Media Effects and Marginalized Ideas:
Relationships Among Media Consumption and
Support for Black Lives Matter

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Building on research analyses of Black Lives Matter media portrayals, this inquiry uses a two-wave panel survey to examine the effects news coverage has on the evaluation of the core ideas from the Black Lives Matter social movement agenda. Results show that conservative media use increases negative evaluations; models suggest this relationship works as a multidirectional feedback loop. Mainstream and liberal media consumptions do not lead to more positive views about Black Lives Matter's core ideas.

Keywords: media effects, partisan media, conflict, news audiences, Black Lives Matter

The 2014 shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, was the catalyst that launched a brewing protest movement into the international spotlight. Police officer Darren Wilson shot the unarmed teenager multiple times in the middle of a neighborhood street. Initial protests aimed at finding justice for Brown turned violent quickly and were subsequently met with a militarized police force (e.g., Brown, 2014). Local protests continued in Ferguson while the jury deliberated Wilson's possible indictment. However, in November 2014, Wilson was not indicted, and the decision refueled national protests. Brown's death was one of many in 2014, and news media paid attention to the reoccurrence of similar scenarios, as well as the associated protests. These demonstrations were part of the growing, decentralized Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Protests echoed demands for justice for Black men, women, and children killed by excessive use of force, for police policy reformation, and for the acknowledgment of oppression against Blacks and other marginalized communities.

The BLM protests are part of the global expansion of protest activity (Carothers & Youngs, 2015). Scholars of mass communication have paid close attention to media portrayals of protests. Before the digital revolution, theorists noted that journalist cover protests that challenge societal norms by emphasizing delegitimizing features and producing coverage that marginalizes protests in a patterned way (e.g., Chan & Lee, 1984; Hertog & McLeod, 1995, 2001). Delegitimizing features include the use of marginalizing frames, rhetorical devices, and official-led sourcing patterns (Di Cicco, 2010; Harlow & Johnson, 2011; Weaver & Scacco, 2013).

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The protest paradigm sustains the quandary for advocacy efforts that rely on media coverage and exposure to spread their message and bring awareness to their cause. The media's delegitimization of a movement is linked with decreased public support, negative attitudes about protests, and opposition to their cause (Arpan et al., 2006). Digital media challenge some of the predispositions of this theory (Harlow & Johnson, 2011; Kilgo, Harlow, García-Perdomo, & Salaverría, 2018), yet the general trend of marginalization remains.

The bulk of protest and media coverage research focuses on content and narrative construction using content and textual analyses to identify if the paradigm persists. In these inquiries, most researchers rely on theoretical effects to position findings (e.g., Boyle, McCluskey, Devanathan, Stein, & McLeod, 2004; Brasted, 2005; Di Cicco, 2010; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Leopold & Bell, 2017; Weaver & Scacco, 2013). Less research has been dedicated to media coverage effects, with the exception of a few inquiries that illustrate the potential complexities that news exposure can have on attitudes toward protests (Arpan et al., 2006) and examinations of effects on social media engagement (Harlow, Salaverría, Kilgo, & García-Perdomo, 2017; Kilgo, Harlow, et al., 2018).

Building on this work, our research examines the role preexisting attitudes about various levels of collective action activity and different types of media consumption have on support for the fundamental ideas associated with BLM. Using a two-wave panel survey, we examine the fundamental ideas in a movement's agenda. We take this approach because social movements that challenge the powerful and oppressive foundations of racism, misogyny, homophobia, and hate continue, and therefore positive assessment of ideas and demands stemming from a protest ultimately helps illustrate the effectiveness and progression of a movement. As such, the research contributes to scholarship by looking at media consumption's influence on the social change requested from movement efforts and positions findings within the context of the longitudinal struggle of Blacks in the United States.

Protest Coverage and Media Effects

Social movements and social change initiatives rely on the mass media to gain attention to their issues, project their goals, and network their messages to broader audiences. Yet journalists have routinely found little news value in demands for change without action, so protestors create media interest by employing action (e.g., street demonstrations, sit-ins, marches) as part of their repertoire of contention (e.g., Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Chan & Lee, 1984; M. Lim, 2013; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). With media interest comes increased media coverage, and, while sensationalism and conflict allow protestors to gain the attention of news media, coverage is not decorous. Instead, coverage has a tendency to be presented in patterns that accentuate the size or drama of a protest, violent actions, and confrontation. Meanwhile, journalists fail to cover details like protest agendas, demands, and accomplishments (e.g., Brasted, 2005; Chan & Lee, 1984; Harlow & Johnson, 2011; Hertog & McLeod, 1995, 2001). This pattern is referred to as the protest paradigm, and the paradigm appears most prominently in protests that challenge the status quo and societal norms (Chan & Lee, 1984). Media sociology scholars argue that the protest paradigm is a result of reporting routines and the shifting expectations for journalists in an evolving media ecology (Gitlin, 1980; Oliver & Maney, 2000).

Some inquiries have identified exceptions to the protest paradigm theory. For example, the affordances of the digital realm have also shown significant shifts (e.g., Harlow et al., 2017). Partisan media

outlets and media ideologies also influence coverage patterns (Chan & Lee, 1984; Weaver & Scacco, 2013). However, research on BLM media coverage has reaffirmed press marginalization of the movement (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Kilgo, Harlow, et al., 2018; Kilgo, Mourão, & Sylvie, 2019; Leopold & Bell, 2017; Mourão, Kilgo, & Sylvie, 2018). Moreover, most work has focused on the protest paradigm from a content and textual analyses perspective, leaving a significant gap in the audience effects component of the protest paradigm.

Few studies have offered empirical evidence of the ideological delegitimization outcomes predicted by protest paradigm theorists. In the few studies that have focused on this branch of the protest paradigm, preexisting attitudes had a stronghold on results. From a general media effects perspective, Klapper (1960) argued that exposure to media coverage would likely have little effect on people's perceptions of any issue that is already well established. However, Detenber, Gotlieb, McLeod, and Malinkina (2007) found well-established beliefs were essential to consider when assessing media effects and attitudes toward protest. In their experiment, highly critical and high conflict media articles made participants more skeptical of protests than those exposed to noncritical coverage. Yet, generally, preexisting attitudes about protest lead to shifts in the overall outcomes. Arpan et al.'s (2006) experimental study on visual media's effect on protest attitudes is one of the few that directly addresses protest paradigm theory. In this study, visual media predicted critical evaluations of protestors, but preexisting beliefs about protest predicted audience's identification or empathetic association with demonstrators as well as their perceptions of the effectiveness of a protest. In a qualitative assessment of protest images, Kilgo (2017) also found that preexisting attitudes and beliefs were fundamental components of protest image interpretation.

Black Protest and Black Lives Matter

The issue of prejudicial policing in the United States and the oppression of Black people across the country remains a pertinent issue today. Recent protests began after the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, who was shot and killed by neighborhood watch affiliate George Zimmerman (Stutzman & Prieto, 2012). Zimmerman received a not-guilty verdict, and the protests that organized after the acquittal became the foundation of the modern BLM movement (Calamur, 2014; Simon, 2017). This decentralized movement's exposure intensified after the shooting death of Michael Brown in 2014 (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016). Similar to digitally driven, antigovernment protest movements of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, BLM gained premier exposure through social media outlets. The online movement was a primary facilitator of the offline mobilization that spanned internationally (Freelon et al., 2016). These high-visibility protests were covered extensively by news media outlets as well.

BLM protest demands are contrary to colorblind ideologies and challenge existing narratives of police as public servants and "good guys" (Dixon, 2017), creating negative public perceptions of the movement (Carney, 2016; Taylor, 2016). As time passed, BLM advocates developed and extended initial demands, which led to more formal policy efforts. For example, the Movement for Black Lives created formal policy demands that conform more readily with protest procedural processes dictated by the U.S. legal system. The stated demands include a notably intersectional agenda that addresses economic, social, and political issues of Black and other marginalized communities (Movement for Black Lives, 2017). As a result of policy efforts, the movement's core demands are now diverse, encompassing issues such as gender, economic inequality, and climate change. However, in 2015 (the time the first wave of this

study was conducted), formulated demands remained decentralized and in the hands of grassroots efforts. Ideas stemming from BLM advocates probed issues of police brutality and the disproportional killings of Blacks by the police state, and the ongoing concerns of oppression and discrimination within society's racial hierarchy that is maintained through colorblind ideologies (for alternative perspectives to colorblindness and race in the United States, see Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Entman, 1992; Fiske, 2000; Lawrence, 1987; López, 2015; Oluo, 2018; Wise, 2010).

Despite the formalization of protest efforts, opposition to BLM remains. In 2016, three years after Zimmerman's acquittal, Pew Research reported that the U.S. public opinion concerning support for BLM remained incredibly divided (Horowitz & Livingston, 2016). In total, 43% of users polled said they supported BLM—this number being markedly higher for respondents who were Black (65%). A total of 30% of respondents mentioned they either did not have an opinion or were unfamiliar with the movement, and 22% directly opposed the movement altogether. Within this context, this study first seeks to explore the media's direct effect on attitudes toward the substantive ideas from the BLM movement.

Research using content analyses shows that news coverage of BLM was overwhelmingly marginalizing, adhering to the predicted paradigm: Mainstream media journalist marginalize protestors through the racialization of coverage (Leopold & Bell, 2017), focusing on violence and confrontation rather than the ongoing and unattended demands and agendas of the protest movement (Kilgo, Mourão & Sylvie, 2019), and excluding preferred advocacy frames (Mourão et al., 2018). Though Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) found that coverage took sympathetic shifts during key peaks in activity, coverage did not become more legitimizing over a sustained amount of time (Kilgo, Mourão, & Sylvie, 2019). Coupled with similar findings in assessments of Black protest coverage from previous eras (e.g., Watkins, 2001), research findings routinely point to implications that protests about race and Black people challenge the status quo in such a way that the paradigm remains intact regardless of the protestors' actions, tactics, or demands. Ultimately, we predict this adherence to the paradigm over time will result in increased negativity toward evaluations of BLM ideas:

H1:   Higher levels of media use will lead to negative evaluations of BLM ideas.

The Influence of Partisan News

There is little doubt that the new media atmosphere requires a more nuanced assessment of media use that takes into consideration the drastic proliferation of channels and the speed of transmission (Blumler & Kavanaugh, 1999). In 2010, a Pew Report showed that more than half of Americans get news from at least four different platforms every day. Specific media choices—or news repertoires—have been found to affect audiences differently, and various contextual variables influence the repertories they choose (Yuan, 2011).

Of particular interest to this study is the proliferation of partisan media, given the polarized political character of BLM. In other words, perceptions of BLM ideas and agendas are subject to a partisan divide. Democrats are more likely than Republicans or Independents to support the movement (Horowitz & Livingston, 2016). The dividing line in support leads us to believe that the increased consumption of

partisan media will also shift attitudes about BLM demands. In 2006, the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2006) noted the problematic uptick of the partisan and editorial nature of cable news, which has since grown exponentially. In 2017, Fox News reported 2.35 million primetime viewers whereas MSNBC and CNN had significantly smaller viewership—1.64 million and 1.06 million, respectively (Matthews, 2017). Partisan media organizations distribute narratives that ultimately reiterate the political views of their audiences (Jamieson & Capella, 2008), and consumption of partisan news can significantly affect attitudes. For example, selective exposure to partisan news increases the likelihood of polarization (Stroud, 2010). Another recent study suggests that Fox News consumption directly shifts attitudes toward more conservative positions (Martin & Yurukoglu, 2017). This finding was not exclusive to those who identify as conservative; liberals who consume Fox News are also likely to have an attitude shift. Our first hypothesis and research question focus on the relationship between mainstream, liberal, and conservative media exposures, and negative evaluations of BLM core ideas:

H2:   *Higher levels of mainstream and conservative media exposure will lead to negative evaluations of BLM ideas.*

RQ1:   *What is the relationship between liberal media exposure and evaluations of BLM ideas?*

Preexisting Attitudes

Just as personal ideology is a likely predictor of political attitudes (Stroud, 2010), so too are preexisting attitudes about protesting (generally) and the BLM movement (specifically). Social movement researchers have noted that public acceptance of protest tactics changes over time, particularly as tactics are employed more often. As such, tactics are often categorized based on the degree to which the public might accept a particular protest tactic. The most acceptable forms of political protest are those that align with formal political procedures. In Western societies, examples of this might include voting. However, tactics are considered as more radical when the public acceptance of them decreases. So, for example, in an investigation of public acceptance of European protest activity, Crozat (1998) described boycotting and sit-ins as moderate protest activities that are not part of the normalized political routine, but are more common forms of protest activity in European contexts and therefore receive more public acceptance than radical protest behavior, such as destroying property or blocking traffic. Similar designations have been made by communication scholars. For example, Lee (2014) bridges this sociological perspective with communication research, again basing the radicalness designation on the public acceptance. In her content analysis, she operationalizes radical tactics as "involving disruption of ongoing activities, strike actions, slow driving, hunger strike, or burning or destroying of objects" (p. 2732). In theory, increased public acceptance of protest tactics will lead to an increase in support for the protest.

Research has typically found that preexisting attitudes toward protests will be a stronger predictor of opinions about the protest than exposure to mainstream media coverage of the movement (Arpan, 2009). However, it is important to note that Black civil rights protest has faced problematic coverage in the media for decades; even the coverage of the 1960s civil rights protests was characterized as sensational, exaggerated, and deceptive (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). In 1961, a Gallup poll showed that 57% of respondents thought sit-ins, freedom buses, and other

demonstrations hurt the protestors' cause, jumping to 60% in 1963 as protest activity became more frequent (and theoretically less radical), leading to the conclusion that the majority believed that protesting generally was a harmful activity for racial equality. Currently, the resentment toward Black protest activity remains historically consistent, where radicalness for Black protesters seemingly includes escalated violent protest alongside peaceful kneeling during professional football games. Therefore, despite protest activity having various levels of public acceptance overall (Crozat, 1998; Lee, 2014), protest activity deemed peaceful, violent, legal, or illegal protest activity might all be considered radical because they are associated with Black civil rights protest. This observation has fed the critique that there is "no right way to protest" for Black U.S. citizens (for an example, see Noah, 2016).

With this in mind, this project questions the extent to which preexisting attitudes about protest will be more significant predictors of the assessment of protest ideas than media exposure itself (Arpan et al., 2006):

RQ2:   *How do attitudes toward (a) radical and (b) moderate protest tactics affect attitudes toward BLM ideas?*

RQ3:   *Are preexisting attitudes about protests stronger predictors of negative evaluations of BLM ideas than media consumption patterns?*

Method

The data from this study were retrieved from a two-wave U.S. national panel survey conducted by researchers in the Digital Media Research Program at the University of Texas at Austin. The survey was limited to Internet users and administered using Qualtrics. Survey Sampling International managed respondent participation in the survey. Using the quota sampling strategies of Bode, Vraga, Borah, and Shah (2014), overall participation in the survey mimicked U.S. census data on several demographic variables, including quotas on race, age, gender, and education. The first wave of the study was conducted in December 2015 ($n = 848$); the second wave was administered in February 2016 ($n = 420$). This study addresses the impact of three types of variables on negative attitudes toward BLM ideas: individual characteristics (demographics and political leaning), media consumption (general and specific types of media), and general attitudes toward the right to protest.

Dependent Variables

This study uses three attitudinal measures to gauge negative evaluation of BLM's ideas (range: 1 = *strongly disagree* to 10 = *strongly agree*). To increase the validity of our study outcome measures of interest, we sought a mixture of variables that measured resentment toward BLM demands from both generalized and specific measures. Item 1 is a validated racial resentment indicator used in the Modern Racism Scale (also known as the Symbolic Racism Scale). The Modern Racism Scale has been widely used in interdisciplinary studies with survey methodologies exploring race (e.g., Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). Further, this measure has been used in U.S. National Election Survey (NES) questionnaires since 1986. The full scale examines a broad scope of racial resentment issues, including measures about attitudes toward slavery and work ethic, and because those attitudes were beyond the

scope of this study, they were not included in the survey execution. One item from the Modern Racism Scale was adapted for this inquiry: "Other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors" (M = 6.58, SD = 2.65). This measure addresses BLM's broader idea of the effects of oppression, and their demands for policy change ("special favors") to overcome the deadly consequences of police prejudice. Item 2 looks at BLM's idea of centering Black lives (rather than all lives) as a core idea: "The official Black Lives Matter is a racist movement" (M = 6.00, SD = 3.03). The idea was reversed so that it was written in the same direction as other established measures used in this assessment. It is important to note that this idea is not unique; many politicians and media figures have called the movement racist (Judge, 2017; N. Lim, 2016). Finally, Item 3 examines the most basic recognition of differences in policing toward the Black community, connecting more closely with the shooting deaths that ignited the BLM movement: "Black people are treated the same by police as all other people" (M = 5.11, SD = 2.86). Importantly, Items 2 and 3 were selected by the researchers as exemplar attitudinal measures for this study. To address reliability issues, items were added on a scale for both T_1 (Cronbach's α = .78, M = 5.90, SD = 2.36) and T_2 (Cronbach's α =.78, M = 5.90, SD = 2.33) to confirm acceptable reliability.

Individual-Level Variables

Demographics

This study controls for age (M = 43.67, SD = 13.99), gender (female = 50.7%), education (M = 3.57, SD = 1.31, range: 1 = *less than high school* to 10 = *postgraduate or professional degree*), income (M = 4.40, SD = 1.53, range: 1 = *less than $10,000* to 10 = *$200,000 or more*), and race (12.4% Black, 63.1% White, 16.2% Latino, 5.6% Asian, and 2.6% other). Each variable was measured from the first wave of the survey.

Political Leaning

This item is a scale comprising three questions from Wave 1: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?" (range: 0 = *strong republican*, 5 = *independent*, 10 = *strong democrat*); "On social issues, where would you place yourself on a scale of 0–10, where 0 = *strong conservative* and 10 = *strong liberal*" and "On economic issues, where would you place yourself on a scale of 0–10, where 0 = *strong conservative* and 10 = *strong liberal*" (Cronbach's α = .87*, M* = 6.24*, SD* = 2.38).

Media Variables

The impact of media consumption on negative attitudes toward BLM's ideas was measured in two ways: general frequency of news consumption and specific partisan media consumption.

General News Media Use

A composite measure was created with participants' responses when asked how often they got news from cable news, network TV news, local TV news, national newspapers, local newspapers, online-only news sites, and radio news (M = 5.66, SD = 2.22, range: 1 = *never* to 10 = *all the time*).

Liberal Media Use

Participants were asked how often they get news from MSNBC, BuzzFeed and The Huffington Post (Cronbach's ɑ = .85, M = 4.41, SD = 2.86).

Conservative Media Use

Participants were asked how often they get news from Fox News (M = 5.17, SD = 3.34) and Breitbart News Network (M = 2.83, SD = 2.93). Because reliability was low (Cronbach's ɑ = .67), consumption of each outlet was entered separately in the models.

Mainstream Media Use

Participants were asked how often they get news from *The New York Times*, NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, and CNN[1] (Cronbach's ɑ = .89, M = 4.22, SD = 2.74).

Protest Attitudes

Participants were asked how much they approve or disapprove of people engaging in the following activities: participating in legal street demonstrations; participating in the blocking of roads to protest; seizing private property or land to protest; boycotting a product as a form of protest; participating in a group working to violently overthrow the government; signing online petitions as a form of protest; and participating in legal street demonstrations (range: 1 = *strongly disapprove* to 10 = *strongly approve*). A factor analysis was conducted with these six items, yielding two factors: support for radical and moderate tactics. Radical and moderate designations were based on research on audience acceptance of protest tactics (Crozat, 1998; Lee, 2014; Lee & Chan, 2013). Table 1 shows the rotated component matrix for the factor analysis.

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[1] Data were collected before the 2016 election and we opted to include CNN as mainstream media following the reliability tests in this sample. Future studies should address the impact of President Trump's comments on this variable, both focusing on if the network objectively leaned further left (via content analysis) and also if the public's perception of the network leaning was altered.

Table 1. Factor Analysis for Attitudes Toward the Right to Protest.

	Component	
	Radical	Moderate
How much do you approve or disapprove . . .		
Signing online petitions as a form of protest	0.00	0.87
Boycotting a product as a form of protest	0.11	0.88
Participating in legal street demonstrations	0.32	0.80
Participating in the blocking of roads to protest	0.87	0.26
Seizing private property or land to protest	0.94	0.10
Participating in a group working to violently overthrow the government	0.91	0.06
Initial eigenvalue	3.16	1.69
Percentage explained variance	52.66%	28.12%
Cumulative percentage	52.66%	80.78%

Support for moderate protests included three items asking respondents how much they approved of "people participating in legal demonstrations," "boycotting a product as a form of protest," and "signing online petitions as a form of protest" (eigenvalue = 3.16, M = 6.47, SD = 2.40). Support for radical protests was measured by three items asking respondents how much they approved of "people participating in the blocking of roads to protest," "people seizing private property or land to protest," and "people participating in a group working to violently overthrow the government" (eigenvalue = 1.69, M = 3.41, SD = 2.59).

Analysis

Research questions and hypotheses were answered using a cross-lagged panel design. We test the four relationships proposed by Kenny (2005): two synchronous cross-sectional (X t_1 → Y t_1, X t_2 → Y t_2), two stability relations (Y t_1 → Y t_2; X t_1 → X t_2), and two cross-lagged (X t_1 →Y t_2, Y t_1 → X t_2). In other words, the tables presented show (a) the cross-sectional relationship between independent and dependent variables; (b) autoregressive regression controlling for stability relations (here, we test the extent to which media consumption influences negative attitudes toward BLM's core ideas, controlling for those attitudes on Time 1); and (c) the reverse causal direction to test whether the relationship is actually negative attitudes toward BLM ideas that generates more general and specific media consumption.

Results

The results presented in Table 2 show the cross-sectional (Model 1) and cross-lagged (Model 2) relationships. The cross-lagged model controls for prior levels of the dependent variable on t_1. Model 1 (cross-sectional) reveals that Whites (β = .33, p < .001), Latinos (β = .21, p < .01), Asians (β = .12, p < .05), and those identifying with other races (β = .12, p < .05) were all more likely to be more negative

towards BLM's ideas than Blacks at statistically significant levels. Conversely, liberals were less likely to hold anti-BLM attitudes ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .001$).

Model 2 in Table 2 shows the autoregressive models for negative BLM attitudes in Time 2, controlling for Time 1.

Table 2. Cross-Sectional (Model 1) and Autoregressive (Model 2) Linear Regression Models Testing the Effect of Demographics, Political Leaning, Media Use, and General Support for the Right to Protest on Negative Attitudes Toward Black Lives Matter.

	Model 1 *Cross-sectional*	Model 2 *Autoregressive*
	β (*SE*)	β (*SE*)
Demographics		
Gender	0.04 (.22)	−0.03 (.17)
Age	0.09 (.01)	0.00 (.01)
Income	−0.01 (.08)	0.04 (.32)
Education	−0.01 (.09)	−0.02 (.07)
Race (ref = Black)		
White	0.33 (.35)***	0.15 (.28)**
Latino	0.21 (.41)**	0.03 (.32)
Asian	0.12 (.57)*	0.12 (.44)**
Other	0.12 (.69)*	0.03 (.53)
Political leaning	−0.22 (.05)***	−0.13 (.04)**
ΔR^2 (%)	**12.78%***	**17.84%***
Media use		
General media use	0.09 (.08)	0.04 (.06)
Mainstream media	−0.01 (.09)	−0.12 (.07)
Liberal Media	−0.12 (.08)	−0.01 (.06)
Fox News	0.22 (.04)***	0.13 (.03)**
Breitbart	0.28 (.06)***	0.03 (.05)
ΔR^2 (%)	**17.74%***	**14.19%***
Support for the right to protest		
Using radical tactics	0.07 (.14)	0.08 (.11)
Using moderate tactics	−0.05 (.11)	0.05 (.09)
ΔR^2 (%)	**.56% [n.s.]**	**.082% [n.s.]**
BLM negative attitudes (Time 1)		0.61 (.04)***
ΔR^2 (%)		**25.75%***
Total R^2 (%)	**31.08%**	**58.61%**

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

As expected, the strongest predictor of the outcome in t_2 is the outcome on t_1 ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$). After controlling for t_1, we find that only being White ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$) or Asian ($\beta = .12$, p < .01) predicts more anti-BLM sentiments at statistically significant levels. H1 hypothesizes that higher levels of media use will lead to negative evaluations of BLM ideas, whereas RQ1 explored the relationship between liberal media

exposure and BLM idea evaluations. Findings reveal that neither the general frequency of news consumption nor higher levels of liberal media consumption (RQ1) significantly affected attitudes toward BLM. H1 was rejected. However, consumption of news from Fox News (β = .22, *p* < .001) and Breitbart (β = .28, *p* < .001) are associated with more negative sentiments toward BLM's ideas cross-sectionally. As shown in the autoregressive model, only Fox News emerged as a significant media predictor (β = .13, *p* < .01). The cross-sectional model explained 31.1% of the variance observed, whereas the autoregressive model explained 58.6%. H2 ("Higher levels of mainstream and conservative media exposure will lead to negative evaluations of BLM ideas") was only partially supported. The cross-lagged models suggest causality (Fox News → BLM negative attitudes), but it is also possible that the direction of this relationship is inversed: More negative attitudes toward BLM ideas cause people to watch more Fox News. To test this, Table 3 shows the same models, with conservative media use as the outcome and BLM attitudes entered as an independent variable. Reverse causal calculations reveal that although increased Fox News consumption leads to more negative BLM attitudes, negative BLM attitudes also lead to higher Fox News consumption (β = .13, *p* < .001), explaining 62.82% of the variance observed.

RQ2 and RQ3 refer to the relationship between support for the right to protest and negative attitudes toward BLM's ideas. Results show that preexisting attitudes toward protest are not significant factors in explaining shifts in attitudes toward BLM ideas, and also show they explain less than 1% of the variance. Instead, media consumption is the more influential predictor of attitudes than preexisting attitudes toward protest activity.

Discussion

This research demonstrates the relationships among different types of media consumption and attitudes toward protest demands. Though scholars have found that the media's inclusion of the demands of protests in news coverage is limited, they also uphold that the inclusion of demands is key for the legitimization of a protest in the eyes of the audience (e.g., Brasted, 2005; Chan & Lee, 1984; Hertog & McLeod, 1995, 2001). Building on previous research that illustrated the relative absence of substantial attention to the needs, agendas, and demands in media coverage (e.g., Leopold & Bell, 2017), this research tested media consumption's effect on attitudes about BLM's core ideas.

Increased media consumption did not create more disagreement or agreement with BLM ideas, and considered separately, neither did mainstream and liberal media consumption when controlling for prior levels of attitudes. Considering this finding within media coverage's framework of marginalization identified in BLM content and textual analyses (Kilgo, Harlow, et al., 2018; Leopold & Bell, 2017; Mourão et al., 2018), it might suggest that negative characteristics of overall coverage have little effect on public opinion.

Contrarily and perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly, increased conservative media consumption from partisan outlets like Fox News and Breitbart results in increasingly negative evaluations of BLM's core ideas. This holds true even after controlling for preexisting attitudes in a cross-lagged model, suggesting some causality between these variables (Kenny, 2005). In addition, our cross-sectional, autoregressive, and reverse causal results show that this relationship is multidirectional, and anti-BLM ideas can also lead to more conservative media consumption, although to a less extent. In other words, conservative media

consumption leads to more anti-BLM sentiments, which in turn leads to more conservative media consumption. This feedback loop is consistent with Slater's (2015) theory of reinforcing spirals, which indicates that when individuals feel threatened, they seek and consume information that acknowledges and reinforces that perception. Our work affirms that disagreement with BLM ideas might be an indicator that news audiences consider Black civil rights protests and its goals to be a threat, which in turn predicts their increased likelihood to seek out partisan media that explicatively aligns with that idea. Those in disagreement may choose to consume media they believe supports their existing attitudes, and that consumption of conservative media also strengthens their attitudes.

Table 3. Autoregressive Reverse Causal Directional Regression Testing if Negative Attitudes Toward BLM Ideas Generate More General and Specific Media Consumption.

	β (*SE*)
Demographics	
Gender	0.00 (.22)
Age	0.02 (.01)
Income	0.02 (.08)
Education	−0.06 (.09)
Race (ref = Black)	
White	−0.14 (.36)*
Latino	−0.03 (.42)
Asian	−0.01 (.58)
Other	0.02 (.71)
Political leaning	−0.01 (.06)
Δ*R*^{2} (%)	**7.19%****
Media use	
General media use	0.04 (.08)
Mainstream media	0.03 (.10)
Liberal media	−0.08 (.08)
Breitbart	−0.01 (.06)
Δ*R*^{2} (%)	**24.90%*****
Support for the right to protest	
Using radical tactics	0.02 (.15)
Using moderate tactics	0.01 (.11)
Δ*R*^{2} (%)	**.06% n.s.**
BLM negative attitudes	0.13 (.05)**
Δ*R*^{2} (%)	**4.44%*****
Fox News attitudes (Time 1)	0.71 (.04)***
Δ*R*^{2} (%)	**26.23%*****
Total *R*^{2} (%)	**62.82%*****

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Results showed that increased consumption of liberal media did not lead to more support of the BLM movement, indicating that though conservative media consumers have a clear disfavor for BLM ideas, liberal media consumers are not affected. In fact, our correlations table reveals that, generally, consumption of liberal and mainstream media is associated with anti-BLM sentiments as well. This effect is no longer significant when controlling for other variables. Therefore, while the regression results suggest BLM is a partisan issue, we should not assume that consumption of liberal or mainstream media has leads to more positive or more negative views on the movement. Future research should seek to identify whether any media consumption patterns lead to more positive assessments of BLM ideas by exploring how consumption of alternative, ethnic, and entertainment media contribute to protest assessments.

The only cross-lagged predictor of support for BLM's core ideas is being Black. The clear lack of liberal support for BLM's ideas adds evidence to criticisms that liberals and the Democratic political party has been indifferent to issues of Blacks (Coates, 2017). From a media perspective, these results are in tandem with prior studies that found that mainstream media generally delegitimized BLM in news about the Ferguson protests (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Kilgo, Mourão, & Sylvie, 2019) Leopold & Bell, 2017; Mourão et al., 2018). For the liberal media outlets (e.g., *HuffPost*), protest paradigm research suggests that portrayals of protest will be more legitimizing from outlets that share similar ideologies, and thus aid in legitimizing the movement. Our study shows that liberal media consumption also does not increase approval of BLM ideas; and we can, therefore, conclude one of two things: (1) liberal ideology does not support BLM's antiracism agendas, or (2) the paradigm's assumptions of media effects and legitimization are wrong. We urge future scholars to tackle these issues in two ways: analyzing content for how liberal partisan outlets portrayed BLM, and using experimental designs manipulating the different types of content and their effects.

One limitation of this study is the use of a two-wave, cross-lagged design, which indicates causal order, but is not as robust as an experiment for direct detection of media effects. Similarly, there are limitations to self-reported news consumption that could be reduced in experimental designs. Future studies should manipulate different types of content in an experimental setting to assess which messages are directly related to attitudes towards Black social movements. Similarly, our outcome questions focus only on three dimensions of BLM core ideas, and future research should expand on those as the movement increased in scope and grievances expanded to encompass its attention to intersectional struggles, including queerness, feminist, environmentalist, and economic perspectives.

Although not in the scope of this study, our results also show that Whites and Asians are equally resistant toward BLM's ideas, extending the findings from myriad authors who have investigated the interethnic conflict between Blacks and Asians, and documented the interethnic tensions and hostilities (e.g., Chang, 2001; Johnson & Oliver, 1989; Shah & Thornton, 2003). Stereotypes are likely major contributions to these hostilities. For example, for Asian communities, the impact of the model minority myth has led to sentiments of anti-Blackness and prejudice that created tangible social distancing (e.g., Kim, 1998). Our results suggest that this distancing might extend to advocacy efforts that seek to better the position of Blacks. Overall, this study finds respondents who identified as Asian were less likely to support Black social change compared to other groups of racial minorities.

More broadly, these findings are important for understanding the role of news coverage in the ongoing struggle with police brutality, use of force, and race in the U.S. Conventionally, when movements like these are covered by the press, news stories condemn protestors to marginality, which can ultimately escalate violent protest tactics and, consequentially, protest repression efforts. Here, we undertake the question of how different patterns of media consumption lead to hostile images of BLM ideas, finding that those who consume conservative media are more likely to have negative views on BLM, which in turn lead them to consume even more conservative news. This feedback loop provides a glimpse of intolerance to Black social movements as a core feature of conservatism, leading to even more partisan selective exposure. However, we caution against seeing these results as evidence of political polarization as we found that mainstream and liberal media consumptions do not lead to more positive views on BLM. Ultimately, much has been said about media portrayals of social movements with recent studies suggesting that ideological affinity with protestors may lead to more positive portrayals (e.g., Shahin, Zheng, Sturm, & Fadnis, 2016; Weaver & Scacco, 2013). We found evidence that these theoretical positive portrayals are not enough to legitimize the protest. The lack of solidarity with BLM and the oppressive ideas they are challenging shows that the protest paradigm must be positioned within the contextual models that explain oppression and power.

Additionally, we acknowledge that the emphasis on BLM protest in this study does not allow us to generalize findings to all protests, and call for future studies to comparatively assess the relationships between media consumption and attitudes toward protest, especially as informal political collective action activity has become more common in the United States. By exploring race-related protest, our research should be considered as a foundation for a program of explanatory models that further our understanding of the protest paradigm and enlighten the state of interdisciplinary theory building.

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