The Whole Country Is Watching: National Cable News Coverage of the Police Shooting of

Jacob Blake and Subsequent Protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin

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Introduction

On the afternoon of August 23, 2020, Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black man, was shot several times by members of the Kenosha, Wisconsin police department. Over the following days, the whole country watched as peaceful and violent demonstrations broke out in Kenosha in solidarity with Jacob Blake, his family, and the greater Movement for Black Lives. In a summer already filled with collective action and discussions surrounding the history of race relations in the United States, the shooting of Jacob Blake was another example of police brutality, an already salient topic in the minds of many Americans. On August 25, the violence of the protests materialized in new ways when 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse shot three protesters, killing two, in Kenosha. Rittenhouse, a native of Illinois, had traveled to Kenosha with the specific intention of helping clean up graffiti from the first two nights of protests. However, once he arrived in Kenosha, Rittenhouse had offered to help protect a car dealership that was attacked by looters the night before.

This paper will explore how cable news outlets covered the shooting of Jacob Blake, the unrest that followed, and eventually, the shooting by Rittenhouse. This paper will draw from foundational theories within the fields of social psychology, political communication, and political behavior, as well as seek to apply these concepts to an analysis of cable media coverage from five days of the unrest.

In a year marked by economic and social crises, as well as a nationwide reckoning with the United States' racial history, the news media has demonstrated its ability to impact public opinion (Tesler, 2020). Unlike previous social and protest movements, however, the coverage of the protests in Kenosha offers important insight into how cable news outlets cover contentious

political behavior, before and after the introduction of a violent third-party, affiliated with neither the state (the police) nor the protest movement (Movement for Black Lives).

Literature Review

Protests as Sociopolitical Expression

Since the founding of modern nation-states in the 18th and 19th centuries, protest and social movements have always had a significant role in expressing the will of the people. Campbell (2004) writes "much like the patriotic rebellions of the 18th century, modern forms of urban upheaval continue to shape and transform American society." Past scholarship has explored the role that protests and demonstrations play in our political system (Lipsky, 1968; Benford and Snow, 2000). Protests and social movements can act as a vehicle for changing public opinion and bringing about public policy changes (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Wasow, 2020; Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993). Social movements attempt to influence public opinion by communicating which problems deserve attention and how those problems should be solved (Smith et al, 2001).

Protests have also had a substantial role in communicating the grievances of the oppressed (Chan and Lee, 1984), as well as potentially contentious political topics such as leftism or Black liberation to the general public (Gitlin, 1981; Mazumder, 2018). However, some researchers have argued that public protests have become less effective in serving as a resource for powerless or disenfranchised groups (Everett, 1992). Whether or not this development is true, protests and social movements have continued to use public demonstrations as a method of drawing attention to important issues. Melucci (1995) highlights that protests and social movements still reflect societal conflicts but have now moved beyond a focus on socio-economic

class toward "post-industrial" issues. These new movements, such as the Movement for Black Lives, are also structured much differently. Recent research has shown that contemporary movements are not characterized by identifiable leaders, but rather cell-like structures in which "small, self-forming groups network with other like-minded groups and at times coordinate action and share information" (Hayduk, 2002). This project's examination of cable news coverage of the events in Kenosha contribute to this research in that many of the anti-police brutality protests have taken this decentralized form.

Media Framing

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) write that events do not speak for themselves but "must be woven into some larger storyline or frame." Journalists create news frames to make sense of the world's complexities for their audience (Tuchman, 1979). News frames also give journalists the ability to "process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences" (Gitlin, 1981). Frames organize reality by providing meaning to an unfolding strip of events by promoting certain definitions and interpretations over others (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987). Framing theory puts forth that an issue or topic can be viewed from a multitude of perspectives and can therefore be construed in many ways (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Iyengar (1990) adds that framing effects on public opinion are important because the inherent ambiguity of political issues is characterized by a "multiplicity of interpretations and perspectives."

At its most fundamental level, framing involves selection and salience (Entman, 1993). In his seminal work, Entman (1993) states that to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived

reality in such a way as to promote a particular problem, interpretation, evaluation, or recommendation. Frames, therefore, do not tell people how to think. Rather, frames make certain aspects of an issue or problem more salient than others (Watkins, 2001). Salience increases the probability that an audience will perceive the information, discern meaning, process it, and eventually store it in their memory (Entman 1993; Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In their study of the framing of decisions, Kahneman and Tversky (1981) demonstrate the effects of adjusting the salience of an issue in its presentation to experimental participants. Although the study focused on hypothetical scenarios that aimed to gauge participants' likelihood to choose risk-averse or risk-taking options, the frame has a substantial role in determining how people understand, and therefore, respond to a certain issue.

While some researchers have considered framing to be an automatic process (Entman, 1993), some have contended that framing effects depend on certain factors such as level of political engagement or credibility of the source (Druckman, 2001; Chong & Druckman, 2007). Extensive research has also been dedicated to categorizing the wide variety of frames employed by the news media. For example, Iyengar (1990) established a schema that could apply to a range of policy issues: dividing frames into two groups, thematic and episodic. Whereas thematic frames examine an issue through the lens of larger trends or developments, episodic frames focus on communicating in terms of personal experience. This research will explore cable news' use of both episodic and thematic frames, as well as the potential for differences in what components of the police shooting and subsequent unrest were made salient in their coverage. The next section discusses how the scholarly discourses surrounding media framing have been applied to protests and social movements.

Media Framing of Protests

Protest and social movements have depended on the news media to gain attention or accomplish their political and/or social goals (Cammaerts, 2012). Serving as an extension of power relations, news framing affects our perceptions of social problems and different political issues (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Lipsky (1968) writes that the news media sets the bounds and limits for protests and other forms of collective action. The mass media also play a significant role in shaping the public's perceptions of protests, as well as their statuses of being either legitimate or illegitimate forms of dissent (Parenti, 1986). Jennings and Saunders (2019) write that demonstrations are a key strategy intended to be disruptive by shifting the media and public's attention to particular topics of interest. Protest and social movements' attempts to harness media attention to communicate their goals has continued over time, despite the other communication methods afforded by the rapid evolution in information and communication technologies. Because of cable media's reach across the country and the declining number of local newspapers (Barthel et al, 2020), the ways in which protests or riots are framed to audiences by television news outlets are still instrumental in achieving the specific goals of the movement and/or protesters.

In the context of cable coverage of protests, several different aspects of a protest can be highlighted by a frame: crowd size, presence of violence, the race of the protesters, etc. Edwards and Arnon (2019) find that American and Israeli populations perceived protests as violent when it was framed as threatening harm. Also, they found that framing the protest as being carried out by an out-group also had some effects on views toward repressing the protest. Kilgo and Harlow (2019) also find that media frames of rioting and violence were most frequently used to communicate information about anti-racism protests. In addition, this coverage often did not

differentiate between which of the actors involved were actually committing the violence. Whereas the aforementioned, as well as other researchers, have focused on frames highlighting protest violence (Wasow, 2017; Lee, 2014), little research has investigated how a violent third-party at a protest is covered by the media or perceived by the public.

The news media, at the bare minimum, provides the public with an awareness of riots and rioters. This awareness, though, is "based upon an information-rich and knowledge-poor foundation" (Sherizen, 1978). Scholars have added that the logic of media institutions (Smith et al, 2001; Gitlin, 1981; Gans, 1979), as well as the capitalist economic systems they often operate within, impact how outlets devote attention to certain events out of fear of losing viewers (Seguin, 2016). Market-driven competition between firms and reporters cause highly-covered events to cascade across the different outlets (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) as the actors involved often use similar sources of information (Atkinson, Lovett, & Baumgartner, 2014).

News coverage of protests also tends to follow a framework that has been termed the 'protest paradigm' (Chan and Lee, 1984). In their examination of news coverage of protests in Hong Kong, the authors assert that journalistic "paradigms," determined by political ideologies, make outlets attribute different "cause-and-effect relationships" to protests and "assign varying degrees of support to protesters." Within the context of these civil protests in colonial Hong Kong, the leftist journalistic paradigm was more sympathetic to the protesters, their messaging, and their goals. The rightist journalistic paradigm, however, was consistently antagonistic to the protests. The centrist paradigm found itself somewhere in the middle between the previous two, displaying both support and hostility towards the protesters. While some researchers have asserted that the news media is now more capable of offering a more nuanced relationship with

protest politics than previously (Cottle, 2008), other scholars have built on Chan and Lee's work to varying degrees.

Other studies focused on the 'protest paradigm' have rejected the belief that coverage is fundamentally biased against protest and have begun to treat media coverage as a variable that can occur to differing degrees (Campbell, 2004; Boyle, McLeod, & Armstrong, 2012). For example, researchers have explored the role that political orientation plays in different applications of the 'protest paradigm' (Rohlinger et al, 2012; Weaver & Scacco, 2012). Different political ideologies can lead outlets to frame the same event(s) differently (Snow, Vliegenthart, & Corrigal-Brown, 2007), some of which complicate the movements' efforts to portray their message effectively. Kilgo and Harlow (2019) have also added to the ongoing body of research surrounding the application of this journalistic paradigm to protests in their exploration of how protest topics and regions shape coverage. In their study of Texas newspapers, the authors find that certain protest topics are more heavily criticized than others, with some variation across newspaper locations. McLeod and Hertog (1999) have also contributed to the ongoing debate surrounding the protest paradigm, categorizing frames into four broad groups: debate, spectacle, confrontation, and riot. This research will make use of their framing model because it encapsulates a wide range of the types of frames often employed by the news media when covering protests or social movements. The use of said model will be expanded upon in the Research Design section below.

Media Framing of Specific Protest Movements

Much of the protest framing literature has focused on single protests or periods with protests to portray the greater media logics at-play. This section will explore some of these

examples, as well as their contributions to the ever-changing body of literature. In McCarthy et al's (1996) examination of demonstrations in Washington D.C. in 1982 and 1991, they found that media selection bias appeared to be stable between the two years of demonstrations with the size of demonstrations, stage of media issue attention cycle, and the greater newsgathering processes employed by the news outlet impacted media coverage of protests. Smith et al (2001) add that throughout the coverage of the D.C. protests, television programs included more thematic frames than newspaper coverage, reinforcing the idea that "television news is more driven by issue agendas than by some independent selection of events deemed newsworthy." However, controversy-generated coverage (counter-protesters, violence, etc.) were more likely to be episodic with a focus on the event itself. Adding to the existing body of 'protest paradigm' literature, they also found that this controversy-generated coverage tended to spin the events in a way that favored "authorities rather than demonstrators."

Weaver and Scacco (2012) build on the existing scholarship and use key frames associated with the 'protest paradigm,' or the tendency to delegitimize movements and draw attention away from their core goals and concerns, in their examination of how the framework can be applied to the Tea Party Movement. Adding to the work of Snow, Vliegenthart, and Corrigal-Brown (2007) and Rohlinger et al (2012), the authors found that cable news strategies ran "in tandem with each channel's ideological contours." In contrast with some of the previous 'protest paradigm' scholarship that has focused on progressive, justice-based, or left-wing movements, Weaver and Scacco (2012) show that the same techniques can be utilized by left-leaning media firms to marginalize and delegitimize right-wing movements, such as the Tea Party Movement.

A more contemporary example of this trend is the news media's coverage of the recent Million MAGA March in November 2020. The protest, just more than a week after the 2020 election, was motivated by beliefs that the election was rigged, that there was rampant voter fraud in key states like Pennsylvania and Georgia, and that Donald Trump actually won the election, despite calls from major news outlets announcing the opposite. Once again, coverage of the march was incredibly divided among partisan and ideological lines. Whereas some media outlets and personalities focused on the content of the protesters' speech (Witt, 2020) or the baselessness of the rally-goers' claims (Segers, 2020), some traditionally right-wing actors focused on the supposed 'left-wing' violence that occurred at the march (Hannity, 2020; Breitbart, 2020), or the media's failure to pay attention to the "movement" taking place (Ingraham, 2020). There were also some significant differences in how news outlets framed the story on their television. For example, the Guardian made use of personal testimonies from observers and attendees of the march in their coverage (Sadeque, 2020), while other outlets like the BBC and the Washington Post framed the story with a heavier focus on conflicts between President Trump and his political enemies, as well as pro-Trump fans and counter-protesters at the march (BBC, 2020; Lang et al, 2020).

Watkins (2001) applies a framing analysis model similar to Weaver and Scacco (2012) in his analysis of coverage of the 1995 Million Man March led by Louis Farrakhan and Ben Chavis, seeking to discern the specific framing practices used in the first of three distinct phases in television news coverage. Building on Gitlin's (1981) research surrounding the role of celebrity spokespersons in capturing the "spirit and vitality" of the movement, Watkins finds that the media focused heavily on Farrakhan in this coverage phase, therefore exercising "considerable influence" over how the public viewed the march. The media's focus on Farrakhan as an

embodiment of the movement supported expectations that television news is dramatic, conflict-driven, and personality-focused, while also denying Farrakhan any political legitimacy and shifting the public's attention away from the dialogue regarding racism in America (Watkins, 2001).

Hunt and Gruszczynski (2019) also contribute to this body of work in their analysis of new and traditional media coverage of the 2016-2017 Dakota Access Pipeline protests. Adding to the body of scholarship focused on how protest violence is framed (Wasow, 2017; Lee, 2014; Edwards & Arnon, 2019), their findings show that the public's attention to the social movement increased heavily after violent clashes between protesters and authorities. Hunt and Gruszczynski (2019) note that social movements may be able to garner public attention "independent of transitional media coverage" by utilizing different social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Media Framing of the Movement for Black Lives

Recent research focusing on the media's relationship with protests and social movements has also explored how the news media has framed contemporary movements that seek to represent the interests of black communities. The news media's framing of such movements is incredibly important because they have the power to mold attitudes and behaviors toward entire groups that share the same racial identity as those they are covering or focusing on (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). Lane et al (2020) show that national newspaper coverage of the shooting of Trayvon Martin and the greater Black Lives Matter movement drew from a "white racial frame" that portrays Black Americans as "criminal" or "violent," while also portraying White Americans as "virtuous" or as "protectors." Their findings build on the conclusions reached by

Feagin (2013), who argues that the white racial frame pairs a "positive orientation with whiteness" and a "strong negative orientation to blackness."

Research has also explored how news outlets have framed incidents of police brutality and potentially served as obstacles in communicating criticisms from impacted communities (Fridkin, 2017; Mills, 2017; Mourão et al, 2018). Mills' (2017) analysis of Fox News' coverage of the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown and the protests that followed shows that media framing can contribute to the success of movements in achieving their goals of changing policy or public opinion. According to Mills, Fox News' obstruction of this meaningful discussion contributes to the sustaining of a racial ideology that seeks to maintain a white-dominated "racial hierarchy" across socio-political structures. Other research has explored the framing techniques employed by Fox News, finding that they have framed values like "personal freedom" in wholly different ways depending on the political issue (McDonald & Morgaine, 2016) and that the outlet even uses antipathetic words more frequently than its competitors (Entman & Knupfer, 2020). The latter finding examines how the channel has curated a brand exemplified by standing in sharp opposition to its political opponents, whether that be Democratic congresspersons like Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, or competitors in television news like CNN or MSNBC.

Media Framing of Protests in the Context of Summer 2020

While a large body of research has been dedicated to studying what factors of a protest or social movement lead to the gaining of media coverage, few researchers have focused on the factors that impact the sustained coverage of issues raised by protests. In the case of the shooting of Jacob Blake and subsequent unrest in Kenosha, the introduction of a violent vigilante actor, separate from the police and the protesters, is a type of coverage-sustaining event that has yet to

be studied in-depth. However, the shooting of Jacob Blake and the wide range of events that followed were not acting alone in the greater issue-attention cycle. At the beginning of summer 2020, a Black man named George Floyd was murdered by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Several cell-phone videos of the killing spread across both online and television media alike, leading to hundreds of demonstrations and a monumental shift in how Americans addressed their country's racial history.

The police shooting of Jacob Blake three months after the killing of George Floyd and the media coverage it garnered over the following days serve as a case study that builds on previous research on the role of "trigger events" in determining levels of media coverage (Jennings and Saunders, 2019), as well as the temporal factors that determine coverage (Seguin, 2016). Seguin (2016) argues that past media attention increases the likelihood of future media attention through its effect on the social movement organization and on other media outlets. However, Jennings and Saunders (2019) find that conflict, as defined by the presence of counter-protesters, does not lead to sustained coverage over time. Therefore, the various anti-racism and anti-police brutality protests of summer 2020 provide an interesting case for studying how media attention to conflict (between protesters and the state, rather than protesters and counter-protesters) impacts coverage of later incidents related to the same political or social issue.

Little research has focused on how the media's attention to the killing of George Floyd and the protests that followed have affected coverage of police brutality, anti-racism protests, or the greater Movement for Black Lives in the following months. Also building on Downs' (1972) exploration of the issue attention cycle and the role of endogenous factors in shifting media attention, this project will focus on how developments external to the news outlets, such as the ongoing protests and shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse, affected coverage. McCurdy (2012) has

categorized past scholarship surrounding social movements and news media coverage into two groups: representational and relational scholarship. This research builds on the former category in that it concerns itself with how an array of factors outside of the media production process influenced how the shooting of Jacob Blake was covered and framed by the news media.

Research Design

This research seeks to understand how the media's coverage of the Kenosha unrest evolved over five nights, focusing on a range of specific components. To study the cable news media's coverage of the shooting of Jacob Blake, the demonstrations that followed, and the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse, I utilized a quantitative content analysis design to analyze the frames used over five days of coverage. The data for this project was collected from news transcripts of two shows from MSNBC, CNN, and Fox News, and one show on both ABC and CBS. Factiva, Nexis Uni, and the CNN Transcripts website were used to access the relevant transcripts from Monday, August 24 to Friday, August 28. These dates were chosen because they provide an image of how the media covered the rather tumultuous series of events that immediately followed the original police shooting. The shows analyzed were Deadline: White House with Nicole Wallace and ReidOut with Joy Reid on MSNBC, the Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer and Erin Burnett OutFront on CNN, Your World with Neil Cavuto and Special Report with Bret Baier on Fox News, World News Tonight with John Muir on ABC, and lastly, CBS Evening News on CBS. Transcripts were analyzed from all five nights for seven of the eight shows. One show, Your World with Neil Cavuto, only had transcripts available for four of the five nights.

The frames used by each show were analyzed per speaking part, as defined by any time a speaker was marked as talking on the news transcripts and could range from a single sentence to a few paragraphs. Five speaking parts were collected from each night of programming, according to which had the strongest relevance to the original shooting, the protests that followed, or the shooting of three protesters by Rittenhouse. In particular, the speaking parts were scanned for key terms like "Kenosha," "Wisconsin," "unrest," "protest," "riot," or "police brutality." However, some programs, such as Deadline: White House on August 24 or Special Report on August 25, covered the shooting and protests in less than five speaking parts so all parts were included in the analysis. Each speaking part was then coded for a handful of variables including but not limited to the media frame of the protests, the speaker's views of the protests, the frame of the Blake shooting, the frame of the Rittenhouse shooting, and whether or not race was mentioned or discussed.

Before coding, however, I performed a series of Scott's pi tests to measure intercoder reliability between one other coder and myself. At first, the scores were low but after discussing examples of speaking parts, as well as other components of the codebook, scores for each variable exceeded the substantial reliability threshold of 0.6.

Over the course of five nights, the channels' coverage included a mix of speaking parts from network-sponsored personalities, observers of the police shooting or protests, family members, politicians, and experts in subjects relevant to the issue at hand. The variables collected will be analyzed using linear regression models to study the potential correlational relationships between outlets and frames of the police shooting and unrest.

Views of the protests were determined using models previously established by media scholars. Farnsworth and Lichter (2006) concluded that coverage was either positive or negative

"if they conveyed an unambiguous assessment or judgment about an individual, an institution, or an action." In addition to this, statements were marked as positive or supportive if they "expressed vitality, optimism or excitement" while statements marked as being negative or hostile to the methods of the protesters if they "were pessimistic and contained jaded perspectives or portrayed self-interested motivations" (Just et al, 1999). This research also takes McLeod and Hertog's (1999) four-part framing model of riot, spectacle, confrontation, and debate, redefines it slightly, and applies it to the whole attention cycle, from the original shooting of Jacob Blake to the protests that followed the shooting of three protesters by Kyle Rittenhouse.

Speaking parts were marked as 'riot' frames if a substantial piece of the part was dedicated to describing the damage done by protesters on buildings, cars, or the people of Kenosha. The 'spectacle' frame refers to coverage that focuses on emotional reactions to the shootings or protests, press conferences, or input from political elites like President Trump or Vice President Joe Biden. Conflicts between protesters and *other* parties, specifically the police, the National Guard, or vigilante groups were marked as 'confrontation' frames. In particular, descriptions of Rittenhouse's shooting were marked as confrontation frames, rather than riot frames with general violence committed by protesters. Lastly, 'debate' frames are characterized by a focus on the greater issues at hand in this context: police brutality and the history of racism in the United States and its judicial structures. For example, frames about the initial shooting of Jacob Blake and general commentary about how the shooting fits into the treatment of Black men and women would fit under this category of frames.

To complement the quantitative content analysis, this research also utilized the Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer to explore the differences between the outlets' use of specific terms over the course of five nights. The Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer is a computational tool

released by the Computer Graphics Lab at Stanford University aimed at measuring who is in the news and what is being discussed. This project utilized this tool to get a better picture of the rate at which these outlets mentioned relevant keywords. In particular, the outlets' use of words such as "unrest," "mobs," and "riot" were examined to better understand how they framed the actions of protesters in the wake of the police shooting of Jacob Blake and the shooting of three protesters by Kyle Rittenhouse. In an attempt to minimize the amount of irrelevant "noise" that would be captured using this tool, only terms that are extremely relevant to the Kenosha unrest, and would not be used in discussions of other political issues or topics, were examined. The Cable TV News Analyzer only has information for three cable channels, CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC, and has information on-file for five of the six shows on those networks analyzed in this project. ReidOut with Joy Reid is the one show on those three networks that does not seem to have any data on the Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer. While this tool does not allow us to get statistically significant results or conclude anything particularly meaningful, it can provide some insight into lexicological differences throughout coverage of the same event.

This research also adds to the body of research dedicated to exploring how ideological differences among news outlets influence coverage of protests and protest issues. The first hypothesis is rooted in theories that left-leaning news outlets will be more likely to support protests (Chan & Lee, 1984) than right-leaning outlets. Although CNN might disagree with my characterization of them as "left-leaning," I categorize them this way due to the current political media landscape. Because of the views held by the current presidential administration, some high-ranking Republican politicians, and many registered Republicans regarding the media (Brenan, 2020), as well as CNN's disproportionately Democratic and politically liberal audience

(Grieco, 2020; Jurkowitz et al, 2020), I view the outlet as a politically center-left organization in the context of the contemporary political media landscape.

H1: News programming on MSNBC and CNN was more likely to lend support to the overall goals of the protests than Fox News' shows were.

Null hypothesis: News programming on MSNBC and CNN was no more likely than the shows on Fox News to lend support to the overall goals of the protests.

The second and third hypotheses are founded in a theory regarding how media outlets frame specific trigger events according to their political orientation. In the case of the networks on interest (CNN, MSNBC, and Fox), it is assumed that the political right's rejection of the protests' goals or methods will translate over to support for the police's actions when arresting Blake, and Rittenhouse's actions in the context of protest violence.

H2: News programming on Fox News was more likely to defend the police shooting of Jacob Blake than its competitors on CNN and MSNBC.

Null hypothesis: News programming on Fox News was no more likely than its competitors on CNN and MSNBC to defend the police shooting of Jacob Blake.

H3: News programming on Fox News was more likely to frame the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse as being the result of self-defense than its competitors on CNN and MSNBC.

Null hypothesis: News programming on Fox News was no more likely than its competitors on CNN and MSNBC to frame the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse as being the result of self-defense.

In the case of the contemporary media landscape, it is assumed that MSNBC and CNN's center-left political orientation would make them less likely to celebrate right-leaning causes or

individuals like the explicitly pro-law enforcement organizations, Donald Trump's presidency, or Rittenhouse's affiliation to either. The fourth hypothesis builds off of this assumption.

H4: News programming on MSNBC and CNN was more likely to bring up Rittenhouse's political affiliation to Trump and the Back the Blue movement than Fox News.

Null hypothesis: News programming on MSNBC and CNN was no more likely than the shows Fox News to bring up Rittenhouse's political affiliation to Trump and the Back the Blue movement.

The fifth hypothesis is rooted in a belief that Fox News and other right-wing media actors' disagreement with the goals and methods of the protests would bleed over into the framing of the police shooting of Blake.

H5: News programming on Fox News was more likely to discuss Jacob Blake's alleged criminality after the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse than their competitors on CNN and MSNBC.

Null hypothesis: News programming on Fox News was no more likely than their competitors on CNN and MSNBC to discuss Jacob Blake's alleged criminality after the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse.

The sixth hypothesis is rooted in some of the same theories detailed above and by Seguin (2015) and Boydstun (2013) regarding the role of market factors in determining the media's coverage of protests. Extending this theory further, it is assumed that Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN's reliance on a partisan viewership will impact their selection and employment of news frames.

H6: Programs on Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN will employ more subjective partisan frames in their coverage of the protests than the primetime news programs on ABC and CBS.

> **Null hypothesis**: Programs on Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN will not employ more subjective partisan frames in their coverage of the protests than the primetime news programs on ABC and CBS.

Pilot Study Results

If we are to apply the norms of civility and rationality traditionally found within American politics to the various frames laid out by McLeod and Hertog (1999) and used in this research, it is possible to order them according to their degree of acceptability in the political deliberative process. The most accepted form of which would be those portrayed in the debate frame where the greater context of race relations or police brutality is explored, followed by spectacle. The forms of behavior made salient in confrontation frames would then be next, followed by the least accepted form of expression, rioting, and destruction of property. According to the results of the pilot study, the debate frame is the most frequently used category of frames over the five days, followed by confrontation, spectacle, and then riot. The debate and confrontation categories of frames might be the most prevalent across the news coverage studied here because of how the speaking parts were annotated (descriptions of police brutality were placed under 'debate') or because of how the news media focused on conflicts between groups, despite their political leanings. The programs on MSNBC were the most likely to use the debate frame, and least likely to use the confrontation frame (Model 1).

The results of the linear model regressions reaffirm some of the conclusions previously reached by scholars in this field. The results provide some evidence supporting the claim that partisan or ideological differences between channels and speakers can affect how they frame the same event. As it is displayed in Model 2 of the Appendix, the results from the pilot study show that speakers on Fox News were considerably more hostile or negative toward the methods or tactics used by protesters than speakers on their left-leaning competitors like CNN or MSNBC. Model 3 shows that speakers on the two Fox News shows, Special Report with Bret Baier, and Your World with Neil Cavuto, were correlated the most with hostile views of the unrest. These results partially reaffirm and build upon the array of conclusions previously reached by scholars that have expanded on Chan and Lee's (1984) concept of the 'protest paradigm' (Campbell, 2004; Boyle, McLeod, & Armstrong, 2012; Weaver and Scacco, 2012). The results provide moderate evidence to support scholars' previous claims that the news media is not inherently biased against protests but is instead influenced by other factors such as partisanship or the actions of the protesters. The pilot study results also build on Jennings and Saunders' (2019) discussion of "trigger events," i.e., events that increase the level of media coverage of the wider issues, by showing that the shooting of Jacob Blake, as well as the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse, triggered the direction of coverage for at least a few days.

The results also show that there were no sizable differences in how the cable media outlets framed the police shooting of Blake, nor in frames of the shooting by Rittenhouse (Models 4 and 5, respectively). While the results still fail to reject the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 2, MSNBC is slightly correlated with framing the shooting by Rittenhouse as a criminal act, rather than at least partly self-defense (Model 5). In addition to the two shows from MSNBC, OutFront with Erin Burnett on CNN is also slightly correlated with these criminality

frames. The results from the pilot study also do not exactly support Hypothesis 3, as there is only a very minimal relationship between CNN (specifically The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer) and frames focusing on Rittenhouse's political affiliations to right-wing causes like President Trump's 2020 re-election campaign, or the pro-law enforcement Back the Blue movement (Models 6 and 7). Results from the pilot study also fail to reject the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 4, as there is no clear relationship between news outlets and their framing of Jacob Blake's alleged criminality (Model 8 and 9).

The pilot study results show that speaking parts on MSNBC were more likely to reference race, as defined by any reference to the race of Blake, Rittenhouse, the police officer who shot Blake, or other victims of police brutality (Model 10). Regarding our fifth hypothesis, some of the results from the pilot study support the claim that even though these shows were supposed to be the least opinionated of the channels' programming, there is still more editorializing on these outlets, compared to the news programs on CBS and ABC. In particular, speakers on Fox were much more likely to speak negatively about the actions of protesters, compared to those on ABC and CBS' programs (Model 11).

This project's use of the Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer tool also provides some interesting insight into the language used by the various outlets over the first week of the Kenosha unrest (Model 12). While these are in no way statistically significant nor have even been analyzed statistically, there are some noteworthy general trends in the verbiage used by news programs. These trends serve an important role because they demonstrate the differences in the language employed by six of the eight programs. Some scholars propose that political language can have a significant role in determining political beliefs (Edelman, 1977). This

project seeks to study these scholarly claims further through the inclusion of the Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer.

The first category of terms studied on this tool refers to words that might depict the protests taking place: "protest," "unrest," and "mobs." The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer used the first two of these terms the most frequently, peaking on August 27 and August 26, respectively. For both of these terms, The Situation Room's use of them increased dramatically on the days following the shooting by Kyle Rittenhouse on August 25. A visualization of the use of the term "mobs" shows that this was the least frequently used out of the three, with OutFront with Erin Burnett using it the most, with a peak on August 28 (Model 12). Second, the outlets' use of the phrase "police brutality" was also examined. Once again, The Situation Room used the phrase the most frequently with a peak on August 28, while the two programs on Fox News used the phrase the least. Next, the programs' use of the phrase "self-defense" was explored as well. This phrase was rarely used throughout the five days with the CNN programs using it the most frequently, peaking on August 28. And finally, this project also considered the frequency of the programs' mentioning of Jacob Blake and Kyle Rittenhouse. In their mentioning of Jacob Blake, The Situation Room increased over time while some shows stayed somewhat consistent over the five nights. Also, Deadline White House and Your World with Neil Cavuto both peaked in their usage of "Jacob Blake" on August 25 and continued to decrease over the following three nights. The five programs' use of "Kyle Rittenhouse" show that this decrease in saying Jacob Blake's name might have been replaced by coverage of Rittenhouse's shooting and eventual arrest.

The pilot results from the Stanford Cable TV News Analyzer tool show that this might be true for Deadline White House or OutFront with Erin Burnett, but not as much for Your World

with Neil Cavuto. The results show that among the 191 speaking parts analyzed, there were some differences in the types of frames employed by the various cable news channels and programs.

<u>Discussion</u>

On Friday, November 20, Kyle Rittenhouse was released from jail in Wisconsin after his lawyers paid $2 million in bail. As expected, his release was met with mostly cheers and congratulations from the right (Wood, 2020) and accusations of hypocrisy and accusations of racism from those affiliated with the aforementioned left-leaning outlets (Ryan, 2020). This research is necessary because it provides important information regarding the differences in how cable news media frames an event that is (1) already salient in the minds of many, and (2) heavily impacted by the actions of a violent third-party that is separate from both the state actors and protesters involved. It is particularly important because of how large of a role political polarization has played in public and media discourse of these events. To this day, Americans are still incredibly polarized in their views toward Black Lives Matter and the greater Movement for Black Lives with Democrats supporting the movement much more strongly than Republicans (Li et al, 2020).

Despite the results showing some relationship between news programs and differences in frames employed, there are also some significant limitations to this research. In addition, this research is non-experimental and does not examine how these aforementioned frames could potentially impact views of protests, the actors involved, or vote-choice down the line. Adding to the work of Abraham & Appiah (2006) and other media scholars, future research into the Kenosha unrest and other anti-racism protests will need to explore how coverage of said protests impacts audiences' views on racial stereotypes.

Some limitations also derive from how this data was collected. First, the content analysis used a sample of 191 speaking parts, with some programs having more speaking parts than others (Model 13). Another limitation of the sample-collecting process, specifically the maximum of five speaking parts per nightly show, is that some relevant speaking parts were not studied in the analysis. Because the frames used by the news programs were analyzed per speaking part, it was also impossible to capture the true multiplicity of frames that could be used in a single part with many sentences. Rather, speaking parts had to be coded according to the frame that encapsulated the main thrust of the part. Future research will have to build on existing methods and analyze frames on the sentence-level.

As it is noted above, this research examines the frames employed by media programs as a whole, rather than differentiating between on-air personalities, testimonies, interview subjects, and so on. Research into the Kenosha unrest and future protest movements will need to discern between the differences in frames used by the many different kinds of speakers that make up a cable news program. In addition, future research should analyze the sentiment of news frames beyond the frequency of terms used, as it is in this project with the Stanford Cables News Analyzer. Lastly, building on the work of scholars like Chadwick (2017), future research should also incorporate social media in their analyses and consider the greater hybrid media system in their examination of news coverage. Although the pilot study results show some differences in how cable news programs framed the Kenosha protests, as well as the introduction of a violent third-party, additional research is needed to explore the greater relationship between the unrest, the news media, and the public's perceptions of both.

Appendix

Model 1

all_channels_debate_frame <- lm(Debate ~ CNN + Fox + MSNBC + ABC + CBS, data =

kenosha_coverage)

all_channels_confrontation_frame <- lm(Confrontation ~ CNN + Fox + MSNBC + ABC + CBS,

data = kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(all_channels_debate_frame, all_channels_confrontation_frame)

| Predictors	Debate			Confrontation		
	Estimates	CI	p	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.36	0.17 – 0.55	**<0.001**	0.36	0.18 – 0.54	**<0.001**
CNN	0.06	-0.17 – 0.29	0.607	0.02	-0.20 – 0.24	0.858
Fox	-0.15	-0.39 – 0.09	0.209	-0.10	-0.33 – 0.12	0.363
MSNBC	0.24	0.01 – 0.48	**0.039**	-0.19	-0.41 – 0.03	0.086
ABC	-0.04	-0.31 – 0.23	0.766	0.04	-0.21 – 0.29	0.756
Observations	191			191		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.083 / 0.063			0.040 / 0.019		

Model 2

channels_speaker_views <- lm(speaker_views_of_unrest ~ MSNBC + CNN + Fox, data =

kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(channels_speaker_views)

coefplot(channels_speaker_views, title="Speakers' Views of the Unrest by Channel",

    intercept=FALSE, ylab="Channel", xlab="Views of Unrest (0 = Negative, 2 = Positive)",

sort="magnitude")

Predictors	speaker views of unrest		
	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.95	0.82 – 1.08	**<0.001**
MSNBC	0.15	-0.05 – 0.36	0.135
CNN	0.05	-0.15 – 0.25	0.609
Fox	-0.57	-0.76 – -0.39	**<0.001**
Observations	140		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.332 / 0.318		

\
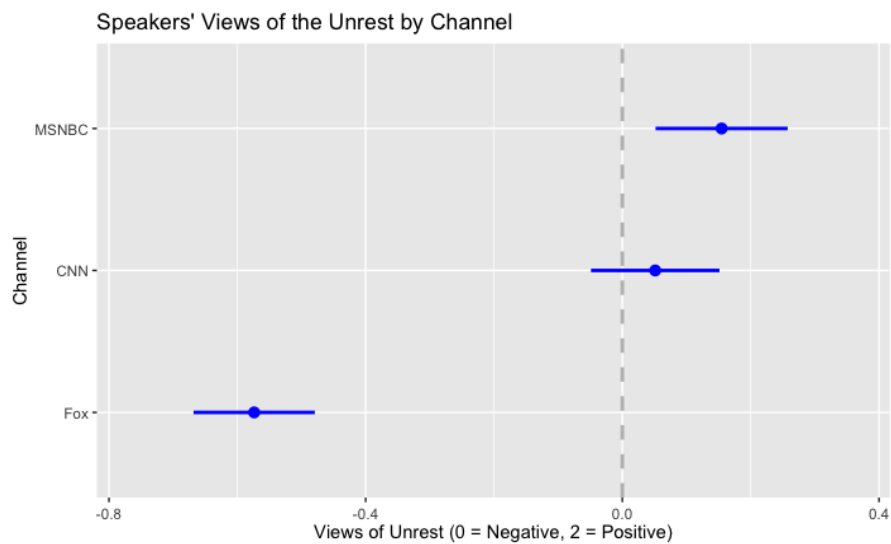
Model 3

all_shows_speaker_views <- lm(speaker_views_of_unrest ~ Show, data = kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(all_shows_speaker_views)

Predictors	speaker views of unrest		
	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.94	0.75 – 1.14	**<0.001**
Show [CBS Evening News]	0.01	-0.26 – 0.28	0.954
ShowDeadline : White House	0.17	-0.11 – 0.45	0.241
Show [Outfront with Erin Burnett]	0.11	-0.17 – 0.40	0.427
Show [ReidOut with Joy Reid]	0.15	-0.17 – 0.47	0.369
Show [Special Report with Bret Baier]	-0.61	-0.88 – -0.34	**<0.001**
Show [The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer]	-0.01	-0.30 – 0.28	0.940
Show [Your World with Neil Cavuto]	-0.52	-0.80 – -0.25	**<0.001**
Observations	140		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.338 / 0.303		

Model 4

channels_blake_shooting <- lm(frame_of_blake_shooting ~ CNN + MSNBC + Fox, data =

kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(channels_blake_shooting)

Predictors	frame of blake shooting		
	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	1.61	1.42 – 1.81	**<0.001**
CNN	-0.08	-0.35 – 0.19	0.553
MSNBC	0.19	-0.08 – 0.45	0.166
Fox	-0.04	-0.35 – 0.26	0.788
Observations	119		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.039 / 0.014		

Model 5

channels_rittenhouse_shooting <- lm(frame_of_rittenhouse ~ CNN + Fox + MSNBC, data =

kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(channels_rittenhouse_shooting)

Predictors	frame of rittenhouse		
	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.60	0.28 – 0.92	**<0.001**
CNN	-0.36	-0.83 – 0.10	0.123
Fox	0.29	-0.28 – 0.86	0.313
MSNBC	-0.47	-0.95 – 0.02	0.058
Observations	61		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.135 / 0.089		

<u>Model 6</u>

all_channels_rittenhouse_affiliation <- lm(rittenhouse_political_affiliation ~ CNN + MSNBC +

Fox, data = kenosha_coverage)
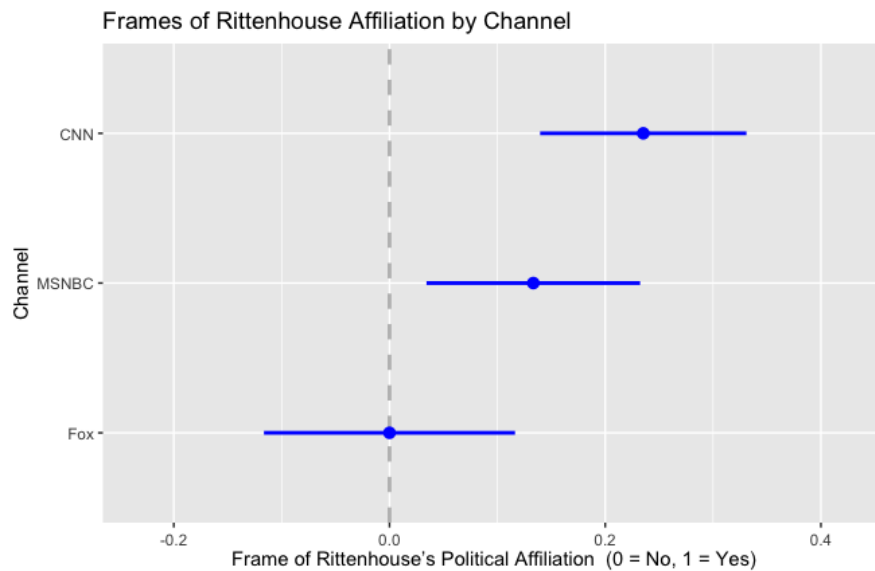
tab_model(all_channels_rittenhouse_affiliation)

coefplot(all_channels_rittenhouse_affiliation, title="Frames of Rittenhouse Affiliation by

Channel", intercept=FALSE, ylab="Channel", xlab="Frame of Rittenhouse's Political Affiliation

(0 = No, 1 = Yes)", sort="magnitude")

Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
	rittenhouse political affiliation		
(Intercept)	-0.00	-0.13 – 0.13	1.000
CNN	0.24	0.04 – 0.43	**0.017**
MSNBC	0.13	-0.06 – 0.33	0.184
Fox	-0.00	-0.23 – 0.23	1.000
Observations	61		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.114 / 0.068		

Frames of Rittenhouse Affiliation by Channel

Model 7

all_shows_rittenhouse_affiliation <- lm(rittenhouse_political_affiliation ~ Show, data =

kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(all_shows_rittenhouse_affiliation)

Predictors	rittenhouse political affiliation		
	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	-0.00	-0.19 – 0.19	1.000
Show [CBS Evening News]	0.00	-0.25 – 0.25	1.000
ShowDeadline : White House	0.29	0.00 – 0.57	**0.049**
Show [Outfront with Erin Burnett]	0.11	-0.15 – 0.38	0.406
Show [ReidOut with Joy Reid]	0.00	-0.27 – 0.27	1.000
Show [Special Report with Bret Baier]	0.00	-0.38 – 0.38	1.000
Show [The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer]	0.38	0.10 – 0.65	**0.008**
Show [Your World with Neil Cavuto]	-0.00	-0.30 – 0.30	1.000
Observations	61		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.225 / 0.123		

Model 8

all_channels_blake_criminality <- lm(blake_criminality ~ Fox + MSNBC + CNN, data =

kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(all_channels_blake_criminality)

	blake criminality		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.34	0.13 – 0.56	**0.002**
Fox	-0.15	-0.50 – 0.19	0.383
MSNBC	-0.12	-0.43 – 0.18	0.424
CNN	0.08	-0.24 – 0.39	0.631
Observations	116		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.022 / -0.004		

Model 9

all_shows_blake_criminality <- lm(blake_criminality ~ Show, data = kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(all_shows_blake_criminality)

	blake criminality		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.20	-0.12 – 0.52	0.216
Show [CBS Evening News]	0.27	-0.17 – 0.71	0.222
ShowDeadline : White House	-0.13	-0.58 – 0.32	0.558
Show [Outfront with Erin Burnett]	0.15	-0.28 – 0.59	0.489
Show [ReidOut with Joy Reid]	0.15	-0.28 – 0.59	0.489
Show [Special Report with Bret Baier]	0.07	-0.38 – 0.52	0.770
Show [The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer]	0.30	-0.16 – 0.76	0.197
Show [Your World with Neil Cavuto]	-0.20	-0.80 – 0.40	0.507
Observations	116		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.060 / -0.001		

Model 10

all_channels_racial_frames1 <- lm(racial_frame ~ MSNBC + CNN + Fox + ABC, data =

kenosha_coverage)

all_channels_racial_frames2 <- lm(racial_frame ~ MSNBC + CNN + Fox + CBS, data =

kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(all_channels_racial_frames1, all_channels_racial_frames2)

Predictors	racial frame			racial frame		
	Estimates	*CI*	*p*	*Estimates*	*CI*	*p*
(Intercept)	0.16	-0.01 – 0.33	0.063	0.12	-0.05 – 0.29	0.163
MSNBC	0.28	0.07 – 0.49	**0.009**	0.32	0.11 – 0.53	**0.003**
CNN	0.06	-0.15 – 0.27	0.568	0.10	-0.11 – 0.31	0.341
Fox	0.07	-0.14 – 0.28	0.501	0.11	-0.10 – 0.32	0.297
ABC	-0.04	-0.28 – 0.20	0.741			
CBS				0.04	-0.20 – 0.28	0.741
Observations	191			191		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.065 / 0.045			0.065 / 0.045		

Model 11

channels_speaker_views2 <- lm(speaker_views_of_unrest ~ MSNBC + Fox + CNN + ABC, data = kenosha_coverage)

channels_speaker_views3 <- lm(speaker_views_of_unrest ~ MSNBC + Fox + CNN + CBS, data = kenosha_coverage)

tab_model(channels_speaker_views2, channels_speaker_views3)

Predictors	speaker views of unrest			speaker views of unrest		
	Estimates	CI	p	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	0.95	0.77 – 1.13	**<0.001**	0.94	0.75 – 1.14	**<0.001**
MSNBC	0.15	-0.09 – 0.39	0.213	0.16	-0.09 – 0.41	0.211
Fox	-0.58	-0.80 – -0.35	**<0.001**	-0.57	-0.81 – -0.33	**<0.001**
CNN	0.05	-0.19 – 0.28	0.688	0.06	-0.19 – 0.30	0.655
ABC	-0.01	-0.28 – 0.26	0.953			
CBS				0.01	-0.26 – 0.28	0.953
Observations	140			140		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.332 / 0.312			0.332 / 0.312		

Model 12

Unrest - CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News

Mobs - CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News

Police brutality - CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News

Self defense - CNN, MSNBC, Fox News

Jacob Blake - CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News

Kyle Rittenhouse - CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News

Model 13

Channel	**Show**	**Number of Speaking Parts (n)**
MSNBC	Deadline: White House	23
MSNBC	ReidOut with Joy Reid	25
CNN	The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer	25
CNN	Outfront with Erin Burnett	25
Fox News	Your World with Neil Cavuto	20
Fox News	Special Report with Bret Baier	23
CBS	CBS Evenings News	25
ABC	ABC World News Tonight	25

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