to uncover by use of simplified measures would however been more cursory than with the chosen approach.

A choice of method involves trading off aspects that are not possible to capture with this method. Against quantitative content analysis of news media, it could be argued that some articles are much more important than others in shaping the public understanding of strikes. The instruments used to investigate the framing could satisfyingly capture the constructs they were aimed at capturing. However, whether the functional definition of frames is the most useful definition possible is open for questioning. During the course of coding the articles,

some metaphors and stereotypes recurred from strike to strike. For instance, the idea of a macho worker was sometimes invoked as a way to both explain and criticize conflictual unions. Another way of defining frames, with another set of measures or “frame devices” could perhaps have captured such aspects. Ultimately, such definitions come with other problems, for instance less clarity, especially with regards to demarcating framing from other textual characteristics.

### **Some suggestions for future research**

As this study had an exploratory aim, the characteristic frames and other characteristics of coverage were findings rather than starting points of the study. As discussed above, the study has both supported and expanded on definitions and characterizations of strike coverage from previous studies. With the results of this study for instance indicating that the Swedish strike coverage contains a prominent framing of strikes as economic threats, other research on news coverage of labor can ask other questions. While strikes and labor journalism has been studied in different national contexts national comparisons are lacking. This is particularly noteworthy with comparative labor studies investigating the effects of processes such as globalization in mind (Silver 2003). Investigating the differences in news media across countries could both enhance the understanding of labor journalism and of the conditions of labor movements around the world.

## Reference list

- Becker, H. S. (1967). Whose side are we on?. *Social problems*, 14(3), 239-247.
- Bennett, W. L. (1990). Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States. *Journal of communication*, 40(2), 103-127.
- Boesman, J., & Van Gorp, B. (2017). An Insidious Poison or a Door to the Story? A newsroom-centered approach to framing. *Journalism Practice*, 11(5), 559-576.
- Borah, P. (2011). Conceptual issues in framing theory: A systematic examination of a decade's literature. *Journal of communication*, 61(2), 246-263.
- Brimeyer, T., Silva, E., & Byrne, R. (2016). What do Unions Do? Media Framing of the Two-Faces of Labor. *WorkingUSA*, 19(4), 517-532.
- Brown, J., Cumberbatch, McGregor, R. (1986) *Television and the Miners Strike*. London: Broadcasting Research Unit
- Bruno, R. (2009). Evidence of Bias in the Chicago Tribune Coverage of Organized Labor: A Quantitative Study from 1991 to 2001. *Labor Studies Journal*, 34(3), 385-407.
- Burscher, B., Vliegthart, R., & Vreese, C. H. D. (2016). Frames beyond words: Applying cluster and sentiment analysis to news coverage of the nuclear power issue. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(5), 530-545.
- Carlson, M. (2009). Dueling, dancing, or dominating? Journalists and their sources. *Sociology Compass*, 3(4), 526-542.
- Carragee, K. M., & Roefs, W. (2004). The neglect of power in recent framing research. *Journal of communication*, 54(2), 214-233.
- Carreiro, J. (2005). Newspaper Coverage of the U.S. Labor Movement: The Case of Anti-Union Firings 1. *Labor Studies Journal*, 30(3), 1-20.

Dahlgren, M. (2019, 18 June). Byggnads: "Media har blivit blind för klass". Arbetet.

<https://arbetet.se/2019/06/18/fack-media-byggnads/>

D'Angelo, P. (2002). News framing as a multiparadigmatic research program: A response to Entman. *Journal of communication*, 52(4), 870-888.

David, C. C., Atun, J. M., Fille, E., & Monterola, C. (2011). Finding frames: Comparing two methods of frame analysis. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 5(4), 329-351.

De Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information design journal & document design*, 13(1).

Donk, A., Metag, J., Kohring, M., & Marcinkowski, F. (2012). Framing emerging technologies: risk perceptions of nanotechnology in the German press. *Science Communication*, 34(1), 5-29.

Enbom, J. (2009) Facket i det medialiserade samhället: En studie av LO:s och medlemsförbundens tillämpning av news management. Umeå universitet: Institutionen för kultur- och medievetenskaper.

Engesser, S., & Brüggemann, M. (2016). Mapping the minds of the mediators: The cognitive frames of climate journalists from five countries. *Public understanding of science*, 25(7), 825-841.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of communication*, 43(4), 51-58.

Entman, R. M., Matthes, J., & Pellicano, L. (2009). Nature, sources, and effects of news framing. In *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 195-210). Routledge.

Erickson, C., & Mitchell, D. (1996). Information on strikes and union settlements: Patterns of coverage in a "newspaper of record". *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 49, 395-407.

Fico, F., Riffe, D., Lacy, & Watson, B. (2019). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research*. Routledge.

- Flynn, F. (2000). No News Is Good News: The Relationship Between Media Attention and Strike Duration. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 39(1), 139-160.
- Freeman, R. & Medoff, J. (1984) *What do unions do?* New York: Basic Books
- Gamson, W. A. (1989). News as framing: Comments on Graber. *American behavioral scientist*, 33(2), 157-161.
- Geiß, S., Weber, M., & Quiring, O. (2017). Frame competition after key events: A longitudinal study of media framing of economic policy after the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy 2008–2009. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 29(3), 471-496.
- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left.* Univ of California Press.
- Glasgow University Media Group (1976). *Bad news.* Vol. 1. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Graber, D. A. (1989). Content and meaning: What's it all about. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33(2), 144-152.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (2013). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state and law and order.* Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Hänggli, R. (2011). Key factors in frame building. In *Political Communication in Direct Democratic Campaigns* (pp. 125-142). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Harrison, M. (1985) *TV News: Whose Bias? A casebook analysis of strikes, television and media studies.* Policy Journals
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley (content analysis).
- Hvitfelt, H., & Malmström, T. (1990). *Ekonomi och arbetsmarknad: journalistik i förändring.* Svensk informations mediecenter (SIM).

Jarley, P., & Kuruvilla, S. (1994). American trade unions and public approval: Can unions please all of the people all of the time? *Journal of Labor Research*, 15(2), 97-116.

Kahneman, D., Slovic, S. P., Slovic, P., & Tversky, A. (Eds.). (1982). *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases*. Cambridge university press.

Karlsson & L Truedsson (Eds.) *Nyheter: Allt mer en tolkningsfråga*. Institutet för mediestudier.

Kelly, J. (2011). Theories of collective action and union power. *The International Handbook of Labour Unions: Responses to Neo-Liberalism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 13-28.

Kjellberg, A. (2016). Partsrelationer och makt. In Holmqvist, M. (ed.). *Makt och inflytande i arbetslivet*. Stockholm: Premiss.

Korpi, W. (1983). *The democratic class struggle*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Kumar, D. (2008). *Outside the box: Corporate media, globalization, and the UPS strike* (Vol. 148). University of Illinois Press.

Lewis, J., & Proffitt, J. (2013). Sports, Labor and the Media: An Examination of Media Coverage of the 2011 NFL Lockout. *Labor Studies Journal*, 38(4), 300-320.

Manning, P. (1998). *Spinning for labour : Trade unions and the new media environment*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Manning, P. (2001). *News and news sources: A critical introduction*. Sage.

Martin, C. (2004) *Framed! Labor and the Corporate Media*. Ithaca: ILR Press.

Martin, C. (2019). *No longer newsworthy: How the mainstream media abandoned the working class*. Ithaca: ILR Press.

Matthes, J. (2009). What's in a frame? A content analysis of media framing studies in the world's leading communication journals, 1990-2005. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 86(2), 349-367.

- Matthes, J., & Kohring, M. (2008). The Content Analysis of Media Frames: Toward Improving Reliability and Validity. *Journal of Communication*, 58(2), 258-279.
- Mccoll, M. (1980). The Mass Media and Industrial Relations News: A Case Study. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 22(4), 420-441.
- McCombs, M. (2018). *Setting the agenda: Mass media and public opinion*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Medlingsinstitutet (2018). Årsrapport för 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.mi.se/alla-vara-arsrapporter/>
- Medlingsinstitutet (2019). Årsrapport för 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.mi.se/alla-vara-arsrapporter/>
- Medlingsinstitutet (2020). Årsrapport för 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.mi.se/alla-vara-arsrapporter/>
- Miliband, R. (1969). *The state in capitalist society*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Morley, D. (1976) Industrial Conflict and the Mass Media. *The Sociological Review*. 24 (1). 245-268.
- Neuendorf, Kimberly A. (2002) *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Nygren, G. (2019) "Fler källor - men vissa grupper saknas nästan helt". In M.
- O'Neill, D. (2007). FROM HUNKY HEROES TO DANGEROUS DINOSAURS: Journalism–union relations, news access and press coverage in the 2002–3 British Fire Brigades Union dispute. *Journalism Studies*, 8(5), 813-830.
- Parenti, M. (1993). *Inventing reality : The politics of news media* (2.nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Puette, W (1992) *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor*. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Rahm, H. (2002). *Journalistikens anatomi: analyser av genrer och textmönster i fem strejkbevakningar i svensk dagspress 1879–1996* (Vol. 58). Lund University.

- Scheufele, B. T., & Scheufele, D. A. (2010). Of spreading activation, applicability, and schemas: Conceptual distinctions and their operational implications for measuring frames and framing effects. In *Doing news framing analysis* (pp. 126-150). Routledge.
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of communication*, 49(1), 103-122.
- Schlesinger, P. (1990). Rethinking the sociology of journalism: Source strategies and the limits of media-centrism. *Public communication: The new imperatives*, 61-83.
- Schmidt, D. (1993). Public opinion and media coverage of labor unions. *Journal of Labor Research*, 14(2), 151-164.
- Silver, B. J. (2003). *Forces of labor: workers' movements and globalization since 1870*. Cambridge University Press.
- Simon, A., & Xenos, M. (2000). Media framing and effective public deliberation. *Political communication*, 17(4), 36
- Sussman, L.A. (1945) "Labor in the Radio News: An Analysis of Content,"
- Tabachnick, B. G., Fidell, L. S., & Ullman, J. B. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (Vol. 5). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Takahashi, B. (2011). Framing and sources: A study of mass media coverage of climate change in Peru during the V ALCUE. *Public Understanding of Science*, 20(4), 543-557.
- Tankard Jr, J. W. (2001). The empirical approach to the study of media framing. In *Framing public life* (pp. 111-121). Routledge.
- Therborn, G. (1997). The rule of capital and the rise of democracy. *Classes and elites in democracy and democratization: a collection of readings*, 1083, 134.
- Thompson, J. B. (2013). *Ideology and modern culture: Critical social theory in the era of mass communication*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Thurén, T. (1997). *Medier i blåsväder: Den svenska radion och televisionen som samhällsbevarare och samhällskritiker*. Norstedt.

Vliegthart, R., & Van Zoonen, L. (2011). Power to the frame: Bringing sociology back to frame analysis. *European journal of communication*, 26(2), 101-115.

Westerståhl, J. (1971). LKAB-konflikten i Radio/tv Och Dagspress. Studier Av Nyhetsförmedlingen Utförda På Uppdrag Av Sveriges Radios Styrelse Och Arbetarrörelsens Arkivl. Statsvetenskapliga Institutionen, Göteborgs Universitet.

Wolfsfeld, G.. (1997). *Media and political conflict: News from the Middle East*. Cambridge University Press.

## Appendix I: Search strings

The following search strings were used to collect articles for the strikes included in this study:

Swedish dockworkers' Union/Ports of Sweden:

hamnarbetar\* or "sveriges hamnar" or (strejk\* and hamn\*)

Swedish Pilot Association/SAS:

(sas\* or pilot\*) and (strejk\* or konflikt\*)

Swedish Pilot Association/Ryanair:

(ryanair\* or pilot\*) and (strejk\* or konflikt\*)

Waste collectors/Reno Norden

sop\* and (strejk\* or konflikt\*)

# Appendix II: Code book

Date		
Article		
Treatment	General news	News stories
	Commentary	Columns, editorials and other opinion material
	Feature	Feature stories
	Vox pop	
	Blurb/headline	
Section	Economy	
	News	
	Editorial	
	Private economy	
	Sports	
	Debate	
	Extra	
	Culture	
	Local news	
	Front page	
Newspaper	Dagens Nyheter	
	Göteborgs-Posten	
	Expressen	
	Aftonbladet	
Conflict	SDU/Ports of Sweden	
	SPA/SAS	
	SPA/Ryanair	
	Waste collectors/Reno	
	Norden	
Dominating source	Union representative	Representative of labor union
	Employer representative	Representative of involved corporation or employer organization
	Affected actors	Person or organization that is affected by strike, while not directly involved
	Authorities representative	Representative of authorities
	Journalist	Only used when the journalist him/herself acts as source. For example in editorials
	Referenced media	Cited or referenced journalists or news organizations
	Worker	Workers not explicitly affiliated with a labor union
	Politician	Politicians
	Expert	Source with expert status in an area, such as law
Secondary source	Same codes as dominating source.	
Topic	Conflict escalation	Strike has been initiated, is growing or is proceeding with no end in sight
	Conflict ended	Strike has ended, parties has reached agreement
	Economic consequences	Strike has concrete economic effects or implications

	Political implications	Strike is a political problem, for instance an effect of too liberal strike legislation
	Evaluation of employer	Moral evaluation of employer, for instance articles about legal transgressions of employers
	Evaluation of union/workers	Moral evaluation of union or workers, articles about workers being spoiled with too high wages or being radicals
	Mediation/dialogue	Strike is a problem of dialogue, articles about actors engaging in mediation
Benefit	Political or legal intervention against strike	Strike may lead to anti-strike legislation
	Conflict solved	Strike may lead to solving conflict of interest between involved actors
	Positive economic effects	Strike has positive economic consequences, such as giving competitors to target of strike advantages
Risk	Beneficial for workers	Strike may benefit workers interests, for instance union demands may be won
	Repressive measures against workers	Risk of repressive or illegitimate measures against unions or workers, such as anti-union firings or illegal surveillance
	Escalation of conflict	Risk of escalated or protracted conflict, for instance risk of strike spreading to more workplaces
Actor	Economic consequences	Risk of negative economic consequences for consumers, corporations or the Swedish economy in general
	Illegitimate actions of workers or union	Risk of the striking actor pursuing illegal or illegitimate actions
	Union representative	
Risk attribution	Employer	
	Equally employer and union	
	Authorities representative	
	Politician	
	Affected actors	
	Worker	
	Union representative	
Benefit attribution	Employer	
	Equally employer and union	
	Authorities representative	
	Politician	
	Affected actors	
	Worker	
	Union representative	
Proposed solution	Employer conceding defeat	Employer meeting union demands, or otherwise giving up
	Union conceding defeat	Union stopping strike action, union withdrawing demand.
	Countermeasures from employer	Employer responding with counter actions, such as lockouts
	Dialogue	Counterparts engaging in dialogue to reach conflict settlement

Legal or political intervention	Politicians or authorities intervening to stop or resolve the conflict
Union or worker action	Strike resolved by union or workers intensifying or engaging in more job actions
Consumer compensation	The problems the strike entails are resolved by consumers being reimbursed or compensated