Programs of Protest: Examining Narratives of Protest Movements on Television News  
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Movements for social justice are constantly engaged in a struggle for visibility -- one in which being represented on a visible, public platform lends a certain level of critical engagement. However, simply earning coverage in the media is not enough for movements to gain traction. The visual mediums through which protest movements are represented -- television news and media -- ultimately determine how they are received by the public eye. I am fascinated by this double-edged challenge of representation. This summer I had the opportunity to visit the Screening Protest project at Stockholm University in Sweden. Led by Dr. Alexa Robertson, Screening Protest aims to bring together the lenses of media studies, political science, and visual art to map and compare how protest movements (from 2008 - 2018) are represented across major global news channels.

My research interests in contemporary women’s movements in India drew me to examine the news coverage of a rape case in New Delhi in 2013 that sparked mass protests nationwide. The national outrage that followed the incident was unique, in that, members of all social and political spectrums protested. My goal was not to delve into the details of the incident, but rather, it was to examine the ways in which the specific events were represented across channels. I was also assisting the Screening Protest team in their meticulous coding process developed to analyze and compare protest headlines across channels. This was especially intriguing because I was able to learn from their effort to develop an empirical methodology for analyzing subjective content -- an incredibly challenging feat. While I was able to identify patterns in the footage, noting how certain elements were highly emphasized in one channel but left out almost entirely in another, it was evident that even with these glaring observations I could not make any grandiose claims. In any scientific approach to research, the conclusions drawn must be proportional to the depth of information collected. What was perhaps even more interesting to me, however, was the space I had to engage with the questions that arose from the ambiguity and gaps in information.
In addition to my work at Screening Protest, I was also fortunate enough to attend various conferences and symposiums on social movements and activism at Södertörn University in Sweden and the University of Westminster in London, UK. Throughout my entire experience abroad, I was able to hear the perspectives of people from backgrounds in different countries and communities around the world, as well as from various academic disciplines. In the true spirit of humanities research, I learned so much from the space I was granted to engage with the nuances and complexities of the information, which really challenged and stretched my thinking.