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Towards 'New Emotional Movements'? A Comparative Exploration into a Specific Movement Type

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ABSTRACT *In this article we broaden the scope of earlier research that established a theoretical specificity for the Belgian 'White March' and 'White Movement', by comparing them to three similar movements and mobilizations that were also triggered by random violence. The comparisons suggest that we are dealing with a new type of social movement and mobilization, preliminarily referred to as 'new emotional movements'. The three other cases under study are the 'Snowdrop Campaign' in the UK, the 'Million Mom March' in the US and the 'Movement against Senseless Violence' in the Netherlands. Four important features seem to characterize all cases: the central role of emotions and victimization in the mobilization and development of the movement; broad elite support; organizational weakness; and extensive media support. We distinguish two sub-types of new emotional movements: (1) an instrumental variant with clear-cut aims and demands; and (2) an identity variant with displays of solidarity and compassion as the main constitutive elements. In both cases the initiators lack prior organizational experience and the absence of mobilizing organizations is compensated for by mass media support. In the instrumental sub-type neither the victims nor their relatives take the initiative but lend support and give approval to amateur entrepreneurs. The main mobilizing emotion appears to be fear about the possibility of personal suffering, and this emotion is reflected in the formulation of clear-cut demands for the future prevention of similar events. This instrumentality results in elite support being considerably broad, yet partisan. In contrast, the victims themselves take the initiative in the identity variant, causing the movement to remain more or less without specific demands but ensuring a broad support that is not bounded by party lines.*

KEY WORDS: social movements, emotions, identity, moral shock, victim movement, random violence

Introduction

In the autumn of 1996, more than 300,000 people took to the Brussels streets in a protest rally called the 'White March'. It was the largest mobilization in Belgian history. The demonstrators denounced a series of horrifying kidnappings, sexual abuses and murders of several young girls by one man, Marc Dutroux, and the alleged incompetence of the judiciary and the police in handling these crimes. Alongside the White March, a new 'White Movement' developed. The movement and its mobilizations were in many respects

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at odds with what one would expect based upon some classic social movement theory based on rational assumptions. The lack of clear-cut demands, the mobilizing force of emotional identification and especially the complete absence of organizational resources and organized networks were some of the features of the White Movement that appeared to deviate from prior theoretical assumptions (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998).

Kent Jennings (1999, p. 1) calls for more research on 'pain and loss events' and their political responses because 'responses to pain and loss events occupy a prominent place in the domains of public opinions and issue activism'. Jennings also claims that harm-related political activism 'has some *unique* properties' (ibid.). The central research question guiding this paper elaborates on this latter assertion. It can be broken down into three questions:

1. Do mobilizatory reactions and social movements that are triggered by victimization display specific *common* features?
2. If so, are these features incompatible with rational actor movement *theory* that has dominated the field of social movement studies since resource mobilization theory in the 1970s?
3. Are these unexpected characteristics mutually associated, i.e. do they crystallize into a particular movement *type* with a recurring pattern of features?

Belgian White Movement evidence suggests that 'pain and loss' mobilizations can indeed defy rational expectations. However, a single case does not suffice to claim a new movement type. Therefore, in this contribution, we go beyond the idiosyncrasies of the Belgian White Movement. We will explore whether three other events in three other countries triggered mobilizations and social movements that are similar to the Belgian White Movement. If this is the case, it may be warranted to define these phenomena as 'new emotional movements'. In other words, the basic aim of this contribution is to identify the distinguishing characteristics, if any, of the 'new emotional movements'. Consequently, we do not focus on *why* violent events bring about a movement but rather on *what* such a movement, provoked by random violence, *looks like*.

Why bother about the possible existence of these 'new emotional movements'? First, as they challenge some of the rational assumptions that some important social movement theory is grounded in, they could have significant theoretical relevance. If 'new emotional movements' exist, these theories may need to be amended. Second, as they may be growing in importance, 'new emotional movements' could inform us about larger societal transformations. Studying social movements can help us understand society better (Buechler, 2000). The current appearance of these movements may be interpreted within different important strands of the literature. The decline in trust in the traditional institutions of democracy and growing dissatisfaction with traditional intermediary organizations (Norris, 1999), for example, might turn people towards disinterested and, in a sense, apolitical forms of collective behavior. The fact that, in Belgium, the White Movement displayed a vigorous antipartisan stance and that its militants almost completely distrusted politics (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997), underscores the possible link between political dissatisfaction on the one hand, and the apparent rise of the 'new emotional movements' on the other. A second interpretation involves the observation that emotions play an increasing role in public life and the rise of 'new emotional movements' could be seen as nothing more that the movement variant of this general tendency. Indeed, scholars have pointed out what they call the privatization or emotionalization of politicians' discourse and performance in

political communication (Hart, 1992). The public expression of emotions has become an indication of credibility and statesmanship. In a similar vein, sociologists speak of the growing impact of victims on modern society. They are considered legitimate claim-makers because they appear not to be motivated by self-interests and they certainly did not ask for their own victimization (Furedi, 1998, 2000). The same tendency to ascribe legitimacy to victims' grievances is not only found in politics, but also in the law (Boutellier, 1993) as well as the media (Fritz & Altheide, 1987; Altheide *et al.*, 2001; Best, 1997, 1999). In short, confirming the existence of 'new emotional movements' would be in line with broader changes in society and would be helpful in monitoring and understanding these transformations.

Our approach is explorative, inductive and comparative. We do not develop a theory of 'new emotional movements' first and test it afterwards, nor do we work with a set of precise hypotheses. Starting with the Belgian case, we specify its particular characteristics and then check whether these are also found in the other cases. If these movements share the same unique characteristics, our claim that they represent a distinct movement type is supported, and these movements could be considered prototypes of a specific kind of social movement with typical mobilizations that is surfacing in the Western world. On the other hand, if these other movements do not share the features of the White Movement, we must conclude the Belgian case is an anomaly, a unique product of particular circumstances. Consequently, we do not endeavor to compare the 'new emotional movements' with other types of movements such as the typical 'old' social movements or the new social movements, even though this would be possible in principle. Rather, we contrast our cases with the rational actor perspective within social movement theory, taking as a point of departure the White Movement's irregular features. The claim that something distinct and new might be at stake, therefore, is based on an indirect and theoretical comparison.

On what basis did we select our cases? One can find many examples of recent mobilizatory reactions to 'pain and loss' events. The list is nearly endless. On 6 December 1989, a misogynist shot and killed 14 women and wounded another 13 people at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Canada. Silent marches were held throughout the country, and Heidi Rathjen, a friend of the victims and herself a survivor of the killings, started a petition that would instigate law reform. Together with university professor Wendy Cukier, she founded the Coalition for Gun Control, which would successfully pursue stricter gun laws (Rosenberg & Simon, 2000). At the beginning of 1999 in France, 'Stop La Violence' was founded by the friends and relatives of a young man who was killed when trying to break up a fight. In no time, a network of 40 local branches was established throughout France. Immediately, media and elite support was manifold. A first mobilization was organized in Paris, which attracted several thousands of youngsters, and national media and political elites participated in force (Cooper, 2000). On the night of 27 March 2002, at the town hall in Nanterre, France, Richard Durn killed eight municipal councilors and wounded another 20. A few days later, some 15,000 people gathered, among them several leading national politicians; the victims' relatives occupied a prominent place at the local stadium, all holding a white rose. On 26 April 2002, the Gutenberg Gymnasium (high school) in Erfurt, Germany, was the object of a deadly rampage. A 19-year-old student shot and killed 17 people. A few days later, 100,000 people, most of them carrying a light yellow rose and including the full complement of the nation's leading politicians, gathered to commemorate the victims.

Though a broad comparison of all these cases would be most interesting, for the time being we will, apart from the Belgian White Movement, examine only three movements: the Snowdrop Appeal in the UK, the Million Mom March in the US and the Movement against Senseless Violence in the Netherlands. These cases were selected by means of a twofold criterion maximizing comparability: all were triggered by brutal, non-war and non-political violent acts resulting in deaths of private persons, and all provoked mass mobilization. The triggering events were all typical acts of random violence: it is patternless – it can happen to anyone – and it is pointless – it happens for no reason at all (Best, 1999, p. 10). Some have referred to such events as 'focusing events' (Kingdon, 1984; Birkland, 1998), 'circumstantial reactors' (Cobb & Elder, 1972), or 'pain and loss events' (Jennings, 1999; Jennings & Andersen, 2003). As we will demonstrate, the mobilization following the violence was in all cases substantial and massive. It caused significant societal debate and entailed political consequences. Yet, the selection of the three cases is not just based on theoretical grounds. Since 'new emotional movements' appear to be ephemeral phenomena with an explosive onset and an equally abrupt end, and because they have attracted only modest scholarly attention, the available secondary evidence is limited. In contrast to some of the other movements mentioned above, the four movements covered appear to be the best documented cases at this point in time, even though we still lack a number of crucial facts about them. Drawing on scholarly literature, newspaper articles and non-scientific books written by involved participants, we will systematically compare our three cases with the Belgian White Movement about which we possess ample primary evidence (Walgrave, 1998; Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997, 1998; Walgrave & Stouthuysen, 1998).

The first part of this article deals with the Dutroux case and the White Movement in Belgium. It outlines its course and extracts six key features of the White Movement. In doing so, we sketch the rough lines of a preliminary type of 'new emotional movement'. Second, our three test cases' basic facts and figures are presented. Third, the six features are systematically scrutinized for each test case. Some features are rejected while others are retained and pass the test. Fourth, we try to make sense of the remaining features; we explain how they interact and why their simultaneous appearance could point to a distinct movement type. Finally, we put our results in perspective and comment on the possible consequences of our enquiry.

From White March to White Movement: Constructing a Preliminary Movement Type

In the late summer of 1996, a man called Marc Dutroux was arrested near Charleroi, an industrial town in the South of Belgium, for kidnapping, abusing and murdering several young girls. Two of them were recovered alive from a cellar in Dutroux's house. For four others all help came too late. Initially, popular anger was aimed directly at Dutroux, the ruthless pedophile. Soon, however, the judiciary system was criticized for being incompetent and grossly disregarding the victims. When successful examining magistrate Connerotte was taken off the Dutroux inquiry by the Belgian Supreme Court for being biased, all hell broke loose. An anarchic, pre-revolutionary atmosphere gripped Belgium with wildcat strikes, violent street protests and the occupation of crossroads all over the country; public transport came to a halt and courts of justice were vandalized. Within four days, about 500,000 people hit the streets (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997). These vehement displays of anger contrasted sharply with the White March that took place at the end of the

same week in the streets of Brussels on Sunday, 20 October 1996. Organized by the victims' parents, the White March became the biggest Belgian demonstration ever, with one in 30 Belgians actively participating. It was an exceptionally quiet and calm event, with no banners, pamphlets or slogans and with the victims' parents occupying center stage. After the White March, protest temporarily came to a halt. A few months later, however, the parents appealed to Belgian citizens to set up White Committees to continue the action and 'to keep the ideas of the White March alive'. By June 1997, there would be 124 White Committees nationwide. They managed to stage more than 100 small local white marches all over the country with approximately 100,000 participants (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997). Yet by then, the tide was already turning, and the White Movement was losing momentum. One year after the White March, some 8,000 people gathered in a remembrance and reminder march. The last large action occurred in February 1998 when 30,000 people took to the streets in what was called the Second White March. Since then, the movement has petered out, no longer having any remaining political meaning and receiving no media attention.

During its short two-year life, the movement displayed some atypical characteristics. Six features especially came to the fore: (1) the role of victimhood and emotions; (2) the lack of clear-cut demands; (3) organizational weakness; (4) support from mass media; (5) elite endorsement; and (6) internal heterogeneity of the movement activists (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998; Rihoux & Walgrave, 2000). Although these six features might seem diverse at first sight, they all address key questions of current social movement theory and go to the heart of the concept of social movements.

Victimhood and Emotions

Although currently a point of contention among contemporary movement students (Rucht, 1998; Staggenborg, 1999), classic resource mobilization theory emphasizes the availability of resources, the presence of external issue entrepreneurs and professionalization as crucial elements in movement formation, rather than (personal) grievances (McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1987). However, social movement scholars have more recently started to examine movements organized by personally involved victims: a Californian woman started Mothers Against Drunk Driving after the traffic death of her daughter and, nationwide, victims set up local chapters and took up leadership positions in the young movement (Weed, 1990; McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996); AIDS patients organize to affect medical research and treatment of the disease (Jennings, 1999); breast cancer activists stand up for their rights (Jennings, 1999), as do the disabled and chronically ill (Duyvendak & Nederland, 2003). The Belgian White Movement exhibits the same victim-initiated mobilization. The little girls' victimhood and subsequent identification process were crucial for setting up the White March and developing the movement. The victims' parents themselves organized the march and launched the movement; no issue entrepreneurs intervened. Throughout the long search for their children, the parents had become public figures, and their private grief pervaded the public sphere (Walgrave & Stouthuysen, 1998). The loss of their children and the authenticity of their suffering endowed them with a profound legitimacy and a moral authority that gave them the right to speak out. Their appeal was met with the greatest respect by public, media and politicians. In a certain respect the murdered children were 'ideal victims' (Christie, 1986). Tarrow (1998, p. 36) emphasized the mobilization potential of victim identification

before: 'It may be surprising to think of death as a source of collective action. But it is the reaction of the living – especially to violent death – that is the source of protest, rather than death itself. Death has the power to trigger violent emotions and brings people together with little in common but their grief and their solidarity'.

This is exactly what happened. Not only did the victims' parents take the initiative and become the undisputed leaders of the movement, their victimhood appealed to supporters and boosted participation. Although probably not the only kind of emotions involved – for example anger and revenge might also be at stake – identification with the victims led to two main emotions: compassion and fear. Jennings (1999) and Jennings & Andersen (2003) identify the same activism-provoking emotions in response to pain and loss events. Survey evidence of demonstrators and White Committee members shows that people identified strongly with the victims and their relatives. First, feelings of compassion and solidarity, and the desire to pay a tribute to the victims, were most mentioned by demonstrators and militants as primary reasons for engaging in the White Movement (37 per cent). The victims were considered as martyrs, as modern saints, and were referred to as close relatives. In all, 44 per cent of activists displayed photographs of the children in their house or car (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998). And 63 per cent of press reports on the White Marches described them as an expression of sympathy and solidarity with the victims (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997). Furthermore, people were afraid for their own children. Many participants wanted the marches to prevent similar events from ever happening again; the Dutroux events should not have been in vain. People took to the streets for their *own* children who gave sense and meaning to their grief: the second largest group considered fighting against pedophilia the most important goal of the movement (29 per cent). Among White Committee activists, 35 per cent answered an open question about their commitment with a reference to 'the protection of our own children' (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997). Factor analyses drawing on the demonstrators' recorded priorities and on answers to an open question on why they participated, showed that compassion/solidarity and fear, formed two distinct underlying dimensions in the motivation structure of the activists, demonstrators as well as militants of the White Committees.

Compassion and fear, both based on identification with the victims, were complementary. Yet we would expect them to have pushed the movement in opposite directions. If compassion had prevailed, the movement would have turned into an *identity* movement, a self-support group, without external goals or instrumental strategies (Duyvendak & Giugni, 1995). Movement gatherings would be primarily Durkheimian rituals, with people meeting, sharing emotions and strengthening group ties. It was fear, however, that gave the movement its external drive. This fear eventually turned it into an *instrumental* movement with political and societal goals, and with the ambition of bringing about structural changes to prevent such events from ever happening again. It could be said that the *emotion* of fear gave the protest a *rational* and goal-oriented character, thus turning the White March into a protest rally rather than merely a mourning cortege. Note that we do not consider identity vs. instrumental movements to be a mutually exclusive dichotomy. They are only ideal types. All identity movements have instrumental components in them, and vice versa: also for instrumental movements identity formation is necessary (Morris, 1995; Whittier & Taylor, 1999). But identity vs. instrumentality remains a useful distinction, a crucial dimension for discriminating between different kinds of movements.

The White Movement's story demonstrates that rationality and emotions are not contradictory. Emotions have long been discarded by social movement scholars, but recently

we have witnessed a catch-up operation (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001). Both rationality and emotions can be found in all mobilizations (Jasper, 1997; Goodwin *et al.*, 2001; Hooghe & Deneckere, 2002) and as Jasper (1997, p. 109) puts it: 'most emotions are part of rational action, not opposed to it'. Hence we do *not* claim that 'new emotional movements' are novel and unique is this respect or that they are more emotional than other movements. What might be innovating is the central role played by the victims within 'new emotional movements', the strong identification process this victimhood triggers, and the fact that intimate and private feelings grounded in personal life (children and parenthood) are turned into politically significant mobilizations (Walgrave & Stouthuysen, 1998). Of course, any movement would draw on victimization, if available, to boost mobilization. As victims foster strong emotional identification, victimization offers great mobilization opportunities for any movement. But the difference is that the White Movement is essentially *built* on emotions subsequent to random violence. It does not concern existing movements that exploit victims to revitalize existing grievances, to re-engage in a continuing struggle and to initiate another mobilization cycle in an ongoing political battle (Cobb & Elder, 1972; Hooghe & Deneckere, 2002). In the White Movement, and consequently possibly also in 'new emotional movements', the suffering itself forms the root of the movement and subsequent mobilizations. Next to expressing compassion and indignation their primary goal – if there is one – is to prevent such victimizing acts in future.

No Clear-Cut Demands

An expression of unambiguous goals is commonly considered as a prerequisite for successful mobilization and movement formation (Gamson, 1975, 1990; Snow *et al.*, 1986). However, during the White March not one slogan, pamphlet or banner disturbed the white tranquility. Normally, social movements submit claims and formulate specific demands, but the white protesters did not. On the contrary, it was the Prime Minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, who formalized the movement's unofficial aims by promising specific policy measures after receiving the parents in his official residence on the day the White March was held. Rucht (1998, p. 46) found similar non-goal oriented examples in the 1950s in Germany, but these cases were rare: 'Only on few occasions, do we find other forms of mass protest, such as a march carrying torches (*Fackelzug*) or a silent march (*Schweigemarsch*) with no speeches or chanted slogans'.

The absence of clear-cut demands was the explicit wish of the victims' parents, who had called for a 'white' and colorless demonstration. In the newspapers, their appeal was amplified and the parents were granted a forum to voice their no-demands stance and to repeat their 'only for our children' mantra (Walgrave & Manssens, 2000). The main motivation of most marchers – showing compassion – corresponded with the absence of public movement aims. Although a considerable number of participants expressed political goals when asked in our survey (reform of the judiciary or even reform of the entire Belgian political system), they respected the parents' wish not to voice any demands at the White March (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998, p. 318). The absence of established movement organizations could account for the 'claimlessness' of the movement: existing organizations did not impose their goals and claims onto the young movement.

Initially its no-claims stance benefited the movement. Generally speaking, social movements often insist that their claims are so urgent that they transcend politics. In the case of the White Movement, however, it was almost impossible to discern any claim at

all. Driven by emotions people simply did not need goals to be motivated and the movement itself was the message. Later on, the movement got into trouble precisely because it made no clear claims and anyone could attribute his personal claims to the movement (Walgrave, 2000).

Organizational Weakness

In the 1980s, American social movement scholars almost reached a consensus that some form of organization is a prerequisite for (mass) mobilization: rational actors engage in instrumental action through formal organizations to secure resources and foster mobilization (Buechler, 1995, p. 441; McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1987). Yet again, the White Movement defeated these theoretical expectations. Although established, well-structured and well-developed organizations focusing on pedophilia, child kidnapping and child abuse existed in Belgium at that time, these organizations did *not* seize the opportunity to set up a mobilization of their own to occupy their field of action and to prevent new movements from developing (Rihoux & Walgrave, 1998). The same applies to the classic movement organizations, labor unions and political parties, which have always dominated the Belgian streets (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 1999, 2001). These actors did not turn on their mighty mobilization machinery or urge members to participate. To organize the White March, the parents did not even set up a temporary association.

This remarkable and complete absence of organizational support was due to the parents who refused to let existing organizations take over their issue. They considered the White Movement as a personal movement, based on their own grief for the loss of their children. After a while, when existing child-protection organizations tried to jump on the attention bandwagon and dared to challenge the parents' issue ownership, the parents fought a bitter battle against them.

Co-optable networks of people with common experiences and/or people most integrated in the social tissue can be considered as a first mobilization alternative to formal organizations (Freeman, 1983; Freeman & Johnson, 1999). However, even this soft organization substitute was lacking in the White Movement case. Demonstrators were not more integrated in society than the average Belgian citizen, they were even less active in associations and we registered a smaller amount of union and party membership (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998). McAdam's (1988) micromobilization contexts could be regarded as a second alternative to formal organizations: recruitment through informal networks in small and scattered cultural and political associations. But our survey data also challenges this substitute: over 80 per cent of demonstrators stated that their most important recruitment channel was the media; ten per cent pointed to family, friends or colleagues as primary recruiters, an even less formal level of recruitment than micromobilization contexts (McCarthy, 1996). Only a very small number of demonstrators were recruited through typical channels: barely ten per cent of demonstrators were mobilized in an organizational manner, and only five per cent walked along with co-members of an organization. On the other hand, 60 per cent of the people came with their family and 19 per cent with friends or colleagues (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998). Comparable evidence for other Belgian demonstrations in the same period reported elsewhere (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998; Walgrave & Manssens, 2000; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001) shows that these figures lay way below the normal situation with organizations playing a much more central role.

Perhaps common recruitment theories fell short because they overemphasize cognitive and neglect moral and emotional recruitment dynamics (Jasper, 1997, 1999; Goodwin *et al.*, 2001). Absence of organizations might be compensated by intense emotions. Jasper & Poulsen (1995) and Jasper (1997, 1999) introduced the notion of 'moral shock'. These shocks result from information or events – usually public events, unexpected and highly publicized – that raise such a sense of outrage that people become inclined towards political action irrespective of whether they are part of a mobilizable network or not. They engage in an *active* search for protest possibilities and are not just inertly waiting for an action opportunity. In other words, and drawing on Klandermans' well-known distinction, an extreme degree of consensus mobilization might spill over to quasi spontaneous action mobilization (Walgrave & Manssens, 2000). In producing this spillover and inflicting moral shock, mass media play a crucial role.

Mass Media Support

Interaction between media and social movements has attracted considerable scholarly attention (Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gamson, 1995; Gitlin, 1980; Molotch, 1979; Van Zoonen, 1992). The actual mobilization potential of the media, however, is all but central to these accounts. Except for some cases (Juhem, 1998), the mass media's mobilizing capacities are not highly regarded (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans & Goslinga, 1996; McQuail, 1993, p. 381). Klandermans (1997), for example, affirms that the mass media are able to create a favorable mobilization climate (consensus mobilization), but fail in persuasive communication (action mobilization). For social movements, the literature contends, the media are almost never a genuine ally. However, for the White Movement the mass media were undisputedly a decisive partner. Jennings (1999) asserts that mass media play a crucial role in molding the political response to 'pain and loss' events, first, because they make people strongly, yet indirectly, experience the events. Indeed, the media 'made' the White March by giving it their unqualified support and playing the role normally played by pre-existing organizations and recruitment networks. As this claim has been elaborated at length before (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998; Walgrave & Manssens, 2000), we shall only summarize the argument here.

The Belgian press not only amplified the issue and provided consensus mobilization; it even supplied action mobilization by literally urging people to participate and encouraging them to attend the White March. News coverage of the Dutroux case was massive and ubiquitous (one-third of all news during more than three months); all media drew on the same master frame, stressing estrangement between 'the people' and 'the system', while generalizing feelings of anger and definitely choosing the side of the parents. The media implicitly (by stressing the historic character of the protest in advance, and by lowering all possible participation barriers) and explicitly incited the public to take part in the protest gatherings (by adding posters announcing the march and organizing supporting protest events). Headlines like 'See you in Brussels on Sunday' (*Het Nieuwsblad*, 19 October 1996) and 'Make Brussels a white city on Sunday' (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, 16 October 1996) speak for themselves.

Although causality between media coverage and mobilization cannot be proven (McPhail & McCarthy, 2002, p. 11), all this suggests that the White Movement has a different relationship with the media. While other movements are challenged by the media

and must struggle to get their message across, the White Movement surfed the media waves and (temporarily) received full media backing.

Elite Endorsement

The White Movement was not approached negatively by the political establishment, on the contrary. Despite the movement embodying popular political dissatisfaction and vehemently criticizing the political authorities, it was widely supported. Popular anger was so great and widespread that politicians decided to back the movement to avoid 'revolutionary polarization' (Tarrow, 1998, p. 149). Also, its claimlessness and the absence of any political color permitting no political actor to capitalize on the white anger, made it easier for the political elites to support the White Movement. Even the nation's King Albert II urged the people to participate in the White March. All parties without exception said they endorsed the march and its (non-) aims. Minister of Internal Affairs Johan Vande Lanotte recognized the victim's parents as the official organizers of the White March and received them several times to discuss the march's organization. Minister of Justice Stefaan Declerck visited the parents at their homes and promised to do all he could to prevent such tragedies in the future. On the day of the White March, Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene personally welcomed the parents in his office and proposed several policy measures, such as sweeping depoliticization of the Belgian judiciary. He even admitted that the Belgian government had neglected important societal problems (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1997). Thus, initially, the White Movement was a consensus movement and not a conflict movement. During the first few months, no opposing views, no offensive or even dissenting remarks were uttered by any politician regarding the White Movement.

Having elite allies can hardly be considered as an exceptional feature of a social movement. In fact, one of the basic tenets of the classic political opportunity structure approach of social movements is precisely that social movements require elite allies to survive and to mobilize (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi *et al.*, 1995; Tarrow, 1992). Yet the breadth of elite support and the absence of any counter pressure in the case of the White Movement is special. It is as if the entire elite was the movement's ally.

Heterogeneous Activists

Typically, gender, age and education are the most important demographic predictors of protest participation (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001; Norris, 2002; Crozat, 1998; Dalton, 1996). Higher educated, male and young to middle-aged are most prone to participate in protest. Although the discriminating force of these classic variables might be withering, protest participation is still a matter of specific groups taking to the streets. Because protest is staged by organizations defending specific group interests there are hardly any well-documented examples of protest events or movements that managed to gather a more or less representative cross-section of the population. Once again, the White Movement confronts the classic notions of mobilization and participation. White Movement participants formed a striking cross-section of the Belgian population. Usually, demonstrations in Belgium are a male affair (Smits, 1984). Appealing to women and men, both groups were equally represented in the second White March. In terms of age too the participants were remarkably close to the population's age pyramid with the 30–49 and the 50–59 categories slightly overrepresented and the +60 group underrepresented (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998).

Also concerning educational levels the second White March was fairly representative, combining an unusually large number of people who only finished lower secondary school, but still less than in the population at large, and with merely a small overrepresentation of the hyper-educated so often dominant among (new) social movement supporters. Multivariate analyses established that the second White March, in comparison to other major Belgian demonstrations, was indeed by far the most heterogeneous (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001; Norris *et al.*, 2003; Decoster *et al.*, 2002). Although militantism in a social movement is even more socially biased than demonstration activism (Verba *et al*., 1993, p. 306), the same striking heterogeneity applied to the movement's militants, the White Committee members (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998).

Three Test Cases: The Preliminary Movement Type to the Test

We singled out six characteristics that typify the peculiarity of the Belgian White Movement. To test whether these characteristics are more than just idiosyncratic anomalies caused by an atypical Belgian context we will check, in this section, whether they can be observed also in three other cases of mobilization after random violence. After briefly portraying our three test cases we will carefully verify point by point whether the six features hold for the Snowdrop Appeal in the UK, the Million Mom March in the US and the Movement against Senseless Violence in the Netherlands. Although we selected cases taking into account maximum availability of secondary evidence, the presented evidence remains incomplete. In particular the information concerning the Snowdrop Appeal is limited.

Three Cases of Mobilization after Random Violence

In the early morning of 13 March 1996, Thomas Hamilton strode into the gymnasium of Dunblane Primary School in Scotland, armed with several legally acquired semi-automatic weapons. Within just three minutes, he shot and killed 16 five- and six-year-old infants as well as their teacher, and wounded another ten toddlers and three teachers. After having released 105 rounds of fire, he turned the gun on himself, thus ending the massacre with a total body count of 18. In the immediate aftermath of this incident, the Snowdrop Appeal was founded to advocate a total ban on handguns. Initially, it was a petition set up by Anne Pearston, a friend of one of the families, and she was soon joined by several others. The Snowdrop Campaign ultimately gathered 705,000 signatures. In less than two years' time, its demands were converted into a law which ultimately came into force in January 1998 (Scraton, 1999; Thomson *et al.*, 1998).

On 20 April 1999, at lunchtime, two teenagers entered their Denver high school, armed with several semi-automatic shotguns and pistols along with numerous explosive devices. In their walk through Columbine High School, they killed 13 students and one teacher, and injured another 23 people, before ultimately taking their own lives. This event, which took place in Littleton, an affluent suburb of Denver (Colorado, USA), was the seventh and most lethal school shooting in 18 months. In sum, these had resulted in 31 deaths and 63 injuries. Exactly one month after the Columbine incident, on 20 May, another teenager shot six people at his Georgia high school. And on 10 August, a white racist opened fire in a Jewish day-care center at Granada Hills, Los Angeles, injuring three toddlers and two adults. Shocked by TV reports of these, Donna-Dees Thomases, housewife and mother of two

infants, decided to dedicate herself to reforming the US' gun laws, and planned to organize a demonstration. She set up a website and named her initiative the Million Mom March. Soon, about 500 mothers joined her. Eventually, on 14 May 2000, Mother's Day, several hundred thousands engaged in the Million Mom March in Washington and in 73 other cities and towns around the country (Boyle, 2000; Goss, 2002).

13 September 1997 in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands: Meindert Tjoelker and his girlfriend were walking home after a night out when they noticed four troublemakers wanting to throw a bicycle in the river. Tjoelker shouted 'Is that really necessary?' after which the four crossed the footbridge and attacked him. He got kicked on the head and died a few hours later in hospital. Within a few days a solidarity movement saw the light: people laid flowers, candles were lit and children's drawings were put at the location where Tjoelker was killed. A national minute's silence was observed, and a remembrance march was attended by several thousand sympathizers. One year earlier, on 17 August 1996, Joes Kloppenburg was killed in a very similar incident when he tried to intervene in a fight between four hoodlums and an innocent bystander. A few days later, a Platform Against Violence was founded and held a remembrance march. Both Tjoelker and Kloppenburg became the epitome of the Movement against Senseless Violence with several local chapters and two national organizations (Boutellier, 2000; Vasterman, 1998). The movement was further fuelled by similar events in the next few years, each time boosting mobilization. On 10 January 1999, two teenage girls, Marianne Roza and Froukje Schuitmaker, were killed when leaving a discotheque in Gorinchem by three men who were shooting haphazardly at the door. A week later a remembrance vigil attended by some 30,000 sympathizers holding torches and white roses was broadcast live on national television. And in Vlaardingen, some 20,000 people took to the streets one week after the death of Daniël van Cotthem, who was murdered for no apparent reason on 7 January 2000, when he was walking his girlfriend to the station (Boutellier, 2000; Vasterman, 2000). Altogether, between 1997 and 2000, 22 different marches were held with almost 100,000 participants (Boutellier, 2000).

Victimhood and Emotions

The Snowdrop Appeal was not set up by (relatives of) the victims themselves but by a friend of one of their families, Anne Pearston. Initially intended to be anonymous and, out of respect, deliberately not associated with the victims and their relatives, a connection with the Dunblane victims was soon made. Several Dunblane families signed the petition, and Mick North, the father of the murdered Sophie, appeared at the Appeal's launch and engaged fully in the lobbying campaign: 'Subsequent to the launch and its support by a number of the families of the victims, the Snowdrop Appeal, in the eyes of the public and the media, became organically linked with the tragedy of Dunblane' (Thomson *et al.*, 1998, p. 330). North himself (2000) speaks of Dunblane as being a 'public private tragedy', meaning that the private grief of the parents had grown into a public issue. The Dunblane children's parents had become public figures, with a privileged status in public debate. In a review of North's book, Hume & Cowley assert that, in the Dunblane days, people were celebrated not for their achievements but for their suffering:

> Nowadays, it seems that the loss of a loved one can automatically gain you the kind of moral authority that politicians crave . . . With the endorsement of victim's relatives,

> campaigns . . . for a ban on handguns, can assume the force of a moral imperative. The message is that to challenge views espoused by these relatives is to disrespect the memory of their loved ones, almost to dance on their graves (Hume & Cowley, 1998).

Although the Dunblane victims played an important role in the Snowdrop Appeal, their role was different from the victims' role in the White Movement. In Dunblane they did not assume the lead; it was not their personal enterprise. However, their sympathy and public support boosted the movement and made its success. Although we lack the necessary survey evidence to confirm it, similar identification mechanisms were probably responsible for the movement's broad support, leading to the typical mix of compassion and fear. British sociologist Frank Furedi (1997, 1998, 2000) argued that Dunblane and the subsequent campaign was an example of what he calls a 'culture of fear'. The tragic Dunblane deaths were quickly transformed into a cause and the surviving relatives thereby expressed the hope that their loved ones had not died in vain (Furedi, 1998). The fact that the movement ultimately focused on the instrumental claim of gun control suggests that fear might indeed have been the dominant emotional response.

Donna Dees-Thomases, founder of the Million Mom March, declared: 'When I started it, I didn't know the difference between the Brady Bill and the Brady Bunch . . . It's just a matter of instinct. Mothers that want to protect their children. It's very primitive' (ESN, 2000). Her identification with the victims' parents, and the idea that similar events could befall her own children, made her set up the Million Mom March. Although, like the Snowdrop Appeal, no Columbine victims were initially involved in Dees-Thomases' initiative, they soon supported it publicly. From the beginning, 11 victims or surviving relatives of gun violence were active in the movement on a national level; dozens of testimonies appeared on the website, and at the march, 'bereaved mothers talked about the loss of their children' (Goss, 2001b, p. 11). The link with surviving relatives and their personal grief rendered legitimacy to Dees-Thomases' initiative. Goss (2001b), who carried out a thorough study of the Million Mom March based on survey research among participants, substantiated that identification mechanism played a major role and that recruitment for the Million Mom March and sustained follow-up activism were primarily based on what she calls the 'maternalist frame' of concern for children's safety: 'The rash of mass shootings in "safe places" made everybody a potential victim. And the maternalist rhetoric, sounding universal themes of child protection, made every mother (or parent) a potential part of the solution, at least for a day' (Goss, 2001a, p. 30). More precisely, more than half of all participants in the Million Mom March marched along primarily out of concern for the safety of (their own) children. Also Brooks *et al.* (2000) describe the nation's reaction to the Columbine killings as 'a mixture of empathy for the community, grief for the victims, and a desperate fear for the safety of their children'. As in Dunblane, victims played an important role. Identification mechanisms did their part and the movement was built on emotions of compassion and fear. Just as in Dunblane the movement went for similar instrumental goals, namely stricter gun laws, suggesting that fear was the dominant feeling.

Victims played a key role in setting up the Movement against Senseless Violence in The Netherlands. Boutellier (2000) counted 13 active movement branches, seven of which were co-founded by victims or friends/relatives of victims. Jan Kloppenburg, father of Joes, for example, set up the *Stichting Kappen Nou!* while de *Stichting Groningen Veilig* was founded by Jaap Ruijter de Wildt, the father of the murdered girl Anne. *Gorcum Tegen Geweld* was set up by Marijn Krol, the brother of a girl who stood next to Froukje

Schuitmaker and Marianne Roza when they were killed at the discotheque. The victims and their relatives were treated with great respect by the population and by the national media. In a striking articulation of Furedi's (2000) notion of the 'victim expert', Froukje Schuitmakers' brother, who was also engaged in the movement, stated: 'In the end, I have to tell my story and journalists will listen. After all, who dares to argue with a victim' (Luyendijk, 2000). Most of the 20 marches staged by the movement were organized by the victims' family or friends or by people directly affected by the violence. In *all* cases, the family was consulted (Boutellier, 2000). Victimhood clearly rendered legitimacy to the movement. Identification of the movement with the suffering of the surviving relatives was an enormous asset. Beunders (2002) characterized Meindert Tjoelker as the 'ideal' victim, implicitly conveying the message that he was easy to identify with: his tragedy could have happened to anyone. One of the two most common attributes ascribed to the silent marches by the media was 'compassion'. Also, 'expressing one's grief', 'mourning', 'contemplation' and other emotional references were frequently mentioned by the Dutch media (Boutellier, 2000). In the Dutch case, compassion and solidarity seem to have been the dominant emotions in the development of the movement.

To conclude, in all four cases victims played a crucial role. The Dutch case is most similar to the original Belgian case with the victims personally taking the initiative and leading the movement. The British and American cases look alike too, with victims supporting and endorsing the movement wholeheartedly and legitimizing its claims, yet not assuming personal leadership. As far as we can observe on the basis of incomplete evidence, in all cases identification with the victims was paramount for getting the message across and stirring people into action. Two emotions were also involved throughout: fear and compassion. In the well-documented American case fear seems to have prevailed, while in the original Belgian case compassion appears to have been most central.

No Clear-cut Demands

Although set up 'almost exclusively as a moral appeal' (Thomson *et al.*, 1998, p. 333) just like the White March, the Snowdrop Appeal soon directed its efforts at obtaining a single very clear-cut demand: a total ban on handguns. The fact that the movement completely disappeared when this ban eventually became law underpins its instrumentality. Thomson *et al*. (1998, p. 341) underscore the instrumentality argument when they contend: 'Pearston's ability to combine highly rational arguments with emotional appeals moved many potential supporters. The tragedy itself was never used as a tool to gain an emotional reaction; it served merely to draw the empathy of supporters'.

The American case supports the fact that 'new emotional movements' have no clear claims either. The Million Mom March was formally set up as a very precise appeal for stricter gun laws by demanding mandatory trigger locks on all handguns and by calling for a national system of handgun registration and licensing. This corresponds with the dominant fear frame that Goss found among the participants. People took to the streets primarily to prevent such things from ever happening again and, hence, for their own children's safety.

Again, the Dutch Movement Against Senseless Violence is most similar to the Belgian case. The silent marches in the Netherlands were far less instrumentally oriented (Duits, 2002). Silence was the means of expression, only supplemented with the light of burning torches and photographs of the victims. As in Belgium, Dutch demonstrators did not make any political claims or demands. Boutellier (2000) examined all relevant press accounts of the

silent marches between July 1997 and July 2000 and very found few political claims attributed to the demonstrators. The most claim-like expressions the media used to describe the marches were 'raising consciousness', 'appealing to values', 'respect' and 'tolerance'. A number of timid demands were made much later during the national march and submitted to the Minister of Justice. Altogether, the media considered these marches as being apolitical gatherings.

For the second time, our cases seem to be divided. On the one hand, the more instrumentally oriented movements in the US and the UK uttered precise external claims; on the other hand, the Dutch movement resembled the more internally oriented movement in Belgium. Either way, it is obvious that a lack of clear-cut demands is not a distinctive feature of these movements in general.

Organizational Weakness

'A key feature of the (Snowdrop) Appeal in its early stages was its apolitical nature. None of the group had been political in the past and their knowledge of the British political system and political lobbying was minimal. This was a genuine local community group that grew beyond the intentions of its founders' (Thomson *et al.*, 1998, p. 329). The initial idea to set up the Snowdrop Appeal arose in discussions between Anne Pearston and a member of her yoga class. Although it did make use of the resources of some existing organizations not linked with the issue at stake (like the Scottish Schools Board) to copy and distribute the petition, the Snowdrop Appeal itself lacked any formal organization. Pearston became head of the campaign, only because of her existing well-known media profile. Later, the movement received official backing from the Labour party and organizational support broadened. When its goals were reached and tough gun legislation was passed in Westminster, the movement disbanded.

The Million Mom March took off quite similarly. It was conceived by a mother of two infants who had no organizational experience whatsoever, and who started simply by setting up a website. In no time some 500 women heard about it through newspaper and television stories, not through organizational networks, and they set up local branches throughout the country. Every two to four weeks local groups met in a small gathering. According to Goss' surveys (2001b, p. 11) these mothers without any organizational experience 'focused primarily on gaining organizational endorsements for the march, securing sponsorship for buses, distributing fliers and posters about the march, and generating local television and newspaper stories'. Well-known and skilled gun control advocate groups like the Brady Campaign already existed, but they did not interfere with the initiative. Although the participants were more civically active than the average American, which contrasts with the less active Belgian participant, 72 per cent of them 'had never done anything at any point in the past in the field of gun control activity or gun violence' (Goss, 2001b). Participants were new to the field and were not recruited through traditional organizational recruitment channels:

> ... one would expect that their participation in the gun control march came about as a result of organizational involvements and personal recruitment. Surprisingly, the data does not support that conclusion. Fewer than 20 per cent of marchers had heard about the march through an organization, such as a church, gun-control lobby, school or voluntary association. Although all the major liberal-leaning women's groups endorsed the march, they did not appear to be the major mobilizers: only 3

> per cent of the marchers had heard about the march through a membership association (Goss, 2002, p. 58).

Immediately after the first successful march, the organizers announced that they would evolve from a march to a movement and established two formal social movement organizations: one for education providing services to victims, the identity part of the movement, another a political lobbying group, the instrumental part. The formalization of the movement had little success and the second Million Mom March was a bitter disappointment with a turnout of barely 200 protesters. This encouraged the Million Mom March to merge with the Brady Campaign in the new Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence on 1 October 2001.

Nearly all local branches of the Movement against Senseless Violence were set up by the families or friends of the victims, or by closely involved people who had the families' consent. These spontaneous local groups organized silent marches wholly independently from other organizations. After a while they all associated within the *Landelijk Overleg Veiligheid en Respect,* a national umbrella organization founded under the impetus of Joes Kloppenburg's father. It never really got off the ground: all local foundations had different views and valued their autonomy (Luyendijk, 2000). None of the local associations remained active for a longer time, except for one better-structured organization, the *Stichting tegen Zinloos Geweld*, which, exceptionally, had not been founded by victims or their friends. Its website (www.zinloosgeweld.nl) remains active and its ladybug-symbol (a sort of anti-violence merchandize-mascot) was very soon known by half of the Dutch population (Luyendijk, 2000).

In all four cases the movement's organizational level was extremely low but in all of them an identifiable social actor developed a certain identity, took (modest) steps to organize itself internally, and was perceived to be an autonomous and legitimate social actor. This underscores the claim that 'new emotional movements' are more than just a mechanism of mobilization and are indeed movements and real autonomous social actors.

What other features did our four cases have in common? First, focusing events like extreme violence are considered to offer opportunities for *existing* movements and movement entrepreneurs to stage mass demonstrations and to revitalize an existing movement's issues. Yet, in all four cases under study, this is not what happened. Although anti-violence or anti-gun movement organizations existed in all countries, *new* organizations were established only after the dramatic events had occurred, just as Jasper (1997) states when he explores the consequences of moral panics. Second, these new organizations were highly informal and solely meant to endorse or to sustain the mobilization. Third, all organizations were set up by everyday citizens who lacked organizational experience and no existing organizations appeared to have been in any way supportive of their development or actions. Fourth, we lack participant level evidence on the organizational background of the British and Dutch cases, but the predominant non-organizational recruitment channels of at least the Million Mom March supporters looked similar to those of the Belgian White March.

Support from Mass Media

Considering the Snowdrop Appeal, the 'Dunblane Massacre' was initially framed as a juxtaposition of 'evil', 'demon' and 'hell' versus 'angels' and 'heaven' (Furedi, 1998; Jorgenson-Earp & Lanzilotti, 1998; Scraton, 1999; Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000). News

coverage of the event was loaded with emotionally appealing terms and expressions. 'The involvement of so many young children, from one school and from one small, clearly defined neighborhood, was an important influence leading to a more compassionate press response than is usual for an event of such magnitude' (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000, p. 477). For many journalists, the event asked for 'different rules of engagement', which resulted in exceptional levels of constraint towards the bereaved, the survivors and the community. Kate Adie, one of the BBC's most respected news reporters, was criticized for being too 'forensic', too objective, rational and scientific in her reports on the events in Dunblane, and for talking too little about the 'emotional kind of mawkish effusion that the media managers at BBC News wanted around that story' (Hume & Cowley, 1998). Hume & Cowley (1998) referred to the Dunblane reporting as an example of 'the journalism of attachment'. Soon after displaying compassion with the victims, the media's focus would shift towards the issue of gun control and the Snowdrop Appeal. 'The media adoption of the Appeal, and the subsequent campaign by the *Sunday Mail*, *Sun* and *Sunday Times* amongst other newspapers, ensured that Snowdrop grew from its original intentions' (Thomson *et al.*, 1998, p. 330). The media clearly sided with the gun control advocates and some media effectively appealed to the people to take action. When the conclusion of the Conservative-dominated House of Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs report on the possession of handguns, that implied that a ban on handguns was not necessary, was made public in August 1996, the tabloid *The Sun* printed the telephone numbers of the Conservative members of the Committee, suggesting readers call them to protest. In the 50-minute *Panorama* program on BBC television, the parents of several victims, who criticized the Select Committee, were interviewed (Thomson *et al.*, 1998). *The Sunday Mail* even launched its own petition for a total ban on handguns which was signed by some 450,000 people. Thomson *et al*. (1998, p. 343) conclude: 'the emotion generated by the horror of the Dunblane Massacre and the simplicity of the Snowdrop Campaign led the media to throw their support behind the campaigners and the Dunblane parents'.

The Columbine High School shooting leading to the Million Mom March was the third most closely followed news story in the US in the 1990s, ensuring that the public's attention was drawn (Goss, 2001a). Goss' media-analysis points out that the Columbine shootings spectacularly boosted the media's attention regarding gun control issues and that coverage remained on a higher level for more than a year after the facts. Amplification of the issue was assured by the media while at the very same time the real firearms crime and gun murder rates had dropped to reach a low not seen since the 1960s. In the Columbine period salience of the gun control issue rose substantially and, although school-associated violent deaths also decreased, the portion of Americans who believed that shootings in their neighborhood school were likely, rose from 49 to 70 per cent (Brooks *et al.*, 2000). Goss convincingly shows that the school shootings stimulated the US media to reframe the gun control issue as a child protection issue. Although we do not have systematic empirical evidence on action mobilization, several examples from different media suggest active support for the Million Mom March. *The Washington Post*, among others, systematically started to inform its readers on the Million Mom March and its goals months before it actually took place. Goss' survey among demonstrators at the Million Mom March highlights the importance of the media in mobilizing for the event. Organizational recruitment was very weak but 'by contrast well over half (56 per cent) had heard about the march only through newspapers or television' (Goss, 2002, p. 58). This figure is strikingly

similar to that found in our Belgian case and confirms the media's role in action mobilization.

Analyzing the five most important newspapers in the Netherlands, Vasterman showed that the murders triggering the collective action, and the Movement against Senseless Violence itself, received ample media attention. All newspapers devoted about 19 per cent of their total coverage to the events and their consequences (Vasterman, 2001). The first event, the murder of Meindert Tjoelker, and its consequences managed to dominate media coverage for months. Media attention increased with every new event and, gradually, all events were predominantly framed as senseless violence. The media, according to Vasterman (2001), created a consensus that senseless violence was an increasing problem in Dutch society. They also engaged in action mobilization. Vasterman (2000, 2001) and Halberstadt (1999), focusing on the Gorinchem case, substantiated that the media effectively participated in mobilizing for the silent march commemorating Marianne Roza and Froukje Schuitmaker. From Monday until Saturday on the week between the killings and the silent march 111 articles were found in the five main newspapers. As in Belgium, the coverage was emotionally appealing and stressed the general nature of the outrage and indignation. The day before the Gorinchem silent march, the newspapers anticipated a huge turnout with titles shouting 'Massive remembrance Gorinchem drama' or 'Gorinchem awaits invasion for silent march' thereby lowering barriers for mobilization. Not only was the turnout large but the march was already characterized as a national event beforehand:

> Preparations for the march are covered substantially, for example on television. The Council of Churches has appealed to church councils to toll the bells, Radio 3 will observe one minute's silence, streetcars, buses and subways in Rotterdam and Amsterdam will come to a halt. The Cabinet will be represented by Minister Korthals (Justice) and his colleague Van Boxtel (Urban Policy), who lives in Gorinchem. This announcement emphasizes the national importance of the commemorative rally (Luyendijk, 2000).

Halberstadt (1999) interviewed Arno Reekers, editor in chief of *De Telegraaf*, who describes Gorinchem as a media hype: 'The media have mobilized public opinion. It was meaningless and tragic for the victims, incomprehensible and horrible. It received media coverage and caught the public's attention, thus generating media attention . . . As it was on the front page, people think it is important and walk in a White March (sic)'.

Reviewing our four cases, it seems that the media are an important ally. Media attention was massive; it was extremely sympathetic to the victims and their movement. Unanimously, the media are all trying to make sense of the horrible events. Although we lack reliable individual-level data for the British and the Dutch cases, we have some proof of active action mobilization by the mass media.

Elite Endorsement

Immediately after the Dunblane killings, the Conservative Prime Minister John Major and Labour opposition leader Tony Blair visited the site where the tragedy had occurred. Queen Elizabeth and Princess Anne brought a bouquet in the nursery colors of pink, white

and yellow (Jorgensen-Earp & Lanzilotti, 1998). However, as the gun control issue and the Snowdrop Appeal found their way into the public sphere and onto the political agenda, the issue became politically divided, with Labour being in favor of a ban on handguns and the Conservatives far more reluctant. Although the Appeal still received significant elite support, it was divided along partisan lines. Martin O'Neil, Pearston's Labour MP, gave advice on how to set up a parliamentary petition. Pearston, who had always been a Conservative voter, was invited to a Labour conference. After she made an emotionally appealing speech, she compromised with the Labour party and called on the public to vote Labour, in exchange for a total ban of handguns if Labour came to power. After the Labour landslide, 14 Dunblane parents were welcomed at 10 Downing Street, the official residence of the new Prime Minister Tony Blair. Labour kept its promises, and a law banning handguns came into force on 26 January 1997 (Thomson *et al.*, 1998). Soon afterwards, the movement disbanded.

Gun control has always been a Democrat issue in the US, and pro-gun lobbies have found a steady ally with the Republican Party. Thus, logically, the initiative for the Million Mom March was received with aversion by the latter, but was given an extraordinarily warm welcome by the former. The Million Mom March was preceded by a smaller morning rally on the lawn of the White House, hosted by President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hilary Clinton. Both stood for the initiative. The first lady said that mothers 'don't want flowers or jewelry; we don't want a nice car or a nice meal as much as we want our congress to do the right thing to protect our children'(Wallace, 2000). After a meeting with the march's organizers, Bill Clinton had tears in his eyes after hearing the stories of parents who had lost a child through gun violence. He said 'I am frustrated and sad, because I don't want more children to die' (ESN, 2000). Later he stated that the gun lobby 'is no match for America's moms' and that 'if moms stick with it, they will succeed' (Knutson, 2000, p. 10). At the march itself the president addressed the people on video screens, the first lady and Tipper Gore appeared on stage, along with other Democratic governors, representatives and congressmen (Pollit, 2000). As well as politicians, actresses, singers and TV stars also took the stage. As in the UK, there was ample elite support for the cause of the movement in the US, but it was partisan and not as general as in Belgium.

The Movement against Senseless Violence gained very broad elite support across parties, comparable to the White Movement in Belgium. Two ministers walked in the Gorinchem march and in 14 of the 20 marches examined by Boutellier (2000) authorities –mostly mayors and city councilors – participated conspicuously. In four marches, authorities (generally the mayor) played an explicit role in the organization of the march. Since the marchers did not manifestly criticize political institutions or certain policies, but sought to change attitudes and proper support for the victims, it was easy for the authorities to support the non-controversial cause: '... both government and civilians rejected violence' (Boutellier, 2000). The most clear-cut example of elite-facilitation can be found in the founding of a National Platform against Violence on the Streets on 4 February 1999, by the Dutch Departments of Internal Affairs and Justice. Its goals were advising the government, pushing back violence on the streets and stimulating societal discussion on the topic.

Elite support is a recurrent characteristic in all four cases. In the UK and the US the movements were only backed by *certain* political parties. By contrast, in Belgium and the Netherlands elite support was ubiquitous, including almost all political actors.

Internal Heterogeneity

In terms of the Snowdrop Appeal, we have no information on the movement's internal diversity. Thomson *et al*. (1998, pp. 338–339) assert that it mobilized 'a wide cross-section of the population', and that 'Snowdrop's aims did not simply represent a small and highly vocal proportion of society, but rather that gun control was of great concern to the public as a whole'. But they do not underpin that contention with any empirical evidence.

Again Goss performed extensive research among participants of the Million Mom March. Goss' findings do not support the heterogeneity feature so typical of the White Movement. First of all, 84 per cent of the surveyed marchers were women (Goss, 2002). This is easily explained by the organizers' direct and sole appeal to women, especially mothers, reflected in the name of the event and the organizers' gender. The organizers did not *want* a diverse crowd but deliberately targeted a very specific group of people. Also gun control's shift from a crime control to a child safety issue contributed to the female overrepresentation, while traditionally men have been more involved in gun control activism than women: 'As gun violence came to involve people (teenage children) and places (schools) over which mothers have practical and moral authority, they acquired a legitimate place at the table in gun-policy debates' (Goss, 2002, pp. 56–57). Second, the participants of the Million Mom March were clearly middle-aged (40–59), more highly educated, more affluent, more civically active than the average American (woman), and, more than half of the participants came from affluent suburban areas (Goss, 2001b). In short: the marchers' profile fits the appearance of feminist activists (Goss, 2002), but not that of the extremely diverse White Movement in Belgium. The militants of the Million Mom March movement who remained active after the big event in Washington were not significantly different from the marchers.

With regard to the Movement against Senseless Violence, there are no indicators of the socio-economic profile. The founding members of the different foundations all had very different professional profiles – a train conductor, a student, a gravedigger, a lawyer – but that hardly suffices for claiming that this was a heterogeneous movement.

As we lack essential individual-level evidence for two of the four cases, the conclusion with regard to the internal heterogeneity features must remain open. We have two contradicting cases: the Belgian White Movement with high diversity, and the American Million Mom March with much more internal homogeneity. Consequently, we cannot settle the matter of heterogeneity.

Towards a Movement Type of 'New Emotional Movements'

After checking the six initial characteristics typical for the Belgian White Movement, it is clear that some of them hold across all four cases while others do not pass the test. Table 1 contains a summary of our findings concerning the four cases under scrutiny.

The absence of clear-cut demands must be rejected. Both the Million Mom March in the US and the Snowdrop Appeal in the UK voiced very specific and unambiguous gun control claims. Internal heterogeneity can neither be rejected nor confirmed because we lack evidence, but the homogeneity of the Million Mom March seriously questions its typicality.

The four other features seem to be tenable.

(1) The four movements are based on victim's activism, identification mechanisms and emotions of fear and compassion. Victims did not play the same role in all

Table 1. Summary of comparative findings

	White Movement	Snowdrop Appeal	Million Mom March	Movement Against Senseless Violence
Victimhood and emotions	++	+	+	++
No clear-cut demands	++	−	−	++
Organizational weakness	++	+	+	+
Support from mass media	++	++	++	++
Elite endorsement	++	+	+	++
Internal heterogeneity	++	?	−	?

four cases, sometimes they headed the movement, and sometimes they publicly supported the movement. However, victimhood and victim identification always appeared to be a necessary condition for mobilization as they underpinned legitimacy and gave the movements a public voice. We have indications that fear and compassion were the main mobilizing emotions in all cases, with more emphasis on compassion in the Belgian (and Dutch) case and more on fear in the US (and UK) case.

(2) Although none of the three test cases came near to the astonishingly low organization level in the Belgian case, all movements were loosely and informally organized. In all cases, inexperienced people, victims or family/friends/sympathizers founded new movement organizations, though established issue-specific movement organizations did exist. In all cases mobilization was generated without relying on formal mobilization structures and in all cases efforts were made to set up more formal organizations only after massive mobilizations.

(3) All movements received ample support from the mass media. The media clearly sided with the movements and boosted their mobilization by giving enormous attention to the issue, framing the issue in a favorable way and even actively inciting people to take part in the staged action. The media, in a sense, substituted the organizational deficit. Yet, we lack evidence whether, in the American case, this was true for 'the' media or just for 'some' media.

(4) The movements were publicly supported by elite groups that took up their cause, adopted their (non)-claim and endorsed their mobilization. In two cases, Belgium and The Netherlands, the movement was a consensus movement with elites from all political leanings competing to become the movement's best friend; in the Anglo-Saxon cases elite support was clearly partisan and divided along established party lines.

Do these four features make any sense? Do they constitute a kind of movement *type*? A type would mean that these features are consistent and tend to be present or absent in the same cases because they mutually affect each other. That would explain as well why these four features recur in all four cases. In Figure 1**,** the different constitutive elements and their relations are presented graphically.

Appealing to universal feelings of sympathy, compassion, solidarity and people's own fear, the triggering device of violent victimhood through random violence has a direct bearing on all other features. Since victimhood has to be met with respect, political elites

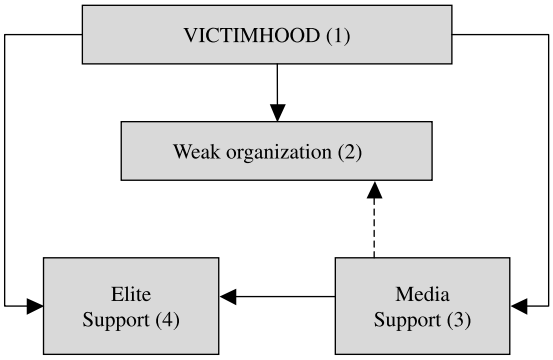

Figure 1. Four Features of 'new emotional movements' and their interaction.

are also eager to capitalize on them. The 'culture of fear' (Furedi, 1997; Altheide & Michalowski, 1999) is shaped by the media that smell an interesting story, simply because innocent victims sell – if it bleeds it leads. A flywheel-mechanism of an auto-reinforcing media frenzy starts up: huge coverage leads to more demand for (background) information and a larger number of media consumers leads to more media coverage, hoping to serve the public's hunger for information (Vasterman, 2000). Mass media, being the people's, or the consumers', allies, pressure the political elites into supporting the movement (at least rhetorically) and into showing compassion. If not, stories on their emotional deficit and political and moral incompetence will be peddled in the media (Furedi, 2000; Walgrave & Stouthuysen, 1998). But the media have a double function: not only do they guarantee elite support, they also engage in active mobilization thus compensating for the organizational weakness of the newborn movements. Since the victims or people close to them – inexperienced in politics and in setting up a movement – start the movement, and as they want to keep control, the movement's organizational backbone remains weak. In a nutshell: 'new emotional movements' not only exist, their features make sense and form a recurring pattern.

Yet, exactly this pattern is responsible for the inherent transience of 'new emotional movements'. They are, almost per definition, ephemeral phenomena. None of the movements studied are active at present; all had a life span of about two, maximum three, years. They either disbanded (UK), merged with a stronger existing movement organization (US), or simple withered and disappeared from the societal scene although still mutely and marginally surviving (Belgium and The Netherlands). Their four features eventually lead to self destruction. Emotions tend to be short-lived and easily numbed. Massive mobilizations function as emotional discharges but leave the movement short-breathed and without stamina. Lacking basic organizational structures and procedures, the movement simply crumbles. Mass media support is transitory too. After a while, the media become bored with the story and its leading characters, lose interest and, following the logic of Downs' (1998) issue attention cycle, turn to something else. Political support tends to be short-lived as well because the movement soon becomes unable to maintain pressure and to keep up high mobilization levels.

We asserted that 'new emotional movements' have four closely associated features. Yet, both discarded characteristics might point towards two diverging tracks of

development constituting two different subtypes of 'new emotional movements'. The Belgian and the Dutch case were strikingly alike, the UK and US case too. 'New emotional movements' might take two forms which we might coin as a more identity-oriented (Belgium, the Netherlands) and more instrumentally-oriented variant (UK and US). In the first type, the victims themselves are the movement's leaders, compassion is the main driving force, no clear claims are made and, as a result, elite support and media support is general. In the second type, friends or sympathizers play the leading role rather than the victims themselves. The driving force here is fear, leading to precise claim-making to prevent these things from happening again. As a result, elite support is partisan because the issue at stake is controversial. The latter movements are more externally oriented and closer to the instrumental movement ideal type. In Figure 2, both diverging tracks are set out graphically.

Some movements try to change course during their short lifetime shifting from one type to another. The case of the Belgian White Movement attempting to shift from the identity-oriented track to the instrumentally-oriented variant thereby accelerating its decline shows that this transition is not easy to make. Caught between identity and instrumentality, the White Committees finally tried to adopt precise claims and to put forward specific policy goals. However, it was too late. The momentum was gone. The movement became marginalized precisely because politics and public did not accept its more political and claim-making course (Walgrave & Rihoux, 1998; Walgrave, 2000).

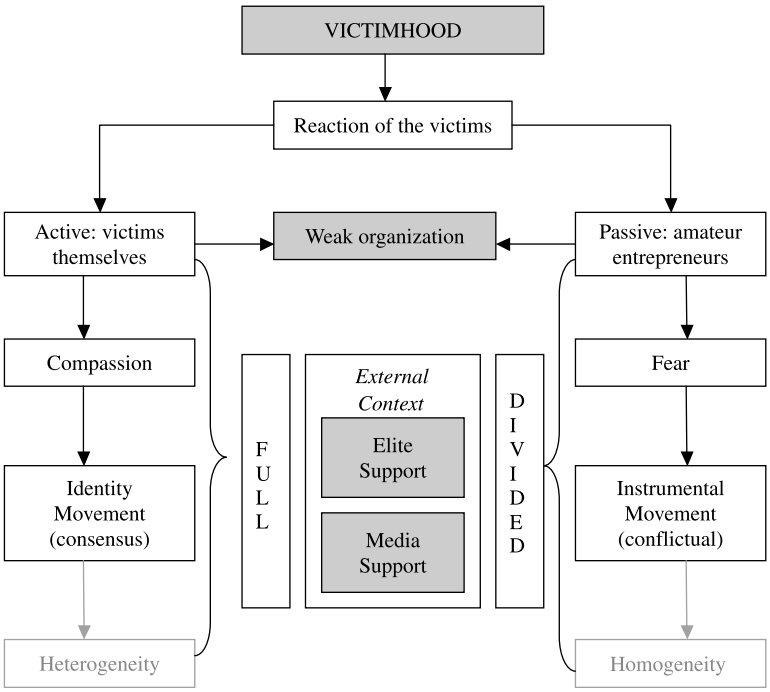

Figure 2. Two types of 'New Emotional Movements'.

What determines which track will be followed when a mobilization occurs reacting to random violence? We believe that the behavior of the victims themselves is the clue. Jennings (1999) too asserts that it is the 'state of mind' of the harm-related persons that determines whether activism will take place or not. It is the initial reaction of the victims – retreat into mourning or stand up in action – that largely determines what follows. Victimization can cause reactions (helplessness, exhaustion, being overwhelmed) that discourage active responses yet it can also 'trigger emotional and cognitive responses that provide incentives and motivations for mobilization' (Jennings, 1999, p. 10). The moral shock of the conspicuous events yields victims, temporarily, a tremendous symbolic power; they can decide to use it or not. If they opt not to exercise power, the mobilization vacuum can be filled with amateur issue entrepreneurs mobilizing on behalf of the victims and in consultation with them. The mobilization vacuum can also be filled by professional issue entrepreneurs who capitalize on the events to gain support for their established claims. The more victims personally control and steer the movement, the more compassionate and identity-oriented the movement will be. In contrast, the more victims give way to other mobilizers, the more fear becomes the central mobilizing emotion and the more instrumentally-oriented the mobilization becomes. As mentioned before, we recognize that identity and instrumentality are not mutually exclusive categories. Our point is simply that identity formation is the more powerful mobilizing mechanism in one case, whereas in the other case primarily the clear-cut goals of the movement incite people to participate.

The fact that the victim's reactions are crucial for determining the movement's course does not mean that their response is purely a matter of individual taste and personality. Victim reactions are probably molded by the event itself and how they have been treated by the authorities. For example, whether or not the violence is a matter of guns or not, the randomness of the event, the length of the event (e.g. long searches for missing persons or sudden shock), the empathy and respect with which they are approached by police and the judiciary, and so on, can all be factors that systematically affect victims' responses. The victims' social background may also play a role, as Weed (1990, p. 469) showed in his study of Mothers Against Drunk Driving activists. If the victim is the clue we need more research on victims' reactions to random violence and the circumstances that make them step up and act.

Conclusion

This study set off with three goals: to identify the common features of the movements mobilizing in response to random violence; to check whether these features correspond to those of rational actor social movement theory; and to examine whether these common features are associated and form a distinctive pattern. At the end of our quest we have answered all three questions. The movements covered displayed four recurring characteristics: victims played a key role, they were very loosely structured, they received ample elite support and the mass media took their side. These four characteristics are clearly at odds with the rational assumptions of classic movement theory. Finally, these traits make sense; they are logically associated forming a plausible movement type. Hence, we corroborated the plausible existence of 'new emotional movements'.

We are well aware of the fact that our findings are tentative and exploratory. Perhaps in the first place, the term 'new emotional movements' itself is flawed and causes confusion.

That is why we kept putting it in quotation marks throughout our paper. We considered many other names, but it was the best that came to our mind. We do *not* claim that such movements are new, but merely that 'new emotional movements' are different and specific; that they follow their own logic and often contradict mainstream expectations.

However, we do believe that victimhood and the emotions created through identification have become a more powerful mobilizer than before. Political dissatisfaction, the more central role of emotions in public life in general – in the communication of political actors for example – and the growing role of victims in the justice system, the media and society in general, all suggest that victimhood and private emotions of grief have gained political importance. Some literature suggests that identification with (the pain of) others nowadays develops far more easily than it used to. Lifestyle barriers between classes and ranks are withering and expanding the possibilities for empathy with the misfortunes of other people (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1973; van Stokkom, 1997). Victimhood has become a rewarding mobilization mechanism that is capitalized on by existing movements. Yet in 'new emotional movements' victims *themselves* play a central and active role; they are a key element in mobilization and the formation of the movement and its features.

We need more cases to further underpin our preliminary movement type including more different types of events, political cultures, polities and eras. Some of the rejected features may turn out to be typical after all, while some of the validated characteristics may be challenged by other cases. Also, while we confined our study to describing the features of the movements that sprung up after random violence, we definitely need more research explaining the sheer existence of these movements. Under what precise circumstances does random violence lead to mobilization and the formation of 'new emotional movements'? Why does random violence often not result in mobilization? Finally, both subtypes we differentiated – an identity-oriented vs. an instrumentally-oriented variant – need more scrutiny. We asserted that the emotion of fear leads to instrumentality while compassion leads to identity. This claim is plausible but we have not presented indisputable proof that both types are based on these different emotions.

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Appendix 1. Data and methods concerning the Belgian White Movement

We have at our disposal three sources of survey data about the Belgian White Movement.

First, surveys were carried out during 11 local white marches following the great White March of 20 October 1996. In sum, 864 participants were surveyed between March and June 1997. Making the projection to the White March is admissible, because of the fact that the themes around which these smaller marches were organized were very much akin to those of the big White March: the same goes for the 'look and feel' of the marches. For more methodological details see Walgrave & Rihoux (1997).

Second, we covered the second White March in February 1998, having 30,000 participants. The number of surveyed people was relatively small.

Third, we surveyed 164 White Movement militants based in a whole range of local chapters of the movement.

In terms of the Belgian media analysis, the news coverage, editorials and letters to the editor of the five most important Belgian newspapers were examined, from 16 August, the day after the liberation of two girls, until 31 October 1996. It concerned *De Standaard*, *De Morgen*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Gazet van Antwerpen*. In sum, 329 copies were scrutinized, encoded and examined, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The fortnight preceding the finding of the two girls, (1–15 August 1996), was taken as a reference period. For more details see Walgrave & Manssens (2000). Quantitative research has also been performed on the news coverage by the Flemish public and commercial broadcasting channels. Verstraeten (1997, p. 90), for example, asserts that both channels twice devoted their entire evening newscast to the Dutroux case, and Baeyens (1997) demonstrated that the public and the commercial broadcasting channels devoted respectively 55 per cent and 63 per cent of their coverage to the case in the first three weeks after the outbreak of the case. More than one in six Belgians followed Julie and Melissa's funerals broadcasted live on public television.

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