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DO PROTEST PARTICIPANTS SHARE THE BELIEFS OF PROTEST ORGANISERS?

1. Puzzle

Frame alignment → the linkage between individual and social movement organisations' beliefs about an issue

RQ: To what extent are the reasons why people protest *aligned* with the mobilising messages of the protest organisers?

Why study this?
- Major theory **BUT** never tested
- Frame alignment **AFFECTS** vital social movement processes:
    - Recruitment
    - Sustained activism
    - Protest impact

2. Theory

FRAMING THEORY	THIS STUDY
Frame alignment is a precondition for protest participation	Frame alignment is a matter of **empirical investigation**
Silent about how frame alignment can be measured	For the first time **measure** frame alignment
Suggests a binary cut-off point (you are either aligned or not)	Study **degrees** of alignment

Three functions of frames:
- **Diagnosis** (what's the problem?)
- **Blame attribution** (who's to blame?)
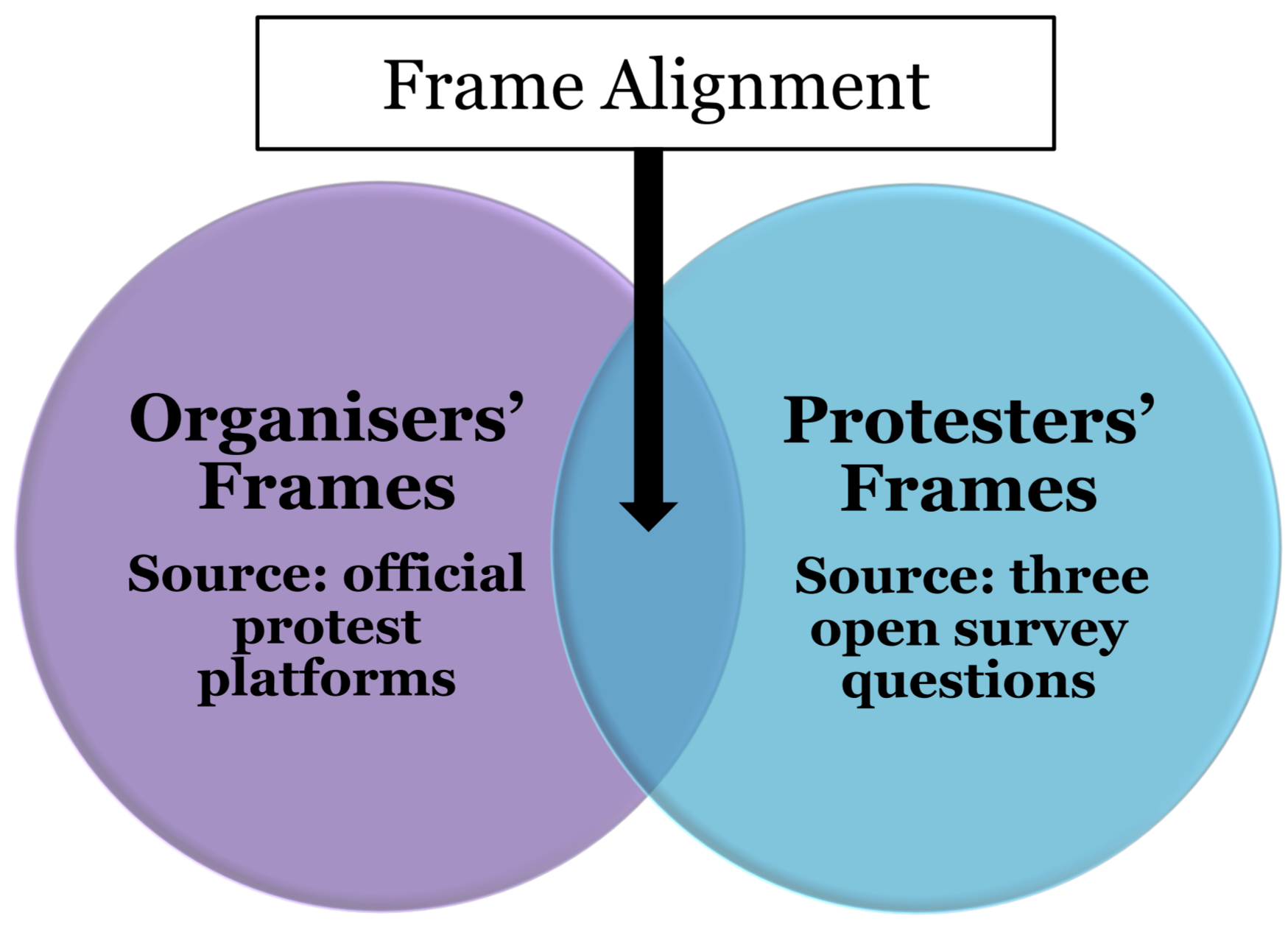- **Prognosis** (what has to be done?)

3. Data

A. Protest pamphlets: official platforms texts of the protest organisers

B. Protest surveys: survey people while they are protesting

- **29** protest events – **6,095** respondents
- **Countries**: Belgium – the Netherlands – United Kingdom
- **Protest issues**: Austerity – Environment – Democracy – Anti-Discrimination
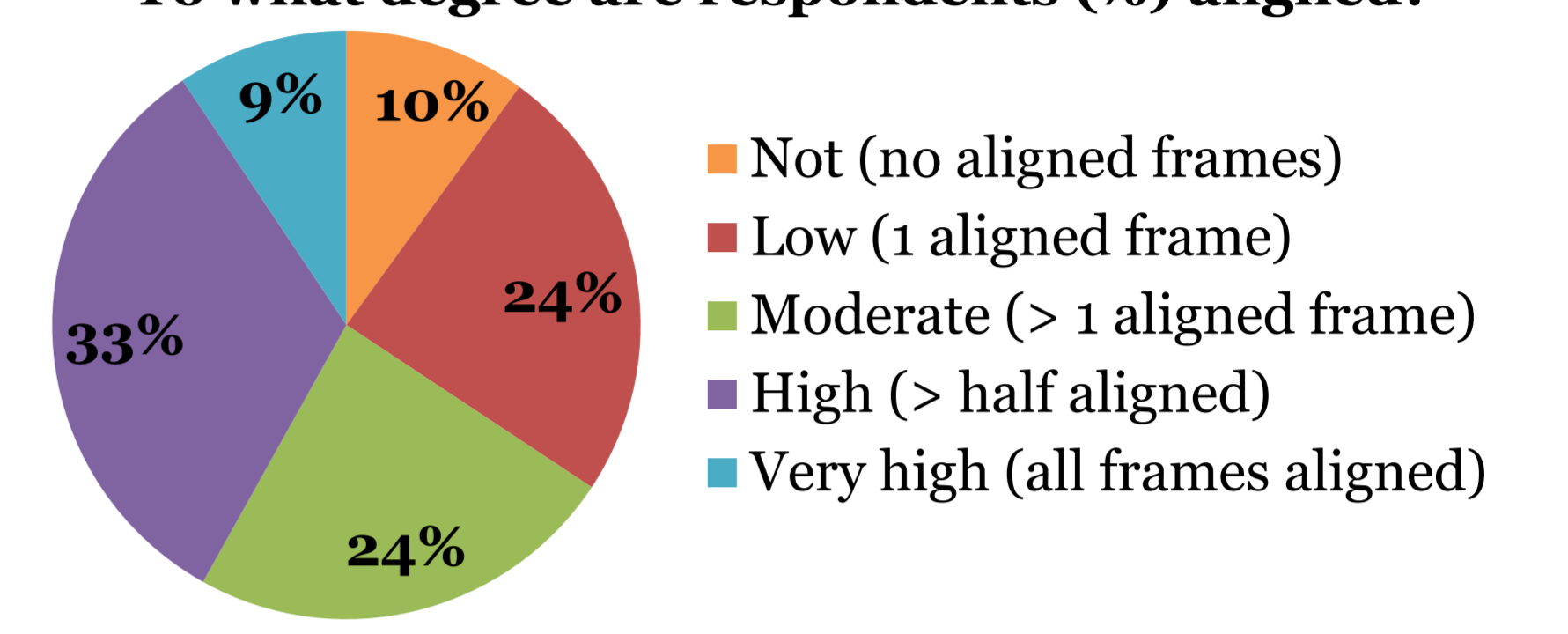
4. Measure frame alignment

Frame Alignment

Organisers' Frames
Source: official protest platforms

Protesters' Frames
Source: three open survey questions

Code the overlap regarding:
diagnoses, blame attributions, and prognoses

5. Results

To what degree are respondents (%) aligned?

- Not (no aligned frames) — 10%
- Low (1 aligned frame) — 24%
- Moderate (> 1 aligned frame) — 24%
- High (> half aligned) — 33%
- Very high (all frames aligned) — 9%

- **49%** of the reasons why people protest are **not in line** with organisers' pamphlets

- **91%** mention frames that are absent in the organisers' framing

- Highest degrees of alignment on 'what is the problem' (**diagnosis**)

Austerity protesters: + aligned on **diagnoses**

Environmentalists: + aligned on **prognoses**

6. Conclusion

- Many participants attribute **alternative beliefs** to the demonstration they attend

- Frame alignment is a **matter of degree** and **varies** greatly

- Protesters do **not necessarily** share the **same understanding** of the issue, how to deal with it, and who is to blame for it