

**CANADIAN NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS: A
CONTENT ANALYSIS**

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines how four English-language Canadian news organizations reported on the Black Lives Matter protests that sprung up after the killing of George Floyd in 2020. A framing analysis of 55 articles from four news outlets in two of the countries' largest English-speaking cities examined how the news media used language, framing, and sources to report on the protests. I coded for several key variables, including overall tone, sourcing, and the presence of marginalizing and legitimizing framing devices. This thesis found that all four news outlets were more likely to use an overall positive tone to frame the protests and protesters by emphasizing peacefulness and highlighting the underlying reason for the protests. The results replicated previous research on the Black Lives Matter protests by Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017), which found that most of the news articles from their sample framed the protests positively. My findings also determined that government officials were quoted the same amount as protesters, while police were under-quoted compared to past research. Future research should continue to examine how the Canadian news media frames social protest movements to determine if this study's findings indicate a shift in the protest paradigm.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores the Canadian news media coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests that arose after George Floyd was killed in 2020. As the creators of news, journalists have a large amount of power over how the general public perceives social and political movements. News reports of protests usually focus on violence, criminal activity, and inconvenience, ignoring the underlying reasons the protests begin in the first place. My thesis results indicate this way of covering protests — a phenomenon known as the protest paradigm — might be changing. Most of the articles I examined framed the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests positively, emphasizing peacefulness, solidarity, and highlighting police brutality and systemic racism as the underlying reasons for the protests. These results could indicate a change in the way news outlets frame similar protests and social movements in the future.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Eleni Trena Stanton Vlahiotis.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Lay Summary	iv
Preface.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Black Lives Matter.....	2
1.2 Purpose and Rationale.....	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	6
2.1 Journalism and Objectivity	6
2.2 Official Sources	9
2.3 Media, Social Movements, and the Protest Paradigm	11
2.4 Race and the News Media.....	14
2.5 Media Framing of Black Lives Matter.....	18
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework	21
3.1 Critical Race Theory	21
Chapter 4: Methodology.....	23
4.1 Research Question	23
4.2 Media Framing Theory	24
4.3 Content Analysis.....	26

4.4	Sampling	26
4.5	Coding.....	28
4.6	Limitations	29
Chapter 5: Results.....		31
5.1	Overall Tone	31
5.2	Sourcing	33
5.3	Framing Devices	34
5.4	News Frames.....	36
5.4.1	Peace Frame	36
5.4.2	Anarchy Frame.....	37
5.4.3	Anti-Racism Frame.....	39
5.4.4	Violence Frame	41
5.4.5	Confrontation Frame.....	43
5.4.6	Canada vs. U.S. Frame.....	45
Chapter 6: Discussion.....		48
6.1	Key Findings.....	48
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....		52
7.1	Theoretical Implications and Future Research	52
7.2	Implications for Journalists and Newsrooms	53
Bibliography		56
Appendices.....		72
	Appendix A Codebook	72
	Appendix B Framing Device Examples	74

List of Tables

Table 1: Newspaper coverage sources	27
Table 2: Overall Tone of Story	33
Table 3: Distribution of Sources	34
Table 4: Legitimizing Framing Devices	35
Table 5: Marginalizing Framing Devices	35
Table 6: Peace Frame	36
Table 7: Anarchy Frame	38
Table 8: Anti-Racism Frame	40
Table 9: Violence Frame	42
Table 10: Confrontation Frame	44
Table 11: Canada vs. U.S. Frame	46

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020, sparked anti-racism demonstrations worldwide, along with renewed calls to defund the police. Footage of the arrest showed Chauvin pinning Floyd to the ground and kneeling on his neck for over eight minutes while Floyd repeatedly said he could not breathe over 20 times (BBC News, 2020, July 16). In a landmark trial, Chauvin was convicted on two counts of murder and one count of manslaughter on April 20, 2021. On June 25, 2021, he was subsequently sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. On December 15, 2021, Chauvin pled guilty to federal charges of violating Floyd's civil rights by using unreasonable force and ignoring Floyd's serious medical needs (Campbell, Levenson & Chan, 2022, Feb. 21).

Between May 26 (the day after Floyd's death) and August 22, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded over 7,750 demonstrations linked to the Black Lives Matter movement across the United States (Kishi & Jones, 2020). The racism and police brutality exemplified by Floyd's killing prompted solidarity demonstrations to spring up around the world, with the ACLED recording at least 8,700 demonstrations across 74 countries, including the United States. Despite the sensationalizing nature of some of the protest coverage, the demonstrations were largely peaceful. A report from the ACLED found that the vast majority of the demonstrations were non-violent (93%). Despite this, the American administration reacted to the demonstrations with a militarized response, consistent with the government's tendency to respond to domestic unrest with force in the past (Kishi & Jones, 2020).

1.1 Black Lives Matter

The social movement behind the George Floyd protests was the Black Lives Matter movement, a global decentralized social movement against structural racism and police violence. Although police brutality is the Black Lives Matter movement's primary issue, it dovetails with many other issues affecting the Black community, including poverty, economic inequality, and the war against drugs, all of which disproportionately impact Black Americans and Canadians (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017). As such, the movement advocates for all types of Black liberation through policy changes, not just police violence. California-based activist Alicia Garza, one of the founders of the movement, describes the organization as "an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" (p. 23).

The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter first appeared in a Facebook post written by Garza in 2013, following the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American boy who was shot and killed by George Zimmerman. Her post was described by Diverlus et al. (2020) as an open love letter to Black people: "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter, Black Lives Matter" (p. 5). Patrisse Khan-Cullors took the last three words and made it into the viral hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which spread rapidly through social media channels. Garza, Khan-Cullors, and another organizer named Opal Tometi, founded the Black Lives Matter organization in 2013. The movement grew after massive protests and calls for reform following 18-year-old Black teenager Michael Brown's killing by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 (Banks, 2018). Organizers and supporters of Black Lives Matter eventually established local chapters in 18 U.S. cities, which has now grown into a global

network of over 40 chapters, including five chapters in Canada. Today, the organization continues to threaten the power of institutional White supremacy and encourages members to continue battling for the well-being of Black people, even when they experience pushback (Hailu & Sarubbi, 2019).

The Black Lives Matter movement took root in Canada soon after the killing of Jermaine Carby, a 24-year-old Black man from Brampton, by Peel Regional Police officer Ryan Reid in 2014, and the clearing of Darren Wilson of any wrongdoing for Michael Brown's murder in 2015. A group of activists organized a Black Lives Matter rally in Toronto, seeking to, in the words of anti-racist activists Sandy Hudson and Rodney Diverlus, “rupture the violent way that Canada attempts to absent us” (Diverlus et al., 2020, p. 7). This same group would go on to co-form Black Lives Matter—Toronto, the first iteration of the Black Lives Matter movement outside the U.S. From there, other chapters popped up in Canada, from Vancouver to Montreal to Ottawa. Diverlus et al. (2020) describe Black Lives Matter Canada's work as being “grounded in the historical and ancestral significance of Black-led politicization, our work recognizes all that is at stake when Black people converge...our work builds on a lineage of successful and powerful choreographies of Black political assembly” (p. 166).

1.2 Purpose and Rationale

Most research done on the framing of Black Lives Matter in the media has focused on American, not Canadian media (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017; Kilgo, Mourão, & Sylvie, 2018; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Adamson, 2016). I intend to address this research gap by examining how Canadian journalists participated in the legitimization or delegitimization of the 2020 Black

Lives Matter protests. Studies of protests are important, especially given the ever-increasing visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement, both locally and globally. In addition, the protest paradigm is not static and can be shifted with intentional, responsible news coverage. As such, the aim of this thesis is to examine how the Canadian national news media framed the Black Lives Matter protests after the killing of George Floyd. Using content analysis, I examined 55 English-language articles published by four Canadian news outlets, to determine the overall tone of each article, the presence of specific framing devices, and the sourcing.

The news media plays a vital role as a connector, shaper, and reflector of the world around us. Editors and journalists choose which issues and events to draw attention to, which voices will be heard, and frame stories in ways that will resonate with audiences. In so doing, they prime the public to think about certain issues, set the political agenda, and manufacture social reality through the “media gaze” — defined by Fleras (2011) as the media’s tendency “to impose a specific view of the world without announcing its intention or underlying biases” (p. 37). The media acts as a mirror — a mirror that, although “distorted or partial,” still reflects images that we have “created and condoned” (Tolley, 2016, p. 20). The sheer amount of influence and power wielded by mass media make them instruments of cultural dominance (Gitlin, 1980). It is the media’s ability to disseminate knowledge so widely and rapidly, especially via digital media, that makes its role as a communicator so interesting and important to study.

The media are particularly important in the dissemination of racist logic because they are one of the most influential manufacturers of public discourse. The production of news is significantly impacted by the members of dominant groups, and this hierarchy of power is reflected in media

interests (Szuchewycz, 2000). While the media is not solely responsible for manufacturing public discourse, their choices carry significant weight. In representing diversity as unusual and newsworthy, the media help to shape public perceptions and attitudes about race. Tolley (2016) refers to the “White gaze,” a concept derived from Stuart Halls’ notion of the “White eye,” to highlight how the dominance of Whiteness, and the journalistic practices that privilege certain behaviours and ideologies, position “non-White” as atypical to the White norm, and therefore as newsworthy. This White gaze manifests in the practices, behaviours, and beliefs that shape how media institutions prioritize certain ways of making meaning. These interpretations include mythologies about Canadian tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity, reducing racism to individual acts rather than a structural issue, and the creation of harmful, stereotypical narratives that typecast racialized individuals into stereotypical, often racist, roles. Not only do these assumptions go unnoticed, but discussions about race are often silenced (Tolley, 2016) or discouraged in media spaces.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Journalism and Objectivity

In its role as a claimant and enforcer of truth, journalism has developed certain discursive tactics to make stories as persuasive as possible. It does this through journalistic practices, routines, and conventions that adhere to professional norms and values dating back to the dawn of journalism in North America (Broersma, 2010; Entman, 2003; Wallace, 2019). Because journalism does not “emanate ready-made for an audience” (Adamson, 2016, p. 202), news must be shaped by those in the journalism industry — namely journalists and editors. When determining which stories are worth covering, Tolley (2016) describes three criteria as the most important: first, a reporter must be able to get all the necessary information, data, and sources needed to write a story. Second, a combination of deadlines, space limitations in magazines, newspapers, or on-air, and the resources a reporter has at their disposal all impact what stories end up being told. Third is newsworthiness, or which stories are most likely to be told based on interest, geographical proximity, timeliness, or novelty (Tolley, 2016). Journalists inherently take all three criteria into consideration while searching for stories and engaging in the process of newsmaking.

Among journalism’s roles and responsibilities is its self-imposed job as a truth-seeker. Broersma (2010) writes: “journalism’s claim to truth is the main feature of the journalism discourse. It is its *raison d’etre*, distinguishing journalism from entertainment and political opinion. This claim to truth legitimizes journalism’s special position as Fourth Estate” (p. 25). As a “trustee of the public,” journalism separates fact from fiction, lies from opinions, manufacturing social reality through a media-centric perspective that determines which stories are worth telling. In other

words, the framing of news stories by journalists and editors reflects and shapes reality (Tolley, 2016).

Journalism's role as a truth-teller hinges on the notion of objectivity and the idea of an uncontested Truth that can be uncovered with the right kind of reporting. Objectivity requires journalists to adopt a position of neutrality or independence, report stories fairly and accurately, and strive for fair and balanced reporting. In claiming objectivity, journalists have been doing more than just advocating for an "impartial" ethical stance and methodology but have been "bolstering their own ability to make knowledge claims" (Callison and Young, 2020, p. 25). Objectivity requires journalists to maintain a certain amount of distance from their subjects — a distance that is not equally achievable among all reports. For many journalists, the majority of whom are White, the "distance" of objectivity is analogous to their lived experiences. Journalists of colour, on the other hand, often do not have the luxury of a similar "distance," especially when the subject matter is one as traumatic as police violence (Mattar, 2020).

Because the news media are unilaterally viewed as objective and a key source of facts and truth, the knowledge they circulate is given authority and taken at face value (Banks, 2018). In reality, mainstream news media is not neutral (Fleras, 2011; Baffoe, 2012). Journalism's very foundation consists of subjective decision-making: which stories to cover, how in-depth to cover them, which sources to seek out and include, and which facts to emphasize and which to ignore.

Journalism is shaped by a wide variety of influences and factors, only some of which are a result of the journalist institution itself. News stories are born out of organizational media structures, journalism conventions, and a variety of extra-organizational influences and agents (Adamson,

2016). Because no human being is objective, no journalistic method is objective, and no individual journalist is objective (Lowery, 2020). Consistent with mainstream institutions in general, the principles and priorities of mainstream media maintain, perpetuate, and distribute the dominant ideologies that define what is deemed normal, acceptable, or desirable in society (Fleras, 2011; Gitlin, 1980; Boler, 2008). However, like these other political institutions, the news media is shaped by external economic, political, and social forces that affect the methodologies of newsgathering, and the content of news itself (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Gitlin, 1980; Entman, 1993). Gitlin (1980) argues that journalists automatically serve “the political and economic elite notions of reality” when deciding how news is defined and what events are noteworthy (Gitlin, 1980, p. 12).

When journalism is described as objective, it ignores the situatedness of journalists and editors and the routines they engage in (Tolley, 2016). Fleras (2011) writes that newsmaking is “so loaded with deeply embedded ideas and ideals about what is normal and acceptable with respect to race, gender, and class that media representations of diversities and difference are invariably raced, gendered, Eurocentric, and classed” (p. 36). It is not only unethical, but unrealistic, to pretend that journalism is somehow the one institution that is able to divorce itself from the forces that shape and sculpt the rest of social reality. Cole (2020) argues that it is precisely this false promise of objectivity that reinforces White supremacy. In other words, the views associated with Whiteness are accepted as objectively neutral because they can be passed off as journalism — as Truth.

Tolley (2016) defines institutionalized Whiteness as the ways in which particular perspectives, norms, and standards of behaviour are privileged in the public sphere and social institutions. White is viewed as standard — as the norm, as the property against which those of all other backgrounds are judged. Because it is often conflated with the viewpoint of people in power (i.e., the use of official sources in journalism), objectivity has been used for gatekeeping, discouraging social movement organizing, and excluding diverse voices from the media. It excludes certain people by suggesting that a detached observer is a better one, even as many of the most important stories of our times have been told by people who were close to the issue, not detached outsiders (Wallace, 2019).

2.2 Official Sources

The reliance on official sources by mainstream news media has been well documented by media scholars (e.g., Koopmans, 2004; Andrews & Caren, 2010; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Arpan et al., 2006). Often in the name of objectivity, journalists are trained to seek out quotes from official sources because they are convenient, readily available, and do not risk alienating elites (who are often depended on for funding) (Arpan et al., 2006; Sigal, 1973 in McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Andrews & Cared, 2010). The use of official sources also gives news stories a certain level of prestige. When public officials are the primary source of information for news stories, stories tend to be reported from the perspective of the powerful, downplaying opposing viewpoints and reinforcing the agendas of official sources (McLeod, 2007; Smith et al., 2001). In this way, the news maintains an appearance of neutrality and legitimacy while adopting a biased perspective that goes unnoticed.

Aside from politicians, the news media also relies heavily on law enforcement institutions, like police departments and courts systems, for news content (Adamson, 2016). Police are not objective observers of things — they are political and government entities (Mattar, 2020) that work with mass media organizations to deliver their intended narratives for news consumption and leverage media to communicate their own messages (Adamson, 2016). As such, police and other members of law enforcement can significantly shape news narratives (Kilgo, 2021a). Unless these messages are interrogated by journalists, they are passed off as news, and no one is the wiser.

Kilgo's (2021) study of news coverage of the killing of Stephon Clark, a 22-year-old African American man who was shot and killed by two police officers in 2018, demonstrates how police officers are able to drive press narratives. News coverage highlighted the officers' perspectives of Clark and his background, including questioning Clark's behaviour, his criminal history, and justifying the officers' actions. Kilgo's (2021) research also demonstrated how the media contributes to the narrative of delegitimization through the framing of key grievances: Clark's death was the central grievance that sparked the resulting anti-police violence protests, and news coverage reduced his existence to a narrative about his accountability as a victim, rather than about questionable police behaviour and anti-Black police violence.

Wallace (2019) also notes the discrepancy in how narratives about “police-involved shootings” are shaped and who does the shaping. Police, with ample support and resources from both the law enforcement organizations and the media, can shape the narratives of “police-involved shootings,” while the communities suffering from police violence rarely have the resources to

push back. As a result, “news reporting often reflected this disparity in resources, and, as such, it was not so much false reporting as lazy or even just under-resourced reporting. Reporters were...reflecting the information available without any attempt to overcome pre-existing power dynamics” (Wallace, 2019, p. 26).

Dixon’s (2017) analysis of broadcast coverage from 2008 to 2012 found that, while the representation of Black people in crime stories has improved recently, White people are overrepresented as both victims and police officers. Adamson (2016) similarly found that news stories under-depict the number of Black people working in law enforcement, while White people are far more likely to be shown as victims, members of law enforcement, or bystanders in crime coverage (Adamson, 2016). The overrepresentation of White people as police, coupled with the underrepresentation of Black police officers, leads to White people being frequently cast as narrative “heroes” (Dixon, 2017, p. 786) or victims in news coverage.

2.3 Media, Social Movements, and the Protest Paradigm

Social movements are defined by McCarthy and Wolfson (1992) as the critical mass of opinions and desires of a given population to change existing structures, assert their interests, mobilize themselves, make their demands for change, and attempt to find spaces for themselves in society. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) characterize the relationship between the media and social movements as a transactional relationship; social movements are more dependent on the media than the media is on them, leading to a power imbalance. Social movements need the news media for several reasons: to mobilize sympathizers and supporters, to validate their cause, and to broaden the scope of their conflict (Cottle, 2008; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). As a result,

they often organize public demonstrations with the aim of attracting media coverage. This attention is often a double-edged sword because while attention is needed so that movements can garner support, news coverage often represents protest in ways that neutralize or undermine social movement agendas. Protest groups must either protest peacefully and risk not being covered by the media, or risk being delegitimized by resorting to dramaturgy (McLeod, 2007). To gain media attention, protesters engage in newsworthy actions that frequently involve sensationalism, conflict, and deviance (Kilgo & Mourão, 2021; (McLeod, 2007; Smith et al., 2001). Media attention is important for three reasons: first, media impacts the authority of social movements, as well as the adoption of organizational techniques, recruitment, and the spread of ideas within movements. Second, media attention has the potential to shape political agendas and yield policy changes. Third, media coverage influences public opinion, discourse, and the understanding of the social problems that underpin social movements (Andrews & Caren, 2010).

While social movements' utilization of the news media is not a new phenomenon, Cottle (2008) argues protests and demonstrations have become reflexively conditioned by their pursuit of media attention to mobilize wider support for their cause. The politics of protest and dissent are now widely disseminated in and via the news media. Through this communication medium, wider support and legitimacy for a social movement's activities and goals can be gained or lost (Cottle, 2008). In their shaping of protest messages for their audiences, the news media plays a crucial role in determining whether and how social movements generate social change, and the success or failure of said social movements (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Ashley & Olson, 1998). Social movements are not considered deviant or oppositional until they actively challenge or threaten the status quo (Gitlin, 1980). Once social movements do challenge the status quo,

journalists tend to cover them under a certain set of unspoken rules known as the “protest paradigm” — a practice that often leads to the delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization of social movements.

The protest paradigm is a set of news coverage patterns that characterize mainstream media coverage and describes how the media contributes to the suppression of social movements that challenge the status quo (McLeod, 2007; Kilgo & Mourão, 2021; Boyle et al., 2005). It is rooted in the notion that media outlets, propped up by the norms and routines of journalism, act as agents of social control that reinforce that status quo (Boyle et al., 2005; Kilgo & Mourão, 2021). Events like protests or demonstrations do not speak for themselves, but must be woven into a frame to take on meaning (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). The protest paradigm tends to delegitimize protesters by employing frames that sensationalize violence, drama, and deviant behaviour, and undermine the social justice issues underpinning protests that make it difficult for protest groups to compete as political actors in the public sphere (Harlow & Johnson, 2011; McLeod, 2007). McLeod (2007) argues that “the more radical a group is, the more closely news coverage will follow the characteristics of the protest paradigm” (p. 188). Radicalism is based on two criteria: first, how extreme a group’s objectives are, and second, how militant a group’s tactics are. The perception of how closely groups adhere to either criterion is undoubtedly shaped by social and political constructs like race, gender, and class hierarchies.

McLeod and Hertog (1992, in McLeod, 2007) identify five key characteristics of the protest paradigm: first, protest news frames usually include certain narratives, like the “crime story,” the “riot,” and the “carnival.” Second, because journalists tend to rely on official sources, protest

coverage tends to adopt the “official” definitions of the protest by focusing on legality issues, rather than the moral issues underpinning the protests. This results in negative coverage that places movement organizations at a disadvantage by legitimizing authority and marginalizing protest groups (Andrews & Caren, 2010; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). Third, journalists invoke the realm of public opinion by focusing on protesters’ deviant behaviours and appearances rather than the context behind demonstrations (Boyle et al., 2005; McLeod & Hertog, 1992). While this delegitimization can be intentional, it is usually due to the norms, routines, and learned behaviours that the journalism industry demands (Kilgo, 2021a; Boyle et al., 2005). Fourth, the media delegitimizes protest movements by failing to adequately explain the meaning and context behind protests, resulting in the public viewing protests and demonstrations as futile or unimportant. Finally, protest coverage demonizes social movements by exaggerating threats from protest groups. The media creates moral panics by focusing on the negative consequences of protests, such as violence, property damage, or lamenting the waste of community resources that result from demonstrations.

2.4 Race and the News Media

Media choices are not made in a vacuum — they take place within a broader societal context that is built upon the assumption of Whiteness as the norm. Because the journalistic production of knowledge is deeply rooted in “power relations, the performance of White masculinity, and maintaining social orders” (Callison and Young, 2020, p. 5), journalists, editors, and publishers are complicit — often unintentionally — in bigotry and racist assumptions, particularly against Black people. Contemporary forms of racism are not restricted to the overt discrimination of the past, but rather “the repetitive, cumulative, and structural patterns of everyday racism which have

the most significant impact on the lives and social wellbeing of minority group members” (Szuchewycz, 2000, p. 499). Modern-day racism has adapted to become insidious, subtle, and difficult to discern in many cases. van Dijk (1993) describes the nature of everyday racism:

Racism also involves the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitudes, and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities, namely those social cognitions and social acts, processes, structures, or institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the dominance of the white group and the subordinate position of minorities (p. 499).

The media is especially instrumental in maintaining contemporary racism, and relatedly, in the perpetuation of Canada’s dominant myth as a tolerant, colour-blind, multicultural country. Szuchewycz (2000) writes that “Canadian society, so the myth goes, is a uniquely tolerant one, free of the racism which mars social life in many nations, and particularly in that of its American neighbour to the south” (p. 497). Stewart (2014) argues that there are two “versions” of Canada — “one which is public and well-known (at least to Canadians), and then a smaller, less-well-known version of itself which is subsumed and ignored by the larger version” (p. 57). This denial of racism serves a dual purpose in the maintenance of Canada’s national identity: first, it serves as a “semantic and pragmatic move of positive self-presentation” (Szuchewycz, 2000, p. 500) in which discrimination is seen as being both morally prohibited and a deviation to be dealt with at the individual, not systemic, level. Second, it provides a contrast between Canadian and American national identity (Szuchewycz, 2000) that provides Canadians with a sense of national pride. It also “obscures the extent and influence of racial thinking” (Tolley, 2016, p. 6) in Canada. Cole (2020) writes that “this idea that Canada’s racial injustices are not as bad as they

could be...is a very Canadian way of saying “remember what we could do to you if we wanted to.” Passive-aggressive racism is central to Canada’s national mythology and identity” (Cole, 2020, p. 64). Denials of racism strengthen the mainstream view that racism is not a serious social problem and stifle efforts to confront racism in Canadian society and its role in maintaining social and economic hierarchies (Szuchewycz, 2000).

Historically, the mainstream news media has been criticized for completely ignoring or marginalizing minorities in the rare occurrences when they receive coverage at all (Baker et al., 2019; Ojo, 2006; Fleras, 2011). Today, racialized people are still vastly underrepresented in the media or ignored altogether (Ojo, 2006). When they do appear in media coverage, they are often misrepresented and stereotyped, and when they are overrepresented, it is “in areas that don’t count or count for less, including tourism, sports, international relief, and entertainment” (Fleras, 2011, p. 66). Black people are often linked with negative stereotypes of criminality, hypersexuality, and ignorance in Canadian media, and are more likely to have their mugshots displayed on the news, be shown handcuffed, or have prejudicial information aired about them (Kilgo & Mourão, 2021; Jiwani & Al-Rawi, 2021). In their examination of Canadian press coverage of Somali youth, Jiwani and Al-Rawi (2021) found that the media often employed stereotypical narratives that fell within the framework of crime, terrorism, and violence. The main narratives that emerged in the press were that Somali youth were violent, involved with the drug trade, involved with gangs, and prone to Islamic radicalization. There was little coverage about the systemic racism that Somali Canadian youth face.

According to Richardson (2020), the most prominent Black stereotypes in the media are the myths of inherent Black criminality, Black marginality, and post-racialism. The myth of inherent Black criminality claims that Black people deserve harsher policing strategies because they are inherently more likely to commit crimes. The myth of Black marginality argues that Black people are invisibilized in the news because Black people are only featured when there is trouble or conflict; they rarely take the time to examine Black everyday life or Black joy. The myth of post-racialism is a colour-blind set of beliefs that minimizes or ignores the existence of racism, arguing that racism is a thing of the past (Richardson, 2020). This notion of colour-blindness contributes to the endurance of racism and the silence surrounding racist discourse. Through these myths, racialized news coverage is allowed to be positioned as reasonable, unproblematic, and completely divorced from any sense of systemic racism (Tolley, 2016) (Tolley, 2016).

The legacy of Black stereotypes in media can be traced back to runaway slave advertisements in the 17th century, in which self-liberated enslaved people were portrayed as thieves and criminals (Maynard, 2017). These portrayals persisted after the abolition of slavery, associating Blackness with criminality to serve “political, social, economic, and cultural functions in maintaining the racial order, and the ongoing surveillance and policing of Blackness” (Maynard, 2017, p. 85). Another stereotype, the myth of the “feral Black male,” can be traced back to the 1700s when stories of alleged rapes of White women by Black men became prevalent. Block (2002, cited in Adamson, 2016) found that 35 per cent of the thirty-nine rape trials reported in the Pennsylvania Gazette between 1728 and 1776 involved a Black rapist, even though Black people made up no more than ten percent of the colony’s population. White-on-White rape stories were constructed to provoke outrage at the individual act, while Black-on-White rape resulted in all Black men

being painted as potential violent criminals (Adamson, 2016). The persistence of this stereotype is even more troubling because Maynard (2017) found that White men are statistically more likely to be sex offenders than any other race.

These manifestations of “racial knowledge,” a term coined by Goldberg (1993) and cited in Adamson (2016), are precisely what led to the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in 2012. Zimmerman, a community watch member, spotted Martin from a distance and called 911, telling the dispatcher that a “real suspicious guy. . . looks like he’s up to no good or on drugs or something. . . looks black[.]” He confronted Martin, and an altercation followed, resulting in Zimmerman shooting and killing him. Zimmerman was subsequently charged with, and acquitted of, second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter. Zimmerman’s phone call with the 911 dispatcher demonstrates how racial knowledge can manifest and how internalized racial narratives are (Adamson, 2016). Not only is racial knowledge insidious in nature, but it is dangerous when left uncontested.

2.5 Media Framing of Black Lives Matter

Although all social movements are at risk of being subject to the protest paradigm, anti-racist and anti-colonialism protests are more at risk than demonstrations about other topics like climate change and anti-government. Kilgo (2021) found that anti-Black protest coverage tended to contain much more frequent uses of spectacle, riot, and confrontation frames when compared to other kinds of organizing. Adamson’s (2016) news coverage analysis of the Ferguson demonstrations similarly found that narratives created around Brown’s killing highlighted racial discord, looting, and violence. Brown’s death and the ensuing demonstrations exemplified the

racially biased ways news narratives about Blacks are constructed. By associating racial identities with crime narratives, the media committed itself to perpetuating racialized and racist constructions of Black people (Adamson, 2016).

Similarly, in their analysis of Black Lives Matter student activism in media coverage, Hailu & Sarubbim (2019) found that most Black Lives Matter movement depictions in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* undermined the credibility of the organization's mission. The constant association of Black Lives Matter with angry people, campus violence, and disturbance of the peace implied that Black Lives Matter should incite fear and apprehension. Black Lives Matter was rarely defined or defended — instead, the movement was used as an epistemological tool to demonstrate the need to protect Whiteness in higher education. Instead of understanding and engaging with Black Lives Matter, the movement was depicted as deviant, other, and demonized. This is arguably a product of the larger demonization of this movement (Hailu & Sarubbim, 2019).

Banks' (2018) research found that three key specific rhetorical strategies were used to delegitimize the Black Lives Matter movement: the deployment of public memory, utilizing rules of decorum, and the maintenance of post-racial discourse. First, by constantly comparing Black Lives Matter to the Civil Rights movement, the news media delegitimized the actions of Black Lives Matter because they deviated from their perceived understanding of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s so-called "peaceful protests." Second, the rules of decorum allowed the news to dismiss the actions of individuals who did not conform to the unspoken social norms that typically govern public spaces. Those who deviated from these rules of decorum were seen as

unfit for citizenship and public participation and were subsequently dismissed as undeserving of support. Finally, the maintenance of post-racial discourse involved media channels like Fox News accusing the Black Lives Matter movement of using race to excuse their individual misfortunes while dismissing the existence of systemic racism (Banks, 2018).

Since racial protests tend to be framed more deviantly than other protests (Boyle et al., 2005), the Black Lives Matter movement risks their ability to gather support from the public when they seek media attention through disruptive, violent, combative, or confrontational means (Kilgo & Mourão, 2021). However, there have been some notable shifts in how the news frames Black Lives Matter. Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) found that two major American newspapers provided sympathetic coverage of the Black Lives Matter protests following the killing of Michael Brown. Both the *New York Times* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* were more likely to employ positively framed coverage, suggesting peacefulness and order, instead of a negative frame suggesting lawlessness and deviance. Neither newspaper over-emphasized protester-perpetrated crimes, and both papers made infrequent mention of looting, arson, assault, and other crimes. Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) theorize that the media found it impossible to downplay the widespread anger and frustration in the face of the sheer volume of public outcry following the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner. This echoes Boler's (2008) observation that when the public perception of facts changes, the dominant news media find it safe to take a more dissenting position. Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) are careful to note that, while these findings differ from traditional patterns of protest coverage, it is important to continue to research anti-Black protests to see if this pattern represents a shift in news coverage, or if these results are isolated or short-lived. That is precisely what this thesis is aiming to do.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is a cross-disciplinary theory that grew out of an intellectual movement in the 1970s among lawyers, activists, and legal scholars in the U.S. who were concerned that racial progress had come to a halt, despite the advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s. Realizing that new theories and strategies were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground, several scholars, including Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Teri Miller, Stephanie Phillips, and Richard Delgado, founded critical race theory. Critical race theory argues that racism is not simply an individual belief, but rather a dominant ideology that is pervasive in modern society. It posits that racism is ordinary, not the exception, but its prevalence is shrouded by the embeddedness of white supremacy in our institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Mills and Godley, 2017). Inherent to critical race theory is the belief that the power imbalances that stem from racial inequality are foundational to many social and political institutions.

Media scholars like Mills and Godley (2017) have found that critical race theory is particularly useful for critiquing the social and racial hierarchies that exist in the news media. As such, this thesis uses critical race theory as a theoretical framework for interpreting how race is mediatized and re-packaged for consumption by the media. Mills and Godley (2017) found that three tenets of critical race theory are particularly useful to the field of digital literacy, which I extend to media and journalism studies broadly. First, Whiteness as property argues that property has historically been defined as related to the material and social capital acquired and maintained by White citizens. Second, colourblindness, which is the belief that race is no longer of significance, has led to policies with embedded, invisibilized racism that serve to uphold White supremacy.

Third, critical race theory demonstrates the importance of counter-stories and narratives that portray People of Color's viewpoints and experiences as credible scientific evidence. Baffoe (2012) expands on the revolutionary narrative potential of critical race theory:

Critical race theory has an activist aspect: the end goal is to bring change that will implement social justice. Thus, the use of the ethnic media by ethnic minorities in Canada can be seen as a means of elucidating their stories and experiences which are not often told or regarded as of any importance by mainstream society and its media.

In other words, in its use of counter-storytelling, critical race theory explicitly and intentionally makes space for racialized people to tell their stories and experiences as part of the theoretical framework. Critical race theory provides a framework for uncovering racism in journalism and media by challenging harmful "us versus them" binaries and developing anti-racist approaches to doing journalism. This type of counter-storytelling is already being done by alternative media and ethnic press organizations, but can easily be extended to other, more mainstream mass media organizations. By utilizing the principles of critical race theory, journalists and editors can recognize the covert operations of racism and counter these effects with anti-racist strategies and counternarratives.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This thesis aims to investigate how four Canadian news outlets in two different cities, representing a range of ideological locations and market orientations, covered the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted after the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020.

Methodologically, this thesis uses content analysis to examine 55 news articles from four selected news outlets: *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Toronto Sun*. Framing analysis involves analyzing news frames, defined by Reese (2007) as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (p. 11). Journalists and editors use news frames to organize stories or narratives so that audiences can quickly identify and classify information (Gitlin, 1980). In doing this, journalists simplify complex events and issues so that readers can make sense of them and determine acceptable ways to respond to these events (Broersma, 2010; Gitlin, 1980). Media frames organize the world around us (Gitlin, 1980).

4.1 Research Question

This dissertation draws on previous research by Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) and Adamson (2016), who examined the 2014 Ferguson demonstrations in U.S. national journalism organizations, and Boykoff (2006) and Dardis (2006), who conducted content analyses of the Global Justice Movement and the Iraq War Protests, respectively.

The research question I seek to answer in my thesis is as follows:

RQ: How did English-language Canadian news media frame the coverage of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests?

I hypothesize the English-language national news coverage of the protests deviated from the typical protest paradigm and overall portrayed the protests as positive (i.e., just, organized, peaceful, and legitimized protester grievances) rather than negative (i.e., violent, chaotic, deviant, sensational). I expect to replicate recent research that found some American national news outlets framed the protests positively and legitimized protesters' grievances (Elmasry and el-Nawawy, 2017).

4.2 Media Framing Theory

The framing process involves emphasizing certain aspects of a story “in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Journalists enhance meaning by making “information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993, p. 53) in a variety of ways, including placement, repetition, or by associating parts of a story with culturally familiar symbols. The selection of news items, and the way these items are presented, can have powerful effects on consumers' perceptions of social problems and support for proposed solutions (Stone & Socia, 2017). While framing issues for public consumption, journalists are often affected by a variety of factors, including personal traditions, political preferences, professional practices, and organizational structures (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017). The process of framing also necessitates that some aspects of a story will be excluded (Gitlin, 1980) because, at its core, news judgement is about “who controls the narrative, whose narratives matter, and how the appearance of “mattering” is created” (Wallace, 2017, p. 34). In other words, news judgement is about power.

In his research, Iyengar (1991) defines two types of framing: episodic and thematic. Episodic framing focuses on a specific individual or event, while thematic framing focuses on a broader collective issue (Iyengar, 1991). Relying primarily on one type of framing impacts how people think about social problems and whether they perceive certain solutions to exist at the individual or institutional level. Issues framed episodically “suggest we need better information to fix the person,” while issues framed thematically “suggest we need better policies to fix the condition” (Stone & Socia, 2017, p. 334). Reducing widely existing social problems to individual cases with episodic framing ignores the responsibilities on a higher societal level and emphasizes individual responsibility. This is illustrated by Iyengar’s (1991) study on crime, poverty, and unemployment. His results found that when issues were described thematically, respondents placed responsibility on societal factors, such as governmental policies or economic conditions. Conversely, when news coverage used episodic framing, respondents were much more likely to blame poor people for their own misfortune. While episodic and thematic frames are not necessarily mutually exclusive and often occur in the same news story, episodic frames tend to be relied on more because they are often more appealing and digestible for readers (Iyengar, 1991).

The news media often falls back on shallow framing narratives when reporting on social and political protests (Harlow & Johnson, 2011). Since the media is more likely to emphasize the legitimacy of the state and existing institutions, mass media coverage of protest groups tends to marginalize any group that challenges the existing power structures, which oppositional groups advocating for change often do (Gitlin, 1980; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Ashley & Olson, 1998). Boyle et al. (2005) argue that the more protest groups threaten the status quo, the more likely the

media will act to marginalize the group. The news media often uses framing to “minimize ideological threats by these groups” by downplaying their contributions while simultaneously exaggerating the threat they pose to the rest of society (Ashley & Olson, 1998, p. 264). My research will seek to discover if the English-speaking news media employs any of the previously discussed tactics and framing narratives that delegitimize social and political protests.

4.3 Content Analysis

This thesis uses content analysis as its research methodology. Content analysis is a “quantitative process of analyzing communication messages by determining the frequency of message characteristics” (Maier, 2017, p. 239). Researchers use content analysis to quantify and analyze the presence and meanings of specific words, themes, or concepts. Although time-consuming, this type of research tool is uniquely suited for the systematic, quantitative study of communicated content and artifacts (Elmasry and el-Nawawy, 2017), like news articles. In media, communication, and journalism research, content analysis is used to gain a deeper understanding of what Neuendorf (2017) calls “human communication behavior” (p. 42) by focusing on “the specific communication message and the message creator” (Maier, 2017, p. 239). I used this research tool to evaluate each article and determine how frames and framing devices were used to describe the protests and demonstrations, the protestors/sympathizers, or any other related events.

4.4 Sampling

This analysis examined the protest coverage of four major Canadian newspapers — *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Toronto Sun*. These four were selected

because they were the four most-circulated English-language newspapers with significant original content (News Media Canada, 2021). Although the *National Post* is one of Canada’s most-circulated papers, it was not selected because it did not have enough original content to contribute to this sample. Though three news of the news outlets are based out of Toronto, and one out of Vancouver, all are distributors of national and international news content.

I used the Canadian Newsstream database to search for news about the Black Lives Matter protests from May 26, 2020, to June 30, 2020, while the protests and subsequent reporting were at their peak. The search terms “George Floyd AND protests OR demonstrations” and “Black Lives Matter AND protests OR demonstrations” were used within the specific date ranges. After an article was pulled from the database, the headline and first few paragraphs were skimmed to determine if the article was relevant to this thesis. Only articles specifically about the protest or demonstrations were examined — any that made a passing reference to the protest, but were not actually about them, were discarded. The final sample included 22 articles from *The Globe and Mail*, 14 articles from the *Toronto Star*, 9 articles from the *Toronto Sun*, and 10 articles from the *Vancouver Sun*.

Source	Articles	%
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	22	40
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	14	25.4
<i>Toronto Sun</i>	9	16.4
<i>Vancouver Sun</i>	10	18.2
Total	55	100

Table 1: Newspaper coverage sources

4.5 Coding

The unit of analysis was every relevant, non-editorial news article pulled from the database that met my search specifications after a filtering process that eliminated any republished articles from other news outlets. As per human content analysis methodology, I used a coding scheme (see Appendix A) for analyzing the articles. Human coding, as opposed to computer coding, involves using people as coders “to read, view, or otherwise decode the target content and record his or her objective and careful observations on preestablished variables” (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 39).

To determine which variables to code for, I used a sample codebook from Neuendorf’s (2017) “The Content Analysis Guidebook” and populated it with coding items replicated from Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017), Adamson (2016), Boykoff, (2006), Kilgo and Harlow (2019) and Dardis (2006). Specifically, I drew on Dardis’ (2006) marginalization devices of lawlessness, police confrontation, and protest as anarchy, Adamson’s (2016) coding items of riots, assault, violence, robbing, looting, chaos, and lawlessness, and Kilgo and Harlow’s (2019) confrontation frame.

Both Dardis (2006) and Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) coded the overall tone of their articles. Elmasry and el-Nawawy (2017) coded articles positively if they “focused primarily on the peaceful, organized nature of the protests, the cause of the protests, or violence and brutality of police.” Articles were coded as negative if they “focused primarily on the criminal actions of protesters or inconveniences caused by the protests for area resident” (Elmasry and el-Nawawy, 2017, p. 865). Dardis (2006) measured “either positive or negative overall story tone toward the protesters” (p. 118). My study replicated a combination of these two approaches and primarily

drew on Elmasry and el-Nawawy's (2017) provided definitions for positive and negative coverage. I employed the same methodology to determine the overall tone of each article. Articles that described the protests as just, organized, peaceful, or highlighted the underlying issue of racism and police brutality were coded as positive, while coverage that focused on criminality (i.e., looting, graffiti, breaking and entering, violence, riots, protesters wielding weapons), or did not contextualize the protests, were coded as negative. Overall, positive framing involved sympathetic coverage, while negative framing involved unsympathetic coverage. Neutral framing was neither sympathetic nor unsympathetic to the protesters and was applied only sparingly and if necessary; the goal was to ascribe an overall positive or negative tone.

As the literature review demonstrated, journalism tends to rely on "official" sources by frequently quoting government officials and law enforcement, whose perspectives are often at odds with those of protesters and social movement sympathizers (Koopmans, 2004; Andrews & Caren, 2010; McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Arpan et al., 2006). As such, part of the coding scheme replicated Elmasry and el-Nawawy's (2017) research method, which measured how frequently protesters/sympathizers, police, or government officials were quoted. Any source that was quoted for at least a sentence was recorded as data, including quotes from social media (i.e., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram).

4.6 Limitations

This study has several methodological limitations that need to be addressed. First, and most notably, is content analysis as a research method. While content analysis is extremely useful as a

descriptive tool, it can present reliability and validity-related challenges, particularly as it relates to coding. There is a tendency for researchers to code too narrowly or broadly. Coding categories should be as exhaustive and detailed as possible, but sometimes they are not comprehensive enough and “important nuances of the message may be missed” (Maier, 2017, p. 241). A great attempt was made to make categories as wide-ranging as possible to avoid this. Secondly, using a binary classification system to determine “positive” and “negative” overall tone is inherently problematic and does not allow for a more exact, nuanced exploration of media framing theory. Creating a more comprehensive coding system that allows for a greater breadth of categories could lead to a deeper, richer understanding of the shifting protest paradigm. Thirdly, intercoder reliability was also a significant limitation. Usually, content analysis uses multiple coders to achieve intercoder reliability, or “the amount of agreement between coders on coding decisions” (Maier, 2017, p. 241). Ideally, coding should be done by, at minimum, two different individuals with experience or training in content analysis, and results should be compared. Lastly, the small sample size and focus on only mainstream news sources were also methodological limitations. A larger, more robust sample size from a more diverse selection of media outlets could reveal more about news media framing and protest coverage.

Chapter 5: Results

My hypothesis predicted that the Canadian news media would be more likely to frame the protests positively by contextualizing and legitimizing protester tactics and paying adequate attention to the Black Lives Matter movement's agenda. As seen in Table 1, this hypothesis was correct: My findings suggest that more news articles were framed positively (60%) than negatively (30.9%) or neutral (9.1).

5.1 Overall Tone

All four news outlets were more likely to frame the stories positively by emphasizing peacefulness and unity and legitimizing protester grievances, rather than framing them negatively by emphasizing lawlessness, anarchy, and deviance. The *Toronto Sun* was most likely to frame the protests positively, followed by *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Vancouver Sun*. There appeared to be a turning point in the media coverage; most of the negative coverage occurred on or before June 3, except for a *Toronto Star* article on June 8, and three *Vancouver Sun* articles on June 13 and 15. Almost all articles after June 3 were coded positively (and a few as neutral).

An example of an article with a positive tone is a June 4 article from the *Vancouver Sun* titled, "Anti-racism movement's 'pivotal moment' sweeps city; Black community touched by support; second major rally planned for Friday." The article opens with the following sentence: "If you were sickened by the video of a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on the neck of a handcuffed George Floyd as the life ebbed from his body, you are definitely not alone. Thousands of people have joined demonstrations and vigils in Vancouver and across the country - in addition to

overseas - in solidarity with black victims of police brutality” (Shore, 2020, para. 1). The sentence is visceral, using descriptive phrases like “ebbed from his body” to describe the horror of Floyd’s murder, and using words like “sickened” to describe the similarly horrific experience of watching his death on video. The article later touched on the theme of solidarity with the following description: “Members of the local black community were touched by the support demonstrated by British Columbians who turned out *en masse* despite the risks posed by the COVID-19 health crisis” (Shore, 2020, para. 11). The use of the word “community” emphasizes the feeling of unity and places the social protests and demonstrations in the broader context and does not isolate the protesters as deviants; instead, they are an extension of “the local black community.”

An article from *The Globe and Mail* titled “Anti-riot tactics draw criticism as Americans protest police violence” provides an example of an article with a negative tone. Although the article discusses the militarization of law enforcement against protesters, the framing of the article overwhelmingly emphasized violence, chaos, and deviant protester behaviour. The article opens with the following sentence: “Americans venting their grief and anger at the death of George Floyd in police custody are being confronted nightly with tear gas, rubber bullets and truncheonwielding, armour-clad riot police - the merciless approach they set out to protest in the first place (McCarten, 2020, para. 1).” Using the word “venting” to describe social movement protests is condescending and delegitimizing. The phrase “being confronted” accomplishes two things: first, it is written in passive voice, thereby shifting the focus and accountability for the violence away from the police, onto the protesters. Second, this is an example of the Confrontation Frame, which I examine in detail later, that positions police and protesters on

opposing sides. Later, the article describes the state of the U.S. during the protests using aggressive war metaphors:

The sense of a country at war with itself is palpable. Far from Ronald Reagan’s shining city upon a hill, parts of the urban landscape across the U.S. are beginning to resemble end-times Hollywood movie sets, with angry epithets spray-painted on flame-scorched buildings and local shops upended and stripped of their wares (McCarten, 2020, para. 8).

There are a couple of words and phrases to take note of: “Ronald Reagan’s shining city upon a hill,” “end-times Hollywood movie sets,” “flame-scorched buildings,” and “shops upended and stripped of their wares,” are all highly descriptive and emphasize the apparent chaos and destruction the protesters are raining down on the U.S.

	<i>The Globe and Mail</i>		<i>The Toronto Star</i>		<i>The Toronto Sun</i>		<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>		
<i>Positive</i>	13		8		6		6		33	60
<i>Negative</i>	7		5		2		3		17	30.9
<i>Neutral</i>	2		1		1		1		5	9.1
<i>Total</i>	22	40	14	25.4	9	16.4	10	18.2	55	100

Table 2: Overall Tone of Story

5.2 Sourcing

Social protests have historically been covered from the perspectives of people in positions of power, resulting in the platforming of top-down perspectives of social movements in the news media (Arpan et al., 2006; Sigal, 1973 in McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Andrews & Cared, 2010).

The analysis sought to determine the relationship between sourcing and marginalizing news frames. Surprisingly, my findings demonstrated that government sources and protesters were quoted an equal amount (45.2%), while police were vastly underrepresented as sources (9.6%).

The news, which often gives police officers the benefit of the doubt (Kilgo, 2021a), instead platformed protesters and sympathizers about four-and-a-half times more than members of law enforcement. The number of protesters quoted could explain two interesting findings: first, they could explain why so many articles had an overall positive tone and why over half framed the protests as peaceful. Second, they could also explain the presence of the Anti-Racism Frame, which contextualized the protests within the broader social issues of police brutality and systemic racism. If journalists provide a platform to those who are organizing and participating in a social movement, the news coverage appears to be more sympathetic to that movement and its goals.

	<i>The Globe and Mail</i>		<i>The Toronto Star</i>		<i>The Toronto Sun</i>		<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>		
<i>Protesters/Sympathizers</i>	31		24		6		10		71	45.2
<i>Police</i>	3		6		2		4		15	9.6
<i>Government</i>	35		30		2		4		71	45.2
<i>Total</i>	69	43.9	60	38.2	10	6.4	18	11.5	157	100

Table 3: Distribution of Sources

5.3 Framing Devices

Framing devices are mechanisms through which the media marginalize or legitimize social protest groups (Dardis, 2006) and are used by journalists to construct news frames. My findings suggest that marginalization devices did not indicate whether an article was coded positively or negatively. 63% of positive articles had at least one marginalizing framing device; *The Globe and Mail* dedicated the most coverage to the protests, comprising 22 articles (40%), the *Toronto Star* comprised 14 (25.4%), the *Vancouver Sun* comprised 10 (18.2%), and the *Toronto Sun*

comprised 9 (16.4%) of the sample over this period. Only 36.4% of positive articles had no marginalization devices; 63.6% contained one or more marginalization devices. In addition, the legitimizing framing devices were employed more frequently than the marginalizing framing devices. For example, the most-used legitimizing framing device, police brutality and racism, was used 81.8% of the time, compared to the most-used marginalizing framing device, protest as anarchy, which was used 41.8% of the time.

<i>Device</i>	<i>Total^a</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Globe and Mail^b</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Toron to Star^c</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Toron to Sun^d</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Vanco uver Sun^e</i>	<i>%</i>
Peaceful protest	27	49.1	10	45.5	9	64.3	4	44.4	4	40
Police brutality and racism	45	81.8	20	90.9	7	50	8	88.9	10	100
Criticism of law enforcement	2	3.6	-	-	1	7.1	1	11.1	-	-
Solidarity and unity	13	23.6	3	13.6	3	21.4	3	33.3	4	40
Systemic racism	19	34.5	8	36.4	4	28.6	2	22.2	5	50
Other victims mentioned	19	34.5	5	10.2	7	50	3	33.3	4	40

$n^a = 55$, $n^b = 22$, $n^c = 14$, $n^d = 9$, $n^e = 10$

Table 4: Legitimizing Framing Devices

<i>Device</i>	<i>Total^a</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Globe and Mail^b</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Toron to Star^c</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Toron to Sun^d</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>The Vanc ouver Sun^e</i>	<i>%</i>
Anger, rage, and fury	8	14.5	6	27.3	2	14.3	-	-	-	-
Lawlessness	18	32.7	10	45.5	4	28.6	2	22.2	2	20
Protest as anarchy	23	41.8	10	45.5	9	64.3	3	33.3	1	10
Police vs. protesters	10	18.2	4	18.2	4	28.6	-	-	2	20
Police confrontations	8	14.5	2	9.1	3	21.4	3	33.3	-	-
Causing inconvenience	10	18.23	4	18.2	1	7.1	2	22.2	3	30
Restoring calm and order	7	12.7	4	18.2	3	21.4	-	-	-	-
Carnival	4	7.3	3	13.6	1	7.1	-	-	-	-
COVID-19 concerns	7	12.7	2	9.1	3	21.4	1	11.1	1	10

$n^a = 55$, $n^b = 22$, $n^c = 14$, $n^d = 9$, $n^e = 10$

Table 5: Marginalizing Framing Devices

5.4 News Frames

From the framing devices I coded for, four marginalizing frames and two legitimizing frames emerged. The Anarchy Frame was the most dominant of all the marginalizing frames, followed by the Violence Frame, the Confrontation Frame, the Canada vs. U.S. Frame, and lastly the Disruption Frame. The Peace Frame was the most prevalent legitimizing frame, followed by the Anti-Racism Frame. Although not every article explored systemic racism as the issue underpinning the reason for the protests, most of them did contextualize them in the broader issues of police brutality and anti-Black racism.

5.4.1 Peace Frame

While peacefulness is not inherently positive and violence is not inherently negative, the news media tends to frame both as such. The Peace Frame portrayed protests as peaceful, emphasizing themes of solidarity and unity, and appeared the most frequently out of all the frames (52.3%). It was used most often by *The Globe and Mail* (20%) and the *Toronto Star* (16.4%). The usage of the Peace Frame increased over time, coinciding with a change in coverage, as seen in an article from *The Globe and Mail* that characterized a shift in “mood” of the protests “from explosive anger to more peaceful calls for change” (Corey & Williams, 2020, para. 3).

Source	# Articles	% Total Articles
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	11	20
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	9	16.4
<i>The Toronto Sun</i>	5	9.1
<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>	4	7.3
Total	29	52.3

Table 6: Peace Frame

In many cases, especially in earlier coverage, peaceful protests were used to contrast “good” versus “bad” protester behaviour. An article from the *Vancouver Sun* described a “rally in Toronto” that “remained peaceful” compared to a rally in Montreal that “degenerated into clashes between police and some demonstrators” (Ip & Carrigg, 2020, para. 8). Later protests were described entirely peacefully. For example, an article from the *Toronto Sun* about a month into the protests reported: “About 2,000 peaceful protesters gathered at Nathan Phillips Square on Sunday for a series of speeches about such issues as defunding police and putting the money into communities” (Braun, 2020, para. 1). This type of coverage also dovetailed with the Anti-Racism Frame by platforming protester grievances and Black Lives Matter’s policy-related goals.

5.4.2 Anarchy Frame

The Anarchy Frame characterized the protests as chaotic and disruptive and emphasized lawless behaviour, like rioting and looting. For example, the *Toronto Star* reported: “Earlier Monday, residents of the U.S. capital were cleaning up and preparing for another night of unrest after windows were broken, stores were broken into buildings were burned on Sunday night” (Keenan, 2020c, para. 8). While no journalists used the word “anarchy” to refer to the protests, some quoted politicians that used the word, such as Doug Ford in a *Toronto Star* article from June 2, 2020, and Donald Trump in a *The Globe and Mail* article from the same date. The Anarchy Frame was the most used marginalizing frame at 38.2% of all total articles. *The Globe and Mail* used this frame the most frequently (18.2%) followed by the *Toronto Star* (12.7%), the *Toronto Sun* (5.5%), and the *Vancouver Sun* (1.8%).

Source	# Articles	% Total Articles
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	10	18.2
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	7	12.7
<i>The Toronto Sun</i>	3	5.5
<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>	1	1.8
Total	21	38.2

Table 7: Anarchy Frame

An article from the *Toronto Star*, fittingly titled “No justice! No peace!’ Already in crisis, America lurches toward chaos,” reported the following: “After months of the coronavirus and days of civil unrest, Americans are bracing themselves for more chaos in the days and weeks ahead” (Keenan, 2020b, para. 14). The word “bracing” frames the protesters as an external threat to the rest of the public. Another clear example of this frame was seen in *The Globe and Mail*’s article, “Minnesota calls in National Guard to respond to unrest over killing of George Floyd,” from May 29. The article described the scene in Minneapolis as such: “The Minneapolis unrest ravaged several blocks in the Longfellow neighbourhood, with scattered rioting reaching for miles across the city (Sullivan & Forliti, 2020, para. 2).” The article later quoted a protester named Cash, who justified the destruction “because the system is broken (para. 11).” A few days later, another *The Globe and Mail* underlined the apparent chaos in the U.S. with the following: “Burning cars and riot police in the U.S. featured on newspapers’ front pages around the globe Sunday - bumping news of the COVID-19 pandemic to second-tier status in some places” (Kirka, 2020, para. 2).

Lawlessness was a key component of the Anarchy Frame. An article from *The Globe and Mail* highlighted protester arrests of protesters in the following headline: “Thousands arrested as protests against racism, police brutality spread across America” (Morrow & Tamsin, 2020). A

June 2 article from *The Globe and Mail* reported that “state and local authorities struggled to respond to the upheaval in more than 140 cities (Morrow & McMahon, 2020b, para. 2).” The same article then stated: “Demonstrators set fire to a strip mall in Los Angeles, looted stores in New York City and clashed with police in St. Louis, Missouri, where four officers were taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries (para. 3).” This quote exemplifies how the Anarchy Frame was associated with protest-related crimes, even though the vast majority of demonstrations were non-violent (Kishi & Jones, 2020).

News coverage at the start of the protests often framed the protests as problems that needed to be solved. The protesters, in turn, were framed as deviants who needed to be dealt with. For example, in the *Toronto Star*, former U.S. president Donald Trump called himself the “president of law and order,” and labelled the looting, violence, and vandalism in the streets as “acts of domestic terror” (Keenan, 2020c, para. 13). The next day in another article from *The Globe and Mail*, he threatened to “deploy the United States military quickly to solve the problem” of the protests if cities and states refused to “take the actions that are necessary to defend the life and property of their residents” (Saikali, 2020a, para. 3). Another article from the *Toronto Star* reported that the governor of Minnesota, Tim Waltz, “made a plea for peace” after “parts of Minneapolis smouldered after a third night of civil unrest” (Keenan, 2020g, para. 1).

5.4.3 Anti-Racism Frame

The Anti-Racism Frame legitimized and contextualized protester grievances by situating the protests within the interlocking issues of police brutality and systemic racism. Journalists did this in a variety of ways, including reporting on examples of systemic racism (i.e., how COVID-19

disproportionately affected marginalized communities. One article from the *Toronto Star* mentioned: “the ongoing reality of racial disparity in the United States—one exemplified by the cost of the coronavirus paid disproportionately by people of colour” (Keenan, 2020a, para. 8). A significant number of articles also highlighted the ongoing issue of police brutality by mentioning other victims, mostly notably Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and Regis Korchinski-Paquet. *The Globe and Mail* used this frame the most frequently (9.1%) followed by the *Toronto Star* and the *Toronto Sun* (both 3.6%), and finally the *Vancouver Sun* (1.8%).

Source	# Articles	% Total Articles
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	5	9.1
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	2	3.6
<i>The Toronto Sun</i>	2	3.6
<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>	1	1.8
Total	10	18.1

Table 8: Anti-Racism Frame

Some news articles covered the grievances and demands of protest groups in depth, like the following *Toronto Star* article that reported on racialized policing tactics:

With about 250 people on hand, the groups pressed for levels of government to address the findings and recommendations of reports such as the 2018 Independent Street Checks review by Court of Appeal Justice Michael Tulloch. It found that carding disproportionately affects racialized communities and should be banned, and made several recommendations aimed at standardizing police interactions Ontario-wide (Moon, 2020, June 13).

Other coverage reported on policy changes that stemmed from the protests, thereby legitimizing the protesters’ political agendas. For example, an article from *The Globe and Mail* reported that the “Minneapolis city council agreed to ban police chokeholds on suspects and require officers to

intervene against unauthorized force by another officer” (Wright, 2020, para. 5). Another article from *The Globe and Mail* was quick to point out a double standard in the U.S. administration’s response to the Black Lives Matters protests when compared to a previous protest of mostly White people: “U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to use the army on the protesters. He had made no similar threat against the mostly white, armed demonstrators who stormed Michigan’s legislature weeks earlier” (Hannay, 2020, para. 2). An article from the *Toronto Sun* covered an educational protest that hosted a variety of difference speakers while platforming Black Lives Matter’s political agenda. The article described the speakers at the event, like the following description of Pamela Palmater’s speech “about police institutions and their history of inherent racism, violence and white supremacy (Braun, 2020, para. 5).” The article reported on her calls “for a demilitarization of the force and a dismantling of the immunity that surrounds racism in policing (para. 5).”

5.4.4 Violence Frame

The Violence Frame differed from the Anarchy Frame by explicitly describing physical violence, or the threat of explicit violence, rather than the chaos, unrest, and lawlessness that characterizes the Anarchy Frame. It was necessary to distinguish between the two because, although there was some overlap, the Anarchy Frame was much more prevalent than the Violence Frame, which is unusual for news reporting on protests (Boykoff, 2006). The *Toronto Star* used this frame the most frequently (10.2%), followed by *The Globe and Mail* (4.1%), and the *Toronto Sun* (2%). The *Vancouver Sun* did not use it at all. An example of this frame can be seen in a *Toronto Sun* article from June 3: “Protests across the U.S. and in Montreal this week turned violent, with

police precincts and cruisers set ablaze, officers shot, protesters shot with rubber bullets and sprayed with tear gas” (Yuen, 2020, para. 3).

Source	# Articles	% of Total Articles
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	2	4.1
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	5	10.2
<i>The Toronto Sun</i>	1	2
<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>	-	-
Total	8	16.3

Table 9: Violence Frame

Many articles that used the Violence Frame described a sense of fear or apprehension in anticipation of future protests. For example, a *Toronto Star* article from May 29 reported that “some stores in Minneapolis and the suburbs closed early, fearing more strife. The city shut down its light-rail system and all bus service out of safety concerns” (Sullivan & Forliti, 2020, para. 2). The media also appeared to expect violence in some cases. In an article titled “Washington curfew doesn’t stop protesters who continue to gather near the White House,” the *Toronto Star* reported:

As the 7 p.m. curfew arrived, the crowd knelt down as one, facing the tall black fence at the edge of the park, the lines of police behind it, and the White House in the distance. And then ... Nothing particularly significant happened. Or rather, the significant thing that happened was that the protest continued peacefully (Keenan, 2020d, para. 3).

The framing of this quote suggests the reporter was primed and ready to see violence carried out by protesters. Their shock at the unexpected peacefulness of the protest is palpable.

The prevalence of the Violence Frame changed over time. After June 3, hardly any articles had an overall negative tone and hardly any of the articles employed framing devices that

emphasized violence. The news articles themselves reflected this change, as seen in the following article from the *Toronto Star*: “[B]y June 3, people were sitting in the street waving flashlights and singing “Lean On Me.” The open rage of the first few days has given way here, at least somewhat and at least for now, to a focused determination” (Keenan, 2020f, para. 10). Similarly, a *Globe and Mail* article from June 6 remarked: “Protests around the country had initially been marred by the setting of fires and smashing of windows, but Friday marked the third day of more subdued demonstrations” (Corey & Williams, 2020, para. 5). Once again, the shift characterized in both quotes involved the reporters contrasting peaceful protester behaviour against violent protester behaviour.

The Violence Frame sometimes overlapped with the Anti-Racism Frame. A few articles provided some insight into the cause of the violence, with one article from the *Toronto Star* reporting that “many protesters decried what they called the co-opting of their peaceful movement by those with violent ends” and that a protest was called off “due to fears the event would be hijacked by white people committing violence in the name of Black Lives Matter” (Keenan, 2020b, para. 8). Similarly, a wire service article from the *Toronto Star* reported that a “violent night” in Providence, Rhode Island “was not a protest over the death of George Floyd but an organized effort to cause destruction” (Toronto Star staff, 2020c).

5.4.5 Confrontation Frame

The Confrontation Frame emphasized confrontations between protesters and the authorities (Kilgo and Harlow, 2019) and often portrayed protesters as the agitators of violence and altercations with police. This type of framing created “public hostility” toward protesters,

portraying them as “deviants, rather than as active participants seeking social change” (Eastman, 2020, para. 6). This type of frame often dovetailed with the Anarchy Frame that painted the police and authorities as “saviours” bringing calm and order to the chaotic protests. The Confrontation Frame pitted protesters against police and created “a false image that protesters are lining up to battle with police or authority figures,” and by extension, also blamed the protesters for any violence that took place (Pierre-Louis, 2020, para. 12). *The Globe and Mail* used this frame the most frequently (7.3%) followed by the *Toronto Sun* (5.5%), and the *Toronto Star* (3.6%). The *Vancouver Sun* did not use it at all.

Source	# Articles	% Total Articles
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	4	7.3
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	2	3.6
<i>The Toronto Sun</i>	3	5.5
<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>	-	-
Total	9	16.4

Table 10: Confrontation Frame

The word “clash” was the most used word to describe confrontations between police and protesters. For example, an article from *The Globe and Mail* reported that protesters “clashed with police in St. Louis, Missouri, where four officers were taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries” (Morrow & McMahon, 2020b, para. 3). Another *The Globe and Mail* article titled “Huge crowds turn anti-racism demonstrations into global protest movement,” described the confrontations as such: “Sunday’s clashes saw bottles, rocks and the occasional firework tossed toward a line of helmeted officers” (MacKinnon, 2020, para. 7).

Similarly, an early article from the *Toronto Star* described a “push-and-pull” that took place between protesters and police, “in which protesters pulled down barricades and police restored them —seemingly poised on the verge of an open clash that never quite came” (Keenan, 2020b, para. 6). Similar to the Violence Frame, in which some articles appeared to expect violence from the protesters, the *Toronto Star* also appeared to expect altercations between the police and protesters. This “push-and-pull” narrative was echoed in a *Vancouver Sun* article, which reported the following on June 1: “Tensions flared after the formal rally had concluded and some demonstrators made their way back to the starting point, in the shadow of Montreal police headquarters downtown. Windows were smashed, fires were set and the situation slid into a game of cat-and-mouse between pockets of protesters and police trying to disperse them” (Ip & Carrigg, 2020, para. 10).

5.4.6 Canada vs. U.S. Frame

As discussed in the literature review, the media plays a key role in maintaining Canada’s dominant myth as a tolerant, colour-blind, multicultural country (Tolley 2016; Szuchewycz, 2000; Cole, 2020). Part of this mythology requires Canadians to compare themselves to Americans. In other words, to be proudly Canadian is to *not* be American. News articles upheld this narrative by contrasting the “peaceful” nature of the Canadian demonstrations with the more “violent” American protests. A *Vancouver Sun* article quoted a protest organizer who stressed that no riots would take place in Vancouver: “It’s not the same as the United States, we don’t have cops going around causing damage here just to uphold a riot” (Ip & Carrigg, 2020, para. 16). This narrative was used much less than I anticipated, comprising only 5.5% of the total

articles. *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Toronto Sun* used it the same amount (1.8%). The *Vancouver Sun* did not use it at all.

Source	# Articles	% Total Articles
<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	1	1.8
<i>The Toronto Star</i>	1	1.8
<i>The Toronto Sun</i>	1	1.8
<i>The Vancouver Sun</i>	-	-
Total	3	5.5

Table 11: Canada vs. U.S. Frame

Similarly, an article from the *Toronto Sun* titled “Thousands of protesters demand ‘Justice for Regis’ in downtown Toronto” reported that the U.S. protests had been “violent, with buildings set ablaze and looting” (Stevenson, 2020a, para. 15). Some articles addressed this tendency for Canadians to pat themselves on the back for not being as “bad” as Americans. An article from the *Toronto Star* swiftly condemned the practice:

Canadians tempted to feel smug should look at maps released this week by the city of Toronto. They show radically disproportionate numbers of COVID-19 cases in low-income areas of the city, neighbourhoods disproportionately populated by people of colour (Keenan, 2020a, para. 14).

The only source that reinforced the myth of a colour-blind Canada was Ford. A *Toronto Star* newswire reported that Ford said Canada did not have the “systemic, deep roots” of racism that the United States did:

Ford... said the difference between the two countries is that in Canada, people for the most part get along, working and shopping together. He says comparing Canada and the U.S. is like “night and day,” and he hopes America can straighten out its problems (Toronto Star staff, 2020b).

The same newswire later quoted Prime Minister Justin Trudeau saying the opposite: “There is systemic discrimination in Canada, which means our systems treat Canadians of colour, Canadians who are racialized, differently than they do others.” An article from the *Toronto Star* reported on some protesters’ response to Ford’s remarks: “Protesters at Nathan Phillips Square emphasized racism is not exclusive to the United States, days after Ontario Premier Doug Ford said Canada does not have the same “systemic deep roots” of racism as its neighbour” (Armstrong & Warren, 2020, para. 3).

Chapter 6: Discussion

Kilgo aptly describes the work journalists must do to counteract the damage done by biased reporting as “unraveling the protest paradigm” (2021b, para. 13). As part of this undoing, she argues that journalists must interrogate the “traditional ideas of who we grant legitimacy to” (2021b, para. 13). Part of this process involves platforming activists, advocates, community leaders, and social movement organizers’ perspectives and narratives in news coverage. My findings illustrate how four Canadian journalism organizations did precisely this in their news coverage of the 2020 George Floyd protests.

My research offers two main contributions: first, it implies the existence of a shift in the protest paradigm since most of the articles were framed positively. Secondly, it introduces the emergence of what I have dubbed the Anti-Racism frame, which appears to be an intervention into the traditional protest paradigm. In this section of my thesis, I will discuss these key findings and contextualize them in the broader journalism studies landscape.

6.1 Key Findings

My findings replicated results similar to Elmasry and el-Nawawy’s (2017) research. Namely, my findings indicate that most of the articles from my sample portrayed the protests positively, by legitimizing protest political agendas and emphasizing themes of peacefulness, unity, and solidarity. Since my results are contrary to most journalism scholarship on Black Lives Matter protests (Hailu & Sarubbim, 2019; Adamson, 2016; Kilgo & Mourão, 2021; Banks, 2018), this finding reveals the dynamic nature of the protest paradigm and how it is subject to change under the current cultural and sociopolitical conditions. My findings also suggest that, as Black Lives

Matter protests have become more common, the public has become more receptive to their messages and grievances. Adeshina Emmanuel, the editor-in-chief of Injustice Watch, argues a similar point in Nieman Reports. He writes that the Black Lives Matter movement is fundamentally changing the dynamics of protest coverage:

The BLM movement...challenges journalists to write about police violence in ways that center the perspectives of the individuals and communities most impacted, look more holistically at public safety beyond cops, uphold the dignity of the person slain, whether they are accused of wrongdoing or not — and address the harm perpetuated by coverage that fails to do these things (2020, para. 12).

As the communicator of the protest paradigm, the mainstream media is malleable to public opinion if said opinion is widespread enough, and if enough people in positions of power also agree with that opinion (or are not publicly opposed to it). This finding supports Boler's (2008) assertion that the dominant media finds it safe to take more dissenting positions when the public perception of facts changes.

One of the most interesting findings was the emergence of the Anti-Racism Frame, which essentially worked opposite to the traditional protest paradigm. Rather than delegitimizing the protests, it placed the protests and George Floyd's death in the wider context of police brutality and systemic racism. Since news media that employed legitimizing frames, like the Anti-Racism Frame, increased reader support for, and identification with, protesters (Kilgo and Mourão, 2021), Canadian journalists participated in the legitimization of the Black Lives Matter movement. I characterize the Anti-Racism Frame as a thematic news frame because of its attention to the broader sociopolitical reasons underpinning the protests. Although it was one of

the most recurrent news frames, the Anti-Racism Frame was still only present in 18.1% of articles, demonstrating the pervasiveness of episodic news frames over thematic news frames.

A key reason behind the overall positive framing of the protests is the amount and type of sources quoted by journalists. Government officials and protesters were quoted the same amount, somewhat challenging the body of journalism scholarship that argues journalists are trained to seek out quotes from official sources (Arpan et al., 2006; Sigal, 1973 in McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Andrews & Cared, 2010). Journalists often reinforce power dynamics and the status quo by quoting “official sources” and giving them control over protest narratives. Journalistic bias from over-reliance on law enforcement sources is even more exacerbated when the media covers the Black Lives Matter movement because their claims often directly conflict with police perspectives. Although the articles did rely heavily on government sources, they paid equal credence to protesters. Police, who are usually quoted frequently in cases related to police brutality (Wallace, 2019; Kilgo, 2021a), were quoted much less than government officials or protesters. Critically, many of the police quoted in the articles strayed from the official line by expressing solidarity with Black Lives Matter, like Mark Saunders, the Toronto Police chief during the protests. Articles were more likely to be framed positively and adhere to the Anti-Racism Frame when protesters were quoted, although it’s important to note that a significant amount of government officials also expressed solidarity with the protesters (while condemning any violence or lawlessness, of course). By subverting sourcing norms and quoting protesters more frequently than usual, Canadian journalists championed protester grievances in a way the mainstream news rarely does.

The framing of most protests as peaceful was not solely the work of the media, but also of the protesters and organizers themselves. The vast majority of Black Lives Matter protesters opted to protest peacefully (Kishi & Jones, 2020), which undeniably contributed to how the news media covered the protests. I argue that the prevalence of the Peace Frame indicates a level of sophistication among Black Lives Matter organizers and protesters, who leveraged a number of non-violent disruptive tactics, including “die-ins” (Yoganathan, 2020), to amplify their platform. While violence is often used as a discursive tactic by protesters to gain media attention, it is usually weaponized by the media to discredit their social movements (Kilgo & Mourão, 2021; McLeod, 2007; Smith et al., 2001). Peaceful tactics, while less likely to be weaponized against protesters, can be detrimental to social movements because the news will be less likely to amplify their grievances (McLeod, 2007). Since news coverage is vital to the success and longevity of a social protest movement, protesters often resort to violence and risk being delegitimized by the media. As such, social protest movements are often at the mercy of respectability politics (Anderson, 2017), and must challenge the status quo while operating within the unspoken rules of decorum. Black Lives Matter’s success has partly hinged on the movement’s refusal to adhere to contemporary notions of politeness, while simultaneously challenging and working within the bounds of respectability politics. The result of their organizing in 2020 was massive demonstrations coupled with the deployment of novel strategies that were strategically — and successfully — used to draw attention to their calls for action.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis examined the news coverage of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests by four English-language Canadian national news outlets. Specifically, I analyzed how the articles published by these outlets framed the protests by drawing on numerous past media framing studies (Elmasry and el-Nawawy, 2017; Adamson, 2016; Boykoff, 2006; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Dardis, 2006). Using content analysis, I identified which framing devices were used by journalists, the overall tone of each article, and the frames used to construct each article. Theoretically, this study drew on media framing theory (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1991; Stone & Socia, 2017), social movement theory (Gitlin, 1980; Cottle, 2008; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993), and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Mills and Godley, 2017; Tolley, 2016; Szuchewycz, 2002). My study was especially guided by Dardis' (2006) work on media framing devices, Boykoff's (2006) research on the Global Justice Movement, and Elmasry and el-Nawawy's (2017) work on the framing of the Black Lives Matter protests following the killing of Michael Brown.

7.1 Theoretical Implications and Future Research

Previous research on news coverage of Black Lives Matter protests focused heavily on U.S. news media, with significantly less research focus dedicated to Canadian news coverage (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2017; Kilgo, Mourão, & Sylvie, 2018; Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Adamson, 2016). This thesis works toward closing this research gap by examining how the Canadian news media adhered to the protest paradigm, and whether Canadian journalists legitimized or marginalized the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. My findings provide an interesting stopping point for other academics and researchers in the field of journalism studies.

Researchers should continue to examine how the Canadian media frames social movements and protests, as my thesis is only the start of closing this research gap. As Elmasry & el-Nawawy (2017) mention in the conclusion of their study, future research should attempt to replicate the results from this thesis to determine if the protest paradigm truly is changing, or if my findings are an exception to the norm.

Future research should also look beyond mainstream news media and examine how alternative and ethnic media provide opportunities for social protest groups to counter marginalizing media narratives. While mainstream media coverage has historically delegitimized protesters and protest groups, the media can also be a site for empowerment and promotion of anti-hegemonic narratives. Future research should examine the impact alternative and ethnic media has on the changing narratives of social protest movements, particularly when protesters are able to be their own storytellers. In addition, scholarly attention should be paid to sourcing in protest reporting. Whose voices are platformed in protest news coverage, and how frequently, deserves further research.

7.2 Implications for Journalists and Newsrooms

Besides theoretical implications, my findings have practical implications for the field of journalism itself. Journalism's lofty goal of speaking truth to power means the standards of the field are high, and there is always progress to be made by journalists and scholars alike. Firstly, the diversity of newsrooms, while gradually improving, is still a pressing issue, despite Canada's supposed commitment to multiculturalism. As Wallace argues, "[b]uilding equitable accountable media organizations means facing power dynamics of race, class, gender, and exploitation"

(2019, p. 206), and diversifying the workforce is merely the beginning. Despite the existence of policy directives, such as the Policy Framework for Canadian Television and the Equitable Portrayal Code — both of which were implemented to ensure “quantity and quality of minority representation” (Yu, 2016, p. 345) — representation gaps in newsrooms and news content persist. The Canadian Association of Journalists’ first annual diversity survey on the Canadian media found that about eighty per cent of newsrooms have no Black or Indigenous journalists on staff. Almost half of all Canadian newsrooms exclusively employ White journalists. This absence of racial and cultural diversity in the newsrooms, coupled with the media’s failure to retain and listen to racialized people, is partly responsible for the negative representation and portrayal of Black people in the media (Lowery, 2020; Henry & Tator, 2000, in Baffoe, 2012; Ojo, 2006). Mattar argues that Canadian newsrooms “do not reflect the world outside of them— which does not bode well for accurately representing the breadth of stories playing out every day” (Mattar, 2020). Newsrooms must prioritize hiring diverse journalists and editors to uphold its role as a watchdog of public institutions, especially in a country as ethnically and culturally diverse as Canada.

Secondly, this thesis is a case study in journalism tactics and methodology. It is an opportunity for journalists to understand the pitfalls of the protest paradigm and how they can avoid delegitimizing framing narratives when reporting on protests. Journalists must be cautious of characterizing protests based on discrete, individual events. As shown in this study, even when the overall framing of a news article was positive, news articles highlighted lawless and deviant behaviour, even though the violence was often carried out by outside agitators who were not actually part of the protest movement, or a very small minority of the protests (Keenan, 2020b).

Because of this, journalists need to be vigilant investigators and verify whether social movement protesters are the instigators of violence and criminal activity. It is careless, irresponsible, and harmful for journalists to assume protesters are involved in adjacent violence without fact-checking. In addition, journalists should pay more attention to non-violent protests and demonstrations, so that protest groups do not have to engage in disruptive newsworthy actions to draw attention to their causes. The Anti-Racism Frame is one such example of a shift in protest coverage that pivots away from sensationalizing news coverage that highlights strife and chaos, toward deeper, richer reporting that contextualizes the Black Lives Matter movement in a way that adheres much closer to journalism's public service goal.

Ultimately, I hope the results from this thesis can inform scholarly journalism literature, inspire further in-depth research on protest news coverage in Canadian media, and impact the way journalists report on social movement protests in the future. If the media is to serve as a forum for public debates and political activism, social movements must be able to platform their grievances alongside the voices of other, more powerful political actors. The conversations that emerge because of social movements are often important and necessary, and journalists should not stifle those discussions, but allow them the time and space to flourish in the public sphere. All of this is integral to unravelling the protest paradigm, which is necessary for rooting out the White supremacy underpinning journalism and revitalizing the democratic aims of the industry more broadly.

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Appendices

Appendix A Codebook

1. **Article Name:** Enter the name of the article
2. **Article date:** Write down date of publication (if an article is published with a correction, use the latest published version and date)
3. **Legitimizing Framing Devices:** Evaluate the article and indicate whether any of the following words, phrases, or framing are used in the article.
 - Peaceful protest
 - Police brutality and racism
 - Criticism of law enforcement
 - Solidarity and unity
 - Systemic racism (i.e., explicit or implicit discussion)
 - Other victims mentioned (i.e., mentioning other victims like Eric Garner)
4. **Marginalizing Framing Devices:** Evaluate the article and indicate whether any of the following words, phrases, or framing are used in the article.
 - Anger, rage, and fury
 - Lawlessness (i.e., arson, arrests, criminal activity, etc.) (Dardis, 2006)
 - Protest as anarchy (i.e., vandalism, chaos, unrest) (Dardis, 2006)
 - Police vs. protesters (i.e., clashes or tensions between the two groups)
 - Police confrontations (i.e. police acting violent toward protesters) (Dardis, 2006)
 - Causing inconvenience
 - Restoring calm and order

5. **Direct Quotes:** Indicate the amount that any of the sources are quoted in the article.

Quotes include anything in quotation marks, including quotes from briefings, social media posts, or articles

- **Protester/sympathizer:** included people participating in the protests and activists or organizers who were involved in, or sympathetic to, the protests
- **Police:** includes both off an on-duty police officers and former police officers
- **Government officials:** include governors, mayors, members of parliament, spokespeople for government officials

6. **Overall Tone:** After finishing the article, indicate whether the overall tone was positive, negative, or neutral.

Appendix B Framing Device Examples

The following table, replicated from Dardis (2006) who included a similar table of textual examples in their research paper, shows an example of each framing device.

Table 6. Framing Device Examples

Framing Device	Example
Anger, rage, and fury	Americans venting their grief and anger at the death of George Floyd in police custody are being confronted nightly with tear gas, rubber bullets and truncheonwielding, armour-clad riot police - the merciless approach they set out to protest in the first place (McCarten, 2020).
Lawlessness	A statue of George Vancouver outside Vancouver City Hall was vandalized overnight Wednesday with blue paint, as protesters in the U.S. target historic monuments after George Floyd's death (Crawford, 2020).
Protest as anarchy	Protests across the U.S. and in Montreal this week turned violent, with police precincts and cruisers set ablaze, officers shot, protesters shot with rubber bullets and sprayed with tear gas and storefronts vandalized (Yuen, 2020)
Police vs. protesters	Montreal's rally degenerated into clashes between police and some demonstrators on Sunday night (Ip & Carrigg, 2020)
Police confrontations	In other cities across the country, the situation was even more violent and volatile: police drove a car into a crowd of protesters in New York City, officers fired paint canisters at residents sitting on their front porch in Minneapolis, in Philadelphia 13 police officers were injured and looting continued into Sunday, prompting the city to order businesses shut down (Keenan, 2020b).
Causing inconvenience	Vancouver police spokesperson Sgt. Aaron Roed said they are aware of the protests, which were blocking the eastbound and westbound entrances to the Georgia Viaduct (Raptis, 2020).
Restoring calm and order	With states and cities doubling down on efforts to crush the unrest and protesters condemning the police response as further evidence of a broken justice system, there was no immediate end in sight (Morrow & McMahon, 2020a)
Carnival	Most wore masks, although social distancing was entirely absent for dozens of metres around the fence surrounding Lafayette Square, where conditions were close to that of a mosh pit (Keenan, 2020d).
COVID-19 concerns	B.C. health officials are urging demonstrators to maintain physical distancing measures, as another anti-racism rally planned for Friday in Vancouver could draw thousands of people into the downtown core (Crawford, 2020, June 4)
Peaceful protest	The crowd outside Lafayette Park near the White House was peaceful, polite even, as they protested the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minnesota (Toronto Star staff, 2020b).
Police brutality and racism	The death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American father of five, under the knee of a Minnesota police officer late last month has unleashed a seismic shift in the conversation about race and police (McMahon & Morrow, 2020d).
Criticism of law enforcement	There are hundreds more such recorded incidents, from cities across the U.S.: police wading into apparently peaceful crowds swinging batons as if they're taking batting practice, indiscriminately firing tear gas, pepper spray, and projectiles at reporters, protesters and bystanders, accelerating cars into people who refuse to get out of the way (Keenan, 2020f)
Solidarity and unity	Defying calls to stay home and maintain physical distancing amid the COVID-19

	<p>pandemic, marchers in Europe, Africa, South America, Asia and Oceania expressed their solidarity with a protest movement that was ignited in the United States by the May 25 death of Mr. Floyd, a Black man who was suffocated when a white policeman knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes (MacKinnon, 2020)</p>
Systemic racism	<p>Robinson, who grew up in Freeport, Grand Bahama, led an exercise to illustrate common injustices experienced by black people and people of colour. She asked everyone in the crowd to raise a fist if they had ever seen videos of violence perpetrated against people who look like them, if someone had ever questioned their abilities because of the colour of their skin and if they'd ever been marked as suspicious and followed in a store (Egan-Elliott, 2020).</p>
Other victims mentioned	<p>In Toronto, the Justice for Regis protest was organized by a group called Not Another Black Life after Regis Korchinski-Paquet, 29, fell from the balcony of a 24th-floor Toronto apartment while police were in attendance on Wednesday night (Stevenson, 2020a).</p>