Black Lives Matter in the Media:

The liberal and conservative newspaper framing of Black Lives Matter protests in the United States between May 2020 and May 2021

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Abstract

The majority of the literature on the newspaper coverage of BLM protests concludes that the overall coverage was quite negative between 2013 and 2020. This study fills in a knowledge gap by answering the research question: How did liberal and conservative newspaper opinion articles frame the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States between May 2020 and May 2021? The method used is a qualitative content analysis and the data consists of 99 newspaper opinion articles written in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post,* and *Wall Street Journal*. Here, the theoretical concepts that guide the analysis are racial grammar and colorblindness. The study finds that the liberal newspaper opinion articles were pro-BLM, and the conservative anti-BLM, in their general protest framing between May 2020 and May 2021. In addition, racial framing through the minimization of racism, cultural racism, and the denial of racism were central in conservative articles, but non-existent or a deviation in liberal articles. The study concludes by stating that the conservative articles deny (systemic) racism to defend its existence and that this is in line with contemporary US conservative ideology.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, conservative, liberal, newspaper analysis, racial framing

Introduction

It is February 26, 2012, when a 17-year-old black child named Trayvon Martin was walking home from the store. On the way home, he was approached by a member of the local neighborhood watch called George Zimmerman. Moments before, Zimmerman had called 911 to report a "suspicious person" and he was told by the 911 operator to wait in the car. However, Zimmerman did not comply and he confronted Martin. The confrontation that ensued ended with Martin being shot to death by Zimmerman. In court, the jury concluded that Zimmerman was not guilty and this acquittal was the beginning of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement (Chase, 2018). Since the start of the BLM movement, there have been protests aimed at (systemic) racism and police brutality (Banks, 2018). In addition to these protests, there has also been extensive media coverage of the protest (Appendix A). This present study is concerned with the media framing of the BLM protest. More specifically, it is concerned with the question of how both liberal and conservative newspaper opinion articles framed the BLM protest between May 2020 and May 2021.

Problem statement

The theoretical framework will discuss the literature on the newspaper coverage of BLM protests between 2013 and 2020. Here, the majority of the existing studies concluded that the media coverage of BLM protests was quite negative between 2013 and 2020 (Kilgo et al., 2019; Leopold & Bell, 2017; Mourão et al., 2021). Thus, the newspaper coverage of BLM protests has already been studied to an extent. However, there is still a knowledge gap in the literature relating to the newspaper coverage of BLM protests that has two components. Firstly, most studies that analyzed the newspaper coverage of the BLM protest did not focus on the protest after the killing of George Floyd. Secondly, most studies did not explicitly focus on the differences between liberal and conservative media coverage. In short, the knowledge gap concerns the potential differences in the liberal and conservative newspaper coverage of BLM protests, after the killing of George Floyd in May 2020.

Hence, the research question can be formulated as follows: How did liberal and conservative newspaper opinion articles frame the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States between May 2020 and May 2021? This research question will focus on two liberal and two conservative newspapers. Here, the two liberal newspapers that will be analyzed are the *New York Times* (NYT) and the *Washington Post* (WSP) and the two conservative newspapers are the *New York Post* (NYP) and the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ). Furthermore, the newspaper articles that will be analyzed are exclusively opinion pieces. This is because opinion pieces are more normative

which allows the potential differences between liberal and conservative newspapers to be more clearly defined. In addition, the research will mainly focus on how the newspaper articles framed the protests by looking at the language that they employ. This is with the help of the theoretical concepts named racial grammar and colorblindness. Here, racial grammar refers to how language is used to either directly or indirectly talk about race (Banks, 2018). In addition, colorblindness is the idea that discourse is used to downplay and justify contemporary racism through the use of disguised racially coded language (Ellis & Branch-Ellis, 2020). Here, two relevant racial frames encompass colorblind racism, namely the minimization of racism and cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). The theoretical framework will discuss these racial frames in more detail.

Scientific relevance

Researching how both liberal and conservative newspapers covered the BLM protest between May 2020 and May 2021 has scientific relevance for two main reasons. Firstly, the killing of George Floyd led to a sharp increase in the extent of the BLM protest (Heaney, 2020). Parallel to this, there was also a strong increase in the media coverage of the growing protest (Appendix B). This increase in BLM protest and media coverage of the protest could have changed how the media wrote about the protest. In addition, the studies that have been done on BLM protests generally did not focus on specifically the BLM protest after the killing of George Floyd. In short, this research has scientific relevance because new research into the media coverage of BLM protests, after the Killing of George Floyd, could come to different conclusions than previous research on the subject.

Secondly, analyzing both liberal and conservative newspaper articles relating to the BLM protest also has scientific relevance. This is mainly because identifying potential differences in how both liberal and conservative newspapers frame the BLM protest can help to understand how these newspapers want the reader to understand the protest. Understanding how different newspapers want their readers to view the BLM protest can give new insight into the underlying ideological beliefs and aims of these newspapers concerning race issues.

Social relevance

The proposed thesis also has societal relevance for two main reasons. Firstly, the BLM protests are a large contemporary social issue in the United States. As a result, there is a lot of media coverage of the protest and this coverage can play a significant role in shaping public opinion. Here, it is important that the media accurately covers and frames social issues like the BLM

protest, especially in times of rampant 'fake news'. This is because, accurately informing the population as a whole, as well as influencers such as opinion makers and policy makers, can lead them to make more informed decisions and pursue actions based on empirical reality. Secondly, understanding how different newspapers respond to protest movements can help protest movements in organizing tactics that lead the media coverage to be more in line with the aims of the protest movements. This can then result in the protest movements potentially having a bigger chance of succeeding.

Theoretical framework

Background

The history, aims, and causes of the BLM movement

The "BlackLivesMatter" phrase was first created in July 2013 by one of the three co-founders of the BLM movement named Alicia Garza, as a direct response to the shooting of Trayvon Martin (Bennett-Swanson, 2017). Together with the other two co-founders, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, the activists wanted to bring attention to the economic, social, and political inequalities facing black people in the United States. Here, the founders were not only concerned with high-profile police killings of black people, but also with the underlying social structures and historical circumstances that have led to these police killings (Banks, 2018). It is therefore not a surprise that the core demands of the movement focus on addressing economic, social, and political inequalities of Black and other marginalized communities (Kilgo & Mourão, 2019). Moreover, the three founders felt that black liberation movements in the past had left out women, queer and transgender people, which is why the movement is intersectional and focuses on inclusiveness (Banks, 2018).

While the direct cause of the BLM protest can be traced back to the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2013, the more underlying cause points towards systemic racism, especially concerning the criminal justice system. According to Braveman et al. (2022), systemic racism can be defined as racism that is "deeply embedded in and throughout systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, entrenched practices, and established beliefs and attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of color" (p. 171). In addition, systemic racism can reflect both ongoing as well as historical injustices. Lastly, systemic racism is often not conscious, intentional, or explicit.

The evidence for systemic racism against people of color in the United States is overwhelming, multifaceted, and too broad to be discussed here in detail. This is why only a few studies specifically related to policing and prison sentencing will be discussed. Firstly,

looking at policing, one study shows that black people accounted for 72% of overall traffic stops in the state of Washington. This is while the black population is only 37.1% in this state (American Civil Liberties Union, 2020, p. 1). In addition, black people were more than twice as likely to be searched by the police than white people when stopped in the city of Ferguson (United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2015, p. 4). Lastly, a study of nearly 100 million traffic stops conducted across the United States showed that black drivers are less likely to be pulled over after sunset, which the study contributes to the fact that it is harder to see the person's race after sunset (Pierson et al., 2020, p. 736).

Looking at prison sentencing, black male offenders receive 19.1% longer prison sentences for the same crimes as white-male offenders (United States Sentencing Commission, 2017, p. 2). In addition, when sentenced black Americans spend almost 10% more time in prison for the same crimes when compared to white Americans (Rehavi & Starr, 2014, p. 1320). Furthermore, despite similar levels of drug dealing and drug usage, black Americans are ten times more likely to be imprisoned for drug-related offenses than white people in the 198 largest counties in the US (The Justice Policy Institute, 2007, p. 3). Lastly, black Americans are more than four times as likely to receive the death penalty for murder than white Americans (Beckett & Evans, 2014, p. 1).

The history of BLM protest in relation to the media

Looking now specifically at the history of BLM protest from 2013 until 2021 and its relation to the media. In this history, three moments can be identified as important in the sense that they changed the extent of the media coverage surrounding the protest (Appendix A). The first moment was that which launched the BLM movement, namely the earlier discussed the killing of Trayvon Martin in July 2013 (Chase, 2018). Secondly, while the killing of Trayvon started the movement, it was the killing of Michael Brown that catalyzed it (Kilgo & Mourão, 2019). Michael Brown was an 18-year-old black man who got shot and killed by a white police officer named Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014, in the city of Ferguson. When it became clear that the grand jury would not indict Wilson, mass protests broke out that went on for weeks (Chase, 2018). The killing of Michael Brown led to an increase in BLM protest, and media coverage of the protest, and put the movement in the international spotlight (Kilgo & Mourão, 2019; Appendix A). There would be many more police killings of black people between 2014 and 2020, including ones that gained a lot of media attention and led to new protests. However, it was the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, by Minneapolis police officers that turned the BLM protest movement into the "broadest in American history" according to the NYT

(Heaney, 2020, p. 196). This moment led not only to increasing protest but also to a sharp increase in the newspaper coverage of the BLM protest (Appendix B).

Literature review

The existing literature on the newspaper coverage of BLM protests between 2013 and 2020 will now be discussed. Starting with a study of two liberal newspapers, namely the NYT and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that concerns the Ferguson protest. The study argues that the analyzed articles were more likely to use a "positive" frame that suggested peacefulness and order than a more "negative" frame that suggested lawlessness and deviance. In addition, the study writes that both newspapers relied heavenly on the voices of protesters and quoted them more often than the police or government officials (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017). In short, this study concludes that the newspaper coverage of the BLM protest in Ferguson is more "positive" than "negative", but it is also the only study that does so. Furthermore, next to there being one study that claims a "positive" news coverage, there is also only one study that claims a "neutral" media coverage. This study by Palmer (2021), argues that the "tone of coverage" as well as the language around the BLM protest was not positive or negative. Instead, the study concluded that the tone and language used were more "neutral" for articles published in the NYT, WSP, and WSJ in the years 2014, 2017, and 2020. Here, "neutral" referred to articles that used "neutral" language like "protest" and "demonstrations" and not more loaded language like "riots".

The next few studies argue that the newspaper coverage of the BLM protest was generally quite negative, beginning with a study that also looked at the Ferguson protest. This study directly responds to the earlier discussed study done by Elmasry and el-Nawawy. It goes against Elmasry and el-Nawawy by stating that the coverage of the Ferguson protesters was not overwhelmingly sympathetic. The study did a content analysis of national newspapers including the NYT, WSP, and WSJ surrounding the Ferguson protest. It concluded that the analyzed articles focused more on violence by protestors, official sources, and confrontation than on non-violence, the opinions of protestors, and the aims of the protestors (Kilgo et al., 2019). The results of this study are further strengthened by Leopold and Bell (2017), who analyzed 79 articles including articles published by the NYT, WSJ, and NYP. The study concluded that the articles focused on the language of crime, lawlessness, and violence while mostly citing official sources. In addition, the study stated that there was little discussion of issues that were associated with the formation of the BLM movement. Furthermore, a content analysis of five newspapers, including the NYT, WSP, and WSJ, argued that race was

associated with deviance in the coverage of the Ferguson protest and that the coverage was generally focused on violent confrontation with the police. However, it also argued that over time newspaper coverage moved away from focusing on violence and towards displaying the demands and grievances of the protestors (Mourão et al., 2021).

Racial grammar and colorblindness

There are two closely associated theoretical concepts called racial grammar and colorblindness that will be used to guide the analysis of the articles. Firstly, racial grammar refers to how language is used to either directly or indirectly talk about race. Here, racial grammar makes it possible to be indirectly racist without being explicitly racist. For example, a news article can use codified words like "thug" to describe a person that is engaging in perceived unwanted behavior, which is meant to insinuate a black person without explicitly mentioning race (Banks, 2018).

A second and related concept is that of colorblindness which refers to the idea that discourse is used to downplay, justify and rationalize systemic and contemporary racism. This form of racism is implicit and the racist rhetoric is disguised in racially coded language, euphemisms, and institutional policies (Ellis & Branch-Ellis, 2020). The sociologist Bonilla-Silva discusses four different racial frames that encompass colorblind racism: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. These four frames can help to explain how racists shield themselves from racial realities that exist around them (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Here, only cultural racism and the minimization of racism are relevant frames for this thesis since the other two frames are absent from the analyzed data. Looking at the two relevant frames, there are three different forms of both cultural racism and the minimization of racism. Starting with cultural racism, there is the narrative that people of color underperform because of their failings, the stereotyping of black people as being more prone to violence or crime, and the labeling of black victims as being "thugs" or gang members. Furthermore, looking at the minimization of racism, there is the narrative of stating that the country has changed and that racism is something of the past, arguing that there are only a few bad apples in the police and framing the actions of the police as mistakes. These two racial frames and their different forms will be part of the initial coding and are central to the analysis of the data. The appendix includes a table with a more detailed representation of each racial frame (Appendix C).

This theoretical framework discussed the history of the BLM movement, its relationship to the media, the literature on the newspaper coverage of BLM, and theoretical concepts that will be used to help guide the research. There are two implications for the research that can be drawn

from this theoretical framework. Firstly, the main takeaway of the literature on BLM protests between 2013 and 2020 is that the majority of the newspaper coverage was quite negative for the NYT, WSP, WSJ, and NYP. The analyzed articles focused mostly on the violence that the protestors engaged in, "official" sources rather than that of the protestors and they generally failed to include the causes and aims of the BLM protestors. Here, the study will research if this trend is continuing after the killing of George Floyd. This might not be the case since the killing of Floyd led to a sharp increase in both the number of protests and the media coverage of these protests (Heaney, 2020; Appendix B). Secondly, while the literature did include both liberal and conservative newspapers in the analysis, comparing them was generally not a focus of the research. Researching the potential differences between liberal and conservative newspaper framing of the BLM protest will be the central aim of this study.

Research Design

Data

The data that was analyzed for this study consisted of newspaper opinion articles written by two liberal and two conservative newspapers that discussed the BLM protest between May 2020 and May 2021. Here, the two liberal newspapers in question are the NYT and the WSP. These two liberal newspapers both have a "center-left" (liberal) bias according to the website "mediabiasfactcheck" (Media Bias Fact Check, 2022a; MBFC, 2022b). In addition, the two conservative newspapers are the NYP and the WSJ. According to the same website, these two newspapers have a "center-right" (conservative) bias (MBFC, 2021; MBFC 2022c). Furthermore, according to Harvard's "The Future of the Media Project", the two liberal and the two conservative newspapers are both the most read newspapers in the United States concerning their political bias (Harvard University, 2022). Analyzing the two most-read liberal and conservative newspapers in the United States is relevant because that which is most read generally also has the most influence on the discourse and society in general.

Looking now at the size of the data, all four newspapers have a website that includes a database of their articles. Searching for "Black Lives Matter" gives thousands of results in the databases of all four newspapers, which is why the data has to be filtered. This filtering was done through the use of multiple search terms and three other requirements. The search terms that help to narrow down the number of articles were: "black lives matter", "George Floyd", "protest", and "racism". Using these terms brought the number of articles down to under a hundred for each newspaper. The last step in narrowing down the dataset was to introduce the

following three requirements to the articles: it must be an opinion piece, be related to the BLM protest, and discuss the United States. This last step brought the number of articles down to a total of 99 articles, 38 for the NYT, 27 for the WSP, 25 for the NYP, and 9 for the WSJ.

Method

Now that it is clear what data was analyzed, there has to be a description of how this analysis will take place. The empirical research was conducted through the use of qualitative content analysis. This form of analysis can be understood as an approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator and that allows categories to emerge out of the data (Bryman, 2016). Here, qualitative content analysis was used as a method for this study because it can help to find new patterns of racial framing by letting categories emerge from the data.

Operationalization

In general, it is quantitative content analysis that applies predefined categories to the sources, however, it is still sometimes useful for qualitative content analysis to employ some initial categorization since this can help to guide the collection of data (Bryman, 2016). This categorization did change during the readings of the data. In addition, it does not seem relevant to discuss the specifics of the codebook in this section. However, appendix (D) has the entire initial categorization that was used to read and code the data, including the codes relating to racial frames. In addition, appendix (E) includes all the codes that were created during the first reading of the data. Lastly, appendix (F) has a second codebook that is a combination of the initial categorization and the new codes, which was used for the second reading of the data.

Results

This results section will discuss three themes that sprang up from the content analysis of the newspaper opinion articles. The core results are summarized in a separate table at the beginning of each theme, and a summary of the full results can be found in the appendix (Appendix G). The first theme looks at the extent to which newspaper opinion articles can be considered to be pro-BLM, anti-BLM, or neutral. In addition, this theme looks at how the newspapers engage in positive or negative protest framing. Here, the first theme is more general and will contain some numerical data. This is because understanding to what extent the different newspapers are generally pro-BLM or anti-BLM can help to give context to the second and third themes. Moreover, the second theme will analyze how the different newspapers engage in two types of implicit colorblind racial framing: the minimization of racism and cultural racism. Lastly, the

third theme will then look at the different ways in which the newspapers engage in denying racism.

Theme 1: Pro-BLM and anti-BLM protest framing

This present theme will determine to what extent the opinion articles in the newspapers are either pro-BLM or anti-BLM by looking at the core message of the articles. When the core message is not pro-BLM or anti-BLM, the article will be categorized as "neutral". In addition, the theme will focus on the extent to which the articles engaged in positive or negative protest framing. Here, positive protest framing is understood as focusing on the aims of BLM, the causes of BLM, and police violence while mostly ignoring the crime and violence by protestors. Furthermore, negative protest framing is understood as mostly ignoring police violence, the aims of BLM, and the causes of BLM while focusing on crime and violence by the protestors.

Table 1

The Core Results of Theme 1

	New York Times (Liberal)	Washington Post (Liberal)	New York Post (Conservative)	Wall Street Journal (Conservative)
Theme 1				
General language	Pro-BLM	Pro-BLM	Anti-BLM	A mix of anti-BLM and 'neutral'
Positive protest framing				
Causes of BLM	Police violence and systemic racism	Police violence and systemic racism	No discussion	No discussion
Aims of BLM	Focus on systemic change of reform	Focus on reform over systemic change	No discussion	Little discussion
Police violence	Regular discussion	Regular discussion	No discussion	Little discussion
Negative protest framing				
Crime and violence by protestors	Little discussion	Little discussion	Regular discussion	Regular discussion
Language of exaggeration	No examples	No examples	Numerous examples Exaggeration of crime and violence by protestors and animosity towards police	Few examples Some exaggeration of crime and violence by protestors, but more nuanced

Starting with the liberal newspapers, for the NYT, 84% of the analyzed articles can be classified as being pro-BLM and 16% as "neutral". In addition, the newspaper engages in mostly positive protest framing. This is in the sense that the NYT identifies the causes of BLM to lie in police violence and systemic racism. For example, one article writes that "George Floyd protests are not just about police violence. They're about structural racism and the persistence of white supremacy" (Bouie, 2020a). Furthermore, the articles regularly discuss the aims of BLM, the focus generally being on systemic change over reform. An example from one article reads:

Now I know we don't need reform. We need something far more radical. The current system does not work. Even during protests against the current system, law enforcement officers largely behaved as they always do, with blunt force and apparent indifference to the safety of protesters. They believe they are righteous. Burn it all down and build something new in the ashes. (Gay, 2020)

The second liberal newspaper concerns the WSP. The articles in this newspaper can be classified as being 96% pro-BLM and 4% anti-BLM. There are two ways in which the WSP compares to the NYT in their coverage and two ways in which they differ. Firstly, just like with the NYT, the WSP engages in more positive than negative protest framing. In addition, the WSP also points toward police violence and systemic racism as being the core causes of BLM. For example, one article states that:

We will never escape the infinite loop of death and trauma until we accept the fact that American policing was born out of a system that was established to protect the tenets of white supremacy and control the movements and aspirations of Black and brown communities that might threaten that status quo. (Norris, 2020a)

One difference however is that the WSP discusses the aims and causes of BLM to a lesser extent than the NYT. Furthermore, the WSP also tends to focus more on reforming the current system instead of changing it. An example from one of the articles reads:

They [BLM protestors] want to reimagine community policing; to reform the educational system so it is equitable and excellent for all students; and to develop policy strategies that bring jobs, investment, revitalized housing and, ultimately, hope into low-income neighborhoods. (Thomas, 2020)

Looking now at the conservative newspapers and starting with the NYP. The articles in this newspaper are 96% anti-BLM and 4% "neutral". The first interesting point concerning the NYP opinion articles is that none of the articles engage in positive protest framing. Instead, the NYP engages in negative protest framing by mostly focusing on protestors rioting, burning down buildings, destroying property, and looting while defending the police. For example, one article writes that "In a summer of madness, cities have been trashed and people killed, and crime rates have spiraled out of control as police were demonized, defunded, and demoralized" (Devine, 2020b). In addition, there is a pattern in the NYP articles that can be called the "language of exaggeration". The articles engage in this "language of exaggeration" in two ways: exaggerating the crime and violence of BLM protestors and exaggerating the animosity against the police. Firstly, looking at the exaggeration of crime and violence, the quotation above had the sentence "a summer of madness". Another example is the title of an article that is called

"Democrats are pretending the cities aren't burning" which writes about "the disorder that has caused countless millions in property damage" (Lowry, 2020a). Secondly, looking at the exaggeration of animosity towards the police, one article states "Around the nation we are seeing police at the breaking point. They are showing restraint in the face of insane abuse" (Devine, 2020c).

The second conservative newspaper concerns the WSJ. The articles in this newspaper are 56% anti-BLM and 44% "neutral".[1] Other than with the NYP, the WSJ articles do engage in some positive protest framing by discussing the causes of BLM as well as violence committed by the police. However, in general, the WSJ does still engage in negative protest framing. Here, the WSJ compares to the NYP in the sense that they focus on protestors being arsonists, rioting, pillaging, and looting. For example, one article states that "Protests spilled over into violence and looting. Stores were destroyed; policemen and civilians injured and killed" (Ali, 2020). However, there is one way in which the WSJ differs from the NYP. Namely, in the sense that it is less radical in their language. Where the NYP uses phrases like "a summer of madness", the WSJ is more nuanced and writes for example "there have been daily protests accompanied by riot and pillage in multiple U.S cities" (Henninger, 2020). Here, the WSJ is more nuanced in the sense that they distinguish between the "daily protest" that have been *accompanied* by riots and pillage.

There are significant differences in the ways that the newspapers generally frame the BLM protest. Firstly, the two liberal newspapers mostly engage in positive protest framing. This is because the two liberal newspapers are trying to understand the BLM protest by focusing on their causes which they identify to lie in systemic racism and police brutality. In addition, both newspapers also discuss the aims of the BLM protestors. Furthermore, there are two clear differences between the two liberal newspapers. Firstly, the articles in the NYT are overall more radical than the WSP in the sense that they are more eager to call for systemic change. Secondly, the WSP engages less in discussing the causes and aims of BLM.

Moving on to the two conservative newspapers that mostly engage in negative protest framing. This is because both newspapers mostly ignore the causes and aims of the BLM protest while focusing on discussing crime and violence committed by protestors as well as defending the police. There is one clear way in which the two conservative newspapers differ in their general protest framing. Mainly the fact that the NYP is less nuanced in the sense that the newspaper has zero positive protest framing and generally makes use of exaggerations. This is

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[1] This data is based on a sample that only consist of nine articles.

while the WSJ does have a mix of anti-BLM and "neutral" articles, engages in some positive protest framing, and has a generally more nuanced and less radical writing style.

The core conclusion of this first theme is that both liberal newspapers are generally pro-BLM and engage in positive protest framing by discussing the causes and aims of BLM with the difference being that the NYT is more radical in their discussions than the WSP. This while the two conservative newspapers are generally more anti-BLM and engage in negative protest framing by mostly ignoring the aims and causes of BLM and focusing on crime and violence done by BLM protestors. The difference is that the NYP is less nuanced, engages in exaggerations, and is more explicitly anti-BLM than the WSJ.

Theme 2: The minimization of racism and cultural racism

The previous theme discussed the extent to which the newspaper opinion articles can be understood as being pro-BLM or anti-BLM and to what extent the newspapers engaged in positive or negative protest framing. This present theme will now analyze two forms of implicit colorblind racial framing called the minimization of racism and cultural racism. How these different frames can be understood is broadly discussed in the theoretical framework section of the thesis and will therefore not be repeated here.

Table 2

The Core Results of Theme 2

	New York Times (Liberal)	Washington Post (Liberal)	New York Post (Conservative)	Wall Street Journal (Conservative)
Theme 2				
Minimization of racism	Few examples Police violence is the result of a few bad apples, but a clear deviation from the central message	No examples	Numerous examples Police violence is the result of a few bad apples Violence by police are mistakes Victim blaming	Few examples Police violence is the result of a few bad apples
Cultural racism	No examples	No examples	Numerous examples Black people underperform because of their bad values and choices Justification of police violence against black victims because of past wrongdoings	Few examples Black people underperform because of their bad values and choices

Minimization of racism

The first form of implicit colorblind racial framing that will be discussed concerns the minimization of racism. Starting with the liberal newspapers, the WSP does not engage in the minimization of racism in any of its articles. However, the NYT does have some minimization of racism in two of the 38 analyzed articles. A first interesting point about these two articles is that they are quite similar in two ways. This is because firstly both articles are part of the 16% "neutral" NYT articles in the sense that their general language is not pro-BLM or anti-BLM and secondly both articles are written by police chiefs. One of the two articles will be discussed in more detail below.

The article written by a former police chief of Burlington is quite critical of police violence. This is because the article sees the murder of George Floyd as "a brutal crime", supports the murder charge against the perpetrator, and calls for police reform. However, the article also states that:

> If you add up all the police killings that have shocked us —even if you add up *all* of the police killings that happen every year — the chance that one of them will happen in any particular police department is very small. There are nearly 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the nation, with roughly 700,000 police officers, but the incidents that convulse us as a nation are a handful. Nearly all officers spend their careers without so much as firing a shot. (Pozo, 2020)

This quotation can be understood as the minimization of racism for two reasons. Firstly, it presumes that the main criticism levied at the police concerns police killings. This while the main criticism of BLM protestors is focused on different forms of police violence and discrimination, not just police killings (Banks, 2018). Secondly, the article frames the police killings as a result of a few bad apples and calls the police killings that do happen "incidents" and only "a handful". This framing ignores the fact that the amount of police killings is not comparable to other developed countries. For example, according to Jones and Sawyer (2020), in 2018 there were 1099 police killings in the US while the next wealthy country is Canada with only 36 police killings in 2017.

While the NYT has limited examples of indirect minimizations of racism, the conservative newspapers are more numerous and direct in their examples. Starting with the NYP, the newspaper engages in the minimization of racism in two ways. Firstly, by stating that certain deaths at the hands of the police are simply "mistakes" made by the police. For example, one article writes that "Gannon was trying to be upfront when he released Potter's bodycam footage and said she had mistaken her gun for her Taser" (Devine, 2021a). The second way in which

the NYP engages in the minimization of racism is victim-blaming. One article writes "Meanwhile, politicians and the mainstream media sensationalize and magnify any questionable case involving a black suspect and a white police officer to affirm dogmas about "racial oppression" (even if the suspect was at fault)" (Arora, 2021b). What is most interesting about these two examples is that the language radically changes when the NYP discusses police violence against white people. For example, one article reads:

> Meanwhile, unarmed white people killed by cops in highly questionable circumstances while reaching for their license during a traffic stop (mistaken for a gun), failing to raise their hands upon police request, lying face down on the ground, or being suffocated to death by wildly excessive force, are ignored by the media. Consequently, the public likely perceives this problem to be almost nonexistent. (Arora, 2021c)

In this example, the police killings are no longer "mistakes" or the "fault of the suspect". Instead, the police engage in "wildly excessive force" and kills white people in "highly questionable circumstances".

Moving on to the WSJ, there is one way in which this newspaper engages in the minimization of racism. Namely by arguing that there are only a few bad actors. For example, one article writes "Cops have to show they will hold their bad apples accountable and build relationships with the community *before* tragedies happen" and that "Similarly, America's national debate over policing must begin by resisting efforts to lump the majority of police, who do their jobs well and humanely, in with those like the Minneapolis cop in that horrific video" (McGurn, 2020a). A second article corresponds to this narrative by stating "This, he said, should give renewed confidence in the justice system, but bad cops cannot be allowed to define all officers, 'the vast majority of whom put on the uniform each day with integrity and servant hearts'" (Noonan, 2021). These statements are examples of the minimization of racism since they point toward police violence being a result of a few bad apples, instead of it being systemic.

Cultural racism

The second form of implicit colorblind racial framing that will now be discussed concerns cultural racism. In the liberal newspapers, there are no examples of cultural racism, which is why we will directly move to the conservative articles. Starting with the NYP which engages in two different forms of cultural racism. Firstly, some articles label black victims as being prone to violence and crime by stating that they have been violent in the past. For example, one article states that "Of course, neither Floyd nor Wright deserved to die. It is a tragedy for everyone involved. But it's worth noting that before their fatal encounters with police, both men

had been charged over crimes involving aggravated violence to women" (Devine, 2021a). Here, a narrative is being shaped that views black victims as dangerous criminals. This is to frame police violence against black victims as justified because of past wrongdoings. The second form of cultural racism that the NYP engages in focuses on black people underperforming. For example, one article writes:

> If they really cared about black lives, they would have tried to address the real reasons for black disadvantage. They would worry about fatherlessness, the 70 percent of black children born to single mothers, the illiteracy that holds down black achievement, and drugs that blight black lives. (Devine, 2020d)

This quotation exemplifies the narrative that black people underperform because of their bad choices and values and not because of socio-historical reasons like systemic racism.

Moving on to the WSJ, this newspaper engages in one form of cultural racism that is similar to that of the NYP. Namely, the idea that black people underperform because of their failings. For example, one article discusses a recently released movie and states:

> "It's easy to say, 'The white man, the white man,' and point the finger," says a pastor in the film whose church is located in one of Chicago's most violent neighborhoods. "In reality, we have to take a very close look at ourselves." His focus is on "the transformation of the person. And we're telling them, hey, educationally, you got to get it together. Economically, you got to get it together. Family and spiritually, you got to get it together. And you have to take responsibility." (Riley, 2020)

This quotation is an instance of cultural racism because "violent neighborhoods" are seen by the article as a result of people of color not taking responsibility, instead of it being a result of social factors. Furthermore, another article in the WSJ refers to the white-nationalist Charles Murray and argues that:

> But we also see, as Charles Murray and J.D. Vance have shown, that these problems aren't unique to black America. White America is also, in Mr. Murray's phrase, "coming apart" socially. Broken marriages and alienated young men are problems in Appalachia as much as in the inner cities. (Ali, 2020)

Here, the article engages in cultural racism by explaining black underperformance as a result of broken marriages and alienated young men. However, the article also mentions that the same is true for (poor) white people. In this way, by pointing toward both white and black people underperforming the article can negate future allegations of racism, even though the argument is made by quoting a white nationalist (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.).

Comparing the newspapers

There are different ways in which the newspapers engage in the minimization of racism and cultural racism. Firstly, looking at the liberal newspapers, it is interesting to see that the WSP does not engage in any minimization of racism or cultural racism. In addition, the NYT does not engage in any cultural racism in any of the articles. However, the NYT does engage in some minimization of racism. This by arguing that police misconduct is the result of a few bad apples instead of it being a systemic problem with the police as an institution. It is relevant to point out however that the two NYT articles that engage in this form of colorblind racism are both written by police chiefs and are also exceptions to the rule. Generally, as discussed in the previous theme, most NYT articles do acknowledge police misconduct as a systemic problem. It can be argued that the reason why the NYT allows these types of voices in their newspaper is because of two reasons. Firstly, the articles were both written by former police chiefs that are still overall quite critical of the police in their articles and are therefore still serving the anti-racist narrative of the NYT. Secondly, allowing voices that dissent from the standard view gives the NYT an image of being more neutral and balanced.

While the liberal newspapers engage little in the minimization of racism, and when they do it deviates from the general view of the paper, the conservative newspapers do engage more willingly in both the minimization of racism and cultural racism. In addition, when the conservative newspapers engage in these forms of racism, it is not a deviation from the general articles that they publish, it is the central message. Looking at the minimization of racism, both conservative newspapers argue that police misconduct is the result of a few bad apples. Furthermore, both conservative articles engage in the form of cultural racism that points towards black underperformance as a result of their poor values, mistakes, and lack of responsibility. One difference between the NYP and the WSJ is that the NYP also engages in a form of cultural racism that reshapes black victims, like for example George Floyd, as dangerous criminals to justify police violence. A last interesting point is that the WSJ quotes in one of their articles the white nationalist Charles Murray who according to the Southern Poverty Law Center uses "racist pseudoscience and misleading statistics to argue that social inequality is caused by the genetic inferiority of the black and Latino communities, women and the poor" (SPLC, n.d.). It can be argued that the WSJ can get away with quoting a white nationalist in one of their articles because the author is a black woman named Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Here, quoting a white nationalist as a black woman can make it harder to criticize her because one has to argue that a black woman is racist against black people.

The first conclusion of the second theme is that the WSP does not engage in any minimization of racism or cultural racism. In addition, the NYT does engage in some minimization of racism in the form of seeing police misconduct as the result of some bad apples. However, this does deviate from the general message of the analyzed NYT articles, namely that police misconduct is a result of systemic racism. Furthermore, both conservative articles engage in the minimization of racism and cultural racism. This by seeing police misconduct as a result of just a few bad apples, black underperformance as a result of black people's behavior, and labeling black victims as criminals to justify police violence. Lastly, where the racism present in the NYT is a deviation from the standard narrative, it is the standard narrative for both conservative newspapers.

Theme 3: Denial of racism

The previous theme looked at the different ways in which the newspapers engaged in implicit colorblind racial framing through the concepts of the minimization of racism and cultural racism. This last theme will now look at the different ways in which the opinion articles deny racism.

Table 3

The Core Results of Theme 3

	New York Times (Liberal)	Washington Post (Liberal)	New York Post (Conservative)	Wall Street Journal (Conservative)
Theme 3				
Denial of racism	No examples	No examples	Numerous examples Strong denial of systemic racism Strong denial of individual racism in society Acknowledgment of past racism, but denial of present racism	Numerous examples Strong denial of systemic racism More nuanced denial of individual racism in society

The third and last theme can start with a conclusion. Namely that there is no observed denial of racism in the two liberal newspapers. There is no denial of systemic racism, individual racism in society, or even the reduction of certain forms of racism. This conclusion makes sense since liberals, and therefore liberal newspapers, are generally opposed to racism. As can be seen by the fact that as of 2017, 81% of (liberal) democrats believe that the US should continue to make

changes towards racial equality (Pew Research Center, 2017). However, it is still interesting to see that there are no examples that deny racism in any of the articles.

Moving on then to the two conservative newspapers and starting with the NYP. This newspaper engages in the denial of racism in three core ways. Firstly, some of the articles simply deny that there is such a thing as "systemic racism" in society. For example, one article talks about "alleged police brutality" that according to the article has been empirically refuted (Arora, 2021c). One more particularly interesting example that encapsulates how the NYP denies systemic racism is present in the following quotation "In the NYPD, 15 percent of officers are black, and more than half are members of a minority group. Contrary to media narratives about systemic police racism, black Americans are the most overrepresented group in law enforcement" (Richmond, 2020). Here, the article makes the argument that systemic racism in the New York City police can't be real because black people are overrepresented in law enforcement.

The second way in which the NYP denies racism goes beyond the systemic level and focuses more on individuals by denying that individuals in society are sometimes racist. This is mainly in the form of saying that no one in society defends the killing of unarmed black people. For example, one article writes that "No one has defended the Minneapolis cop who kept his knee pressed into Floyd's neck until he stopped breathing. Everyone is appalled" and another article reads "There is not a single politician in the country who excused what happened in Minneapolis" (Devine, 2020c; Harsanyi, 2020).

Thirdly, there is the narrative that racism is something that existed in the past, but has now been overcome. One article writes:

> America, whose founding document declares "all men are created equal," which uniquely fought a civil war to end slavery, and which passed the Civil Rights Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin, is a great failure as a white supremacist nation, when you think about it. A white police officer had his trial, and a mixed-race jury of his peers determined his guilt. Justice is blind, no one is above the law and if a police officer does wrong, he will be punished. That is our system and we should be proud of it. (Devine, 2021b)

This quotation is interesting because, on the one hand, the author gives the impression that past forms of racism, like slavery and legal racism, have been overcome and that this is a good thing. However, at the same time, the author implies that the current system works in a non-racist way by stating that justice is blind and no one is above the law. This is while the empirical evidence shows that justice is not blind. For example, black male offenders receive longer prison

sentences for the same crimes committed by white male offenders (United States Sentencing Commission, 2017).[2]

The WSJ has two ways in which it denies racism that is similar to the NYP. Firstly, some articles deny that there is systemic racism in society. For example, one article writes "We have our problems and we need to address those. But our society and our systems are far from racist" (Ali, 2020). Furthermore, a second article states that "Certainly, there are those who honestly believe that America's police are racist and in need of fundamental reforms. They are mistaken" (Latzer, 2020). Secondly, beyond the denial of systemic racism, there is also the denial of individual racism in the WSJ. For example, one article writes that "Ever since Floyd died at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer, filmed with a knee on the man's neck while he was not resisting, almost no one has excused police actions— including fellow cops" (McGurn, 2020b). In addition, a second article states that "An overwhelming majority of Americans already agree that racism should have no place in the country" ("Opinion | Racism, Riots and #BLM", 2020). These two quotations state that almost no one has excused (unjustified) police actions and that most Americans are against racism. This is a denial of racism since many Americans have excused police violence and many Americans do have white supremacist views. For example, according to a recent poll done by the Southern Poverty Law Center, white nationalist narratives like the "great replacement" have become mainstream among the political right. This is because nearly 70% of Republicans believe, at least to an extent, that conservative white voters are being replaced by non-white voters (Miller, 2022).

Comparing the liberal and conservative newspapers is not relevant for this theme since the liberal newspapers have no examples in their articles of denying racism. However, the two conservative newspapers can be compared. Looking at the similarities, both newspapers deny that systemic racism exists in the general society and at the level of the police. In addition, both newspapers deny to some extent the existence of individual racism. However, there are two differences between the NYP and WSJ. Firstly, the NYP engages in the narrative that there was racism in the past that has been overcome, which it sees as a good thing, but then denies that racism in the present still exists. This while the WSJ does not engage in this form of denialism. A second and perhaps more interesting difference is that the WSJ is slightly more nuanced than the NYT in its discussion of individual racism. This is because while the NYP says that "no one" and "not a single politician" has defended the killing of George Floyd, the WSJ does say that "almost no one" has defended the killing of Floyd. In addition, the WSJ states that "the

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[2] See the theoretical framework section for more empirical evidence concerning systemic racism.

overwhelming majority" - so not everyone - believes that racism has no place in society. This difference is in line with the conclusion of the first theme. Namely, that the NYP is less nuanced and more explicitly anti-BLM in their writing than the WSJ. It can be argued that this is true for two reasons. Firstly, the NYP can be seen as a newspaper that is further on the right than the WSJ. Secondly, this difference can be a result of the WSJ being more of a "professional" newspaper aimed at higher-educated conservatives while the NYP is more populist.

In conclusion, the two liberal newspapers do not engage in any denial of racism. In addition, the NYP engages in three forms of denialism. Namely, denying systemic racism, individual racism, and present racism while acknowledging past racism. Furthermore, the WSJ engages in denying both systemic and individual racism. The main difference between the two newspapers is that the WSJ is more nuanced and careful in its denial of individual racism than the NYP.

Conclusion

The present study analyzed ways in which both liberal and conservative newspaper opinion articles framed BLM protests between May 2020 and May 2021. This is to find potential differences in the framing of liberal and conservative newspapers and to see if this framing changed with the killing of George Floyd in the summer of 2020. Furthermore, the study was done through a qualitative content analysis of opinion articles published in the *New York Times, Washington Post, New York Post,* and *Wall Street Journal*. This content analysis produced three core results. Firstly, the content analysis found that the liberal newspapers are pro-BLM, and the conservative newspapers are anti-BLM in their general messaging between May 2020 and May 2021. A main difference between the two liberal newspapers is that the NYT is more radical in its discussions than the WSP. Furthermore, the NYP engaged in what can be called the "language of exaggeration", which refers to consistently exaggerating perceived unwanted behavior from BLM protestors. In addition, the analysis found that the conservative NYP is explicitly anti-BLM in its general messaging. This is while the conservative WSJ has more of a mix of anti-BLM and "neutral" messaging. Here, the NYP can be considered to be more radical and populist, while the WSJ is more nuanced and "professional".

This first core result can be brought in comparison to previous research. The core conclusion of the previous research was that the majority of the newspaper coverage concerning the BLM protest was quite negative between 2013 and 2020. This is because the articles focused mostly on crime and violence by the protestors while failing to include the aims and causes of BLM. It can now be concluded that this trend did continue for the two conservative newspapers, but not for the two liberal newspapers. This is because the newspaper coverage of the NYT and

WSP can generally be understood to be pro-BLM after the killing of George Floyd in May 2020.

The second core result concerns two forms of implicit colorblind racial framing. The NYT, NYP, and the WSJ engaged in the minimization of racism by arguing that police misconduct is the result of a few bad apples. The difference is that for the NYT it was a deviation from the central message, while it was the central message for the conservative articles. Furthermore, the conservative newspapers engaged in cultural racism by arguing that black underperformance is the result of their poor choices and values. In addition, the NYP reshaped black victims to look like criminals to justify police violence.

The last core result from the content analysis concerns denying racism. Only the conservative articles engaged in this form of racism which consisted of denying individual and systemic racism. Furthermore, the NYP denied present racism while acknowledging past racism. The difference between the two newspapers is that the WSJ is more nuanced in its discussions than the NYP.

In conclusion, the research question of this study was: How did liberal and conservative newspaper opinion articles frame the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States between May 2020 and May 2021? It can now be concluded that the liberal newspapers were pro-BLM, and the conservative newspapers were anti-BLM in their general protest framing between May 2020 and May 2021. More specifically, implicit colorblind racial framing in the form of the minimization of racism, cultural racism, and the denial of racism was central in conservative articles, but non-existent or a deviation in liberal articles.

Scientific relevance

Four points can be made concerning the scientific relevance. The first point concerns how contemporary US conservative ideology functions. In this study, the liberal articles discussed systemic racism and police misconduct aimed against black people. This while conservative articles rejected the social phenomenon of systemic racism and police misconduct aimed at black people, while also stating to be against racism. Here, a major problem arises for the conservative newspaper opinion articles. Namely that there is overwhelming evidence for the existence of systemic racism and police misconduct aimed against black people.[3] Thus, the conservative opinion articles have to find a way to reject the claim of systemic racism, while also declaring to be against racism. The solution is to state that there is no (systemic) racism

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[3] See the theoretical framework section for a discussion of the empirical data.

and police misconduct aimed at black people. This is through the minimization of racism, cultural racism, and the denial of racism. The result is a continuation of contemporary US conservative ideology, which is to deny (systemic) racism to defend its existence.

The second point of scientific relevance concerns a specific pattern found in the articles by the NYP. In the opinion articles for this newspaper, there was a consistent pattern of exaggerating the perceived unwanted behavior of BLM protestors. This pattern, what can be named the "language of exaggeration" was exclusive to the NYP and can be attributed to their populist writing style.

Thirdly, in line with the results of this study, it can be argued that public protest can change how (liberal) newspapers cover a protest. Fourthly, it can be argued that what changes how (liberal) newspapers cover a protest is the size of the protest. This is because what changed before and after May 2020 was the size of the protest and not the tactics or aims of the BLM movement itself.

Social relevance

The conclusions of this study have social relevance for general protest movements, the BLM movement specifically, and the broader society. Firstly, the conclusion that protest in themselves and especially their size can change the way that the (liberal) media covers the protest, shows protest movements in general that protesting can indeed change media narratives. Secondly, the study shows that mass protests can change the narratives of the liberal media, but not the conservative media. This is why it might be strategically relevant for the BLM movement specifically to first and foremost try to focus on appealing to the liberal media. Lastly, the conclusion that conservative newspaper coverage of BLM denies systemic racism, in light of all the evidence, shows the broader society that societal change towards racial equality means opposition to contemporary conservative ideology.

Limitations

There are two limitations of this study that have to be taken into account. The first limitation is that the study analyzed opinion articles written after May 2020 and then compared the results with the previous research on the topic. However, the previous research on the topic did not specifically look at newspaper opinion articles, just newspaper articles. This is a limitation to keep in mind when comparing the conclusions of this study with the conclusions of previous research. A second limitation is that the WSJ only had nine opinion articles written between May 2020 and May 2021, when using the criteria laid out in the method section. This is a

limitation because it deviates from the other three newspapers, which had 38, 27, and 25 articles, and also because nine articles are a small amount of data in and of itself.

Suggestions for future research

Four suggestions can be made for future research. Firstly, this thesis focused mostly on negative racial framing. Consequently, there were limited results for the liberal newspapers, since these newspapers did not engage much in negative racial framing. Here, future research could focus more on analyzing positive racial frames like anti-racism. Secondly, keeping the limitations in mind, future research could analyze newspaper articles in general, not only opinion articles. Thirdly, future research could analyze other right-wing populist newspapers and broader media outlets. This is to examine if the coined concept named the "language of exaggeration" is a broader part of populist right-wing language use or if it is more of an isolated phenomenon specific to the NYP. Fourthly, this study looked at the differences between liberal and conservative newspapers. Here, future research could analyze the differences between more far-left and far-right newspapers. This is to analyze how they differ from each other, but also in what ways they differ from the more center-left and center-right newspapers analyzed in this study.

Concluding remark

In the end, the conservative newspapers did not change their framing of the BLM protest after the killing of George Floyd. However, liberal newspapers did become more pro-BLM in their framing, which can be contributed to the mass protest of 2020. As a result, this study can conclude by stating that collective mass protest can indeed have an effect on media behavior and bring about social change.

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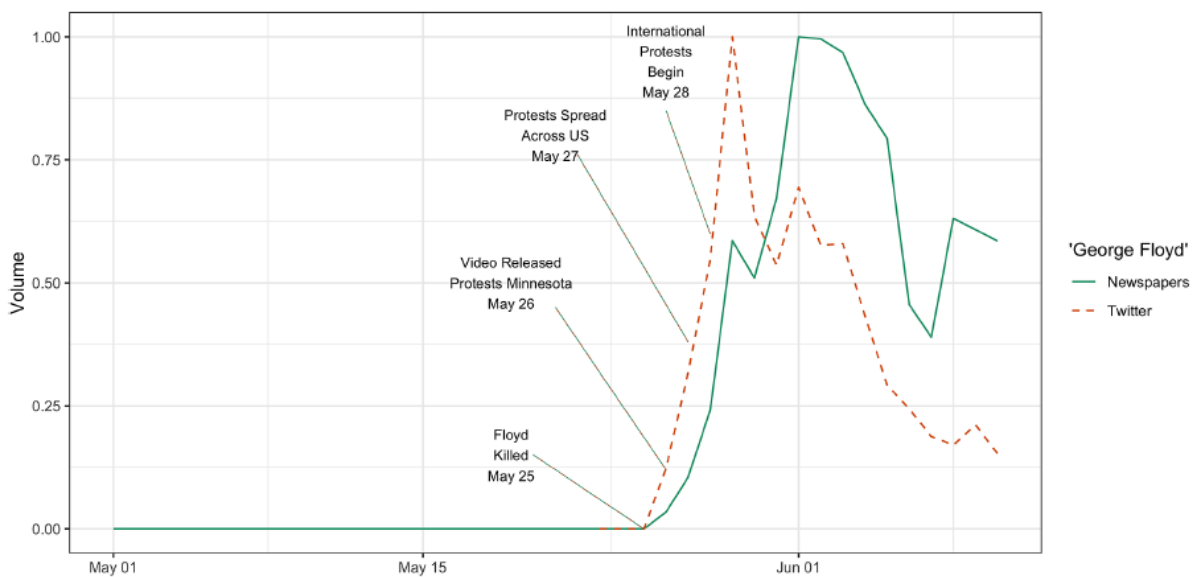
Appendices

Appendix A

Frequency of BLM Coverage in Newsrooms
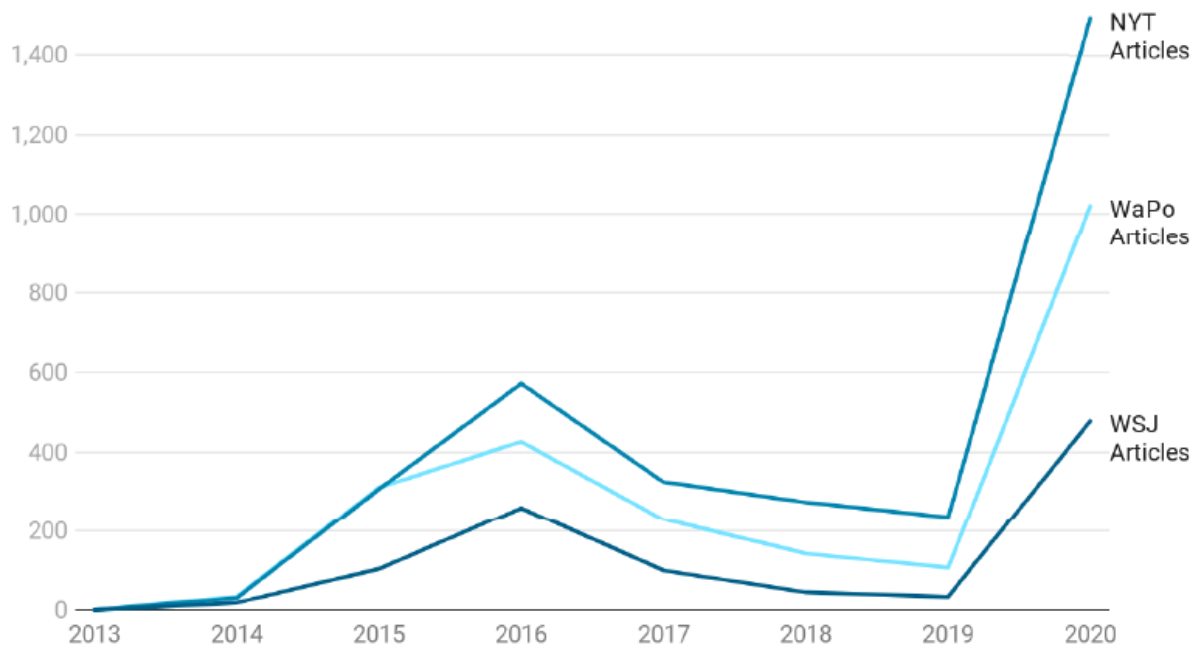
Source: Palmer, 2021.

Appendix B

George Floyd Media Coverage, Social Media Posts, and Search Behavior

Source: Reny, 2021.

Appendix C

A Colorblind Racism Theoretical Schemata of Police use of Deadly Force

Levels of Colorblind Racism	Minimization	Cultural Racism	Naturalization	Abstract Liberalism
Post-Civil Rights Colorblind Ideology	By comparing the past to the present, it is suggested that race relations, racial attitudes, and the country has changed	The narrative that people of color underperform because of their poor choices, attitudes, behaviors, and values	The narrative that racial patterns and disproportionate outcomes are natural occurrence	The belief that the United States is just and fair, so each person has individual choice and equal opportunity
Colorblind Justification in Policing	It is argued police work is difficult and there are only a few bad actors	Blacks are stereotyped as being more prone to crime and violence	Blacks are stereotyped as super-predators who possess super-human strength	The narrative that it is difficult to prove deliberate prejudice
Colorblind Justifications in some High-profile Police Shootings	Framing the actions of officers as poor judgement or poor tactics	Labeling victims as thugs and gang members	Arguing that non-lethal force was ineffective, so greater force was merited	Officials ask the community to wait for a full and thorough investigation to be conducted

Source: Ellis and Branch-Ellis, 2020.

Appendix D

Initial Codebook for the First Reading of the Data

- Author:
    - Political orientation
    - Occupation
    - Relation with BLM
    - Other
- General language:
    - Pro-BLM (positive)
    - Anti-BLM (negative)
    - "Neutral" or centrist
- Negative protest framing:
    - Violence by protestors
    - Crime by protestors
    - Property destruction by protestors
    - Other
- Positive protest framing:
    - Aims of BLM
    - Causes of BLM
    - Violence by police
    - Other
- Racial framing:
    - Implicit racial framing

- - - Abstract liberalism
    - Naturalization
    - Cultural racism
    - Minimization of racism
    - Other
  - o Explicit racial framing
- Intersectionality:
  - o Discussion of women's issues
  - o Discussion of queer issues
  - o Discussion of economic issues
  - o Other
- Voices:
  - o Voices of pro-BLM protestors
  - o Voices of officials
  - o Other

Appendix E

New Codes Created During the Reading of the Data

- Voices of intellectuals
- Voices of anti-BLM protestors
- Need more working together
- Experiences of racism
- Denial of racism
- Changes
- Non-violent change
- Racial grammar
- Pro-police
- Voting as solution to racism
- Democrats are pro-violence/Antifa
- Democratic/left hypocrisy
- Exaggeration
- Distraction of the actual problem
- Bad comparison
- Proposed solutions
- Anti-SJW language
- Misunderstanding/wrong/lies
- Language use
- Id-pol
- Whitewashing

Appendix F

Codebook for the Second Reading of the Data Based on the Initial Codebook and new Codes

- General language:
  - o Pro-BLM (positive)

- o Anti-BLM (negative)
  - o "Neutral" or centrist
- Negative protest framing:
  - o Violence and crime by protestors
  - o Pro-police
  - o Other
- Positive protest framing:
  - o Aims of BLM
  - o Causes of BLM
  - o Violence by police
  - o Other
- Racial framing/language:
  - o Implicit racial framing
    - Abstract liberalism
    - Naturalization
    - Cultural racism
    - Minimization of racism
  - o Racial grammar
  - o Experiences of racism
  - o Denial of racism
  - o Anti-SJW language
  - o Language use
- Intersectionality:
  - o Discussion of women's issues
  - o Discussion of queer issues
  - o Discussion of economic issues
- Voices:
  - o Voices of pro-BLM protestors
  - o Voices of anti-BLM protestors
  - o Voices of officials
  - o Voices of intellectuals
  - o Other
- Change:
  - o Changes
  - o Non-violent change
  - o Proposed solutions
- Other:
  - o Democratic/left hypocrisy
  - o Exaggeration
  - o Distraction of the actual problem
  - o Bad comparison
  - o Misunderstanding/wrong/lies
  - o Id-pol

Appendix G

A Full Summary of the Results

	New York Times (Liberal)	Washington Post (Liberal)	New York Post (Conservative)	Wall Street Journal (Conservative)
Theme 1				
General language	Pro-BLM	Pro-BLM	Anti-BLM	A mix of anti-BLM and 'neutral'
Positive protest framing				
Causes of BLM	Police violence and systemic racism	Police violence and systemic racism	No discussion	No discussion
Aims of BLM	Focus on systemic change of reform	Focus on reform over systemic change	No discussion	Little discussion
Police violence	Regular discussion	Regular discussion	No discussion	Little discussion
Negative protest framing				
Crime and violence by protestors	Little discussion	Little discussion	Regular discussion	Regular discussion
Language of exaggeration	No examples	No examples	Numerous examples Exaggeration of crime and violence by protestors and animosity towards police	Few examples Some exaggeration of crime and violence by protestors, but more nuanced
Theme 2				
Minimization of racism	Few examples Police violence is the result of a few bad apples, but a clear deviation from the central message	No examples	Numerous examples Police violence is the result of a few bad apples Violence by police are mistakes Victim blaming	Few examples Police violence is the result of a few bad apples
Cultural racism	No examples	No examples	Numerous examples Black people underperform because of their bad values and choices Justification of police violence against black victims because of past wrongdoings	Few examples Black people underperform because of their bad values and choices
Theme 3				
Denial of racism	No examples	No examples	Numerous examples Strong denial of systemic racism Strong denial of individual racism in society Acknowledgment of past racism, but denial of present racism	Numerous examples Strong denial of systemic racism More nuanced denial of individual racism in society