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**“ANTI-COP RIOTS” OR BLACK CIVIL
RIGHTS PROTESTS?**

Media Portrayals of the 2020 George Floyd Protests

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ABSTRACT

Shannon Nichols: “Anti-Cop Riots” or Black Civil Rights Protests? Media Portrayals of the 2020 George Floyd Protests

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Protests have long been marginalized by media coverage which fails to capture the motivations, goals, and demands of the protestors. The media, instead, tends to focus on the actions and appearances of protestors which leads to the delegitimization and demonization of protest. This type of negative coverage has been termed the “protest paradigm”. The protest paradigm has been found to be particularly prevalent in coverage of anti-Black racism protests. This is despite scholarship which argues that anti-Black racism protests tend to encounter more state repression by police than other types of protests. This indicates that there is a significant media bias against anti-Black racism protests in that repression is not being accurately covered.

This work aims to investigate whether media coverage of the George Floyd protests from May-June 2020 are similarly delegitimized by the protest paradigm despite the greater institutionalization of the Black Lives Matter movement since its inception. This analysis also seeks to investigate how the actions and appearances of the police at protests factor into the portrayals of protestors and the protests themselves. These questions will be answered through a frame analysis of protest coverage from Fox News and CNN during the height of the protests following the murder of George Floyd. This analysis, then, seeks to move the protest paradigm literature forward by furthering understandings of how the protest paradigm is used by media outlets of different political orientations as well as how other protest roles are portrayed.

The analysis finds that anti-Black racism protests are still heavily delegitimized by the media regardless of political orientation. It also finds that the police tend to be given greater legitimacy even when using force. The delegitimization of protestors/protest is achieved through extensive focus on the criminal and confrontational nature of protestors while police are framed as victims of these behaviors. Only slight differences in framing between the media outlets was observed.

Ultimately, this research concludes that the protest paradigm is still used to systematically delegitimize protest movements which challenge the status quo. However, the analysis also finds that greater refinement of the protest paradigm is needed to capture nuances in media coverage as well as to include how the paradigm manifests differently textually versus visually. The research also argues the need for greater collaboration between the protest paradigm, police militarization, and protest policing literature to understand the potentially cyclical effects of disproportionate state repression and biased media coverage.

Keywords: police brutality, George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, media framing, protest paradigm, police militarization

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“If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.”

- Malcolm X

1. Introduction

For as long as protests have existed, they have had to contend with the ways in which the media of the era presents them. Yet, though protests may have concerns over how the media will portray them, they are nevertheless reliant on them for disseminating their message due to their low resources. Protests, thus, take a risk by engaging with the media as their message may be modified in the process of news production. Further, as the pace of news production has increased and protests have become more decentralized due to social media, protests have had a more difficult time defining the media narrative. This difficulty is amplified when protests are not only decentralized, but also spontaneous and widespread as was seen in the wave of protests which followed the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020. The scale of the protest movement that proceeded his death was unprecedented and led to the transnational diffusion of the protest movement. As a result, the movement garnered substantial media attention. But how did the media portray these protests?

This research project is interested in investigating how the media engaged with the protests that arose from the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers. Thus, the main research question of this thesis is *how are the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd presented in news articles?* This is further broken down into the following questions:

1. How are protestors/protests themselves framed?
2. How are police framed?
3. Does this framing differ based on the political orientation of the news outlet? If so, how?

This research rests primarily upon the framework of the protest paradigm. The protest paradigm posits that mass media tends to “delegitimize' or 'marginalize' protest movements that challenge the status quo” (McLeod & Detenber, 1999, p. 3). This is typically achieved by focusing on the

actions of protestors or events which are violent or radical instead of the substance or goals of the protests themselves (Kilgo et al., 2019). Mass media also tends to privilege the narratives of the protest constructed by official sources instead of giving protestors the ability to define their goals. These narratives commonly redirect the conversation around social issues in a way which delegitimizes the protests in order to uphold the status quo. This is a particularly acute problem for protests regarding Black civil rights in the United States (US) as they tend to be those which most fundamentally challenge the status quo and delegitimizing them has tangible consequences on their lives.

The analysis will also make use of the literature on protest policing and police militarization. Protest policing is a form of state repression in which police are present at and/or take action at protests (Earl et al., 2003). While many variables have been identified which impact the level of repression by police at protests, Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests seem to intersect a number of these, such as race, radical goals, and direct physical threats to police, to name a few. This is especially true of this iteration of protest which directly advocated for radical goals like defunding the police and in some cases attacked police stations. Coupled with statistics that indicate a greater level of police repression at these protests compared to the prior year and other types of protest, the protest policing literature can help not only explain the reasons for this increased repression, but also indicate if the framing of the protests and police is truly distorted (Kishi et al., 2020). Additionally, the scholarship on police militarization aims to explain not only how, but why police have increasingly come to resemble the military. This literature adds perspectives on the racialized nature of police militarization, how that may manifest in the interactions between police and protestors at Black civil rights protests, and the ways in which police militarization will be evident in the framing of police. These literatures will help add nuance to depictions of police at protests in order to help construct police frames from the news articles. They will also be used to argue that greater collaboration between protest policing, police militarization, and protest paradigm literatures can provide a greater understanding of the ways in which the development of police militarization, the extent of state repression, and news coverage of protests interact.

This research will attempt to answer the research questions through a frame analysis of news articles published during the most active period of protest from 25 May to 30 June 2020 (Kishi & Jones, 2020). As research on the protest paradigm fails to compare how news outlets with disparate political orientations may utilize the paradigm differently, the analysis herein will attempt to address this gap by comparing the framing of the protests in Fox News and CNN: two of the leading free news outlets for Republicans and Democrats, respectively. Further, protest paradigm research often fails to characterize how the police are framed in connection to the framing of protestors; this research aims to close this gap by creating frames which address the portrayals of police specifically. Additionally, prior work has found that the protest paradigm has been used to delegitimize past iterations of BLM protests. However, this research focuses largely on the protests precipitated by the two deaths which sparked the BLM movement. Thus, this research will move the literature forward by ascertaining if the protest paradigm is still prevalent in coverage of later iterations of the protest movement in spite of its greater institutionalization. Finally, this research will investigate the framing both textually and visually. The combined impacts of textual and visual framing are relatively understudied in the protest paradigm literature, especially in terms of fitting visual characterizations of protest into the extant protest paradigm frames. As such, this research attempts to strengthen the protest paradigm in a number of areas by expanding what is included in the framework and increasing understandings of how it is used.

This project is divided into seven parts. In the subsequent chapter, there will be a brief overview of the protest movement sparked by the death of George Floyd as well as the origins of the Black Lives Matter movement. The third chapter delves into the literature review which covers literature on protest policing, police militarization, and the protest paradigm, including the elements of the paradigm, its use in BLM protests, and the effects of the paradigm, among other things. In the fourth chapter, the data collection and frame analysis as the method are discussed. This chapter will also discuss the ethical implications and limitations of the research. The fifth chapter will present the findings of the frame analysis with specific focus on the use of protest paradigm frames for the protestors by each outlet before moving on to the framing of the police. This chapter will be followed by the discussion which outlines some of the implications of the research as well as the connections between protest policing, police militarization, and the protest paradigm. Finally,

the seventh chapter concludes the thesis by situating the findings of the thesis within the broader landscape in which the phenomena take place.

2. Background

On 25 May 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, George Floyd was murdered after a police officer kneeled on his neck for nearly eight minutes (*George Floyd: What happened*, 2020). The fatal encounter was recorded by a passerby and posted to social media where it spread like wildfire igniting protests across the US and the world. Though BLM movement has been around since 2013 to protest against police killings of Black men and women, the protests ignited by the death of George Floyd took place on a monumental scale: between 26 May and 22 August, there were 7750 recorded demonstrations affiliated with BLM (Kishi & Jones, 2020).

Not only was the current wave of protests sparked by the particularly gruesome death of Floyd, but also by the convergence of events that happened around the same time. Just before Floyd's death, Americans were outraged over the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. Coupled with the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on Black and Latino communities across the country, Americans were tired of watching injustices play out while they were sitting at home (Cheung, 2020). The protests continue even now as legal proceedings in the aforementioned deaths reignite tensions (Bella et al., 2020).

Yet, what sustained the protests may have been the excessive response by the police. Night after night, videos and pictures went viral on social media and news sites which showed inappropriate levels of force being used on otherwise peaceful protestors. Of the protests recorded between 24 May and 22 August, 95% were peaceful (Kishi & Jones, 2020). Despite this, there were extensive reports of the use of tear gas, "non-lethal" munitions, pepper spray, and violent tactics, like shoving, kettling, beating protestors with batons or bicycles, and even ramming protestors with vehicles (Amnesty International, 2020; Gabbatt, 2020; Hasan, 2020). In one particularly violent incident that garnered national attention, a 75-year-old man was shoved to the ground by police officers from Buffalo, New York who continued to walk past him despite visibly bleeding from a head injury (Rose & Levenson, 2020). Further, police were seen deliberately targeting journalists,

international observers, and medics at the protests (Amnesty International, 2020). These incidents not only fueled further protests, but also invigorated discussions of police brutality and police militarization.

2.1 Black Lives Matter Movement

Of course, discussions of police brutality are nothing new in the United States. Police in the United States have brutalized many classes of people throughout history, including Latinos, LGBTQ+ individuals, white immigrants, and workers, but Black people have surely suffered the brunt of it (Moore, 2020). In fact, the disproportionate policing of Black people was already evident in the early 1900s but would not become more widely known outside of the Black community until the Race Riots of the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement (Moore, 2020; Nodjimbadem, 2017). Unfortunately, however, it seems that not much has changed since then.

On 26 February 2012, 16-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman, a local neighborhood watchman (Munro, n.d.). Martin was returning from a trip to the convenience store when Zimmerman spotted the teen and called emergency services to report a suspicious person. Against the instructions of the emergency dispatcher, Zimmerman confronted and shot Martin. Ultimately, in July 2013, Zimmerman was acquitted (Munro, n.d.). The shooting and acquittal led to protests across the United States calling for accountability and highlighting the racism of the criminal justice system (Upright & Fagenson, 2013). This incident led to the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement through the creation of the Twitter hashtag #Blacklivesmatter (Freelon et al., 2016). Yet, BLM would not become the movement it is now known as until the death of Michael Brown.

On 9 August 2014, 18-year-old Michael Brown was fatally shot in Ferguson, Missouri by Darren Wilson, a white police officer (“Timeline of events”, 2019). The uncertain circumstances surrounding Brown’s death coupled with the fact that the police left his body uncovered in the streets for hours unsettled the residents of Ferguson. As questions went unanswered, the residents of Ferguson took to the streets to protest the killing (Lowery, 2017). Protests escalated when, on 24 November 2014, a grand jury decided not to indict Darren Wilson for the killing of Brown

(“Timeline of events”, 2019). The unrest garnered national media attention and reignited a conversation about systemic racial injustice. Ultimately, Brown’s death and the unrest that followed propelled #Blacklivesmatter to the status of a movement and led three Black women activists to create the Black Lives Matter organization (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016; Lowery, 2017). Unfortunately, however, Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown would not be the last Black people killed by police or other civilians. A long list of individuals, known and unknown, have come to be national symbols of systemic racial justice in America: Eric Garner, Alton Sterling, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Jacob Blake, and many others. Unfortunately, George Floyd is yet the latest individual whose tragic death challenged America’s notions of a post-racial society and reignited a national reckoning with racism and injustice.

3. Literature Review

Black civil rights protests are distinct forms of protest which involve opposition not only to power structures in the state, but also to those responsible for responding to a protest. This is especially the case for BLM protests which often center around the highly visible death of a Black person at the hands of police. Thus, police occupy a particular role when they are present at anti-police-brutality protests due to their role as both “peacekeepers” and targets of the protestors that they do not occupy at protests regarding other issues. As a result, it is important to consider the impact of policing and race in addition to considerations of how the protests themselves are portrayed. This chapter presents the literature review that underpins this thesis. It begins by discussing protest policing and the variables that determine the extent of state repression at protests. It then moves on to define the concept of police militarization and to detail how police militarization is intimately connected to race in the US. Finally, this chapter defines the framework of the protest paradigm before presenting research that interrogates its use in news coverage of BLM protests, how it manifests visually, and its effects on news consumers.

3.1 Protest Policing

Within the state repression literature, there has been significant focus on the policing of protest. For protest policing, repression is defined as police presence and action at protests (Earl et al.,

2003). Earl et al. (2003) argued that it is important to consider presence and action, even each specific action, separately as police make discrete decisions about whether or not to attend a protest, and then which combinations of tactics they will use once they are present. Police actions are generally grouped into no action, arrests, force and violence, and arrests plus force and violence (Davenport et al., 2011; Earl et al., 2003; Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). In this case, violence refers to police attacking protestors or using weapons against them, like batons or tear gas, while force is the use of physical tactics during the protests (McAdam et al., 2009).

Scholars have established a number of explanations for the variation in repression across protest events and movements. These explanations include the threat posed by the protest, the weakness of the protest, threat and weakness in combination, and law enforcement characteristics. Of these, threat and weakness are the approaches that have received the most attention and evaluation within the literature.

Threat refers to behaviors that threaten “the political system, government personnel, the economy, or the lives, beliefs, and livelihoods of those within [a government’s] jurisdiction” or otherwise threatens the status quo and political elites (Davenport, 2007, p. 7). Though Davenport (2007) argues that repression in response to behavioral threats is one of the most consistent findings in the literature, what exactly is perceived as threatening to elites is not as clearly known. For this reason, threat is measured in a variety of ways in studies of protest policing. Threat has been measured as protest size (Davenport et al., 2011; Earl & Soule, 2006; Earl et al., 2003); using confrontational tactics (Davenport et al., 2011; Earl & Soule, 2006; Earl et al., 2003); pursuing radical/revolutionary goals (Earl & Soule, 2006; Earl et al., 2003); race of protestors (Davenport et al., 2011); pursuing multiple goals (Earl & Soule, 2006; Earl et al., 2003); targeting multiple actors (Earl et al., 2003); presence of counter-demonstrators (Davenport et al., 2011; Earl & Soule, 2006); and making specific claims, such as anti-police-brutality (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). After examining a variety of explanations for police response to protest, Earl et al., (2003) concluded that threat is the most important predictor in determining both police presence and police action at protest events.

Another explanation for repression by state actors relies on perceptions of a movement's weakness. According to this explanation, repression generates backlash if it does not work, thus state actors will seek to repress movements which they believe cannot withstand it (Earl et al., 2003). In this explanation, there are two broad conceptions of weakness: weakness-from-within and weakness-from-without (Earl et al., 2003). Weakness-from-within refers to the internal characteristics of a movement or protest events, such as being composed of marginalized groups or having less formal organization. In this conception, these groups may be seen as less able to retaliate against repression or are less reputationally costly to repress. On the other hand, weakness-from-without refers to the "willingness of outside audiences to monitor and react to repression", and, thus, encompasses issues like media coverage of a protest (Earl et al., 2003, p. 584). The argument here, then, is that increased public scrutiny will lead to a decrease in repression and vice versa. Interestingly, though Earl et al. (2003) considers the minority group status of protestors to be a sign of weakness, Davenport et al. (2011) argues that minority group status, particularly Black people, can be perceived as especially threatening to authorities. Thus, race as an explanatory factor is contested within the literature. Further, evidence for weakness as an explanation for repression is mixed. For example, in Earl et al. (2003), despite some of the weakness variables being significant, most had the opposite effect of what would be expected based on the literature for explaining both police presence and action at protests and led the authors to conclude that the results were not supportive of weakness theory. This indicates that more work needs to be done to ascertain the explanatory power of conceptions of weakness and what effects these factors have on police presence and action.

While explanations of threat and weakness are based on characteristics of the movement or protest events themselves, investigations of protest policing typically gloss over the internal characteristics of police organizations that may explain repression. Thus, most extant literature focuses on police as a body through which political elites' interests and goals are made manifest without regard to police as an institution that possesses its own interests and goals potentially distinct from those of the elite (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). Earl and Soule (2006) consider this a critical oversight in the protest policing literature since in the United States, local law enforcement agencies are the agents primarily responsible for responding to protest and have a number of

distinctive institutional characteristics that shape the performance of their duties, such as an insulated police culture (p. 148). Additionally, this oversight is in spite of the fact that there exists a considerable body of literature that investigates the specific institutional characteristics and logics of police agencies.

To address this gap, Earl and Soule (2006) attempt to generate a police-centered approach to explain variation in repression of protest events. In their approach, they define a number of police-specific threat variables as well as organizational and professionalization variables that may explain variation in protest event repression based on both protest characteristics and the capacities of the specific police department. They argue that institutionally police have particular focus on maintaining control and will view any signs of emerging disorder as a loss of control and, thus, failure (Earl & Soule, 2006, p. 148). Combined with officers' socialization into an ever-present sense of danger, police are most immediately concerned with situational threats that represent a loss of control and threat to officer safety (Earl & Soule, 2006, p. 149). Accordingly, the authors believe that presence of counter-protestors, property damage and/or violence by protestors, and object throwing will increase police presence and action at protests. Additionally, the authors expect that larger departments and more professionalized departments will tend to police protests differently than their counterparts. Through an investigation of protest events from New York State from 1968 to 1973 as reported in the *New York Times*, the authors find that counter-protestor presence, property damage and/or violence, and object throwing all increase probability of police presence at a protest and the probability that police will use force-based strategies once present (Earl & Soule, 2006, pp. 154, 158). The support for the importance of the organizational and professionalization variables used by the authors to measure variation in response across departments was a bit weaker which is likely due to the weakness of the operationalization of these concepts. Finally, this study points to a weakness in the literature in answering the question of threatening to *whom*? The authors use many of the same operationalizations of threat as in Earl et al. (2003) with similar results but seem to arbitrarily divide them into threatening to political elites or threatening to police. For example, number of participants in a protest and use of confrontational tactics are both placed in the category of threatening to political elites, but then note in the results that the findings of their significance are likely due to situational threats posed by both which

would seem to correspond to understandings of police threat (Earl & Soule, 2006). Consequently, more scholarship needs to be done to ascertain the distinctiveness of threat to political elites versus threat to police and to move beyond mere theoretical or intuitive speculation of perception of threat. Instead, scholars should interview stakeholders to establish what considerations are really being made and how those considerations affect protest repression.

Of particular interest to this study are the findings of Reynolds-Stenson (2018) on repression of protests making anti-police-brutality claims. In this study, the author tests two competing hypotheses for how police may respond to protests against police brutality. In the first hypothesis, the expectation is that police may feel particularly threatened by protests against police brutality, and, therefore, will be more likely to be present and take action at these protests (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). In the other hypothesis, the author builds on literature on the development of the professionalized police department to argue that police reputational concerns and attempts to establish greater legitimacy may instead make them less likely to attend and take action at anti-police-brutality protests (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). To investigate this, the author examines protest events from 1960 to 1990 occurring in New York State covered in the *New York Times* (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). The author found that, after controlling for measures of threat and weakness as mentioned above, anti-police-brutality protests were twice as likely to garner police presence as other types of protests. Further, police are more likely to take action once present, especially if the protest is instigated by those who are not the victims of the anti-brutality claims (Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). The author argues that their work builds on the work of Earl and Soule (2006) to extend the police-centered approach to symbolic threats.

Finally, one major weakness of this literature is a lack of systematic, quantitative examination of protest policing that uses data post-1990. All of the studies cited above focus exclusively on protesting during the mid- to late-1900s. While this was inarguably an important era for both protest and policing, protest policing has likely changed since the 1990s, in part due to the militarized response to the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, Washington (Balko, 2013, pp. 234-7; Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). Thus, it is likely the results of these studies would vary, especially in the prevalence of force-based strategies, if data from the 2000s was used. Regardless,

any findings for how police respond to protest post-1990 would be interesting for ascertaining if protest policing is changing and, if so, how.

One further weakness of the studies discussed above is their reliance on the same exact dataset. This dataset, the Dynamics of Collective Action, collected data from daily editions of the *New York Times* from 1960 to 1995 which were compiled by reading these papers, instead of using the indexing system (Davenport et al., 2011). This dataset does include events that occurred throughout the United States, yet some of these studies narrow their data further by restricting it geographically to events that occurred in New York State. Though this helps combat some of the biases associated with newspaper data, the generalizability of such findings and the extent to which they would be replicable given the huge variation in both contexts, historical development, and organizational capacity of police departments across the United States is questionable. As a result, there is a need for more scholarship that attempts to investigate the veracity of the explanatory variables for protest policing in different contexts in the United States.

3.2 Police Militarization

Police militarization is a concept which eludes fixed definition in the literature. Defining and conceptualizing militarization is complicated by the fact that even experts in policing or fields related to policing do not necessarily agree on what militarization means (Simckes et al., 2019). Further, many studies and the media tend to take a narrow view of militarization that focuses on specific manifestations of it, such as the acquisition and use of military weapons and use of tactical police units (Simckes et al., 2019; Steidley & Ramey, 2019). Yet, while these manifestations are important, they provide an incomplete picture of militarization. Thus, there was a need to establish greater harmonization of definitions in the literature.

The most widely accepted conceptualization of militarization was articulated in Kraska (2007). As one of the foremost researchers in police militarization, Kraska's definition builds off of decades of work examining the contours of militarization. In Kraska (2007), he argues that the police have always been to some extent militarized due to the fact that the foundation of military and police power rests on the state-sanctioned use of force to establish security (p. 3). Thus, the important

question to ask is to what *extent* the police are militarized. In order to explore this continuum, Kraska defines two interrelated concepts: militarism and militarization (2007). Militarism refers to “a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that stress the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate and efficacious means to solve problems” (Kraska, 2007, p. 3). Militarization is the implementation of this ideology and occurs along four dimensions. (Kraska, 2007). The first dimension is material whereby police acquire weapons, equipment, and technology that increase their effectiveness in deploying violence. In the second, cultural dimension, police adopt aggressive language, appearance, beliefs, and values (Kraska, 2007). In the organizational dimension, police establish special squads or organizational configurations that resemble the military. The fourth dimension is operational where the very conduct of police work is modeled on military activities (Kraska, 2007). Altogether, Kraska (2007)’s conceptualization of militarization provides added nuance which allows us to examine the phenomenon as an ongoing process instead of a discrete end point.

A considerable body of literature seeks to establish the moment when police in the United States began to militarize to a greater extent. Balko (2013) argues throughout his book *The Rise of the Warrior Cop* that police began to grow increasingly militarized in the 1960s due to the erosion of Fourth Amendment protections by the Supreme Court and political opportunism that harnessed anxiety over urban riots, increasing crime and drug use, and the Civil Rights Movement into greater policing. This period saw the emergence of the first Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams as well as the beginning of the “War on Drugs” led by President Richard Nixon (Balko, 2013). The dehumanizing rhetoric of the “War on Drugs” coupled with the incentivization of drug raids and arrests through federal funding led to a culture shift in police departments that deemphasized their role as public servants and legitimized the use of military tactics and weapons for police activities. This culture shift and creep of militarization into activities beyond anti-drug efforts has only accelerated in large part due to the vehemently anti-drug administration of President Ronald Reagan and the post-9/11 “War on Terror” (Balko, 2013). Though Balko (2013)’s is a journalistic account of the process of militarization, it is a useful overview of militarization as it touches upon developments in policing along the four dimensions outlined by Kraska (2007) as well as highlights the importance of institutions in shaping the process.

Additionally, it corresponds closely with other contemporary accounts of militarization that emphasize the “War on Drugs” as a turning-point (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2014). However, a major weakness of Balko (2013) is the obfuscation of the role of race in constructing both the “War on Drugs” and the “War on Terror” and, thus, police militarization. Though he does acknowledge that specifically *White* anxiety was harnessed by Nixon and subsequent administrations to further a “law and order” agenda, he goes no further in discussing the intentional racial dimensions that shaped these agendas as well as police culture and conceptions of who are criminals (ACLU, 2003; Balko, 2013, pp. 67-71; Elba, 2018; Lockie, 2019). This is a massive oversight, especially given the importance of race in the historical development of policing in the United States.

In contrast, Gamal (2016) examines police militarization entirely as a “race-making process” in which race and racial hierarchies are constructed and reinforced (p. 982). In this article, the author departs from many other scholars in arguing that the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which bars the use of the military for civilian law enforcement, actually fits within the racialized logic of police militarization instead of representing an American rejection of military intrusion in internal affairs (Gamal, 2016, p. 983). After the Civil War, the military was used in the South to enforce Black people’s rights and Reconstruction era reforms (Gamal, 2016). After a contested election, a deal was struck where the newly elected president would end Reconstruction by withdrawing the military after which Congress passed the Posse Comitatus Act. The Act did not stop military intervention in internal affairs for issues supported by the white majority, like forced removal of Native Americans, but it did open up Black people to violence and intimidation and gave white people the opportunity to “rebuild an economic and social order predicated on black exploitation” (Gamal, 2016, p. 988). This underlies the unequal access to state protection which is made manifest through police militarization. Like Balko (2013), Gamal (2016) traces the contemporary origins of police militarization to racial uprisings in urban centers in the 1960s. Government officials, especially the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), instrumentalized the racialized fear and anxiety of urban uprisings to cast the protestors as an internal threat that required a militarized response. As a result, “Black communities are treated as sites of internal insurrection, constructing members of the community outside of citizenship and protection” (Gamal, 2016, p. 996). This

project was only reinforced in the following decades through the racialized rhetoric of the “War on Drugs” and the “War on Terror”, the burgeoning prison-industrial complex, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Consequently, police militarization is both constructed by and constructs race and racial hierarchies with similar rhetoric justifying a greater extent of police militarization throughout the last sixty years.

Though racial logics seem to be instrumental in the process of police militarization, Go (2020) argues that this process began even earlier than the 1960s. Though modern police departments emerged in the US during the nineteenth century, they were largely inefficient and corrupt until they centralized and professionalized during the reform era in the early twentieth century (Go, 2020, pp. 1196-7). Go (2020) argues that this restructuring during the reform era was a form of imperial feedback. In imperial feedback, models of pacification and techniques for power that are used successfully in colonial and imperial encounters are transported back to the metropole where they are implemented on the domestic population. As the American military became increasingly entangled in colonial endeavors that stretched its resources and capacity, reforms were implemented that centralized, professionalized, and improved the operational efficacy of the military (Go, 2020). Police reformers made direct reference to these military reforms when advocating for the implementation of policing reforms, such as centralization and daily training drills (Go, 2020, pp. 1204-5). Even the founder of the policing reform movement, August Vollmer, later acknowledged how influential the military reforms had been on his orientation to police reform.

After establishing the connection between military and police reforms at the time, Go (2020) seeks to explain the mechanisms through which imperial feedback worked in the US. He argues field homologies and having police chiefs which were military veterans explain imperial importation in this period (Go, 2020). Field homologies refer to similarities between colonial and domestic fields that allow importers to draw connections between the two. Colonial spaces are “racially hierarchical, with colonizers monopolizing power and privileges[, and] they are legitimated by racial ideologies constructing the colonized as “uncivilized,” [...] “irrational,” “childlike,” and “degenerate” (Go, 2020, pp. 1211-2). Yet, domestic spaces can take on these characteristics and

become “internal colonies” when there is a growing number of racialized minorities who are seen as threatening to the domestic order. The more homologous the domestic and colonial spaces are, the more likely it is that methods developed for the latter will be transferred to the former (Go, 2020). Further, importers are more likely to be military veterans because they are the most familiar with military methods and reforms. Police reformers at this time often viewed colonial subjects and racial minorities in the same terms as unassimilable, predisposed to criminality, and in need of civilizing which made constructing field homologies much easier (Go, 2020, p. 1214-5). This qualitative investigation is supported by a subsequent quantitative analysis of 205 cities with populations over 30000 that establishes veteran status of the police chief and high percentage of non-white population as significant predictors of militarization as represented by the presence of mounted police units in a city (Go, 2020). Taken together, Go (2020), Gamal (2016), and Balko (2013) establish militarization as both a racialized and historically layered process that has occurred in distinct waves over time.

3.3 Media Framing

This section discusses prior work on the media framing of protest movements. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical underpinning of this frame analysis: the protest paradigm. It, then, discusses the application of the protest paradigm to BLM protests, the framing of police at protests, visual framing, and framing effects. It ends with a summation of this chapter.

3.3.1 Protest Paradigm

For decades, media and social movement scholars have been interested in the ways that traditional and contemporary media portray social movements. Social movements rely, in part, on the mass media to help them disseminate their message to a broader audience and attract new supporters, so they tend to develop strategies that will attract media attention (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Yet, the media does not always cover protests in a way that accurately reflects their intentions and goals. In fact, the mainstream media has long been criticized for its generally unsavory coverage of protest movements. This tendency was first identified by Gitlin (1980) in his analysis of the news framing of the New Left movement Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the 1960s. In this work, Gitlin argues that the aggregation of corporate media through the logic of capitalism created

a dominant commercial culture which limits the public's sources of information and forces social movements to reckon with commercial newsmaking logic in order to reach a captured public. However, by "submitting to the implicit rules of newsmaking", they give up their ability to make their own meanings and instead are seen solely through the frames utilized by the mass media (Gitlin, 1980, p. 3). As the corporate mass media is embedded in a web of capitalistic economic relations as well as political relations to the state, it tends to support the status quo as a means of securing its own power which leads it to denigrate radical opposition to the established order. Gitlin refers to this interaction between the media and social movements as the "movement-media dance" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 17). Gitlin examined this dynamic through an analysis of CBS News's and the *New York Times*'s coverage of the SDS which focused on trivial aspects of the movement's members, such as appearance and age, instead of their critiques of war (Gitlin, 1980). Even as news coverage denigrated the movement through an emphasis on violence and association of the movement with communism, members were still compelled to interact with the media in hopes of spreading the movement's message. Indeed, the media's focus on newsworthiness led to the creation of movement celebrities who, though attempting to use their fame to amplify the message of the SDS, often focused on personal benefits and short-term gains which heightened internal dissension. The media's continued focus on radicalism and strife in the organization vilified the movement ultimately contributing to its collapse. This type of news coverage which serves to delegitimize protest and dissent has subsequently come to be known as the "protest paradigm" (Boyle, et al., 2005; Gitlin, 1980, p. 17; Lee, 2014; Leopold & Bell, 2017). The protest paradigm is characterized by five elements: news frames, reliance on official sources, use of public opinion, delegitimization, and demonization (Leopold & Bell, 2017).

First, frames allow us to sort through large amounts of information to make sense of events and determine whether they are worth further consideration (Lane, et al., 2020). Framing accomplishes this principally through "selection" and "salience" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames highlight certain aspects of an issue, while deflecting attention away from others, thus, constructing an incomplete account of an event or issue. Frames may increase the salience of specific information through repetition, placement, or association with culturally relevant symbols (Entman, 1993). Through this, frames can significantly impact which information an audience remembers about an issue as

well as their assessment of the problem and resources for acting upon it. For these reasons, framing plays a major role in the exertion of political power as political opponents compete through the media to frame issues in their own terms (Entman, 1993).

There are four frames canonically associated with the protest paradigm: riot, confrontation, circus, and debate (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). The riot frame overemphasizes lawlessness, danger, destruction, and disorder (Leopold & Bell, 2017). It frames the protest as a conflict between the protestors and society in which peaceful protests degenerate into violence that, even when quashed, continues to loom over lawful society (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). The confrontation frame focuses on a conflict between the protestors and the police. It tends to recount violence towards the police on the part of protestors and refers to police-protestor interactions as “clashes” or “battles” (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). The circus frame highlights the theatrical or spectacular aspects of the protest (Leopold & Bell, 2017). It often focuses on the unusual looks or actions of protestors and downplays their social critiques (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Finally, the debate frame, unlike the other frames, focuses primarily on the social critiques of the protestors and their ideological conflicts with society or amongst themselves. This frame tends to situate protestors as legitimate actors and includes a deeper discussion of the issues that the protestors are highlighting (Hertog & McLeod, 2001).

Though the aforementioned frames tend to be the essential frames used in any studies of the protest paradigm, scholars have attempted to identify additional frames. Di Cicco (2010) argued that the protest paradigm frames were relatively focused on specific protests, and that scholars had ignored “news coverage of *the idea of protest itself*” (p. 136). He identified what he termed “the public nuisance” frame wherein protests in general are dismissed as irritations. Whereas protest paradigm frames tend to dismiss specific protest groups or protestors, Di Cicco (2010) asserts that this frame promotes a generally negative view towards protests as a tactic. In the public nuisance frame, all protests are portrayed as a disruption of daily life which is unwarranted as they are unlikely to lead to real change and as an unpatriotic sign of ingratitude for American freedoms (Di Cicco, 2010). The author finds that these characterizations of protest increased 17% between 1964 and 2004 in the five biggest newspapers in the US regardless of the ideological position of the protest. Though

this frame appears to be specific to the American context, it does offer additional insights that are not found in the other protest paradigm frames. Conversely, many of these additional frames seem to be artificial reconstructions of extant frames and, consequently, largely unnecessary. For example, Leopold & Bell (2017) identify a crime story frame which focuses on criminality and criminal acts committed by protestors. Yet, considering that both the riot frame and confrontation frame discuss violence and illegal actions by protestors, this frame seems to be too similar to those frames to be a relevant separate frame. This is indicated by the content analysis of newspaper articles about BLM conducted by the authors in which no examples of the crime story frame were found (Leopold & Bell, 2017). As a result, this study relies on the canonical protest paradigm frames with the addition of the public nuisance frame as it captures a uniquely American perspective on protests which has already been found to appear in coverage of BLM protests (Leopold & Bell, 2017).

Another characteristic of the protest paradigm is reliance on official sources. Quoting official sources is often counterproductive to protest goals as most protests tend to be in opposition to the status quo. By privileging official sources, journalists give officials the opportunity to define the problem and the discourse around it while stifling oppositional voices in the process. As such, the discussion of the protest becomes instead about protestors' deviance, not their social critiques (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Though this may sometimes be a conscious effort at upholding the status quo, researchers typically attribute this behavior to journalistic routines (Boyle et al., 2005; Kilgo et al., 2019). The pace of contemporary news production is swift, and journalists report on a variety of topics of which they are not experts. As a result, journalists often rely on official sources who can provide information on a number of issues quickly and easily to reduce reporting needs and bolster claims of objectivity (Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2012; Kilgo et al., 2019). Further, the nature of journalistic beats cultivates a "symbiotic relationship" between reporters and their official sources where journalists provide publicity for officials and officials provide much of the narrative for news stories (Kilgo et al., 2019, p. 417). Due to officials' already outsized access to the media, protestors' voices are marginalized. Thus, even when they manage to garner the attention of the media, the overrepresentation of official narratives often leads to the delegitimization of the protest movement.

The third characteristic of the protest paradigm is the use of public opinion. Journalists will often interview bystanders and use their statements to generalize about how the non-protesting public feels about the subject of the protests and the protests themselves (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Typically, these bystanders are interviewed simply for being in the general vicinity of a protest. Consequently, much of their commentary is superficial and based on a cursory understanding of the social issue at the center of the protest and the movement itself (Leopold & Bell, 2017). This again empowers outsiders to define the protest instead of the protestors.

The fourth characteristic of the protest paradigm is delegitimization of protests. The delegitimization of protest is a product of the use of news frames, reliance on official sources, and use of bystander opinion. When news covering the protests empowers outsiders to define the protests, instead of the protestors themselves, the basis and goals for the protest become obscured (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Accordingly, protests become wholly defined by protestors' actions, and discussions of societal problems and protestors' solutions are neglected. Without context for the protests, news audiences may view the protests as pointless (Leopold & Bell, 2017). In the end, protests will fail to garner the support necessary to motivate societal change and will likely fade away while audiences continue in the belief that protests are unproductive and purposeless, undermining future protests.

The final characteristic of the protest paradigm is demonization of protest. Demonization of protest is related to the episodic nature of media coverage. Episodic coverage "focus[es] on individual episodes and singular events" without contextualization (Kilgo et al., 2019, p. 417). This furthers the characterization of protest entirely through protestors' actions. Episodic coverage that focuses on property damage or confrontations with police can lead audiences to focus on these events instead of the overarching reason(s) for protesting. Even if these events are relatively uncommon, the media tends to overreport them. This is a result of the capitalistic nature of media production where novel and dramatic stories are perceived as more "newsworthy" and, thus, more valuable (Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2012). Ultimately, this type of coverage perpetuates conceptions of protestors as social deviants and decreases sympathy for the protestors as well as for the social

issue(s) they are protesting (Leopold & Bell, 2017). Like delegitimization, this impedes changes to the dominant power structures in societies and generates negative feelings in audiences about a particular protest and, potentially, protests in general. As a result, protests are increasingly seen as deviant and disruptive attempts to change society while dominant power structures and the grievances that underly protests remain.

Though many earlier studies considered the protest paradigm to be applied equally to all types of protest, more recent scholarship has examined the extent to which the protest paradigm is employed based on various protest characteristics, such as topic of protest or protest tactics (Boyle et al., 2005; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). Notably, Kilgo & Harlow (2019) sought to illuminate how the topic of a protests relates to the utilization of the protest paradigm as well as how coverage differed according to the location of the newspaper through examination of coverage of several different protest types in a number of Texan newspapers. The authors found that coverage of anti-Black racism protests and Indigenous anti-pipeline protests most closely corresponded with the negative framing of the protest paradigm while health, gender, environment, and immigration protests were the most legitimized. They also found that the location of the newspaper only affected if a protest was covered, but not how (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). This lends support to the argument that the paradigm is a systematic feature of journalistic reporting due to an overreliance on habits and norms. Their findings also support the claim that protest paradigm strength is related to the extent to which the ideological position and goals of the protest challenge the status quo (Boyle et al., 2005; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). Finally, they validate additional studies (which will be discussed subsequently) which found that anti-Black racism protests receive consistently negative framing.

3.3.2 Protest Paradigm and Black Lives Matter Protests

Since the inception of the Black Lives Matter movement, a growing body of research has sought to determine the extent to which the protest paradigm is used in coverage of BLM protests. Nearly all of these studies have found that media coverage demonized and delegitimized the protests (Araiza et al., 2016; Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017; Kilgo, 2021; Kilgo, 2017; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Kilgo et al., 2019; Leopold & Bell, 2017). Even on social media, traditional journalists

reaffirmed the protest paradigm in their coverage of the Michael Brown protests (Araiza et al., 2016). These results demonstrate the strength of journalistic habits and routines even as coverage becomes increasingly digitized and decentralized. Indeed, for traditional media figures, it suggests that the platform of coverage does not significantly alter the ways in which they cover protests.

However, not all studies have found that coverage of BLM was consistent with the protest paradigm. Some studies found differences in the extent to which the paradigm was used depending on the phase of the protest cycle in which the article was written. For example, Kilgo et al. (2019) investigated the media framing of BLM from the movement's inception in 2012 to the death of Michael Brown in 2014. The authors found that though overall the coverage was delegitimizing, post-trial coverage tended to be more legitimizing despite increased violence after the judicial decisions in the Michael Brown case. They argued that this finding was in line with the understandings of the protest paradigm as a form of hegemonic control wherein protests are only legitimized once there is no longer space for them to formally accomplish their demands (Kilgo et al., 2019). In contrast, when Elmasry & el-Nawawy (2017) examined articles from two newspapers over three time periods of intense protest activity surrounding the death of Michael Brown, they purported that coverage of the protests was framed altogether positively. They attributed this mainly to more protestor representation in the coverage and to the cause becoming too big for the media to downplay (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017). Yet, Kilgo et al. (2019) argue that Elmasry & el-Nawawy (2017)'s findings are actually supportive of their findings as two of the time periods examined by the latter study followed the judicial decisions in the Michael Brown case and likely reflect the tonal shift in coverage as identified by them. Consequently, there is preliminary support for the notion that the tone of coverage shifts after key events in the protest cycle. This is especially important for anti-Black racism protests which, in contrast to other protests, often entail a definite cycle of a high-profile incident followed by a judicial proceeding. Thus, future studies should examine pre- and post-trial coverage separately to determine if a shift from protest paradigm coverage to legitimizing coverage is a common feature of news coverage of these protests.

Further, some studies have examined the framing of race in stories of police killings. Obasogie & Newman (2016) examined media coverage of BLM through the intersecting lenses of

respectability politics, post-racialism, and colorblindness. Respectability politics is a philosophy which prioritizes uplifting Black people through the correction of individual character traits in order to assimilate into White behavioral norms. As a result, it ignores the role of overarching systems of exploitation in the perpetuation of Black subjugation, instead hoping that positive characterizations of Black people would “trickle-up” to delegitimize racist beliefs (Obasogie & Newman, 2016, p. 546). This works in tandem with the prevailing ideas of colorblindness (the view that as race has no biological meaning, it has no social meaning and should be ignored) and post-racialism (the notion that society has moved beyond race, so it should no longer be considered) to create an understanding of racism that situates the problems within individuals. In this understanding, racism is a problem of individual bad people, and the failure of Black people to achieve is attributable to individual character flaws instead of systems of subjugation. In media narratives of police killings, this is seen through coverage that picks apart the victim’s life and creates an underlying sense that they are responsible for their own deaths (Obasogie & Newman, 2016, p. 553). These narratives, then, delineate which bodies deserve protection from extrajudicial killings and which do not. As BLM is, in part, a project to dismantle notions that only certain bodies are worthy of protection, the authors sought to investigate if the emergence of BLM had changed the ways in which police shooting incidents were reported in the media by analyzing media accounts in local papers of police killings from June 2013 to July 2015. They found that the racial dynamics of encounters were left largely unexplored, that articles often relied solely on police accounts of events, and that articles often brought up irrelevant past criminal convictions or other “moral failings” (Obasogie & Newman, 2016). Though the former study is limited by the archival availability of data on police killings prior to the emergence of BLM, it is nevertheless important for highlighting the ideologies and mechanisms that likely underly demonization and delegitimization in the protest paradigm. If coverage of the death itself is already questioning the very basis of protest movements’ assertions, then it becomes easier to call into question the efficacy and necessity of the protest movement itself and to create negative depictions of protestors. For example, if articles about the death itself call into question the innocence of the victim, then coverage of protests characterizes protestors as destructive and violent, the audience may view protestors as misguided and form negative evaluations of a protest’s motivations and goals. This is demonstrated by the findings of Lane et al. (2020) in which media portrayals of Trayvon Martin

following his death emphasized aspects of his life that questioned his victim status and used negative racial stereotypes in characterizations of BLM. Moreover, as mentioned previously, the extent to which the protest paradigm is employed is related to the extent to which the protest challenges the status quo. Thus, the authors, by highlighting the racial ideologies underpinning American society, illustrate how BLM is an immense challenge to the status quo in America which helps explain findings that demonstrate that anti-Black racism protests are the most negatively characterized protests (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). Ultimately, this study highlights the interlocking ideologies that underlie both American society and the protest paradigm as a manifestation of it.

3.3.3 Framing of Police

Though the framing of police is given less attention than that of protestors, several studies have also characterized the framing of police in the context of how protests are framed. The results on the predominant framing of police in the news media are mixed. Several studies have found that police are overall framed positively if they are given attention at all (Douai, 2014; Kilgo, 2021; Kilgo, 2017, Mills, 2017; Wan et al., 2018). However, there are indications that the framing of police is shifting toward negative portrayals. For example, Wan et al. (2018) found that police were framed more negatively in coverage of the Ferguson protests than they were in coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Similarly, Arora et al. (2018) found that coverage of Ferguson was more in favor of protestors than police. These findings may suggest that after decades of incidents of police violence against Black people that news media organizations are beginning to hold them accountable. Yet, further studies have found that even when police have been portrayed negatively through discussions of the use of violence or depictions of police in militarized gear, news coverage has tended to frame police as guarantors of law and order wielding the disciplinary violence of the state (Coward et al., 2016; Santa Ana et al., 2010; Trivundža & Brlek, 2017). Thus, police are typically still framed as legitimate actors even if they act or appear violent: a benefit which is not afforded ordinary protestors.

Studies on the framing of crime in television (TV) news have uncovered another interesting aspect of the framing of police: the police are overwhelmingly portrayed as being White. This was first discovered by Dixon & Linz (2000) in their analysis of Los Angeles-based television newscasts

about crime from 1995 and 1996. In this study, the authors found that White people were portrayed in TV news crime stories as police officers at a higher rate than they were employed as them. A later study confirmed these results at the national level (Dixon et al., 2003). Further, Dixon (2017) found that White people continued to be overrepresented as police officers in TV news relative to their level of employment well into the 2000s. White people, thus, are portrayed as the “heroes” in news about crime. Dixon (2017) argues that this is due to the unconscious racism of news producers reproducing narratives that favor White people while demonizing BIPOC in an attempt to appeal to the largely White audience of news viewers. This has troubling implications for the creation and maintenance of stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about out-groups which will be discussed later. Considering that police officers are often present at protests, it is possible that visuals of protest may also contribute to an overrepresentation of police officers as White. This could be particularly problematic when covering anti-Black racism protests as it could replicate the dichotomy in crime stories between White protectors and Black criminals. Further, if a reader has viewed these depictions in other types of news stories, such as crime stories, viewing them within the context of stories of protest can activate and reinforce beliefs and opinions related to the depictions they have seen in other media. As many of these studies on the racial dimensions of role depictions in news focus on crime stories, there is a need to expand this knowledge into news reporting on protest to see if protest roles are similarly racialized.

3.3.4 Visual Framing

Despite the vast literature on the framing of protests, the majority of studies have focused primarily on textual framing. Visual framing of protests is comparatively understudied in the protest paradigm literature. It is important to investigate visual framing, though, as the perceived objectivity of visuals means that the ways in which they contribute to the selective retelling of an event are more obscured than for written or spoken material (Wan, et al., 2018). Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature seeking to redress this gap. Many of these studies have found that visual framing tends to delegitimize protest similarly to textual framing (Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2012; Cowart et al., 2016; Douai, 2014; Kilgo, 2017; Trivundža & Brlek, 2017). However, Wan et al. (2018) found that, when compared to the 1992 Los Angeles riots, images of the Ferguson protests predominantly employed the civil liberties frame, which emphasizes citizens’

democratic right to dissent (Douai, 2014). This may suggest that framing is becoming more sympathetic to protests visually, but more comparative studies would need to be done to ascertain if this is an anomalous finding or indicative of a larger trend.

These studies have two notable shortcomings. First, many of the studies inductively create new frames from their data. This hinders the creation of an overarching theorization of the visual framing of protest that would allow for more direct comparison between different framing studies. It also fails to strengthen the already extant theorization of the news framing of protest which is lacking an understanding of the visual component of protest framing. Situating these studies more firmly within the protest paradigm would, then, further refine the protest paradigm as well as make it easier to compare framing across space and time. Further, these studies also tend to singularly focus on visual framing. In an increasingly multimodal media environment, readers seldom encounter these frames separately. As textual and visual frames interact to create the overall frame of the article, researchers may be misinterpreting the overall framing of a piece by focusing on only one type of framing. Consequently, there exists a significant gap in the literature on the combined impact of textual and visual framing. This thesis seeks to address this gap.

3.3.5 Framing Effects

While news framing is interesting in and of itself, studies have shown that news framing has myriad effects on readers which can influence how issues are perceived and dealt with in a society. News framing effects can be broken down into five categories: issue interpretations, cognitive effects, attitudinal effects, affective effects, and behavioral effects (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2019, p. 35). First, news frames have been found to impact individuals' issue interpretations (Aust & Zillmann, 1996; de Vreese, 2004; Iyengar, 1987; Price et al., 1997; Valkenburg et al., 1999). Issue interpretations refer to the ways in which news framing can affect how people think about an issue by activating different knowledge pathways (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2019). For instance, Price et al. (1997) demonstrated that different news frames of a story on state budget cuts had appreciable effects on the thoughts and ideas readers expressed in that the topic of these thoughts corresponded highly with the frame of the story to which they were exposed. This left the authors to conclude that the frames “evoke[d] distinctive patterns in the activation of thoughts” (p. 496). Findings such

as these illustrate the power of news frames to shape the thoughts of news consumers and, as a result, the discourse around an issue as well.

Second, researchers have sought to determine how news frames impact cognition, such as through recall and learning. There is some evidence that different textual frames can impact recall, but visuals have been shown to have greater, though mixed, effect (Arpan et al., 2006; Gibson & Zillmann, 2000; Newhagen & Reeves, 1992; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Wanta & Roark, 1993). Images, in general, appear to be more effectively stored and retrieved from both long-term and short-term memory than words (Paivio et al., 1968). This quality of images is reflected in studies which show that visuals can be more memorable than narrative information when the two are mismatched (Arpan et al., 2006; Brosius, 1993; Newhagen & Reeves, 1992; Wanta & Roark, 1993). In contrast, visuals that complement the information in a news story enhance overall recall of the presented information (Brosius, et al., 1996; Drew & Grimes, 1987; Gibson & Zillmann, 2000; Wanta & Roark, 1993). Yet, the content of the image can also influence the level of recall even if it is related to the news story (Zillmann et al., 2001). For example, Arpan & Tüzünkan (2011) demonstrated that images which depicted greater levels of protestor deviance led to more negative perceptions of protestors which caused readers to spend less time reading stories thereby decreasing their level of comprehension. This has direct consequences for the protest paradigm. If news coverage contains greater negative portrayals of protestors, then readers are likely to have more negative evaluations of the protestors and may be less likely to seek out additional information about the protests or protestors which could ameliorate this perception. This, then, may be one mechanism through which the protest paradigm functions, and is yet another reason why visual framing should be investigated alongside textual framing.

News framing can also impact news consumers' attitudes and behavior towards issues. News framing has been shown to have an impact on support for groups associated with or public policy responses to the issues presented in a news story (Arpan et al., 2006; Domke et al., 2002; Gross, 2008; Kilgo & Mourão, 2021; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Powell et al., 2015; Smith-Rodden & Ash, 2017). However, in testing the effect of protest paradigm frames on support for protestors and police in articles about BLM protests, Kilgo & Mourão (2021) found that predispositions about

BLM were stronger predictors of support and identification with protestors than frames, though criticism of protestors was more influenced by frames. Thus, frames are not accepted wholesale, but interact with prior knowledge and attitudes in generating effects. This has been demonstrated in research on behavioral intentions from news framing as well. In Borah & Irom (2021), individualizing frames of refugees had a positive effect on behavioral intentions to donate, but only for those who already had a positive disposition toward refugees while other frames worked on those with less positive feelings toward refugees. This gives rise to a chicken-and-egg situation though as prior news consumption may be partially responsible for their pre-existing attitudes and behavioral intentions which complicates research on framing effects.

The effects of news framing on attitudes or behavioral intentions are typically mediated through emotions (Aust & Zillmann, 1996; Gross, 2008; Kinder & Sanders, 1990; Parrot et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2015; Smith-Rodden & Ash, 2017; Stamps & Mastro, 2020). For instance, Stamps and Mastro (2020) sought to uncover how news coverage of different races engaging in different forms of social unrest affects the emotional responses of audiences. The study varied both images and text depicting the race and type of social unrest. Though the affective responses generated were counterintuitive, the results indicated that “news images of dramatized social unrest can provoke heightened, complex emotional responses”, such as disgust and shame (Stamps & Mastro, 2020, p. 634). In another study, Powell et al. (2015) found that viewing images from a conflict that featured either victims or fighters had an indirect effect on emotions which impacted resultant attitudes and behavioral intentions. For example, those that viewed the image of victims felt greater sympathy, and those that felt sympathy were more supportive of intervention in the conflict and had stronger behavioral intentions toward the conflict (measured as willingness to donate, sign a petition, discuss with a friend, etc.). These studies highlight not only the multitudinous, interconnected effects of slanted media consumption on emotions, affective responses, and behavior, but also of our limited understanding of them. These results also underscore the impact of visuals which were utilized in experimental manipulations in many of the aforementioned studies. In light of these results and due to the increasingly multimodal nature of contemporary media, it is necessary to devote more research to understanding the impact of framing as well as the mechanisms behind its effects.

In short, prior research has demonstrated that news coverage of protests tends to frame protests negatively in a way that delegitimizes and demonizes protestors as well as their motivations and goals. This phenomenon is particularly acute for anti-Black racism protests which have consistently been found to be framed negatively. This framing may only change after judicial proceedings conclude, and formal avenues for justice are unavailable. Regardless, the research on BLM protests overwhelmingly focuses on the two incidents that inspired the movement, namely the killings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. There are few articles that directly investigate the framing of protests precipitated by subsequent incidents of anti-Black violence. Though these findings indicate that the protest paradigm remains important in structuring coverage of protests, more evidence is needed to determine if framing has changed as a result of greater knowledge of and institutionalization of the movement. Moreover, the majority of studies investigating the protest paradigm focus solely on textual framing and ignore the crucial role of visuals in contemporary media. This is especially relevant for studies of race as it is widely recognized that visuals can articulate racial claims that would be inappropriate to make textually (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). As a result, studies of the protest paradigm that focus on textual framing, particularly in relation to anti-Black racism protests, are missing a crucial source of framing and attempting to disaggregate types of framing which are increasingly entangled in our multimodal media environment. This thesis seeks to address these gaps by examining the textual and visual framing of a more recent case of anti-Black racism protests, the protests following the death of George Floyd. In this way, this thesis hopes to contribute to the emerging literature on the visual framing of protests and the protest paradigm in coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement.

4. Research Design and Methods

This section discusses the process of data collection as well as the methodological basis of this study. This section will first describe the process of data collection and basis for the selection of data for analysis. Subsequently, frame analysis will be introduced as the methodological foundation of this study. Finally, this section will touch upon the positionality of the researcher, the ethical implications of the study, and the study's limitations.

4.1 Data Collection and Article Selection

As the protest paradigm regards the use of frames in news media, online news articles from CNN and Fox News were chosen for analysis. CNN and Fox News were chosen as they are among the top ten most-visited English language news sites in the world (Majid, 2021). Additionally, CNN and Fox News reflect two politically disparate ideological orientations in the American political landscape as reflected by polls where left-leaning Americans identify CNN as a main source of news in contrast to right-leaning Americans who more often rely on Fox News (Jurkowitz et al., 2020). Choosing news sources on “opposite” ends of the political spectrum adds an ideological component to my analysis that allows me to make preliminary observations about the use of frames based on the ideological orientation of a news source. This is especially relevant to protest paradigm research as most extant literature does not refer to the ideological orientation of the news source under study and the effect it may have on the frames employed in its coverage. Furthermore, much of the research on the protest paradigm focuses on liberal-leaning or “neutral” news sources, thus, creating a gap in understanding of the framing behavior of right-leaning news sources. As the political parties in the US structure the debate around issues differently, it is reasonable to conclude that news sources overwhelmingly favored by adherents of a particular political party will employ frames differently as ideological alignment between political party and news source preferred by an individual is expected.

Data collection and selection took place in three parts: mass article collection, article review, and article selection for analysis. First, all potentially relevant articles were collected via the websites of CNN and Fox News using their inbuilt search functions. Articles were collected for the period 25 May 2020 to 30 June 2020. 25 May represents the date of George Floyd’s death while 30 June signifies the date by which the majority of protest activity had dropped off (Kishi & Jones, 2020). The keyword used to find relevant articles was “George Floyd protests”. This keyword was chosen to reflect the episodic nature of protest. The protest paradigm theorizes that protests tend to be delegitimized by articles which fail to adequately cover their beliefs and goals. Additionally, previous research has shown that articles of protest often employ an episodic frame which focuses on singular events instead of the overarching reasons for protesting. Consequently, I surmised that articles would be more likely to make mention of the specific death that led to the protests than to

the Black Lives Matter movement overall. This is supported by a greater number of search results for the phrase “George Floyd protests” than “Black Lives Matter protests” on CNN.com despite the number of killings that have led to protests under the umbrella of BLM. Moreover, there was another police killing that took place during the period of the George Floyd protests and I wanted the keyword to clearly separate between the protests emanating from the two deaths.

After choosing the dates and keyword, they were input into the search functions of the CNN and Fox News websites. The search on CNN returned just over 1500 articles, but CNN’s search function did not allow a delimitation by date, so this count includes articles outside the dates under study. Retrieving articles from Fox News was more complicated. Though the search function did allow for the search to be confined by dates, the search function only allowed you to retrieve the first 100 articles, but the articles were in no particular order. So, in order to obtain as many relevant articles as possible, I separated the time period into three-day blocks which were input into the search function with the keyword. For example, I searched for articles with “George Floyd protests” from 25 May 2020 to 27 May 2020, then the next time block was 28 May 2020 to 30 May 2020, and so on. Further, it is difficult to tell how many total articles Fox News published on the topic of the protests. Though the initial search results for the entire period indicated that there were roughly 4000 articles, when the time period was broken down into blocks, there were instances where the total number of articles in a three-day block exceeded the total number of articles for the entire time period. Thus, it is impossible to know the true number of articles Fox News published about the protests. Additionally, there was a noticeable drop in the number of retrievable articles in the latter half of the time period. While there were over 100 relevant articles in the time blocks in the first half of the dates, by mid-June, not all time periods had 100 retrievable articles. This complicates data collection as I was able to get all relevant articles for the latter period, but not for the first half. Since I have no way of knowing how the Fox News search algorithm decides which 100 articles to retrieve first, it is not possible to know the representativeness of my article sample. Finally, for my data collection, not all articles captured by my search term that fell within the dates was collected. As I am concerned in this study with the nature of the protests themselves and police-protestor interactions in the US, I focused on the collection of articles that primarily discussed these topics. As a result, data collection excluded the

following types of articles or topics: opinion pieces and editorials; coverage of protests outside of the US; protest effects, such as city council measures or laws; celebrity statements or coverage of their participation in a protest; comments by political figures; coverage of corporate responses to the protests; and coverage of sports teams' response to the protests. After data collection, I had 118 CNN articles and 161 Fox News articles.

Next, I reviewed all collected articles to determine whether they would be relevant for analysis. In this stage, I verified that the articles in my data did not correspond to the excluded article types and to see if there were other types of articles that should be excluded from analysis due to relevance. In this phase, a table was made to track important characteristics of the articles I read to help me narrow down the number of articles from which I would choose the ones to analyze. In this table, I recorded the headline, a small summary of the content of the article, whether the article contained media and what kind, if the text of the article fell within the area of my study, the date of the article, and any additional notes I had about the article. As this study is concerned with the multimodal nature of the protest paradigm, any articles that did not contain images or contained media unrelated to the topic of the article were not considered for analysis. For example, nearly all CNN and Fox News articles contained videos at the top that were either clips from a TV news segment at the time of the article or a rundown of top news stories during the time. If an article only contained this media, it was excluded from the final data. For articles that have these clips in addition to other relevant media, these TV clips will not be analyzed as they are a fundamentally distinct medium for analysis and are not the medium of interest in this study. Many CNN articles also contained small images which linked to other articles or "highlight" videos which contained videos or images of an incident interspersed with text summarizing the incident or quoting a source. These were also not included in the analysis. Further, during this review phase, I discovered additional article types which were not relevant to the study and were, thus, excluded from the final data: articles that cover an arrest or outcome of a case regardless of relation to the protests; live update feeds on the protest; news overview articles; in-depth articles about certain aspects of the protest that did not directly cover a specific protest event (i.e., an in-depth article about rubber bullets and other crowd-control weapons); and coverage of the Trump administration. After this

phase of data review, there were 20 CNN articles and 62 Fox News articles from which the analysis articles could be chosen.

From the relevant articles, 10 articles from each news source were chosen for analysis. In selecting articles for analysis, I initially looked for events that both news sources covered as this would allow for a more direct comparison of framing. There were only three articles from each source covering the same incidents. The remaining articles for analysis were chosen based on their representativeness of the overall types of articles that the respective news source published about the protests.

4.2 Frame Analysis

The nature of frame analysis is a highly debated topic within the social sciences. Scholars disagree over whether it is an approach, a theory, a perspective, or something else (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Consequently, there is no coherent method of studying framing in the social sciences (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Nevertheless, scholars agree on the enormous impact that frames and framing have in shaping individual consciousness and social reality. In fact, it is their ability to unconsciously impact the perception of issues that makes frames both powerful tools for news creators and crucial analytical subjects for researchers.

As defined by Entman (1993), framing is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient [...] in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Framing is achieved through the invocation of frames in a textual or visual work. Frames themselves are primarily composed of concepts clustered into conceptual nodes which link with other conceptual nodes through association. Conceptual nodes most central to the understanding of a frame are densely packed but become more loosely packed as one moves towards peripherally linked concepts. The meaning of the frame, then, is “a function of the nodes and links activated and the pattern of relations among them” (Hertog & McLeod, 2001, p. 142). Frames can also be thought of as frame packages which contain a combination of framing and reasoning devices. Framing devices are the concepts that make up the frame, like historical examples or visuals, while the reasoning devices

are the routes through which the concepts are associated though not always explicitly (Van Gorp, 2010). Frames are, then, invoked through the use of certain keywords, phrases, images, sources, arguments, metaphors, etc. which activate reasoning devices that generate specific conclusions about the issue (Entman, 1993; Van Gorp, 2010). As such, “framing is a form of metacommunication” where communicators supply not only the relevant information on a topic, but also the means of interpreting it (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 65).

Frames are largely cultural phenomena. The most dominant concepts that make up the central meaning of a frame are cultural myths, narratives, and metaphors due to their immense symbolic power and strong affective attachments. Moreover, as cultural phenomena, frames have widespread recognition. Communication relies on the speaker and the audience sharing the same frames as they provide a basis of knowledge from which people can engage in discussion using a shared set of assumptions (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Socialization, then, can be seen as the process through which new members of society are taught the frames utilized by a society to construct social reality. Further, frames remain quite stable over time as communication relies on their continuity of meaning to structure social interaction. It is these characteristics of frames as cultural phenomena that make them particularly impactful because socialization into them makes their use appear normal and natural (Van Gorp, 2007). Thus, their role in constructing social reality is concealed and their true impact unknown.

Yet, the extent to which frames are an entirely cultural phenomenon remains debated in the literature. Some scholars argue for a constructionist approach wherein texts are seen as complex systems of meaningful elements which can be studied in their own right (Van Gorp, 2010). On the other side are those who advocate for a constructivist approach wherein the meaning structure of a text can only be revealed in the interaction between the text and the reader. This thesis is based on a mediated approach between constructionism and constructivism as argued by Van Gorp (2010). In this approach, it is recognized that frames are cultural phenomena and that the stock of frames exists outside of the individual. However, individuals are not merely windows through which to view frames as they contain their own mental schemata that is constructed of their acquired knowledge, experiences, and feelings (Van Gorp, 2007). Therefore, though framing

imparts its own interpretation, there is a process of interaction between the frame and the schemata of an individual wherein an individual's schemata may correspond with or alter the interpretation of the frame. Consequently, the interpretation of a frame is always subject to the interaction between the individual cognitive and sociocultural levels (Van Gorp, 2010).

Though framing applies to all forms of communication, visual framing is understudied compared to textual framing. Visual refers to any “media content that is processed by the eye alone” (Coleman, 2010, p. 236). This includes, for example, still photos, moving pictures, color, facial expressions, and infographics. Several characteristics of visuals are thought to contribute to their overall impact on framing: “analogical quality”, “indexicality”, and “lack of explicit propositional syntax” (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 215). Analogical quality refers to the fact that images directly resemble the things they represent unlike text. This allows images to appear more natural and realistic even though all images are artificially constructed by humans (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). The indexicality of images refers to the perception that digitally taken images are closer to truth than other types of images due to the automatic nature of their creation. Consequently, viewers may be unaware of the subtle ways that images may be manipulated, such as through staging or cropping, and, thus, less likely to question what they see (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). Finally, while written/verbal communication possesses a syntax with conventions for making claims, visual communication does not. Causality can be implied in visual communication, but it relies on the “viewer's ability to make intuitive sense of implicit meanings on the basis of contextual or other cues” (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 219). Viewers may, then, be less aware of the having processed a full set of claims than if the claims were made textually/verbally. This allows communications to make some claims visually that would otherwise be considered inappropriate or taboo, such as those with racial connotations (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). In concert, these properties of visuals enhance the overall effects of framing by making the frame appear more natural or common sensical in much the same way as cultural associations with frames. This effect of visual images is supported by studies which have shown that visual material is processed more automatically than text and may be more memorable (Arpan et al., 2006; Coleman, 2010; Powell et al., 2015). In fact, some studies have shown that when the text and visual framing is incongruent, the visual framing is recalled rather than the text (Coleman, 2010). In light

of these studies, it is critical to examine the contribution of visuals to framing in the context of increasingly multimodal communications. This is especially true for stories about race where Messaris & Abraham (2001) argue that “racial appeals now often take place through visual imagery, without any explicit or overt reference to race” (p. 220). Indeed, analyzing just textual framing misses a whole wealth of information that viewers use to draw conclusions and make decisions and may give an incomplete picture of the nature of framing on stories about contentious political topics.

4.3 Coding

Frame models were created for analysis through a review of the literature on the protest paradigm and aggregation of codes or indicators enumerated by numerous authors. The frame models aim to capture the essential concepts and terms that compose a particular frame. Hertog & McLeod (2001) advocate for the use of frame models to guide analysis in order to aid in the delineation of frames through the identification of central and peripheral concepts to a frame. In this way, the relationships between frames can be ascertained and frames which share some similarities may be more easily identified through recognition of their core concepts instead of rigorous application of coding categories which may complicate frame assignment.

For the coding of protestors and protests themselves, codes were adapted from the existing literature on the protest paradigm. The majority of the codes were adapted from Kilgo et al. (2019). The rights frame was subsumed into the debate frame in line with most protest paradigm research. Those for the spectacle frame were drawn from Kilgo & Harlow (2019). An additional frame, the public nuisance frame, was adapted from Di Cicco (2010). In the absence of previous work on visual framing that aligned neatly with the protest paradigm categories, visual indicators for the frames were derived from Kilgo (2017). Kilgo (2017) conducted think-aloud sessions with 40 participants, evenly split between Black and White, regarding images related to the Ferguson protests following the police killing of Michael Brown. Participants were interviewed one-on-one and instructed to select a set of 20 to 40 images from a compilation of 200 that they were to process verbally. The frames identified by participants in the think-alouds largely corresponded to the media frames identified in the protest paradigm (Kilgo, 2017). Kilgo (2017)’s analysis, thus,

illuminates how viewers processed images and what elements became associated with certain frames. These visual elements were, then, added alongside the previously identified textual elements to create frame models for the protest paradigm which can be seen in Table 1.

Finally, articles will be coded for demonization devices. Sourcing is theorized to be one indication of the protest paradigm, so the following quote sources will be coded: officials (police officers, police union heads, elected officials, etc.), protestors, bystanders, journalists, organizations (such as news outlets or civil rights organizations), experts, or public figures (celebrities, civil rights leaders, etc.). This coding category will include direct and indirect quotes, but it will not include quotes of George Floyd's dying words or protest chants as they do not reflect journalists' sourcing. Finally, articles will be coded dichotomously as employing either an episodic or thematic frame.

Table 1. *Protest Paradigm Frame Models*

Frame	Examples
Riot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentions of property destruction, arson, arrests, protestor violence, or illegal behavior • “Riot” • Images of property destruction, fires, engaging in illegal behavior (like throwing molotov cocktails), militarized police
Confrontation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Clashes”, “Altercation”, “Confrontation” • Images of protestors and police face-to-face, arrests, police use-of-force • Images of police and protestors in friendly engagement, such as taking pictures
Public Nuisance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic caused by protests, disruption of businesses • Bystander sources describing feelings of annoyance, frustration, disturbance • Discussions of protests being unpatriotic or ineffective (ex: ignored by leaders), presence of anarchists • Mentions of protesting as harmful to the country or protestors as unappreciative of freedoms • Mention of the public cost of a protest
Spectacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentions of peculiar dress of protestors, looking odd, or spectacular forms of protest (like die-ins) • “Celebration”, “circus”, “party” • Mentions of dancing, cheering, music, displays of emotion • Images with displays of emotion like crying or shouting • Dramatic descriptions of protests or emphasis on size of protests • Images of suggestive body language (flipping people off), nudity, peculiar dress
Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions of protest reasons, especially the stated goals and ideology of protest or contextualization of protest reasons beyond single event (in this case the killing of George Floyd) • Types of issues that may be discussed: police brutality, systemic racism, racial inequality • Images of non-violent protest or protest signs without other visual cues

4.4 Ethics and Positionality

Given the sensitive nature of research regarding race, it is important to consider the ethical implications of the research. First, it is critical to acknowledge the role that social science research has played in the construction of race and how the process of racial construction was central to the “historical development of social thought and knowledge production” (Neal, 2020, p. 407). Any work on race is in conversation with this legacy and its contemporary effects. Further, it is essential to acknowledge the real impacts that race has on society and individuals. Though race may be presently recognized as a social construct with no biological meaning within academia, race as a meaningful category remains salient for many people and has concrete effects on the lives and life outcomes of BIPOC across the world (Neal, 2020). Indeed, even as this thesis aims to critique and question the representation of Black protest in the United States, by categorizing the protests using race, I am reifying race as a meaningful category by which to distinguish certain types of protests and protestors. Finally, there is a high likelihood that the data will include negative stereotypical depictions of Black people. Previous studies have shown that Black people are overrepresented in news media as criminals and underrepresented as victims (Entman, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Presentation of these stereotypical depictions through my thesis does have the potential to reinforce these negative associations with Black people even as it seeks to undermine their credibility. Consequently, there are clear tensions between the aims of this thesis and unintended effects that may arise when researching race. I hope to minimize these effects through careful use of language, proper contextualization of the data set within the reality of the protest movement, and thoughtful exploration of the nature of protest representation.

In addition to ethics, it is necessary to consider my positionality as a researcher. As Day (2012) writes, “investigating positionality involves a reflection upon social location and the self as situated within broader social structures” which contextualizes the researcher’s voice instead of reproducing a dispassionate voice of authority (p. 73). This is a complex and challenging process given that identity is fluid and intangible, and it is difficult to know which aspects of our identities predominant at any given point and how they may impact the research process (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). Moreover, there are numerous characteristics that may have an effect on the researcher’s relationship to the topic as well as the choices they make in their research, such as

age, national origin, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, ability, and educational background. Nonetheless, it is a critical exercise as it allows us to make manifest the internal practices of qualitative research that shape its social and political consequences (Day, 2012).

Of particular relevance to this research are my national origin and race. First, I am an American. As I come from the country of interest, I have a deep historical and situational knowledge of my topic that is useful for my understanding of it but comes with additional complications as well. As “most researchers view the world with the dominant cultural assumptions, expectations, and blindspots”, it can be easy to overlook obvious frames when researching news from your culture (Hertog & McLeod, 2001, p. 150; Van Gorp, 2010). Moreover, my knowledge of and opinions of the news media from which I drew my data has the potential to color my assumptions about the data in ways that would not happen were I to investigate news media with which I am unfamiliar. Finally, it is important for me to acknowledge the emotional aspect of researching events from your own country. I vividly remember following the developments of these protests and even had friends who participated in protests and were tear gassed. Undoubtedly, my inability to participate physically in the protests due to being in Finland played a role in my decision to make this the topic of my thesis. It was also emotionally taxing at times to revisit extensive accounts of these events and to continually see images and videos of the killing of George Floyd when they were interspersed in these news reports. Resultantly, I do have a position on this incident, the protests, and their coverage. Still, through reflection on these biases, I hope to mitigate the impact they may have on the outcome of my research. Yet, I recognize that true objectivity is impossible, and there may be some instances where bias inadvertently manifests (Day, 2012).

Though I may be an insider as an American, I am an outsider due to my race. As a White American, I have been socialized into a heavily racialized society where Black individuals are perceived to be at the bottom of a racial hierarchy that White people sit atop of (Song, 2004). In fact, it is the very existence of this enduring racial hierarchy that facilitates the disproportional killing of Black Americans at the hands of authorities. Were it not for this racial hierarchy, it is likely that this topic of research would not exist. Further, socialization into such a society necessarily entails that I hold

certain unconscious biases about my race and the races of others some of which is shaped by the very type of data I seek to analyze. However, I have noticed that reading these articles with the stated goal of analysis and understanding has allowed me to perceive how my unconscious biases are activated and remain aware of how I am initially processing the material. Nevertheless, as a White researcher investigating, in part, the representation of Black protest in mainstream media, there is an asymmetry of power between myself and many protestors who are being represented in the articles. I am not directly impacted by some of the societal problems that Black protestors are facing nor am I directly impacted by the media portrayals. As a result, I am, through this research, perpetuating a situation where protestors are being talked about instead of talked to. This is problematic as it flattens internal diversity in the ranks of protestors and ignores the multiplicity of identities that the protestors inhabit as well as their reasons for protesting in favor of a one-dimensional version that focuses on race. It is, then, imperative that I properly situate this research and add relevant depth when possible to avoid perpetuating the problem that I am seeking to investigate and, if possible, ameliorate.

4.5 Limitations

There are several limitations of this research. First, as with any frame research, frames are open to interpretation. Therefore, my understanding and interpretation of frames present in a given article are not necessarily reflective of how other readers or researchers would perceive the frame(s).

Secondly, as frames are a cultural phenomenon, my socialization has an effect on what frames I perceive. As stated previously, researchers approaching news from their own culture may be unaware of the obvious cultural frames present in it due to their being socialized into them. Though I anticipate that this problem will be less severe in my work as I am utilizing a ready-made set of frames identified through previous research, many of those authors share the same cultural background as me and as my data. Thus, it is possible that the frames I examine in this work are not exhaustive of all potential frames in news about protests, especially outside of the American context.

Next, as evidenced by the frame models in Table 1, the debate frame is more difficult to reflect in images than the other frames. For example, in Kilgo (2017), a picture of a woman marching

peacefully, but yelling, with protest signs in the background was perceived as part of the spectacle frame by participants. As a result, it may be underrepresented in the data, and this underrepresentation may be a result of this difficulty instead of a concerted effort to portray protest negatively.

Furthermore, the use of Kilgo (2017)'s think-aloud results for the identification of image frames adds high subjectivity. As mentioned previously, these results were generated from only 40 participants who were recruited using purposive sampling. Additionally, the sample of participants were demographically quite similar and were composed of only two races (Black and White). As a result, the findings are not generalizable, and there is no way of knowing the extent to which these findings would resonate across different demographic groups. Nevertheless, all framing work relies on subjectivity at some level, either from the lone researcher or group of coders or participants, as all frames are subjective. As there is relatively little research on visual framing in general, this was the only study that directly dealt with how individuals perceive the types of images I would encounter in my work. Moreover, I concurred with the participants' assessment of the frames present in the images in the study. Thus, it gave me a solid foundation from which to interpret the placement of images within the frame models that moved beyond reliance on only my own assessment, and, for this reason, I maintain that it adds an additional layer of credibility to my assessment of the frames.

Finally, the criteria for article selection had a greater impact on which CNN articles could be used, so the results for the CNN articles may not be representative of the whole of articles written on the protests. Overall, there were less CNN articles than Fox News articles, especially after the first week of the protests. Further, CNN had more articles that discussed historical connections between these protests and earlier civil rights protests as well as articles which addressed the aftermath of the protests. CNN also had less articles with images. As the focus of this research was articles with images that directly discussed the protests themselves, these topics and text-only articles were excluded from consideration for analysis. The exclusion of these other types of articles means that a consideration of the full spectrum of protest-related media may offer different conclusions than this research. This is particularly true for the coding of thematic versus episodic frames as thematic

frames may be more prevalent in articles that cover other aspects of the protests. Thus, this research may give an incomplete picture of the nature of media coverage. However, investigations into discussions of the protests directly are still important for understanding how protest itself and the actions taken by protestors are portrayed in the media. Consequently, in spite of these limitations, this thesis can contribute towards an understanding of multimodal framing and the evolution of framing of Black Lives Matter protests since the beginning of the movement.

5. Protestors and Police in News Coverage of Black Lives Matter

This chapter presents the findings of the frame analysis of Fox News's and CNN's coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests in May-June 2020. The analysis focused on both how the protestors and protests themselves were framed as well as how police were framed. The textual and visual elements of framing will be discussed independently. The protestor/protest frames are identified using the frame models from Table 1 while the police frames were derived from the data. First, protestor frames will be discussed for Fox News, then CNN. The protestor frames will be discussed in the following order for both outlets: riot, confrontation, debate, and, finally, spectacle. Next, the chapter will cover police frames for Fox News before ending on a discussion of police frames from CNN.

5.1 Protestor Portrayals

The frame analysis found that both Fox News and CNN overwhelmingly delegitimized the protests through primarily employing the riot and confrontation frames. Though the debate frame was utilized, it did not constitute a significant share of the coverage, nor did it cover protest issues or ideology in depth. The spectacle frame was also present in coverage, but of the frames identified, it was employed the least and was not universally delegitimizing. The public nuisance frame was not found to be prevalent in news coverage of the protests by either news corporation. Consequently, the findings lend further support to the protest paradigm as a recurrent framework for reporting on protests that challenge the status quo. Nevertheless, there are differences in the distribution of frames and extent of negative framing of the protests between Fox News and CNN.

5.1.1 Fox News

Coverage of the protests from Fox News aligned neatly within the protest paradigm. All articles employed episodic frames and relied heavily on official quotes. In fact, only 6% of quotes from Fox News articles came from protestors. Moreover, coverage relied heavily on the riot and confrontation frames: 8 of the 10 articles had this as their overarching frame. The remaining two articles used the debate and spectacle frames. The public nuisance frame, though present in some characterizations of protest or images, was not present as an overarching frame for the protests in any articles. However, the aspect of the public nuisance frame wherein protests are deemed unpatriotic was heavily visible alongside riot coverage in the articles. Lastly, none of the articles contained images and text corresponding to only one frame. Multiple frames were present throughout protest coverage. Still, the vast majority of frames used together were complementary, i.e. delegitimizing textual frames with delegitimizing visual frames. Nevertheless, there were two articles that featured debate frames alongside confrontation or riot frames, but their influence in these articles was offset by a greater number of riot and confrontation characterizations both textually and visually.

In the riot frame, protests were often depicted as uncontrollable. This was achieved in a number of ways. First, some articles alluded to uncontrollable natural phenomenon through phrases like “Los Angeles protest *erupts*” which gave the impression that protests sprang violently from nowhere (Aaro, 2020). It was also achieved through simple characterizations of the protests as riots, unrest, violent riots, or even “anti-cop riots” that “escalated in[to] violence” or “escalated out of control” (Aitken, 2020; Casiano, 2020; Stimson & Aitken, 2020; Suarez Sang, 2020). The uncontrollable nature of the protests was also highlighted through emphasis on the size of protests. One article emphasized the number of lawbreakers by saying “hundreds of looters were seen breaking their way into Downtown Manhattan businesses” while another characterized protestors as a “mob” (Casiano, 2020; Re, 2020). In one article, the White House was even described as “under virtual siege” which, among other things, implies a large number of protestors (Re, 2020). Finally, articles tended to ascribe volatile emotions to protestors. For example, protestors were described as “angry”, full of rage, outraged, and “hostile” (Aaro, 2020; Casiano, 2020; Re, 2020). Altogether, these seemingly small textual details help to paint the protests as volatile, unpredictable, and

uncontrollable spaces due, in part, to both the large number of protestors as well as their charged emotional state.

Riot frame articles also included extensive commentary on illegal or violent actions carried out by protestors. Though the actions documented ranged in severity, they were all portrayed as equally violent. For example, throwing rocks and breaking curfew were treated as illegal and violent as throwing Molotov cocktails or looting. Thus, any transgression was grounds for characterization of a protest as a riot. In fact, all of the riot and confrontation articles included myriad descriptions of these types of activities undertaken by alleged protestors. In one example, an article describing a protest at the CNN building in Atlanta, Georgia recounts that “[a] crowd gathered [...] breaking windows and spray-painting the CNN sign, and later throwing objects” (Wulfsohn, 2020). This description appears just a few lines before mentions of cars set ablaze and explosives being thrown at police officers. This implies a natural progression from these less severe acts to more violent acts that necessitates vigilance for even the smallest improper actions in order to prevent further escalation. In another article, the authors write that “protestors started to break store windows and loot and vandalize them” (Stimson & Aitken, 2020). In another instance, an article mentions that “protestors set two cars on fire over the course of an hour” amidst more images and descriptions of police cars set on fire (Aitken, 2020). In yet another example, an article details looting by saying that “[d]ozens of looters used crowbars to bust into a Microsoft store and made off with valuable electronic devices” alongside two videos from Twitter of people looting and additional mentions of looting (Casiano, 2020). Through repetition, these descriptions reinforce the uncontrollable nature of protests and protestors as well as portray protests as sites of criminality and violence. As will be discussed, this provides justification for police use-of-force even against those that engage in relatively minor acts. When so many diverse “violent” actions are mentioned together, the differing severity of “violent” or illegal acts is lost, so any action outside of what is expected of purely non-violent protest becomes justification to violently repress a protest. This emphasis on criminality also becomes a means through which to delegitimize the goals and ideology of a protest.

Visually, riot frames were depicted through images of property destruction, fires, looting, and/or violent/criminal behavior. The images did not always show individuals directly engaging in these actions. For example, in Figure 1, a man can be seen walking down a street flanked by a burning car and a burning building. The caption accompanying the photo states that the photo depicts a protestor running down the street in St. Paul, Minnesota (Re, 2020). However, with the fires already raging, it appears that the man in the photo is not responsible for them. With no person visibly responsible for this destruction, the image frames the protests as not only destructive, but also chaotic. It is as if the anger of the protestors envelops all that it touches in flames.



Figure 1. *Riot image (Aitken, 2020)*

In Figure 2, an American flag is thrown into a fire started by protestors at a protest in Washington D.C. (Re, 2020). While this image is similar to Figure 1 in that it depicts property destruction and fires, unlike Figure 1, the persons partaking in the destruction are visible. However, beyond indicating the riotous nature of the protests, images and descriptions of American flag burnings are used to suggest that protests and protestors are unpatriotic and un-American. Indeed, Fox News articles made repeated reference to American flag burnings. Later in the same article in which

Figure 2 appears, the author refers to another flag burning incident: “An American flag hanging at the Export-Import Bank was taken down, burned and replaced with a Black Lives Matter banner” (Re, 2020). This description not only evokes the image of the flag being replaced, but of the ideals and cultural values attached to the flag being forcibly removed and replaced with something else. In another article, an instance of an American flag being burnt was considered so serious that it was included as part of the headline (Aaro, 2020). This headline is closely followed by a recounting of the incident that includes three embedded Twitter posts that show protestors attempting to burn the flag before showing a partially burnt flag, and a later video of protestors completely burning the flag (Aaro, 2020). The image of the partially burnt flag is accompanied by the caption “looks like they’ve given up on trying to burn the American flag” followed by three American flag emojis (Aaro, 2020). This caption appears to venerate the flag, and what it symbolizes, as resistant to destruction. Yet, the final video of protestors completing the burning of the flag while saying “fuck the police”, “fuck the system”, and “burn that motherfucker” evoke similar feelings of cultural values being attacked which is made manifest through the antagonistic language of the protestors. As the American flag “has become a sacramental object” that contains the “land, people, government, and spirit of the United States”, these visuals can be particularly violent to readers (Gardella, 2014, p. 81). Indeed, Schatz & Levine (2007) assert that national symbols are important for essentializing groups into “a transcendent psychological entity” that connects people to a “larger meaning and purpose, superseding the individual’s personal existence and inevitable mortality” due to their connection to and continuation of a mythologized past (p. 333). Thus, the desecration of national symbols is not merely property destruction, but for some, is an attack on the very concept an individual has of themselves as well as an attack on their beliefs and values. Those that engage in the desecration of national symbols are, then, seen as unpatriotic or un-American as they are perceived to also be rejecting all that the national symbol symbolizes.

The attack on “American values” or the “American way-of-life” is further emphasized by associating the protestors with terrorists. This was typically achieved by repeating official quotes that directly labeled protestors as terrorists. Yet, in one instance, an article that described protestor violence during protests in DC discussed that President Trump was taken to the White House bunker for protection before mentioning that the last time this had occurred was during 9/11 (Re,

2020). As the attacks were framed as based on intolerance or hate for American values and the American way-of-life, 9/11 is the ultimate symbol of American martyrdom (Gardella, 2014). In fact, the proliferation of American flags occurred as a response to 9/11 as a means of reaffirming the resilience of American values (Gardella, 2014, p. 353). 9/11 carries with it innumerable powerful and moving associations, but ultimately, it provokes a sense of shared victimhood, of being hated for your cultural values. Thus, by associating the protestors and their message/means with terrorists, the author suggests that protestors represent the same type of existential threat.



Figure 2. *Riot Image (Re, 2020)*

Another characteristic of riot frame coverage in Fox News is blame attribution. Blame attribution was first identified in protest paradigm coverage by Leopold and Bell (2017), and it refers to “the attribution of acts of violence or crime to the protests or to protestors even when there is no evidence that the protestors committed the acts” (p. 726). It can also include mentions of acts of violence committed on protestors by those not engaged in protest. In one example, an article states that “shots were fired in a park across the street from the Statehouse after most of the protestors had moved downtown” (Stimson & Aitken, 2020). This incident is mentioned in the article despite a later quote from a police department spokesperson which states they do not believe the incident to be related to the protests. However, the indication that only most, but not all, protestors had left

the area at the time as well as a follow-up quote from the mayor that urges protestors to “leave the weapons at home” introduces some doubt as to whether the protestors really were not involved (Stimson & Aitken, 2020). In another article, the author writes simply “in Chicago, shots were reportedly fired at police” before moving on to discuss other incidents (Casiano, 2020). The mention of this incident does not indicate that any protestors were involved, nor does it indicate where and when it happened. Yet, by situating this incident between other descriptions of confrontations between protestors and law enforcement, the reader is left to make their own conclusion about who may have committed the act. As the rest of the article discusses incidents of police and protestor confrontations and/or violent actions undertaken by protestors, it is, then, reasonable to surmise that the viewers may assume that this act is an extension of those. Consequently, blame attribution further contributes to the impression that protests are chaotic, volatile situations which precipitate further crime thereby delegitimizing and demonizing the protest and protestors.

The confrontation frame was the second most common frame for the protests. Confrontation frames depicted not only direct physical confrontation between police and protestors, but also benign interactions between police and protestors as well as images of arrest or police use-of-force. For instance, one article described a confrontation by police and protestors by saying “when police told protestors to disperse at 9 p.m., the protestors allegedly started hurling rocks at the police, who responded with tear gas” (Stimson & Aitken, 2020). In this incident, both protestors and police are participants in the confrontational encounter. However, in some cases, only one group is depicted as engaging in confrontation. For example, one journalist writes “Virginia police officers purportedly pepper-sprayed protestors late Sunday” (Chakraborty, 2020). Though the article discusses that a “standoff” occurred as protestors attempted to remove a statue, there is no direct cause stated for police use-of-force. In another article, protestors are portrayed as the sole aggressors as the author writes “protestors in Philadelphia hurled rocks and Molotov cocktails at police” (Re, 2020). Once again, there is no mention of a response from police, so the reader is left to assume that only one side engaged in the confrontation. Confrontation was also evident textually through mentions of the number of protestors arrested which were frequently cited in the articles. As being arrested leads people to believe that an individual engaged in some illegal act, detailing

large arrest numbers lends credence to depictions of protests and protestors as criminal. The confrontation frame delegitimizes protestors by framing them as violent aggressors and threats to the social order by attacking those meant to safeguard public order.

Visually, confrontation frames depicted either protestors and police engaged in physical confrontation, protestor arrests, police use-of-force, or apparent defiance on the part of protestors. For example, Figure 3 depicts an officer pushing a protestor back with his bike. In this image, the two are engaged in a direct confrontation as they are face-to-face while the officer forcefully engages with the protestor. With the protestor apparently walking toward the officer as he is being shoved, there is some suggestion of provocation on the part of the protestor thereby suggesting that the officer is merely protecting himself. This is further supported by the fact that officers seem to be encircled by a mass of protestors and, thus, appear to be in an unpredictable situation.



Figure 3. *Confrontation Image (Suarez Sang, 2020)*

Yet, confrontation is not only visible through physical altercation. In Figures 4 and 5, confrontation is visible through defiance of police orders instead of direct interaction. In the video, protestors

can be seen standing quietly on a street meters apart from a line of police, but as the camera pans, a large number of police officers and, what appear to be, National Guardsmen holding rifles are revealed standing behind barriers to the side of the protestors. As Figure 4 indicates, these protestors are defying a curfew, and previous articles have documented other incidents where defying curfew was enough to get protestors tear gassed (Re, 2020). Thus, the threat of direct confrontation or use-of-force is ever present. Coupled with the riot frame, these depictions frame protestors as defiant and, at times, aggressive people who engage in criminal violence when angry.



Figure 4. *Tweet with Confrontation Video (Casiano, 2020)*



Figure 5. *Confrontation Video from Figure 4¹*

The final most common frames were the debate and spectacle frames. In contrast to the riot and confrontation frames, the debate and spectacle frames can legitimize protestors. The debate frame was evident through mentions of protestors' goals or reasons for protesting. For example, one article stated that protestors are "calling to defund the police and make sweeping reforms to law enforcement tactics" (Rambaran, 2020). Though this mention is not followed by a deeper discussion of the protestors' goals, it does offer some explanation for the protests that extends beyond the immediate circumstances of George Floyd's murder to connect to the overarching movement. It is also noticeable in a quote from a police chief who acknowledges some goals of the protests by saying "we can create a space where policing is focused on deescalation and dialogue" (Sorace, 2020). In this quote, the police chief acknowledges the protestors' desire for change, and instead of dismissing those concerns, opens space for it which may allow readers to

¹ The video is available at the following URL: <https://youtu.be/poBsS5cs-0M>

also consider the merits of the protestors' goals. The debate frame was also signaled textually by specific mentions of the protests as being peaceful.

Visually, the debate frame is evident in images of peaceful protest as well as images of protest signs and messages. Figure 6 is an example of the debate frame. In this image, the protest signs of the protestors in the foreground are clearly legible, and the other protestors visible in the background all appear to be peacefully protesting. Similarly, Figure 7 also depicts an organized, apparently non-violent march with protestor signs plainly visible. By prominently displaying the slogans or messages of protest movements, these images force audiences to engage with and think about the demands of the protests instead of their actions.



Figure 6. *Debate Image (Suarez Sang, 2020)*



Figure 7. *Debate Image (Aaro, 2020)*

Finally, the spectacle frame drew attention to the theatrical, celebratory, or otherwise unusual aspects of protest. For example, in an article discussing the occupied protest zone in Seattle, the author described that the protestors “set up tents, painted murals, and have music playing from speakers throughout the night” (Rambaran, 2020). The author also writes that there are “armed guards” that “have been surrounding the perimeter of the region” (Rambaran, 2020). The first quote draws attention to the partylike atmosphere of the protest zone while the second quote emphasizes the deviant, but not illegal, appearance of some of the protestors. In this way, attention is diverted from the substantive goals of the protestors to their abnormal way of protesting so that agreement with the protest’s goals becomes contingent on agreement with their way of protesting.

The spectacle frame was also present in descriptions of uncommon forms of protest. In this instance, the uncommon form of protest was solidarity marches that brought together police and protestors. For example, in one instance, “officers clapped on protestors, hundreds of whom stopped and took a knee with fists raised” (Sorace, 2020). In another instance, “police [...] held hands with protestors” (Sorace, 2020). These quotes highlight an uncommon form of protest that contrasts sharply with the innumerable other descriptions and images put forth by Fox News highlighting confrontation and animosity between the groups. It is this contrast that marks these

forms of protest as spectacular as they deviate from the expected modes of protest for these types of protestors.

Visually, the spectacle frame manifested in images of unusually dressed protestors and unusual or novel ways of protesting. For instance, Figure 8 depicts an armed protestor from the occupied protest zone in Seattle. In the caption to the photo, the protestor is described as a “volunteer” working security in the protest zone (Rambaran, 2020). The image of the protestor holding a rifle while wearing what appears to be a bullet proof vest contributes to an impression of the protest as deviant, perhaps even threatening and subversive.



Figure 8. *Spectacle Image (Rambaran, 2020)*

Conversely, Figure 9 falls within the spectacle frame for capturing a sensational form of protest. Figure 9 depicts a solidarity march with police and protestors walking side-by-side while holding a banner. In the photo, the police chief can be seen holding a peace sign as the photo is taken. Whereas Figure 8 captures spectacularity through deviance, Figure 9 captures the spectacular through depicting an aspirational, but rare, form of protest. As stated previously, this type of protest deviates from the expected form of protest in these situations due to the repeated coverage of

animosity between protestors and police. As a result, solidarity protests are seen as unusual and worthy of attention. The unusualness of this type of protest is reflected in the fact that almost an entire article is dedicated to this one protest.



Figure 9. *Spectacle Image (Sorace, 2020)*

In sum, Fox News predominantly utilized the riot and confrontation frames in characterizing the protests and protestors. Through these, the protests were framed as chaotic, lawless situations full of aggressive, criminal, and unpatriotic protestors. Though there was some, albeit very limited, space for protest demands to be articulated, Fox News tried to downplay these in some instances

by highlighting the deviance of protestors even when peaceful. In spite of this, not all protestor deviance was portrayed negatively. Nevertheless, Fox News's coverage of the protests was roundly negative and delegitimizing.

5.1.2 CNN

CNN coverage also corresponded highly with the protest paradigm. Like Fox News, all CNN coverage was episodic in nature. However, CNN articles gave protestors more space to define the protests: roughly 13% of quotes in the articles came from protestors. Nevertheless, this still indicates that outside sources are overwhelmingly privileged over the protestors themselves. Further, CNN employed the riot and confrontation frames in most coverage of the protests: 7 of the 10 CNN articles predominantly utilized these frames. However, the rhetoric was arguably more toned-down than that of Fox News with the riot frame being central in only 4 of the 10 in contrast to 8 for Fox News. Of the remaining articles, 2 utilized the debate frame, and 1 employed the spectacle frame. As with Fox News, no CNN article made overarching use of the public nuisance frame. Additionally, CNN had more incongruence between textual and visual frames than Fox News with some articles employing up to four frames throughout the text. Though CNN provided a more balanced look at the protests than Fox News, they still portrayed them negatively overall.

As with Fox News, riot frame coverage was apparent in repeated descriptions of violent or illegal protestor behavior. In one instance, protestors are described “vandalizing CNN’s logo outside its offices, breaking the building’s glass and entering the center” before “destroying Atlanta Police Department vehicles parked in front of CNN” (Alfonso III, 2020). In another, “police vehicles were vandalized” when their windows were broken and the cars were covered in graffiti (Chavez, et al., 2020). In yet another article, a protest was described where a statue was graffitied before “a crowd of protestors gathered around [...] and lit a fire on its head before pulling it to the ground” (Williams, 2020). Once again, these descriptions highlight the destructiveness and criminality of protestors thereby delegitimizing their goals by calling into question their actions and motives.

Yet, while CNN portrayed the protests as destructive, the rhetoric is less extreme than that utilized by Fox News. Whereas Fox News often labelled protests as riots or protestors as rioters, these

labels were largely absent from CNN articles, except in one quote from a protestor (Andone & Chen, 2020). Further, though CNN did express that protestors were angry, raging, furious, frustrated, and even violent, these characterizations were few. For instance, both Fox News and CNN wrote articles about the protests and damage to the CNN Center in Atlanta, but Fox News portrayed the protest as more chaotic and destructive than CNN. While the CNN article focused primarily on property destruction, the Fox News article not only more closely details property destruction, but also mentions protestor-police confrontation, and protestors cheering while the building is destroyed (Alfonso III, 2020; Wulfsohn, 2020). Visually, both articles included the same 30 second video from Twitter that depicted some individuals attempting to break windows as bystanders stood around and cheered when they succeeded. However, Fox News included an additional three embedded tweets with CNN TV News videos of coverage from this protest as well as pictures of crowds around the defaced CNN sign and officers walking by protestors as they shield their faces and protestors flip them off (Wulfsohn, 2020). Thus, Fox News also visually includes more material that characterizes the protestors as combative and destructive than CNN. Consequently, while they both depict the same protest and are both characterizing the protest squarely within the riot frame (though Fox News added confrontation as well), the protest is not portrayed equally negatively. This finding carries through the rest of the coverage by CNN.

Interestingly, CNN coverage of the protests did contain one type of riot frame that was not present in Fox News coverage. As identified by Kilgo (2017), the “community rebuild” subframe of the riot frame depicts community cleanup efforts that follow riots. It is the only legitimizing riot frame, but it leads to positive evaluations of the community, not the protests or protestors themselves. This subframe is found in one full article which discusses clean-up efforts in several cities following the first few days of protests (Andone & Chen, 2020). Though this article mentions the protests as destructive and confrontational, it primarily focuses on the motivations and opinions of community members and protestors who clean up the aftermath (Andone & Chen, 2020). These bystanders are, then, given space to define the protests and are portrayed as having opinions representative of the rest of the community. Further, most of the bystanders’ comments focus on criticism of protestors’ actions, thus, perpetuating the delegitimization of the protest by ignoring their goals. Thus, though this frame may be considered legitimizing to the community itself, it is

still overwhelmingly a negative portrayal of the protests which attempts to separate protestors from an ill-defined “community” as if protestors do not represent one part of that “community”.

Overall, CNN had few visuals that fell within the riot frame. In fact, only the Twitter video from Alfonso III (2020) mentioned previously depicted protestors directly engaging in destructive or criminal behavior. The majority of the riot images fell within the community rebuild subframe of the riot frame. For instance, in Figure 10, through the broken glass of a storefront, workers can be seen cleaning. This image visualizes both the destruction wrought by the protests as well as the community’s resilience to clean up and continue on. However, by showing how the damage affects the very community that the protests take place in, the protestors are shown as both destructive and misguided, wreaking havoc on those not responsible for their pain.



Figure 10. *Riot Frame – Community Rebuild Subframe Image (Andone & Chen, 2020)*

Figure 11 depicts a protestor amidst some fires though there is no clear indication that he took part in setting them. The protestor is also holding up a sign, but it is illegible. As in Figure 1, with no clear actor responsible for the destruction in the background, the protests are framed as both

destructive and chaotic as the anger of the protestors threatens to destroy all that it encounters. Yet, as the protestor holds a sign in the foreground, it seems as though he is trying to break through this anger to share his message. It suggests that there are two types of people involved in the protests: those that engage in violent or illegal acts and those seeking to convey a message.



Figure 11. *Riot Frame Image* (Chavez et al., 2020)

The most common frame in the CNN articles was the confrontation frame. In contrast to Fox News, CNN was more likely to give space to allegations of police brutality. For instance, journalists detailed one incident where “two officers push[ed] a 75-year-old man, causing him to fall back and hit his head on the sidewalk” (Shoichet, 2020). In another article, an incident is mentioned where a disabled man in a wheelchair was shot in the face with a rubber bullet by police (Hamedy, 2020). Further, there are mentions of incidents where “a police truck plow[ed] into a crowd, an officer brandish[ed] his gun amid protestors, and an officer push[ed] a woman” (Shoichet, 2020). These statements add nuance to coverage of the protests as they highlight that protestors were not only aggressors, but victims as well as police also engaged in violence. This nuance is largely

missing from Fox News coverage of the protests, especially any direct discussion of excessive force.

Nevertheless, there was still ample coverage of reciprocal confrontations between police and protestors. However, these confrontations were typically framed as protestor instigation followed by a police response. This was achieved through situating mentions of police use-of-force alongside details of protestor violence and claims of police injuries. For instance, in one article, the author highlights an incident where “police fired nonlethal bullets and tear gas [...] *after* a crowd spilled onto Interstate 676, shutting down traffic in both directions” (Casiano, 2020; emphasis added). The use of *after* in the sentence establishes the police’s use-of-force as instigated by the actions of protestors instead of being unwarranted. Thus, though police are described as the physical aggressors, by describing the weapons used as “nonlethal” and indicating that the protestors were being disruptive, justification is given for the use-of-force to downplay its significance. In another example, an incident is described where “protesters marched through the downtown area on Thursday, stopping traffic and briefly blocking cars from entering a freeway, *prompting* police to fire tear gas to get them to disperse” (Stimson & Aitken, 2020; emphasis added). Through the use of language like *prompting*, protestors are implied to have brought police use-of-force by their actions, despite the fact that their actions and the police response are disproportionate. Another article mentions that “police fired tear gas and projectiles at demonstrators defying a curfew” (Re, 2020). Once again, defiant and illegal actions by protestors are highlighted after mentions of police use-of-force thereby providing a justification for why use-of-force was undertaken. In yet another example, one article includes quotes from the police department alleging that protestors were “throwing bottles, rocks, fireworks, and other projectiles” as well as “shining green lasers into officers’ eyes” to which the police “*responded* with pepper spray and blast balls” (Spells & Maxouris, 2020; emphasis added). Finally, another incident is mentioned where protestors “tossed rocks at officers who fired rubber bullets *in return*” (Chavez et al., 2020; emphasis added). In the above quotes, the authors once more use language that implies a causal relationship where protestors instigated the violence to which police simply responded in self-defense. These characterizations ultimately delegitimize claims of excessive use-of-force

because protestors are framed as deserving of the treatment they received due to their criminal or defiant actions regardless of the proportionality of the force.

Blame attribution was also observed in CNN coverage of the protests but was most commonly found alongside confrontation frames. At one protest, “a man who drove into a crowd of protestors” was later found to have a gun with which he seems to have shot a protestor (Spells & Maxouris, 2020). After providing the details of this incident, however, the article goes on to quote police allegations of protestor aggressor that was met with police force. By juxtaposing a violent event committed against protestors with violent acts committed by them, it questions their victimhood. This is a tactic already common in coverage of police shootings where past criminal behavior is brought up to question the tragic nature of the victim’s death (Mills, 2017; Obasogie & Newman, 2016). In this case, this denial of victimhood is furthered by the fact that the protestors are generally nameless and faceless and, thus, devoid of any humanizing elements. As a result, though the protestor who was shot is not explicitly stated to have taken part in any violent or criminal activities, the fact that protestors in general have been suggests that perhaps this protestor was, so they are not so innocent after all. This thread is present in discussions of police use-of-force where protestors are suggested to have brought it upon themselves.

Blame attribution also manifests in mentions of bystander and police injuries. For instance, “at a protest in Detroit, one person was shot dead” (Chavez, et al., 2020). No further explanation of the circumstances surrounding this death nor who was killed or by whom are provided. Immediately following the mention of this incident, the article mentions that “one Federal Protective Service officer was killed and one other injured [...] in a shooting at the downtown federal building during protests” (Chavez, et al., 2020). Once again, no further explanation is provided, and there is no apparent link to the protests other than the timing. Yet, by mentioning these two incidents amidst numerous accounts of protestor confrontation, the reader is left to fill in the missing details and may well surmise that protestors were responsible for these acts otherwise why would they be included in the article. Further, these incidents contribute to a general sense that protests are hubs of criminal activity. As such, the reader may not assume that protestors directly committed those acts but could conclude that the disruption caused by protests provides opportunity for further

crime. Consequently, protests and protestors come to be associated with and defined by actions or events in which they played no part but that frame protests as bringing about crime and disorder.

Confrontation frames were evident visually through images of police use-of-force. Protestors were not always visible in these images. For instance, Figure 12 illustrates a police use-of-force image in which the protestors targeted are not visible. In this image, police can be seen surrounded by smoke, possibly from tear gas as the police can be seen wearing gas masks, while one in the center aims a gun at a location off camera. The police seem poised to attack which is also evidenced by the caption that states the police were “advanc[ing] on demonstrators” (Shoichet, 2020). The scene appears chaotic. The police’s heavily militarized appearance is threatening, seeming more suited for a war than a protest, and contrasts sharply with the many other images that show protestors in ordinary clothing. Moreover, with no visual cue indicating protestor provocation, the reader is left to consider whether the police’s actions are justifiable. This picture, then, opens space to reconsider the accuracy of the framing of the protestors as violent and aggressive while still portraying the protests overall as chaotic.



Figure 12. *Confrontation – Police Use-of-Force Image (Shoichet, 2020)*

Figure 13 depicts another type of confrontation image. In this image, police are seen advancing toward the camera as they push two protestors. One of the protestors appears to be running away from an officer or is potentially mid-fall. The other protestor is pushing back into an officer as he advances forward. The police also appear to be wearing some form of protective gear while the protestors are wearing ordinary clothes. While there is no clear indication again of what precipitated the confrontation, the police are actively attacking the protestors as can be seen by their forward motion. Like Figure 12, this image contrasts with the textual portrayals of protestor aggression and police response by positing the police as aggressors. In this way, it challenges the negative portrayals of protestors while still upholding negative portrayals of the protests overall as chaotic and violent as they are still rife with confrontation.



Figure 13. *Confrontation Image (Shoichet, 2020)*

The debate frame was also found in CNN coverage of the protests. Though the debate frame was evident in descriptions of the protests as peaceful, it was primarily used to contextualize the protests as well as discuss their demands and goals. In an article that dealt principally with protestors tearing down controversial statues, the motivations for the protests were briefly conveyed as were the reasons why certain statues were taken down. For instance, the author described the protests' rationale as a "reconsider[ation of] the legacies of the founding fathers and other historic figures in response to the massive Black Lives Matter protests against systematic racism and injustice" (Williams, 2020). The author also explained that statues of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were graffitied and torn down due to being prolific slave owners which provides context to the protestors' actions instead of leaving the actions to speak for themselves. In another article about the autonomous protest zone in Seattle, protestors were given room to speak for themselves as it was stated that "many [protestors] said they wanted to defund the police department" and were willing to stay in the area "as long as it takes to affect change" (Andone, et al., 2020). In this case, protestors were given some space to define the protests' goals on their own, but they were not given a direct voice and continued to be referred to as an

undifferentiated group. Nevertheless, these quotes exemplify an expansion of coverage of the protests to the realm of ideology instead of just actions. As protestors are typically framed solely in relation to their negatively perceived actions, discussion becomes centered around the “right” ways to protest. By presenting the goals and motivations of the protests, coverage legitimizes the protestors as legitimate political actors with something to say. This allows readers to meaningfully engage with the political and ideological aspects of the protests.

Visually, the debate frame was evident through depictions of legible protests signs as well as images of organized peaceful protests. Figure 14 is one example of a debate frame image in CNN coverage of the protests. This image comes from an article focused entirely on protest signs affixed to a security fence surrounding the White House. In Figure 14, a man stands in front of the security fence with his hands up. It is possible that this gesture is in reference to a common protest chant at BLM protests, “Hands up! Don’t Shoot”, which directly refers to the police shooting of Michael Brown but also is used as a symbol of police brutality and to indicate that a person is not a threat (Grinberg, 2015). Behind the man are various signs with protest slogans as well as demands from the protestors, such as “defund the police” and “criminal justice reform”. By centering the peaceful protest of the man in the photo as well as the protest signs themselves, readers are able to engage with the messages present in the photo.



Figure 14. *Debate Image (Andrew, 2020)*

Figure 15 also falls within the debate frame as it depicts a peaceful protest. In this image, protestors are pictured in a peaceful gathering outside Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti’s home. The protestors were said to be chanting “peaceful protest” as they sat with their hands in raised fists for three hours (Hamedy, 2020). The raised fist is another symbol of resistance to racism and oppression in the US that is associated with the Black Power movement and is perhaps best known for its use by two American sprinters from the 1968 Olympics as a form of protest while they were standing on the podium (Stout, 2020). Thus, this is another well-known symbol that activates a host of associations in the same way as Figure 14. Additionally, as the protest appears organized and peaceful, readers may be less inclined to discuss the protest itself, but the meanings and associations that come up from their use of the Black Power fist or to discuss their motivations to protest outside the Mayor’s house. Once again, this enables readers to engage more deeply with the messages of the protest as protestors are framed in a more legitimizing light.



Figure 15. *Debate Image (Hamedy, 2020)*

The final frame present in CNN coverage was the spectacle frame. This frame was primarily employed visually through images of a celebratory atmosphere at protests and solidarity marches. Figure 16 is an example of a spectacle image that highlights the party-like atmosphere at a protest. In the image, a band is playing a free concert for a large crowd in the autonomous protest zone in Seattle. This makes the protest zone seem more like a block party and less like an intentional occupation for the purpose of furthering a message. The carnivalesque nature of the protest can be interpreted either as trivializing the protest or as indicating the peacefulness and creativity of protestors (Trivundža & Brlek, 2017). There is support for the latter interpretation in the quote of

a bystander who says that protestors are “having teach-ins, talks, and political discussions” (Andone et al., 2020). As such, the protestors are portrayed as purposeful in their occupation by using something akin to a mass sit-in to indicate their dissatisfaction with the treatment of Black people in the US. Figure 9 also appeared in CNN coverage of the solidarity protests that occurred around the country (Silverman, 2020). Unlike Fox News, CNN briefly documented several instances of solidarity marches or shows of solidarity among officers alongside numerous images of these instances instead of focusing primarily on the march depicted in Figure 9. This article, like that from Fox News, emphasized the theatrical and spectacular nature of these acts by police as deviations from the expected behavior and interactions between police and protestors. As such, Figure 9 serves the same purpose in the CNN article as in the Fox News article of documenting an exceptional form of protest that contrasts with the other forms of protest seen around the country. Overall, the spectacle frame highlights festive or theatrical protests as unexpected deviations from the confrontational and riotous protests that dominate coverage.



Figure 16. *Spectacle Image* (Andone et al., 2020)

In sum, CNN coverage of the protests also overwhelmingly portrayed the protests negatively by relying heavily on the riot and confrontation frames. In the CNN articles, the confrontation frame was the most common, followed by the riot frame, then the debate frame, and, finally, the spectacle frame. Like Fox News, the confrontation frame was commonly found alongside the riot frame. Blame attribution was also found to be prevalent in CNN coverage of the protests. However, CNN's rhetoric overall was more toned-down than that of Fox News. Debate frame coverage was found throughout in small contextualizations of the protests or mentions of the protestors' goals though a deeper discussion of the protest goals and demands was lacking. Additionally, though the spectacle frame was apparent visually, it was not widely used textually. The public nuisance frame was all but absent. Generally, CNN framed the protests as chaotic and destructive and the protestors as aggressive and confrontational. Yet, depictions and discussions of police brutality and excessive force tempered these characterizations somewhat by also portraying police as aggressors which will be discussed in the next section.

5.2 Police Portrayals

This section presents the findings for the frame analysis regarding the framing of police in coverage of the protests. These frames were derived directly from the data and were not based on prior literature. In many ways, the framing of police was a direct foil to the framing of protestors. For Fox News, the analysis found that the primary frames were police as the victims of protestor violence and aggression as well as police as protectors of American values. Conversely, CNN employed two contradictory frames that reflected CNN's slightly more balanced, and conflicted, coverage. The frames used by CNN were police as victims of protestor violence and police as aggressors. These results indicate that while protestors were framed overall negatively, police tended to be framed positively.

5.2.1 Fox News

Fox News coverage of the protests framed police as the victims of violent and aggressive protestors. This was achieved partially through descriptions of protestor aggression against police officers. In fact, one Fox News article was dedicated to protestor confrontations with police with

the headline “protestors destroy police property, smash and burn cars as riots continue across US” (Aitken, 2020). This headline is incredibly provocative with verbs like destroy, smash, and burn which illicit violent imagery and signal intention to harm on the part of protestors. It makes it seem as though police are being attacked. This violence carries through the article which mentions that “bottles and fireworks were reportedly thrown at police” and that “Chicago police officers [...] were] swarmed, hit, and dragged by protestors” (Aitken, 2020). By recounting one-sided confrontations seemingly instigated by protestors, these descriptions simultaneously frame protestors as violent aggressors and police as their hapless victims. This is strengthened by assertions that “officers were forced to retreat and abandon their departments” due to protestors setting precincts on fire (Aitken, 2020). Not only does this emphasize the protestors’ violence and rage, but also suggests that the power of this is overwhelming the police and that police are victims of them. It deemphasizes the material coercive power that the police have over protestors by emphasizing their perceived victimhood. These descriptions of one-sided protestor aggression are present throughout Fox News coverage of the protests. For instance, in another article, the author writes that “protestors [...] hurled rocks and Molotov cocktails at police” in one city while in another “dozens of demonstrators, some throwing fireworks, taunted police” (Re, 2020). Protestors, thus, are continually described as attacking police which victimizes police as well as provides justification for police use-of-force.

Police as victims is furthered conveyed through numerous mentions of police injuries. In one article, it is reported that “numerous Secret Service agents were injured” with an “official put[ting] the number of agents injured at over 50” (Re, 2020). In another article, the author states that “many departments reported officers were injured” which suggests that the use of violence by protestors against police is widespread (Suarez Sang, 2020). Further, another article refers to a protest in New York wherein “at least four officers were injured” (Stimson & Aitken, 2020). These statements bolster the framing of police as victims as they indicate that not only are police targeted by protestors, but that protestors’ violence is inflicting bodily harm on the police. Conversely, protestor injuries as a result of police use-of-force are never mentioned in the Fox News articles. In fact, there are only two mentions of protestor injuries in reference to one incident in which protestors banged on a police cruiser which drove away injuring one protestor who was on the

hood of the car at the time and fell off (Aaro, 2020; Stimson & Aitken, 2020). This one instance, then, is still framed as an action of police self-defense where the protestor was responsible for his own injuries. By consistently recounting police injuries, but leaving out protestor injuries, the protestors' actions are framed as much more violent and injurious than the police's, and it is insinuated that the police only ever acted in self-defense. Accordingly, police are framed as victims of protestor violence and aggression through mentions of protestor violence that negate one-sided police violence and through repeated mentions of police injuries which reinforces the allegedly brutal nature of the protests.

These descriptions of protestor violence and police victimization are supported visually through depictions of protestors in action, of the destruction of police property, or of police being hit with objects or in a protective stance. Figure 17 is an example of the latter. In this image, police can be seen putting shields up to their faces as they recoil from an unseen object or action. This image is accompanied by the caption "police officers protect themselves with shields as protestors throw debris" with the pictured protests described as being peaceful before "escalat[ing] into violence" (Suarez Sang, 2020). In Figure 17, the police both appear to be and are described as defending themselves while protestors are described as violent and antagonistic. This reinforces the framing of police as victims and protestors as violent aggressors. In contrast to Figure 17, Figure 18 does not directly show any confrontation between police and protestors. In the image, a police vehicle is engulfed in flames with the word "police" clearly visible underneath the flames. This image, instead of directly representative of confrontation between police and protestors, is symbolic of this antagonism. For readers, it signifies not only the protestors' disdain for the police, but also elicits fear over the true meaning of the slogan "defund the police". As mentioned previously, the flames throughout images in Fox News' coverage are the protestors' rage made manifest, and, in this image, the flames are threatening to fulfil the goals of protestors by putting an end to the police. In this way, the protestors are represented as threats to the police both physically as individuals and existentially as a collective. Therefore, the police are framed in the inverse as hapless victims of combative, rageful protestors.



Figure 17. *Police as Victims Image (Suarez Sang, 2020)*



Figure 18. *Police as Victims Image (Aitken, 2020)*

In addition to framing police as victims of antagonistic protestors, Fox News also framed police as protectors of American values. This frame is the foil to the frame of protestors as unpatriotic and is particularly pronounced visually. In images within this frame, police are typically pictured standing dispassionately and motionless in a formation which contrasts sharply with depictions of protestors as active and emotional. For instance, Figure 19 depicts heavily militarized, emotionless police officers standing with weapons in a line along the street with the White House looming in the background. Like the American Flag, the White House is a preeminent symbol of American values, like democracy and freedom. Thus, by standing in front of the White House looking more appropriately dressed for battle than protest policing, these officers appear poised to protect not only the physical space of the capital, but the symbolic values for which it stands. This is emphasized by a description that immediately precedes this image of an American flag being torn down, burnt, and replaced by a BLM flag as “hundreds of people converged” on the White House (Re, 2020). This juxtaposition of protestors as unpatriotic threats to American values with Figure 19 underlines the frame of police as protectors of American values as they stand in between riotous protestors and the symbol of American democracy. Further, the emphasis on the large number of protestors contrasts with the small number of police pictured to convey a sense of police as a courageous minority defending the nation. Additionally, the frames of police as victims and police as protectors complement each other by portraying police as steadfast in their duties despite being assaulted and antagonized by protestors. These frames are collocated throughout coverage of the protests to elicit both sympathy for the “plight” of the police as well as admiration for their devotion to public service. Consequently, the police are framed overwhelmingly positively by Fox News in coverage of the protests.



Figure 19. *Police as Protectors of American Values Image (Re, 2020)*

5.2.2 CNN

Textually, CNN articles predominantly framed the police as victims of protestor aggression. As with Fox News, CNN articles contain myriad descriptions of protestor violence against police. Many of these descriptions are included in quotes from officials used to dismiss claims by protestors of police brutality. These quotes are presented uncritically throughout the articles while protestor quotes alleging brutal treatment are few in number. For example, in response to coverage of incidents of police brutality in New York City wherein a police car drove into a crowd, the police union president is quoted in the article as saying “police officers are being run down, knocked down, and almost shot on a nightly basis [...] it’s like a war zone in this country” (Shoichet, 2020). The use of war metaphors to describe policing situations is an indicator of police militarization along the cultural dimension as defined by Kraska (2007). In another instance, the use of tear gas was defended by a police chief because he asserted that “property was being vandalized, bricks were thrown at officers and tires were slashed on police squad cars” (Shoichet, 2020). In these examples, the quotes reframe the conversation to redirect sympathy from protestors who suffer unacceptable treatment by police to the police by claiming that they are the real victims and are acting in self-defense against the criminal and violent actions of protestors. This framing

is further supported by numerous descriptions of one-sided protestor violence. For instance, protestors in Chicago were reported to have been “vandalizing police vehicles”, “[throwing] water bottles at police officers in riot gear”, and “lifting police barricades and throwing them at police cars” (Chavez, et al., 2020). In another article, protestors were told to have thrown objects at police and looted stores (Hamedy, 2020). In yet another example, protestors were said to have “pelted [police] with rocks and bottles” (Shoichet, 2020). By including ample mentions of one-sided protestor violence, police officials’ summary dismissals of police brutality on the basis of self-defense are endowed with more weight. As the police officials hold authority, readers unsure of the situation are more likely to defer to the framing of the protests offered by them which posits the police as victims of protestor aggression. Further, CNN articles recount police injuries more than protestor injuries. Though they do this to a lesser extent than Fox News, it nevertheless reinforces the notion that protestor violence is more injurious and dangerous than that exercised by police. Ultimately, these aspects all contribute to the framing of police as victims of protestor violence.

Visually, however, the CNN articles offer a contradictory framing of the police as aggressors. Unlike the Fox News articles, the CNN articles do not include much visual material that shows protestors actively engaging in violence or destruction. Overall, protestors are depicted as peaceful while police are depicted as engaging in confrontation or with a heavily militarized appearance which threatens confrontation. These depictions of police are exemplified by Figures 12 and 13 wherein police appear heavily militarized with one weapon pointed at protestors and in active confrontation with protestors, respectively. Figure 20 is another example of an image that contributes the visual framing of police as aggressors. In this image, an officer is shown on top of what appears to be an armored vehicle while aiming what the caption describes as a “nonlethal weapon” at protestors below (Shoichet, 2020). The protestors appear blurry in the foreground with their hands up which suggests submission to police, as stated previously, but also dehumanizes them as it recasts the protestors as an undifferentiated mass with no distinguishing features. Further, though labelling the weapon as nonlethal is a misnomer, regardless of its lethality, the positioning of the officer above the protestors with a weapon (which they have no way of knowing is lethal or not) pointed at protestors appears threatening. So, despite the fact that no overt violence

is depicted in this photo, there is an undertone of threat which implies the potential for violence on the part of police, thus, framing the police as aggressors. Altogether, this contributes to the contradictory framing of police in CNN articles where textual framing asserts that the police are victims of protestor aggression while visually the police are framed as aggressors. Ultimately, then, the reader is left to ponder the truth of the protestors' allegations of police brutality as well as the police officials' hasty dismissals. However, it is impossible to know what frame will ultimately shape the perception of the reader.



Figure 20. *Police as Aggressors (Shoichet, 2020)*

6. Discussion

The above findings indicate that while the protests are covered in some nuance, the protests and protestors are still overwhelmingly delegitimized through spotlighting the aggressive and criminal behavior that manifested in some protests. Despite differences in the distribution of frames between Fox News and CNN as well as variation in the tone of their coverage, delegitimization predominated irrespective of the political orientation of the news outlet. This is also evidenced by

the lack of protestor quotes in stories as well as the episodic nature of coverage. These results add to the growing literature which finds that news coverage of anti-Black racism protests tends to delegitimize and demonize the protests in line with the protest paradigm. The findings also suggest that the greater institutionalization of BLM protests has not led to a shift in the framing of news coverage.

Both Fox News and CNN tended to legitimize the actions of police by portraying them as the victims of protestors' violent behavior. Fox News also depicted the police as protectors of American values suggesting that their victimization at the hands of protestors was due to the protestors' opposition to these same values. Consequently, Fox News' framing of the police is in line with prior literature that found police at protests were framed as the guarantors of law and order (Coward et al., 2016; Santa Ana et al., 2010; Trivundža & Brlek, 2017). In contrast, CNN was more conflicted in their framing of the police, as they framed them as victims textually, but as aggressors visually. Yet, though framing the police as aggressors is considered to be negative framing within the context of the analysis, it may be well within the bounds of prior literature wherein the violence wielded by police was still framed as legitimate due to their position in the state. In this way, the framing of police as victims may serve to legitimize the framing of police as aggressors by positing that the violence was warranted due to the actions of protestors. The complementarity of these seemingly conflicting frames is evidenced by the responses of some White think-aloud participants in Kilgo (2017) who responded to images of police-protestor confrontations and police use-of-force by emphasizing the difficulties that police face in doing their jobs, a response that was not shared by the Black participants (p. 68-72). These responses are also indicative of the racial disparities in the US regarding evaluations of police performance where White people have much more favorable assessments of the police than Black people (Morin & Stepler, 2016). Thus, the race of the news consumer likely also plays a role in whether the frames of police in CNN coverage are considered complementary or contradictory. This suggests that more studies should be done to ascertain the racial differences in frame interpretation as well as to understand the framing of the police in media more generally.

The analysis found incongruity between the textual and visual frames in articles from both news outlets. In fact, in only two out of twenty articles were the textual and visual frames wholly the same. This illustrates not only the complexity of framing, but also the importance in analyzing both textual and visual framing in conjunction. As contemporary media is increasingly multimodal, it is necessary to investigate how news consumers interpret a text holistically. By analyzing different types of framing in isolation, researchers are failing to capture the full spectrum of protest framing and may be misrepresenting the relative prevalence of frames. This may make it seem as though protest coverage is more or less legitimizing than it is in actuality. Further, analyzing both types of framing together allow us to ascertain whether some frames are more prevalent visually or textually. This would allow us to explore the limits of certain types of framing as well as interrogate the meanings of frames in different mediums. It would also allow us to investigate how news consumers interpret a text when different types of framing are incongruent. In light of research which highlights the outsized impacts of visual framing, it is particularly important to consider how textual and visual framing interact in order to create a complete and accurate conception of the protest paradigm that reflects the contemporary nature of news media.

The findings of the analysis also added additional nuance to the spectacle frame. Though the spectacle frame is considered to be universally delegitimizing within the literature, this analysis finds that the spectacle frame can be legitimizing. For example, solidarity protests were framed in Fox News and CNN coverage as spectacular due to their novelty and subversion of expected interaction between police and protestors, but these protests were also praised as ideal forms. Even spectacle frame coverage that emphasizes “the festive, carnivalesque nature of protests” can highlight the “peacefulness or creativity of the protestors” (Trivundža & Brlek, 2017). For example, CNN coverage of Seattle’s Capital Hill Autonomous Zone framed the protest occupation as spectacular by including pictures of bands playing live music and quotes from bystanders that describe the zone as providing a number of educational activities (Andone et al., 2020). Yet, these depictions demonstrate the peacefulness of the protestors as well as their dedication to the cause through education which is legitimizing. Moreover, regarding it as universally delegitimizing ignores the ways in which spectacularity is manufactured in order to attract media attention (Trivundža & Brlek, 2017). For instance, Trivundža & Brlek (2017) found that while news

coverage of the All-Slovenian People's Uprisings included discussions of the carnivalesque nature of the protests, the coverage was also able to acknowledge the political purpose of such actions. In this way, the spectacularity of a protest can be legitimizing as it is acknowledged as an element of the act of dissent instead of as evidence of the deviance or otherness of protestors as is inferred in the protest paradigm. The findings of this thesis, then, complement prior work in arguing that spectacle frame coverage need not be delegitimizing as it can counteract depictions of protestors that foreground aggressiveness and criminality.

The findings also highlight the growing extent of police militarization. This is especially striking visually. As Kraska (2007) explained, police militarization occurs along four dimensions: material, cultural, organizational, and operational. Though each of the four dimensions can be depicted visually, the material and cultural dimensions lend themselves more readily to visuals through depictions of weapons and a militarized appearance, respectively. This visuality is reflected in Figures 12, 13, 19, and 20. In each of these figures, the officers are wearing camouflage-colored, full-length clothing with body armor, helmets, and, in some cases, face shields while holding weapons, either guns or batons. Figures 19 and 20 also feature armored vehicles likely transferred to police departments by federal government programs that distribute military surplus (Kraska, 2007). These images contrast with those such as Figure 9 which depicts a standard police uniform without the additional weapons and armor. In the militarized images, the police appear threatening and devoid of their humanizing features. They resemble an occupying force in their own country. However, the heavily armored appearance of the police also suggests that police are facing a threat from which they need protection. Protestors are thus constructed as dangerous enemies to be confronted. The depiction of protestors as enemies is reinforced by textual metaphors likening the protests to war. In one article, the White House is described as "under virtual siege" while another quotes an official that describes the protests as a "'war zone'" (Re, 2020; Shoichet, 2020). War metaphors are also common in other areas of policing, such as the War on Drugs or War on Terrorism. These metaphors are another manifestation of the cultural dimension of police militarization through the adoption of aggressive language (Kraska, 2007). Altogether, the militaristic appearance and use of war metaphors reveal an additional cultural aspect of militarization: the "warrior mentality".

The warrior mentality is a form of militarized masculinity in which aggression, domination, and the use of violence are justified (Goodmark, 2015). It is a mindset inculcated in police officers through repetition of the notion that everyone is a threat because “everyone they meet may have a plan to kill them” (Stoughton, 2015, p. 228). It instills fear in officers based on the belief that they live in a hostile world in which “every situation [is] a deadly force encounter in the making” (Stoughton, 2015, p. 228). They, then, come to believe that their survival every day relies on their willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure their safety. It is the ultimate overarching victimhood narrative of the police which is used to justify all manner of violence enacted by them (Stephens, 2020). By parroting war metaphors alongside dozens of descriptions of “one-sided” protestor violence, these articles are reinforcing the victimhood claims inherent in the warrior mentality which justifies, for police, further aggression against protestors. In fact, the warrior mentality may even necessitate violent action against protestors as officers are taught to act in an assertive manner and expect deference to their authority. Any failure to comply with their demands is seen as validation that a person is the enemy (Stoughton, 2015; Walker, 1983). As protest is inherently a display of defiance, it is seen, in the eyes of police, as a direct threat to them. This is especially so when the protest is directed, in part, at the police as it substantiates their belief in the hostility of the world towards them. Thus, any means undertaken to suppress the protest are justifiable in order to protect the lives of the police from the threat posed by the protestors. Indeed, inherent in the warrior mentality is a troubling lack of respect for the First Amendment protections of the right to protest. Consequently, narrative and visual indicators of police militarization, when presented alongside descriptions of “one-sided” protestor violence, signify protestors as threats and enemies thereby delegitimizing protests while protest suppression and police militarization are presented unproblematically as a “natural” response to this threat.

The warrior mentality is intimately connected to the hypermasculine culture of policing. In a given society, men are expected to be masculine, but men are not masculine just by virtue of their “maleness”. Masculinity is a social performance in that men must be seen partaking in socially acceptable forms of masculine behavior in order to affirm their “maleness” and separate themselves from women (Ellis, 2016; Goodmark, 2015). However, masculinity is also socially

constructed such that the societally acceptable forms of masculinity differ across time and space. However, in a given society at a particular point, there is one ideal form of masculinity: the hegemonic masculinity (Ellis, 2016). In the United States, hegemonic masculinity is about “the power that men have and the power that men wield over others” (Goodmark, 2015, pp. 126-7). As such, violence is one means through which to assert the power and dominance requisite for the validation of someone’s masculinity. As a male-dominated profession in which power over others is central, police culture is so steeped in the messaging of hegemonic masculinity that it has adopted a hypermasculine orientation (Harris, 2000). Hypermasculinity is “a masculinity in which the strictures against femininity and homosexuality are especially intense and in which physical strength and aggressiveness are paramount” (Harris, 2000, p. 793). Police militarization has led to the emergence of a militarized masculinity within police culture which merges the hypermasculinity of the police with a culture of militarism. Militarism is an ideology in which the use or threat of violence and the use of military weaponry are seen as the most efficient means of solving problems (Kraska, 2007). Through militarism, the use of violence is “eroticized”, “institutionalized”, and linked “with the political concerns of the state” (Higate & Hopton, 2005). The appeal of militarism is especially strong in countries which glorify military superiority, like the United States, as it emphasizes the man as a hero and warrior with the ability to dominate the world (Goodmark, 2016; Kraska, 1996). As such, militarized masculinities focus on violence, control, and dominance above all else.

As mentioned previously, police are taught to expect deference to their authority, and any display of defiance is seen as a threat. However, these displays of defiance may not be seen only as physical threats to their safety, but threats to their masculinity. Consequently, displays of defiance to the police, such as protesting, may be responded to with violence not because the police necessarily feel that there is any credible threat to them physically, but because challenges to their authority are emasculating (Goodmark, 2015). Violence as a means of protest suppression is then also a means of reasserting control over an unruly community, thus, validating their masculinity. As the police have become increasingly militarized, their ability to wield violence has increased as well. As militarized violence is highly visible in the context of protest suppression, it also serves to reinforce the unique masculine position of the police as the only legitimate intrastate wielders of

violence. In the context of Black civil rights protests, Black people likely comprise the majority of protestors, so the use of violence by primarily White police forces also serves to emasculate a hypermasculine Other (*Data USA: Police Officers*, n.d.). As a result, the use of violence at these protests not only reaffirms the masculinity of the individual police officers amidst threats to their authority, but also reinforces a racial hierarchy in which hegemonic masculinity is White masculinity (Ellis, 2016; Goodmark, 2015; Harris, 2000). In this way, the manifestation of militarized masculinities through the violent suppression of political dissent reinforces the centrality of violence to hegemonic masculinity while also delineating the acceptable performers of such masculinity.

The visibility of police militarization in protest paradigm coverage of anti-Black racism protests additionally highlights the militarization of racial control (Gamal, 2016). For example, Figure 21 depicts a soldier on top of an army tank that is patrolling the streets of Detroit during the race riots of 1967. When compared to Figure 20, which depicts a police officer on top of an armored vehicle pointing a weapon at protestors, it is evident that the police now assume much of the function and form that the military took in quelling Black unrest in the 1900s. As police wield the disciplinary violence of the state, who the police wield violence against is a powerful indicator of who is considered internal to the state, and thus protected by it, and who is not. “The spectacles of armored vehicles on city streets, police in military-style uniform, and officers wielding submachine guns communicate a need to control certain communities with excessive force” (Gamal, 2016, p. 988). When these spectacles repeatedly manifest in Black communities, but not White ones, it “fortifies the boundaries between whiteness and blackness” (Gamal, 2016, p. 988). Blackness, then, becomes synonymous with being outside of state protection. Media coverage of anti-Black racism protests plays a major role in this process. By situating coverage of protestors squarely within the protest paradigm through an emphasis on violence and criminality, both news outlets furthered negative racial stereotypes of Black people as criminal aggressors. Further, Fox News’ framing of protestors as anti-American and CNN’s coverage of community cleanup which distanced protestors from their communities marked them as Others within their own polity. These moves construct an identity for the protestors that places them outside of state protection and posits them as an internal threat to security. Moreover, research shows that when protestors are portrayed as

both separate from and threatening to an in-group, there is increased support for state repression of protestors (Edwards & Arnon, 2021). As those principally concerned with police brutality against Black people are Black people themselves, protest paradigm coverage of anti-Black racism protests situates Black people as threatening to the in-group, White people, which further securitizes Black communities and delegitimizes their expressions of dissent. It also further delineates the boundaries between whiteness and blackness where whiteness and proximity to it affords individuals greater access to state protection. This type of coverage, then, perpetuates a racial hierarchy that disproportionately hurts Black people and creates the conditions which they are protesting in the first place. By perpetuating racial stereotypes, it can increase police militarization by heightening the level of threat perceived by the police thereby increasing the demand for and willingness to transfer surplus military equipment to them. Greater police militarization would, then, further endanger BIPOC communities and perpetuate the conditions which led to the protests. Consequently, protest paradigm coverage is not only potentially harmful for the ways in which it may delegitimize protest as a whole, but also for the ways in which it can perpetuate the subjugation of already marginalized groups through the sustenance of threat-based feedback loops that further militarization.



Figure 21. *Army Tank in Detroit during the Race Riots of 1967 (Balterman, 1967)*

The literature on protest policing and the protest paradigm suggests that state repression and media coverage are mutually reinforcing. Though the protest policing literature generally contends that protest policing has become more restrained as protests have become institutionalized, the evidence for this style of policing is based on data sets that predate the shifts in policing that followed 9/11 (McCarthy & McPhail, 1998). As a result, the predominant style of protest policing in the post 9/11 period is uncharacterized. However, there is preliminary support for the notion that protest policing is again taking a more aggressive stance. For instance, data on police use-of-force at protests in 2020 revealed that intervention by police was up overall in 2020 compared to 2019 (Kishi & Jones, 2020). Further, the data also suggests that police intervene in protests in a biased manner. Police intervened forcefully at BLM protests at a higher rate than at right-wing protests despite the overwhelming majority of protests being peaceful (Kishi, et al., 2020). This data supports prior research by Reynolds-Stenson (2020) which found that police, in general, were more likely to be present and take action at anti-police-brutality protests than at other forms of protest. Moreover, anti-police-brutality protests are subject to the most delegitimizing protest

paradigm coverage when compared to other types of protest (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). The above findings also illustrate that coverage of the George Floyd protests overwhelmingly emphasized violence and criminality. Both protest policing and protest paradigm literature expect that protests which challenge the status quo to a greater extent will suffer greater repression and delegitimizing media coverage. Thus, evidence of the uniquely repressive nature of police at these protests as well as of the negative nature of protest coverage points to anti-Black-racism protests as a distinctive challenge to the status quo. The findings of the analysis also indicate that police and their expressions of violence tend to be legitimized in media coverage which can further the delegitimization of the protestors. Additionally, increased coverage of Black protestors that paints them as criminal and deviant can increase support for police repression of protestors among White audiences who are already more likely to support police use-of-force (Edwards & Arnon, 2021; Morin & Stepler, 2016). This can create a self-fulfilling cycle where greater coverage of violence leads to greater repression due to socialization of officers into a sense of fear which creates further confrontation which is used to frame protestors as deviant which increases support for repression and so on (Earl & Soule, 2006). This cycle ultimately also contributes to the further victimization and marginalization of protestors as previously discussed since heightening the level of threat perceived by both police and the public can increase support not only for current repression but for the militarization of police in hopes of quelling future violence. Consequently, there may be a relationship between the level of protest repression seen and the extent of news media coverage of the protests that conforms to the protest paradigm. However, more work needs to be done to bridge the gap between the protest policing and protest paradigm literatures to ascertain if such a cycle exists. Though the protest paradigm is prefaced on the fact that media coverage of the protests does not reflect the true nature of the protests, no articles compared the level of negative coverage to data on the activities undertaken at protests to determine if negative coverage was disproportionate. Utilizing data from these literatures in tandem, then, would help reveal the extent of biases in news coverage and could reveal the relationship between protest ideology, actual levels of state repression, and extent of protest paradigm news coverage.

7. Conclusion

This research sought to determine how media coverage of the George Floyd protests in the US in 2020 framed protestors and the protests themselves as well as the police. This thesis approached these questions by conducting a frame analysis of ten articles each from Fox News and CNN in order to determine if the political orientation of the news outlet affected framing. Interestingly, the analysis determined that their coverage was remarkably similar: both Fox News and CNN primarily utilized frames which denigrated the protestors while legitimizing the actions of police. Both also relied heavily on quotes from sources other than the protestors and on episodic coverage that decontextualized the protests. Resultantly, coverage from both sources fell squarely within the protest paradigm indicating that BLM protests continue to be delegitimized despite greater institutionalization of the movement.

These findings reveal a deeper contradiction between the extensive polarization of American society and belief in the dissimilarity of news sources versus the role of media organizations as protectors of the status quo. Though media organizations portray themselves as ideologically distinct from other news sources, the entire media apparatus tends to form a united front in support of the status quo. This is reflected in the ways in which right wing versus left wing opposition to the state is portrayed in the media. While Black Lives Matter protests or Indigenous anti-pipeline protests are delegitimized in the media and demonized by the police, right wing opposition, such as the anti-lockdown protests or Unite the Right rally, is frequently brushed aside despite its arguably greater overt threat (Beckett, 2021; Levin, 2021). As mentioned previously, the BLM movement is an indictment of the racial ideologies which justify continued racial subjugation on the basis of a “natural” racial hierarchy. For this reason, it represents an immense challenge to the prevailing social system as the realization of its goals would require a complete reconfiguration of the institutions, structures, and systems that undergird American society. In contrast, right wing movements are supportive of various social hierarchies, such as those predicated on race or gender, and may even view them as desirable or inevitable (Bjørge & Ravndal, 2019). Consequently, their expressions of dissent are disregarded as they do not challenge the status quo, but seek to preserve it, even enhance it. As media elites, irrespective of professed political ideology, are closely connected to political elites and benefit from the prevailing social system, they are deeply invested

in preserving the political-economic status quo (Gitlin, 1980). As a result, the media overall marginalizes and delegitimizes dissenting voices while presenting those in support of the status quo unproblematically. For liberal media outlets, this tendency is especially duplicitous as social movements see the liberal media as an ally due to its professed desire for reform, yet it routinely engages in the delegitimization of movements which attempt to change the system too radically (Gitlin, 1980). Thus, belief in the diametrically opposed nature of media outlets is largely a myth: if a social movement challenges the status quo to a great extent, elite media outlets will coalesce in opposition to it.

The myth of ideologically opposed mass media has additional consequences beyond the suppression of the transformative potential of social movements. Mass media has also been shown to converge ideologically on the topic of war. As with protest, with war, the mass media tend to defer to the dominant frames of political elites. This can be seen in the media's involvement in drumming up support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Similar to the findings above, analysis of media coverage leading up to the Iraq War found that both "liberal" and "conservative" news coverage, including CNN and Fox News, had a pro-war slant (Altheide & Grimes, 2005; Hayes & Guardino, 2010; Wilesmith, 2011). In fact, most mass media outlets, particularly in the United States, only began to question the legitimacy of the war and occupation once it was well underway. This pro-war perspective was largely responsible for generating public support for the war effort. Even now, the media tends to neglect its role in the legitimation of these wars directing critique largely at the government as can be seen with the general media coverage of the withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 (Shephard, 2021). Interestingly, the media's elite bias in regard to war is attributable to many of the same phenomena that contribute to the protest paradigm, such as a preoccupation with capitalistic notions of newsworthiness and reliance on official sources (Altheide & Grimes, 2005; Hayes & Guardino, 2010). Nevertheless, the ideological convergence of the mass media on issues of war and protest in order to support the status quo is incredibly problematic. Not only do these issues in particular have meaningful consequences (for example, it is estimated that over 200,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in the Iraq War alone which is likely an underestimate), but the public generally expects the media to act as a check on the government (Dreier, 1982; Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 2021). However, as media and

political elites generally both benefit from extant social structures, they can no longer meaningfully fulfill that role. Instead, mass media organizations have created both a polarized and uninformed public through marketing themselves as oppositional (to all other media) but largely failing to actually perform their investigatory and informational role. Media organizations' emphasis on their difference while relying on similar frames means that, on several key issues, individuals who consume seemingly ideologically opposed media are actually much closer in viewpoint than they believe despite overwhelming messaging which demonizes those with a supposed opposite ideological viewpoint. In the United States, this polarization is particularly acute, and its effects are increasingly apparent. Without significant change in the operation of the media in the United States, this polarization may have a lasting detrimental effect on the functioning of American democracy and cohesion of its populace as can be seen with the current disagreement over the election of President Biden.

In addition to media-mediated polarization, police militarization is a major problem affecting American society. Though the militarized suppression of political dissent is highly visible, police militarization has crept into all aspects of policing and, even, everyday life. For example, even though Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams were created to deal with high-risk scenarios, such as hostage situations, they very rarely are used for these purposes. In fact, SWAT teams are primarily used as investigatory tools: a study of SWAT team deployments conducted by the ACLU found that 79% of deployments were for the purposes of executing search warrants, usually in drug investigations (ACLU, 2014). With numerous documented incidents of botched SWAT raids, this "mission creep" not only makes people less safe but violates the principles of innocent until proven guilty by treating all suspects as highly dangerous criminals irrespective of their suspected crime or conduct (Balko, 2013). As these deployments also primarily impact Black people, it further illustrates how the militarization of racial control constrains the freedom of Black people even in their own homes. Moreover, the overutilization of SWAT may be another manifestation of how militarized masculinities within police forces valorize the use of violence or force in policing above other forms of problem-solving so as to make the use of SWAT too appealing to resist. Regardless of the reason, the militarization of all aspects of policing is an unacceptable development that reveals an alarming cultural and operational shift from serving the public to targeting the public.

In a nation in which the police are given ever greater surveillance and investigatory powers in the interest of “national security”, the militarization of their activities threatens the safety and freedoms of the general public. It is critical that militarization in all its forms is reigned in before it is too late.

An additional consequence of the existence of militarized masculinities within police culture is the prevalence of intimate partner abuse perpetrated by police officers. Studies have repeatedly shown that police officers commit intimate partner violence at a higher rate than the general population (Goodmark, 2015). Moreover, their abuse may be more severe as they have extensive training in weapons and psychological tactics that can be used to intimidate and isolate their partner as well as connections throughout the criminal justice system that make reporting their abuse nearly impossible (Goodmark, 2015). Though militarized masculinities may not be the sole cause of such abuse, its emphasis on domination, violence, and control and denigration of the feminine affects the way that officers interact with their partners in the home: “[m]ilitarized men, unable to contain their soldiering, unable to become civilianized, bring home military norms of domination and violence to enforce compliance with, protect the integrity of, and quash women’s resistance to their regime of domestic power” (Adelman, 2003, pp. 1134-5). Consequently, the militarization of the police affects all manner of social relations creating a culture of fear and distrust in public and at home. While the public problems of policing have been recognized (though far from solved), the private manifestations of militarized policing have received less attention. It is imperative that both aspects be considered in tandem so as to adequately address the societal consequences of militarization and the impacts it has on the reification of hierarchical social structures predicated on race and gender, among others.

It has now been over one year since the murder of George Floyd by officers of the Minneapolis Police Department. Though the man primarily responsible for his death has been found guilty of his murder, little else has been accomplished to guarantee the protection and equal participation of Black people in the US. Indeed, support for BLM, which spiked just after George Floyd’s murder, had already fallen among White people by September 2020 (Thomas & Horowitz, 2020). As no substantial changes have been made, the conditions which generated this massive protest

movement remain. As a result, large scale Black civil rights protests should be expected to reoccur in the future as Black peoples' lives in the United States continue to be at risk. It is thus imperative that the issues identified in this thesis (media coverage of protest, police militarization) are addressed so as to enable the possibility for revolutionary transformational change in society through the destruction of discriminatory hierarchical social structures. Only in this way can we create a society predicated on dignity and respect of others' humanity, which is a society in which I hope we would all want to live.

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