

AN ANALYSIS OF PROTEST PARADIGM IN NEWS MEDIA AND CONTENTION IN 2020
RACIAL INJUSTICE AND POLICING PROTESTS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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ABSTRACT

In 2020, there was a wave of racial injustice and policing protests that occurred across the globe after the murder of George Floyd. Although racial injustice and policing protests are not a new phenomenon, sociologists have not yet systematically examined either the empirical patterns of contentiousness of protests or adequately applied theories of media coverage to the racial injustice and policing protests of 2020. Using a sample of protest events from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a team of sociologists gathered a sample of protest news articles from the NewsBank USA news archive database. Using this data, I conducted Protest Event Analysis (PEA) using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software to measure the contentiousness of the protests and the sentiment of the news coverage of these protests during this time period. The thesis tests theories of contention and media coverage of protest by modeling the effects of a variety of community characteristics on these outcomes. The research results provide limited support for community measures expected to be associated with protest contention and protest media coverage.

An Analysis of Protest Paradigm in News Media and Contention in 2020 Racial Injustice and
Policing Protests in North Carolina

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BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE

In the United States in 2020 there was a wave of protests that occurred after the murder of George Floyd (Wu, Gallagher, Alshaabi, Adams, Minot, Arnold, Welles, Harp, Dodds, and Danforth 2023; Shuman, Hasan-Aslih, Zomeren, Saguy, and Halperin 2022; Bartzen Culver and McLeod 2023; Drakulich and Denver 2022; Kann, Hashash, Steinert-Threlkeld, and Alvarez 2023; Reid and Craig 2021; Ebbinghaus, Bailey, and Rubel 2024; Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020; Putnam, Chenoweth, Pressman 2020). According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED 2020), there were 444 protest events that occurred in North Carolina between May 27, 2020, and August 31, 2020. Many of these protests focused on lethal police violence against racial minoritized and other civilians. News media reported on these events, building a dense record of news stories about protests of police. These stories can be thought of as wealth of data that social movements scholars can analyze to describe empirical aspects of the protests and test theories related to protest characteristics and features of media coverage of protests. News media stories offer third-party, verifiable, and publicly accessible data on protest events that is difficult to find elsewhere. Additionally, the writing style, theme, and content itself are consistent with the historical and social environment of the time, providing an avenue to explore a public record of events surrounding issues of the time. Research employing Protests Event Analysis (PEA) seeks to use news stories and other new media data to identify patterns through themes and codes that are evident across stories and/or types of protest events (della Porta 2014; Almeida 2019; Earl et. al 2004). Using PEA to analyze news media story data, my thesis research will test aspects of three conceptual frameworks prominent in research on social movements and media coverage of protests in the racial injustice and policing protests that occurred in North Carolina from May 27, 2020, to August 31, 2020.

I am interested in research that uses the concept of contention given the sensationalized news coverage of the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests (Reid and Craig 2021; Banks 2018; Umamaheswar 2020; Brown and Harlow 2019), which focused on portraying these protests and protesters as violent and dangerous, rather than focusing on their message. Additionally, this news coverage would highlight protesters' tactics and uncommon cases of riotous protest activity and ignored the power and tactics used by any law enforcement agencies involved. Contention combats the notion set forth by this news media coverage – that protests are either completely violent or completely peaceful, and that police tactics have no effect on the tactics used by protesters – by asserting that tactics used in protests exist on a spectrum and include both the protesters' and police tactics (McAdam 1982; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). In addition to contention, I include protest paradigm theory in my analysis because of this sensationalization of the news coverage of protests, especially in these racial injustice and policing protests which received highly negative coverage towards the protesters and portrayed these protests as violent or threatening (Reid and Craig 2021; Banks 2018; Umamaheswar 2020; Brown and Harlow 2019). Given that this research is centered around racial injustice and policing protests, and the racialization of the news coverage of these protests, it is important to include racial threat theory to provide more context into this intersection. Furthermore, I want to explore how community characteristics and the concept of news media being a profit-driven industry may impact news coverage of protests (McCluskey, Stein, Boyle, and McLeod 2009). Below, I review relevant literature on the concept of protest contention, protest paradigm theory, racial threat theory, and analyzing potential impacts of community characteristics and the news media industry on news coverage of protests.

Research Literature on Protest Contention

Contention (McAdam 1982; McAdam et. al 2001) has become an increasingly relevant and important topic within social movements because news media tends to treat protests as being either peaceful or riotous events, while contention recognizes and measures protest conflict or violence as existing on a continuum. Peaceful protests differ in how much there is conflict between protesters and police, or if counter-protesters are present. Indeed, arrests may occur at peaceful protests. Violent protests differ in their degree of contention depending on whether there is property damage, injuries, arrests, or all these features of protests that may be commonly thought of as riots. This complexity in the variety of aspects observed in protests and the simplistic and often binary ways the media describes protests illustrates the importance of describing characteristics of protests to place them along a scale of contention ranging from low to high contention. To put it simply, contention is the level of aggression observed at an event, from either protest characteristics (such as how large the protest is), protest tactics used, the protest subject, the actions or presence of law enforcement agencies and officers, or other parties present at protests (McAdam 1982; McAdam et. al 2001). So, protest contention can range from low-level contention – like a vigil for a victim of police brutality with little-to no police presence – medium contention – like a peaceful protest marching around the state capitol building, disrupting traffic flow and business activity that encounters police presence, such as barricades or police yelling commands at the protesters – to high-level contention – like a violent demonstration ending in property damage and a large riot police presence using incendiary devices, kettling citizens, and shooting rubber bullets. Scholars have provided several reasons for increasing or shifting contention observed at protests. The flashpoints model (Waddington and King 2005; Waddington 2008) examined structural, cultural, political/ideological, contextual,

situational, and interactional factors that can lead to changes in protest contention. In alignment with this model, scholars found that protest characteristics such as the level of state capacity and authority (Sullivan 2018) and the resources available to the social movement involved and resource mobilization (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977) could be categorized as a kind of flashpoint, leading to differences in protest contention. While I seek to home in on discussion around social grievance, many scholars have disavowed its usefulness (Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988; Snow, Cress, Downey, and Jones 1998; McAdam 1999). However, many of these scholars looked at economic grievances, while I seek to examine the effect of police killings of civilians on protest activity, given that the racial injustice and policing protests during the time were focused on police brutality. These racial injustice and policing protests are widely seen as being linked with the Black Lives Matter organization, which specifically spawned from the death of Trayvon Martin and other victims of police brutality (BLM 2024). Additionally, many of these protests employed “Say Her/His/Their Name(s)” standpoints, which again focuses on specific victims of police brutality, seemingly as a point of reference or justification for mobilization. So, while some scholars thought that theories around political opportunities or framing should be understood as the base causes for social movements, again, these mostly focused on economic grievances, resource mobilization, or political process models, whereas I focus on social grievance – the police killings of citizens. As was seen when George Floyd’s death became a global and nationwide event and is now widely held as the “spark” for the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests, grievances are not solely economic: they entail social and political aspects as well, such as police brutality against citizens, racial discrimination, and more.

Given the substantial number of protests that occurred in the summer of 2020 and the highly politicized nature of the protests and protesters, I will use protest event analysis of newspaper articles about a sample of protests in North Carolina between May 27, 2020 to August 31, 2020 to examine the contention level of the protest event by analyzing the content of newspaper articles on protests (Reid and Craig 2021; Banks 2018; Umamaheswar 2020; Brown and Harlow 2019). Additionally, I want to explore how contention and sentiment vary across communities, news sources, and stories, leading to a discussion and analysis around protest paradigm and racial threat theory. Partly because I am using news stories as data to measure and explain contention of protests, I am also interested in examining the ways that news media frame their coverage, leading me to focus on a particular theory of media framing called protest paradigm (Halloran, Elliot, and Murdock 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984) because of how it examines the impact of the characteristics of the news industry and identifies different types of frames employed by news media to delegitimize protests, providing a more nuanced approach to conducting PEA. This is especially relevant to a study such as this, with intersections between race, social movement activity, and the for-profit news industry. I review literature on media framing of protests with special attention to protest paradigm below.

News Coverage of Protests: Protest Paradigm Theory

In addition to the empirical patterns of contention at public demonstrations, protest scholars have also been interested in how the media covers protests, with the dominant theory in protest research in sociology being media framing (Snow and Benford 1988; Snow and Benford 1992; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Benford 1997; Rohlinger 2006; Ryan, Anastario, and Jeffreys 2005; McCurdy 2012), I draw from communication studies and political science in using protest paradigm theory because it offers a more critical perspective in understanding how media frames

protests and protesters, arguing that news media is used as a tool to delegitimize protesters. The protest paradigm was initially developed by Halloran et. al (1970) in their study of London protests, where they found that characteristics of news media as an institution lead to more negative coverage of protests and protesters. These characteristics include aspects such as how journalists interacted with and built stories off each other, ultimately having the same opinions and perspectives on social issues given their economic need to pursue newsworthiness (Halloran et. al 1970; Noelle-Neumann and Mathes 1987). Another aspect which has been thoroughly documented by many scholars results from this feedback loop, leading to news media largely focusing on and escalating violent or riotous demonstrations because of their newsworthiness (Halloran et. al 1970; Cohen 2011; Gans 2004; Simmons 2018; Wolfsfeld 1991; Oliver and Maney 2000). Later, Gitlin (1980) explored how news media and the anti-war movement – from his perspective as the former president of the Students for a Democratic Society – related to each other. He examined both print and televised news media covering the anti-war movement from multiple sources, including *The New York Times* and *CBS*. He found that the news industry delegitimized the movement by ignoring it, then sensationalized it by solely focusing on the threatening or radical aspects of the movement. While he found the news industry delegitimized the anti-war movement, the movement also used news media as a potential political opportunity through increased awareness and mobilization for the movement. Gitlin's focus on how news media framed the anti-war movement during this time lead him to conclude that news media was used as a form of social control and oppressive tactic against social movements by delegitimizing and ignoring movement. Building off this, Chan and Lee's (1984) study analyzed news coverage of the Jubilee School – from financial fraud conducted by school leadership, the numerous protests and rallies held against the Catholic church, the government, to the closing of the school

(which was portrayed as either a corrective measure to ward off communism or as oppressive towards the concerns of the students and participants, depending on the newspaper). Chan and Lee (1984) contend that this new journalistic paradigm they propose is strengthened by movements that have unclear motivations or goals, which lead them to utilize the Golden Jubilee School Affair as a case study, given its ambiguous nature at the time. They analyzed news articles, headlines, editorial articles, and letters from eight Hong Kong newspapers spanning across the political ideological spectrum. They tested several hypotheses by measuring the absence of several thematic statements in the news articles on the Jubilee School. They found that right-leaning news producers were more likely to prefer status quo preservation and increased government action to end the protests; right-leaning news producers were more likely to politicize protests – meaning, "...the tendency to define a civil protest in political perspective, to liken it to other similar political events (similar in form, perhaps) in the past, and to attribute it to external manipulation rather than a spontaneous reaction to internal social-structural deficiencies" (Chan and Lee 1984: 194). It is important to note that during the Jubilee School protests and demise, Chan and Lee (1984) discussed how the right-leaning news producers and community cited worries about communist and Marxist tactics and ideology contaminating the culture. Lastly, they found that right-leaning news producers were more likely to proclaim that protests were going against "traditional morality" (Chan and Lee 1984: 196). For each of these findings, Chan and Lee (1984) found significance in the editorial and letters portions of news media and attributed the weakness of significance in other aspects of the news media they analyzed to the objective nature and goal of news media.

More recently, Brown and Harlow (2019), Harlow, Brown, Salaverria, and Garcia-Perdomo (2020), Harlow and Bachmann (2023) used Gitlin's (1980), Chan and Lee's (1984),

and McLeod and Hertog's (1999) and Hertog and McLeod's (1995, 2001) work to develop a typology to describe the four ways that protest is described in news stories. This typology argues the news media uses one of the four following tactics identified by protest paradigm in their story: 1) Riot focus, in which news media solely focuses on riots that have occurred or the possibility of one occurring; 2) Confrontation focus, where news media only report on confrontation between protesters and police or the possibility of it occurring; 3) Spectacle focus, when news media showcases any peaceful protest as a rare occurrence; and 4) the Debate focus, in which news media simply discuss the moral/political arguments surrounding the protest. The confrontation and riot frames completely vilify and dehumanize protests and protesters by only focusing on the most extreme forms of protest activity. The spectacle frame focuses on the "right way to protest." The only "legitimizing" frame is the debate frame, although it still delegitimizes protests by not recognizing the cost and necessity of social movement mobilization in creating systemic change. Again, these frames are ignoring the empirical reality of protest; not all protests are riotous, dangerous, or necessitate militarized policing, which is what the usage of riot and confrontation frames in news coverage of protests would have consumers believe.

Using the aforementioned frames, Brown and Harlow (2019) conducted content analysis on news articles that were produced in 2017 from four major and 16 regional Texan newspapers with varying regional characteristics, which provides the ability to measure impacts of community characteristics on news coverage more clearly (as opposed to conducting analyses on newspapers with a broader global or national reach). Using several keywords such as protest and Black Lives Matter in their search protocol, and after removing irrelevant articles and letters, they had a sample of 777 articles. They coded the protest subject from the articles, with topics including immigration, NFL (kneeling during anthem), anti-Black racism, gender, Dakota

pipeline, anti-Trump, health and environment, local issues, and international issues. They also coded the “sourcing” of the article, which essentially measured how much the article included either protesters or officials (i.e., law enforcement officers or elected officials) as sources of information in the article, which was determined by direct quotes. Brown and Harlow (2019) found several things from this study: that coverage of Black Lives Matter protests received more negative news coverage than protests on other (less threatening) subjects, with heightened riot framing and negligence to identify where the violence was coming from (such as counter-demonstrators or fringe actors) and decreased debate framing; anti-Black racism protests had increased sourcing from officials; and while both framing and sourcing is not affected by differences in regional markets, coverage of different protest subjects is affected by such regional differences.

In another study focused on protest paradigm, Harlow et. al (2020) conducted a content analysis of news articles shared on Facebook and Twitter, collected from Newswhip’s Insights platform using a search protocol using both English and Spanish words, such as “protest” and “protestante”, from January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2014. They utilized the top 24,000 articles from Facebook; 12,000 in English and 12,000 in Spanish. They then randomly sampled 750 English and 750 Spanish articles, and after getting rid of irrelevant articles, landed with a sample of 692 English and 746 Spanish articles. They coded the articles in their content analyses for the following aspects: news organization (traditional/mainstream, alternative, online-native media); geographic region (Central and South America and Caribbean, Europe, the United States and Canada, Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Pacific Islands or Australia or New Zealand); geographic region of the protest (Central and South America and Caribbean, Europe, United States and Canada, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Pacific, more than one region/worldwide, not applicable);

protest subject (anti-government/corruption, human rights/justice/peace, socio-economic, environment/animals, religious, conservative/revivalist); the protest paradigm frame used (riot, confrontation, spectacle, debate – not mutually exclusive); protest violence and peaceful protests; sourcing of story via direct quotes; and social media variables measuring likes, shares, comments, and retweets. News coverage of the conservative/revivalist protests had decreased instances of the riot frame, increased instances of the spectacle frame.

From this analysis, Harlow et. al (2020) essentially found several things: different kinds of protest subjects receive different kinds of frames, potentially according to how much they do or do not align with the status quo and the tactics employed by the movement (e.g., the conservative/revivalist protests had less instances of the riot frame and increased instances of the spectacle frame); and that the location of the protest, the kind of news media outlet (mainstream or alternative), the region of the media outlet, the usage of English or Spanish language, and differences between the location of the protest and the region of the media outlet all had varying impacts on what kind of framing increased or decreased in news coverage of protests in this study during that period. They also found varying effects between Twitter and Facebook platforms. Most importantly to this thesis, they ultimately concluded that protests that align with the status quo will receive less negative news coverage, or as they state, “... news coverage that adheres less to the paradigm” (Harlow et. al 2020:1604). Given that the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests in the United States are distinctly seen as going against traditional or conservative ideals and seeking to change many of the institutions that the United States is built upon, then it follows that these protests would receive increased news coverage that adheres to the protest paradigm, meaning that they would receive more negative news coverage via usage of the riot, confrontation, and spectacle frames.

Building off this research, Harlow and Bachmann (2023) argued that adherence to the protest paradigm does not equate to perpetual or invariable delegitimizing news coverage of all protests; instead, scholars of the protest paradigm should take into consideration the multitude of factors that can affect news coverage of protests. Having explained this, they still go on to say that news coverage of protests is still delegitimizing and may just vary in their level of delegitimization (which some would view as more positive, but it is still ignoring what is happening at protests, why they are occurring, or vilifying protesters and wanting to maintain the status quo). In this study, they conducted content analysis on news coverage of protests in Chile from October 19, 2019-November 1, 2019 and George Floyd protests in the United States from May 26, 2020, to June 14, 2020. They employed articles from one mainstream and one alternative news source for both countries. Using words such as “protests,” “George Floyd,” and “social crises,” they conducted a search online, collecting 123 stories from *El Mercurio* (mainstream Chile news outlet), 25 from *The Clinic* (alternative Chile news outlet), 107 from *The New York Times* (mainstream U.S. news outlet), and 23 from *Unicorn Riot* (alternative U.S. news outlet). After weeding out duplicates and random selection, they ended up with a sample of 228 stories (90 *El Mercurio*, 25 *The Clinic*, 92 *The New York Times*, and 23 *Unicorn Riot*). They read each article multiple times and discovered the following themes: for mainstream media, they focused on themes of protester violence, policing, peacefulness, and episodic; for alternative, they focused on protester grievances and police criticism. Each of these themes were then assessed as entailing any of the following four dimensions that they argue align with four protest paradigm frames (riot, confrontation, debate, and spectacle): violence, repression, oppression, and blame. Harlow and Bachmann (2023) found that mainstream media in Chile and the United States highlighted and sensationalized protester violence, focused on confrontations between irrational

protesters and rational police, novelized peaceful protests, and separated protest contention from the context surrounding the protest. In contrast, alternative media portrayed protest contention in the context of their grievances and discussed the oppressive nature of law enforcement agency presence and actions at protests.

Although Chan and Lee (1984), Harlow and Brown (2019), Harlow et. al (2020), and Harlow and Bachmann's (2023) may take different analytical approaches, they all measure the protest paradigm by conducting content analysis on news articles, focusing on the sentiment of news stories by either the type of frame used (riot, confrontation, spectacle, or debate), different thematic sentiments employed in the article that align with more or less conservative ideals, or differences in aspects of news media such as where and how news articles, headlines, editorials, letters to the editor appear, frequency of coverage, etc. Chan and Lee (1984) measured adherence to the protest paradigm by coding news articles, headlines, editorial articles, and letters to the editor on whether they did or did not include the various themes (with each of these being separated by whether they were right-leaning, central, or left-leaning). Harlow and Brown (2019) measured adherence to the protest paradigm through coding of news articles based upon the protest subject, the sourcing (direct quotes from officials or protesters), and the kind of frame (riot, confrontation, spectacle, debate) used. Harlow et. al 2020 measured adherence to the protest paradigm through a content analysis of English and Spanish news articles shared on Facebook and Twitter, coding for various attributes (location of protest, region of the news outlet, alternative or mainstream news outlet, etc.) and the kind of frame used. Harlow and Bachmann's (2023) measured adherence to the protest paradigm by conducting content analysis on news articles from both Chilean and U.S. mainstream and alternative news sources, examining what themes arose most in the articles and how they portrayed violence, repression,

oppression, and blame. Protest paradigm theory holds that there is an essential conflict aspect that is inherent in news reports on protests that vilifies, dehumanizes, and invalidates protesters who challenge the status quo (McLeod 2007; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Gitlin 1980; McCurdy 2012; Boyle and Schmierbach 2009; Brasted 2005). Drawing from the growing research literature that has built protest paradigm theory, the research design that follows relies upon news stories about protests to examine whether, and in what ways, evidence of the protest paradigm is reflected in the media coverage of protests that occurred in the summer of 2020.

Although work has been done on protest contention and protest paradigm separately, these two phenomena do not exist in a vacuum, and it is imperative to build a more discursive theoretical framework around both that includes racial threat theory. The concept of contention can be empirically observed through noting certain characteristics of protests like the size of a demonstration, the extent and nature of police presence, and if property damage, injuries, or arrests occurred. The relationship between racial threat, contention, and negative news media coverage of protests – as predicted by protest paradigm - has not been adequately explored. News coverage of the racial injustice and policing protests in the United States during this time was highly racialized and politicized, with protesters often being portrayed as “radical,” “terrorists,” or “violent” (Reid and Craig 2021; Banks 2018; Umamaheswar 2020). Racial threat theory is a useful conceptual framework to guide the analysis of article sentiment and empirical contention of protests. This is because both are impacted by law enforcement agencies, the state’s, opponents of the movement, and other elite groups’ perception of increased racial threat. When racial threat increases, these groups combat it with increased contention – such as increased aggression from police force or increased counter-demonstrations – and increased negative article sentiment to delegitimize or discount protests and protesters.

Contention is related to racial threat in multiple ways. When we examine the actions of protesters, contention grows when more disruptive tactics are used, such as disrupting traffic flow or business activities (Alimi 2015); the number of participants present at the event increases (Alimi 2015; there are increased resources available to the protesters (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977), and more. Protesters and law enforcement agencies both have “repertoires of contention;” a bundle of tactics to choose from in any given situation to either enhance or suppress a movement (Tilly 1978, 1995, 2008). However, when taking into account the phenomena of “protesting while Black” as introduced and examined by Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong (2011), protests that may have the same characteristics as each other but differ only in racial composition or are labeled as a “White protest” versus a “minority protest” may also differ in how their repertoires of contention are received by bystanders, counter-demonstrators, the public, the state, and law enforcement agencies. So, the more racially threatening a protest becomes, the more contentious said protest may become from reactions and tactics used by law enforcement agencies present. However, the increased contentiousness from law enforcement agencies may provide more newsworthiness and political opportunity for social movements (McAdam 1982; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1994). Political opportunities include “...any event or broad social process that serves to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured” (McAdam 1982:41).

Scholars might question what protest paradigm adds to our understanding of social movements that is not already covered by existing theories on media framing. While media framing theory has been widely researched, its main focus centers on newsworthiness, the efficacy of certain protest tactics in gaining media traction, or the political opportunity structures provided by news media, and does not have an agreed-upon standard measurement or definition

of framing (Entman 1993; Scheufele 1999). This is a conceptual limitation that protest paradigm theory begins to address; protest paradigm theory describes the conflict aspect of the relationship between protesters, the public, and news media and as outlined above, has a consensus on measuring the negative sentiment of media coverage of protests that protest paradigm predicts by measuring the instances of the different kinds of frames employed (riot, confrontation, debate, spectacle). While in my thesis I do not take a qualitative approach such as the scholars reviewed above, the quantitative measure I take employ by measuring the instances of specific words, themes, and phrases that are similar in ideology or impact is in alignment with measuring increased adherence to the protest paradigm.

Racial Threat Theory

In 2020, the politicized and racialized sensationalization found in news coverage of the racial injustice and policing protests has led scholars – from social movements to communications – to explore how factors like protest and community characteristics may lead to changes in sentiment in news coverage of these protests/protesters. One example of this kind of analysis is found in Davenport et. al's (2011) study, in which they identify this phenomenon of racialized reactions from law enforcement agencies and the public as, “protesting while Black”. This is a callback to the phenomena of “driving while Black”, in which studies have shown that police treat Black drivers and citizens differently, pulling them over and ticketing them more frequently than citizens of other races (Harris 1999; Geiger-Oneto and Phillips 2003; Warren, Tomaskovic-Devey, Smith, Zingraff, and Mason 2006). Following a similar logic, Davenport et. al (2011) find that protesting while Black is comparable in the sense that police treat Black protests and protesters differently, using a more militarized and aggressive approach than they

would for other protest subjects and protesters of other races (or more specifically, non-threatening/White protests/protesters).

I include racial threat theory (Blalock 1967; Blauner 1971; Blumer 1958; Bonilla-Silva 2015) in this thesis given this phenomenon of “Protesting While Black” (Davenport et. al 2011), as it seems that Black and minority protests and protesters are systematically treated differently by news media because of aspects of threat dynamics. Blalock (1967) explains racial threat theory as a critical analysis of the interaction between the dominant group and minority groups: as the political power of a minority group rises, whether perceived or real, the majority group “meets the threat” by increasing subjugation. This can occur through legislative routes, increasing law enforcement, using more aggressive state responses, or through media portrayals of demonstrations and issues. These responses to threat could increase contentiousness within the protests, with increased police aggression in response to protests, and lead to media coverage that minimizes or vilifies the protest increased, with some news outlets exaggerating/focusing only on the threat level of the racial injustice and policing protests, and others focusing on the police response to these protests. Given the highly racialized and politicized nature of the racial injustice and policing protests (Reid and Craig 2021; Banks 2018 Umamaheswar 2020; Brown and Harlow 2019), the aggressive state response towards these protests (Barker, Baker, and Watkins 2021; Brantley-Jones, Cruz, and Deliso 2021), and the capitalist nature of the news media market (McCluskey et. al 2009), I expect to see increased negative news coverage of the racial injustice and policing protests (or increased adherence to the protest paradigm). Furthermore, this analysis can provide context to the differing contention levels found at protest events and differing sentiments of protest events that occur in different news media markets (communities).

Community Characteristics and News Media Industry

Following McCluskey et al. (2009), I am interested in examining the market forces that influence news coverage of protests. Just like any other industry, the news industry is a business. News sources must make money, and they do so through advertisements run in news media, and by retaining and increasing readership and subscriptions. The characteristics of the surrounding community of a news source is vital to how it conducts its business, including the topics they publish, the stories they run, the pictures and headlines they choose to compliment those stories, the kind of sources they use to boost their content, and other key aspects of reporting that affect public perception and ultimately, policing and policymaking around protests. McCluskey et. al (2009) focus on community characteristics and how that impacts news media coverage by measuring the sentiment of news stories. This study showcases how critical a news source will be, or how well protest paradigm predicts negative news coverage. In other words, based on the community's characteristics and the characteristics of the news story itself. For example, McCluskey et. al (2009) found that negative news coverage of protests was more prominently placed on the front page of newspapers in less pluralistic communities. This is evidence of racial threat in the context of media coverage because we expect to see more negative coverage of stories that are threatening to the status quo where dominant interest groups are more plentiful or powerful. For example, in less pluralistic communities, the news market is dominated by White consumers, which impacts the ways that news is covered so that protests are framed negatively. Likewise, in more pluralistic communities, protests are threatening but less so as White people and economic elites have less control over community political and economic dynamics. This results in less negative coverage, less threatening content, and less prominent placement of protest stories in media outlets

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Emerging from the review of the literature are several questions. These questions are primarily framed by the ways in which community features that reflect the relative threat of protests influence protest contention as well as the negativity of protest coverage in the news media. First, this research aims to explore a more descriptive aspect of these protests and coverage, seeking to find out how contentious these protests and how negative news coverage of these protests were. My main research questions seek to examine how racial threat markers, grievances, and community characteristics may impact protest contention and adherence to the protest paradigm in news coverage of protests in 2020 in North Carolina.

RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

For my analysis around contention, events are the logical unit of analysis, following PEA (della Porta 2014; Almeida 2019; Earl et. al 2004). Since the level of contention present at a protest is a characteristic of the protest, I will test my research expectations between contention, racial threat, grievance, and community characteristics by analyzing protest event data. As racial threat within a community increases, protest contention is expected to increase. While racial threat theory typically analyzes threat using the percentage of the community that is Black, I utilize an inverse measure of the proportion of the White population and Hispanic/Latino population instead to mitigate collinearity issues. While grievance has been shown to be under-researched, the limited scholarship around the concept of grievance seems to typically focus on economic and political routes. In this thesis, I utilize the number of police killings to measure this concept of grievance and test for a connection between grievance and contention. Here, I expect that as the number of police killings increases (e.g., as grievance increases) that contention will increase as well. The potential impacts of community characteristics on protest contention seems to be similarly under-researched, although scholarship highlight characteristics such as state authority, legitimacy, and suppression (Sullivan 2018). In this thesis, I utilize a ratio of White/Black employment inequality, full-time sworn officer (FTSO) rate, the urban/rural categorization of a county, and the presidential vote of a county as community characteristics that may impact protest contention. As the White/Black employment inequality increases, FTSO rate increases, counties become more urban, and counties voted more for Trump in 2016, I expect to see protest contention increase as well.

For my analysis on tone, following PEA, I utilize data from news coverage of protests as the unit of analysis as each story possesses features that are important to protest paradigm, such

as the tone of the story (which is what I will be primarily using to measure adherence to the protest paradigm). I will test my research expectations between the tone of the article, racial threat, grievance, and community characteristics by analyzing protest event data. As racial threat within a community increases, sentiment of news coverage of protests is expected to become more negative (decrease). As I do with contention above, I utilize an inverse measure of the proportion of the White population and Hispanic/Latino population instead to mitigate collinearity issues to measure racial threat. I also use the number of police killings to measure the concept of grievance and expect to see that as the number of police killings rises, the more negative the news coverage of protests becomes. This would be in adherence with the protest paradigm because increased grievance would essentially validate protesters' claims-making, which would push state authorities and news media to use more negative portrayals of protests to mitigate the political power and opportunities for the protesters (Halloran et. al 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Hertog and McLeod 1995, 2001; Brown and Harlow 2019; Harlow et. al 2020; Harlow and Bachmann 2023). Lastly, I utilize a ratio of White/Black employment inequality, FTSO rate, the urban/rural categorization of a county, and the presidential vote of a county as community characteristics that may impact protest contention. As the White/Black employment inequality increases, the FTSO rate increases, the counties become more urban, and the counties voted more for Trump in 2016, I expect to see more negative news coverage of protests. Counties with these characteristics may have more inequality overall in different institutions, again causing news media to utilize more negative news coverage to invalidate the protesters' claims.

DATA AND METHODS

My project used a unique dataset built upon the research expectations associated with racial threat and contention and racial threat and protest paradigm. The data analysis relied upon several diverse sources of data as well as certain novel tools that facilitated the analysis testing expectations about protest news coverage tone. As a foundation to begin to identify protests that occurred in NC (and the associated communities), I used the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED 2020). The ACLED is set up to document protest events and be treated as a complete list of protests in a given place and time. News stories were gathered from the NewsBank USA (2021) index beginning with the ACLED list of protests. This created a data set of news stories about a list of protest events, which will be used to examine the research questions and associated research expectations laid out above. News stories provide the basis to measure aspects of both protest contention across a sample of protests and provide the ability to evaluate protest paradigm in terms of the tone used in news coverage of the protest events. Whether and how contention and the media tone of the protest events may be related to community characteristics, such as community racial threat, or other community factors are questions I examine using county data from the American Community Survey (ACS 2022) matched by county location of the protest (contention) and county location of the news source (protest paradigm). Once the news stories about protests were located, I used Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (2022) software as a tool to conduct content analysis on the news stories. I describe each of these data sources and the measures I have constructed for analysis in greater detail below.

Data

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED 2020) captures events – ranging from peaceful protests to armed coups – that occur every day around the world. The ACLED provides extensive data on protest groups present at the event, what the subject matter of the event was, where it took place, approximate size of the event, and short notes about what happened at the event, based on data they collect from news stories. ACLED purports to provide details about the global population of armed conflict and related political protest events. For example, they verify some of their events solely from social media posts, so they may not capture every event that occurs, or they miss key details like the size of the event, the racial composition of the protesters, or the organizers of the event; some details that are especially important to social movement and policing scholars because of their impact on political opportunities, newsworthiness, public and state reactions to social movements (Koopmans 2004; Oliver and Maney 2000). Most important to this paper, details that potentially impact article sentiment and racial threat are among those often found in ACLED data about political protest.

Due to concerns about the validity and completeness of the ACLED database and to better understand the underlying protest events reflected in ACLED data, sociologists at ECU developed a protocol to systematically verify 1) the existence of a protest contained in the ACLED and 2) the accuracy, breadth and depth of information about the characteristics of the protest event (Philbrook, Miller, and Edwards 2023). As a part of this data validation work, I contributed to the development of a protocol using the NewsBank USA (2021) index to find as many published news stories on each ACLED event as possible. As a result of this work, we confirmed that many protests possessed multiple news stories describing aspects of the protest.

We also verified that ACLED data about protests during this time described a significant percentage of all protests based on what we could locate in the news media coverage of protests. Additionally, many other scholars have utilized this source of event data (Raleigh, Linke, Hegre, and Karlsen 2023). This increased our confidence in the accuracy of the ACLED database as a useful data source about protest events.

NewsBank and verification. NewsBank USA (2021) is a news archive database, containing news stories from various mediums, locations, and news sources. The mediums range from physical copies of newspapers, online news sites, Facebook posts of news media sources, videos from live/TV news to college newspapers and podcasts spanning from large media conglomerates (like the Associated Press) to small weekly local newspapers. Within NewsBank there are different search capabilities, from filtering through location, topic, news sources, news medium, or date. We had a team of three graduate students and one undergraduate implement the following search protocol: (Location) and ("North Carolina" or NC) and (Protest* or demonstration* or rally or rallies or march* or "civil disobedience" or "public disorder") AND (the date of when the event occurred according to ACLED's listing - ten days later). In some cases, other words specific to the event would be added onto this protocol to narrow the search results. Through this verification protocol, 316 events reported by the ACLED that occurred from May 27, 2020, to August 31, 2020, were verified using the NewsBank index. We also verified an additional 32 cases through Google using the same protocol. Of the 444 events reported by ACLED during this time, we had a verified rate of 78.4% with 348 total events verified and gathered a total of 923 news stories on these events.

While we did not specifically look for events that were not listed by the ACLED, when conducting our search protocol, we did find that there were several events found that were not

listed by the ACLED. However, this was an uncommon occurrence, and these events were not included in this research. Events listed by the ACLED that were not verified by our protocol are most likely due to how the ACLED verifies events; many of the “unverified” events were found by the ACLED either through social media or a third-party platform, like an independent blog or Facebook post. Since NewsBank’s focus is on being an archive of newspaper articles and since the design of this research is to verify the event via newspaper articles to then be able to conduct PEA using the content from those news articles, it follows that these protests would go unverified. Many of these events were more likely to have been either smaller, taken place in more rural places, or were protests not focused on racial injustice or policing. Excluding these protests means that this data may be more likely to omit small, local, Whiter protests not focused on racial injustice or policing. However, this is in alignment with racial threat theory because these protests would be seen as less threatening, and therefore, not newsworthy, or necessitating as negative/harsh news coverage as racial injustice and policing protests.

As one would expect, news stories were concentrated among particular news sources, especially those located in large population centers of the state where protest events were also more prevalent, such as Charlotte and Raleigh, among others. Table 1 highlights the top 10 news sources that contributed the most news coverage on protests during this period.

(Table 1 here)

Many of these news sources being the top sources of articles covering protests during this time is as expected. For example, *The News & Observer* covers topics ranging from the local Raleigh-Durham area to topics on the national and global level and runs stories from their headquarters located in Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina, which also is reflected in a specific focus on state-level politics and related news. Not only is it a prominent news source in

the state, but located in the state capital, it covers news in an area that is highly attractive to protest groups and likely sees increased protest activity. This general pattern about the news media sources who published stories about racial injustice/policing protests shows that protests were more common in cities and large population areas. Table 2 highlights the 10 locations in North Carolina with the largest number of protests during the study period.

(Table 2 here)

In Table 2, we can see similarities between the places with the most protests and the news sources (and their locations) with the most stories during this time in North Carolina. Table 2 shows that protest activity in North Carolina during this period was concentrated in large cities. This is expected given that larger cities are more likely to possess the basis of grievances for protests of police: higher levels of police activity, more police killings, and be “hubs” for protests because of their notoriety, as a tactic to gain momentum for social movements (Eisinger 2014).

American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS 2022) is an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS collects data on a wide variety of topics, including racial and economic characteristics, technology usage, housing, and educational characteristics at the household level. Due to the sample design of the ACS, researchers tend to use the five-year aggregated data in order to ensure complete geographic coverage of all communities within the United States. Since my analysis is focused on news coverage of protests that occurred in 2020 – the protest events and stories occurred in 2020 - I use 2016-2020 ACS data, which was released to the public in 2022. Many of my independent variables originate from this data. The ACS samples 3,143 counties and equivalents in the U.S. and 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico. The ACS has an annual sample size of about 3.54 million addresses, including both

Housing Units and Group Quarters (like a college dorm), obtained from the Census' Master Address File (MAF). The ACS conducts its sampling via two different six-month phases (Period 1, addresses from MAF assigned January-June and Period 2, addresses from MAF assigned July-December), and Housing Units cannot be sampled more than once in a five-year period, or once in each production of the ACS. After this sampling stage, the ACS distributes the survey (in which they assess the content of it each period), prepares the data, and then provides it on the ACS website for public access/review (ACS 2022).

Using this data from the ACS, I take a county-aggregated approach. Analyzing protest at the county level is a valid strategy for multiple reasons. Firstly, news outlets target audiences outside of the city they are headquartered in, and participants travel to protests shaping the protest characteristics and activities. Additionally, the characteristics of protests affect multiple places and news coverage of the protests.

Article and event sample selection. Since my analysis is focused on the impact that community characteristics has on newspaper coverage of protests, and I focus on the protests that occurred in North Carolina during this period, I narrowed my sample of NewsBank articles to only North Carolina based news sources. Even though out-of-state news sources covered some protests, their focus tended to be much less focused on the protest dynamics, with articles typically alluding to protests of police occurring across the country using one-sentence blurbs. This does not lend for an in-depth PEA of protest articles specific to the racial injustice and policing protests that occurred in North Carolina during this time. Furthermore, since these out-of-state sources are only providing this surface-level detail that is only sufficient enough to be able to verify an event, they are not conducting a similar level of market-analysis or tailoring of their content as the in-state news sources would. After taking out these non-North Carolina news

sources, I am left with a total sample of 346 protest events in which to measure contention. Additionally, this reduced my total sample of articles about protests to 835. For frequencies on the event counties, view Table 3.

(Table 3 here)

As shown in Table 3, there were protest events in 59 counties listed by ACLED that were verified by the news articles found. These event counties mostly coincide with the top 10 cities with the most protest activity shown in Table 1. The counties with the largest number of protest events were Wake, Mecklenburg, Forsyth, and Durham, which are more urban, more educated, and have more resources and notoriety, so it follows that they had more protest activity. Seven counties that were locations for protests were not in the news article sentiment dataset (did not have any news articles run on protest in their county) but did have protest events (Avery, Gates, Henderson, Hoke, Johnston, Madison, and Pender.)

As seen in Table 4, there are a total of 60 source counties that had a news media source that ran an article about one of the events listed during this period. This list of source counties mostly corresponds to the event counties in Table 5, although with some slight differences. For example, Wake County had the most events, but Mecklenburg County had the largest number of articles during this period (with Wake a close second). Thirteen counties had producers of news with at least 10 stories. The counties with the most stories (having ≥ 10 stories) make up 83% of all the cases (in descending order). The top five contributors – Mecklenburg, Wake, Guilford, Forsyth, and Wayne counties – make up 56.6% of the cases. Unique counties (8) in this source county variable (story sentiment dataset) include: Scotland, Richmond, Perquimans, Yadkin, Greene, Hertford, Martin, and Vance. This means these counties were not in the contention dataset (did not have an event) but had news articles run on protests in NC during this time.

(Table 4 here)

There are 99 unique publishers of news represented in the data (story sentiment dataset), which are all based in North Carolina and ran an article about a protest event that occurred in North Carolina during this period. Again, these news sources correspond to the event and source counties outlined above, with The News and Observer (headquarters located in Raleigh) and The Charlotte Observer (headquarters located in Charlotte) being the top two contributors of articles on protest events in North Carolina during this time. Sources who contributed the most (≥ 10) made up ~76% of all the cases. The top five sources – The News & Observer, The Charlotte Observer, Winston-Salem Journal, CBS – 17 WNCN (serves Raleigh and Durham), and StarNews – composed 42% of all the cases.

Measures

This study is concerned with two distinct but related aspects of protests during the summer of 2020: 1) empirical protest contention and 2) summary assessments of news coverage of protests and protesters. It follows, then, that the study employs two different outcome measures (my dependent variables), one for each of these concepts that define the inquiry. I will describe how I operationalize each of these concepts into measures next.

My dependent variables are protest event contention and news story tone (as conceived by the protest paradigm described above – see Harlowe et al. 2020), which are both measured using a form of content analysis that relies upon counting the number of words in stories that reflect the concepts of contentiousness and the negative/positive tone of a news story. I used a software tool, Linguistic Inquire and Word Count software (LIWC 2022) to count words that reflect the conceptual meaning of contention. The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC 2022) is a statistical software designed to quantify underlying linguistic dimensions of text,

which is a useful approach to conducting content analysis. Within LIWC, you can create a dictionary with a library of words, which you assign meaning to, and it goes through the data you provide and counts each instance of these words. To measure contention, I created a “contention dictionary” within LIWC. Through this dictionary, the LIWC then provides a percentage of these words' occurrence, ranging from 0 to 99. The larger the percentage, the greater the number of instances those words were found. Based on theory surrounding contention, policing of protests, and preliminary content analysis done while doing the previous verification work (reading news stories and taking notes on them), I tested and developed several versions of a contention dictionary within LIWC.

(Figure 1)

In Figure 1, you can view the final version of the contention dictionary I created and used in my analysis. Since I worked closely with each of the articles, read and verified them, and took my own notes on many of them, I developed these words of contention based upon the combination of theory around contention and from the summary-level content analysis I did while compiling this database of articles. Since contention can come from either the protester side and the side of the law enforcement agencies or counter-protesters, I included words in the dictionary that capture actions from both sides to be able to fully capture the contention at each protest (and not just the contention from merely one side or the other).

To evaluate adherence to the protest paradigm in the news coverage of the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests in North Carolina, I rely upon LIWC's built-in tone measurement algorithm, which captures the overall sentiment of news stories. Recall that I am conceiving adherence to the protest paradigm to be essentially the degree of negative tone of a news story (rather than the four-category typology Harlow and Brown (2019), Harlow et. al (2020), and

Harlow and Bachmann (2023) use). According to Boyd et. al (2022), the overall tone score generated from LIWC is the result of subtracting the total negative tone score from the total positive tone score, and then normalized to a 1-99 scale. So “0” would indicate completely negative and “99” would indicate completely positive.

The LIWC indicator of sentiment is the most direct measure of the tone of a text. Ranging from 0% to 99%, with 0 meaning complete negativity, and 99 meaning complete positivity, this story tone measure allows researchers to assess the proportion of both negative and positive words. Separate from sentiment, LIWC’s linguistic algorithm menu includes both the component positive and negative tone variables which are used to calculate the overall tone variable. In Table 5, the following variables developed by LIWC are identified: story tone, positive tone, negative tone, power, conflict, and the dictionary variable. One important thing to note when viewing this table is that these subdictionaries are not merely built only from the words listed as examples; in developing each of the dictionaries, LIWC started with around 12,000 unique words in total, which were all tested and judged, then using the Test Kitchen Corpus they identified 5,000 commonly-used unique words from their sample, and further testing and analysis was done to complete the official LIWC 2022 dictionary and subdictionaries (Boyd et. al 2022). So, the examples provided are merely illustrative of what each subdictionary contains.

Overall story tone, positive tone, and negative tone all follow along the same vein, measuring how negative or positive the overall tone is of the articles. While I include conflict and power here to compare my NewsBank sample to the Boyd et. al’s (2022) NYT sample, I do not use them as measures of contention given the focus that contention theory has on actions and reactions of law enforcement officers and protesters (versus just overall notions of conflict and

power, and more specific to protests). However, including these measures in this preliminary comparison between my sample of articles from NewsBank and Boyd et. al's (2022) sample of *New York Times* articles is still useful because the experience of protesting and the politicized and conversational nature of the wording of newspaper articles makes the measurement of interpersonal conflict and power relevant to any analysis around racial threat, media framing, and protest paradigm theory (Reid and Craig 2021; Umamaheswar 2020; Banks 2018; Brown and Harlow 2019), with increased themes or portrayals of conflict or power in news coverage of protests potentially indicating adherence to the protest paradigm. View Table 5 to explore the definitions/examples of words included for each of these variables, provided by Boyd et. al (2022).

(Table 5 here)

To assess one of the primary expectations of news coverage of protests and protest paradigm – that news coverage of protest events will be negative – I make use of Boyd et al.'s (2022) analysis of the LIWC's dictionary with the Test Kitchen sample of *New York Times* news articles, including overall scores for all their variables. I provide some analysis on tone based on the sample of NewsBank stories about NC protests compared to a sample of *New York Times* articles that Boyd et. al (2022) utilized. The results of this comparison give a sense of the typical or “average” news story tone using the LIWC dictionary and provides a reference point to judge whether the protest story sample LIWC scores are more negative by comparison, as protest paradigm theory (Halloran et. al 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Hertog and McLeod 1995, 2001; Brown and Harlow 2019; Harlow et. al 2020; Harlow and Bachmann 2023) would predict. This comparison is important because it provides a validity check on the tone of news stories about protests is more negative than a sample of news stories

on regular/daily events. Table 6 displays both the means and standard deviations for both samples across tone (proportion of positive to negative), positive tone (absolute count of positive words) and negative tone (absolute count of negative words), power (absolute count of words in power subdictionary), conflict (absolute count of words in conflict subdictionary), and dictionary words (overall count of words in LIWC's entire dictionary).

(Table 6 here)

Table 6 shows the differences between the NewsBank sample articles and NYT articles regarding these variables. The average tone for the sample of articles covering protests is lower, meaning coverage of protests is on average more negative. Specifically, the protest articles mean score of 25 is, as expected, lower compared to the NYT's sample of all stories average score of 37. In a similar pattern, when I turn to examine negative tone and positive tone separately, which are absolute counts of negative and positive words, respectively, the NewsBank sample of protest articles also have much lower mean scores for positive tone (NewsBank=1.7, NYT=2.33) and a slightly higher score for negative tone (NewsBank=1.56, NYT=1.38) than the NYT's articles sampled by Boyd et. al (2022). Even in comparison to a more left leaning newspaper like *The New York Times*, the sample of articles from NewsBank has more negative sentiment, in their coverage of protests, which is consistent with the argument of protest paradigm theory. To provide more insight on what may be going on here, I included the means and standard deviations for the power and conflict variables for both samples of articles. The articles collected from the NewsBank archive had a higher mean level of power than the *New York Times* articles (NewsBank=3.66, NYT=2.85). This showcases that the news coverage of the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests in North Carolina had more themes and portrayals of power differences and issues than the average *New York Times* article sampled by Boyd et. al (2022),

which shows potential adherence to the protest paradigm (Halloran et. al 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Hertog and McLeod 1995, 2001; Brown and Harlow 2019; Harlow et. al 2020; Harlow and Bachmann 2023). Additionally, the articles collected from the NewsBank archive had a higher mean level of conflict than the *New York Times* articles (NewsBank=1.83, NYT=0.41). This implies that the articles in my sample collected from NewsBank had increased usage of conflictual language and themes. It is important to remember that these NewsBank articles are specific to the racial injustice and policing protests that occurred, whereas the *New York Times* articles were sampled by Boyd et. al (2022), and are more “daily news” articles, not focused on protests. This difference in increased portrayals of conflict and conflictual themes between regular, everyday news articles and articles specifically covering protests showcases an adherence to the protest paradigm.

Next, I will discuss my independent and control variables. I include the following as independent variables from the ACS (2022) dataset in my analysis: the percentage of the White population, the number of police killings from 2013 to 2020 pre-George Floyd’s murder in a county, the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population, the rate of White/Black employment inequality, the FTSO rate in a county, categorical variable identifying the rurality of a place, a dummy variable identifying whether counties voted for Trump or Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, the number of protests that occurred in a county during this time, the percentage of the population that falls between 15 to 24-years-old, and the percentage of the population who earned a bachelor’s degree who are at least 25-years-old. Each variable helps determine if there are impacts of community characteristics, racial threat, or protest paradigm on news coverage of protests.

To measure racial threat, I use the percentage of the White population in combination with the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population. I did not use the percentage of the Black population to measure racial threat because of issues with multicollinearity. In my multivariate analysis, I attempt to include a range of community characteristics thought to be important for protests of racial injustice and policing protests. For example, given the enormous importance of the video-taped murder of George Floyd that triggered much of the protest activity in 2020 and calls to end police brutality, I include the total number of police killings of civilians to measure the concept of grievance. The police killings variable is drawn from the Fatal Encounters (FE 2024) website and is aggregated to the county level. I chose to represent this variable as a count rather than a calculated rate given the potential impacts each police killing has on collective memory; while a county may have lower rate of police killings, each specific killing may decrease citizens' tolerance towards the issue. The everyday citizen does not view police killings as part of an average or rate; instead, they learn about and remember each incident, with each occurrence likely increasing the potential for protest mobilization. Fatal Encounters (FE) has collected its data in three ways: firstly, through public records requests in which the FE team collected information on incidents specified by the public; secondly, through volunteered information from the public, which the FE team verified; lastly, through paid researchers who conduct state-by-year searches through several news archive databases, such as NewsBank. Now, FE is routinely updated weekly by its developer and manager (FE 2024). Ultimately, FE is not only one of the most extensive databases when it comes to verified police killings, recording a variety of incidents and detailed information for each case, but its collection and verification takes a similar avenue of utilizing newspaper data as this study. This keeps the focus of the analysis on this aspect more stable, again centering the role of news media on protest

mobilization, since each police killing reported in news media could potentially lead to increased awareness and inclination to participate in social movements.

For one of the community characteristics, I utilize a White/Black employment inequality measure, a variable calculated using data provided by ACS. This is calculated by dividing the number of White 16 year-olds in the civilian labor force that are employed with the total number of White 16 year-olds in the civilian labor force, and dividing that by Black 16 year-olds in the civilian labor force that are employed with the total number of Black 16 year-olds in the civilian labor force (see Figure 2). This equation focuses on the employment and unemployment of White and Black 16-year-olds because that is the only age group for which the ACS specifies race. From this equation, results of anything lesser or greater than one mean implies more employment inequality. This is important in my analysis as I use it as one of the community characteristics that may impact tone or contention – counties with increased employment inequality may have more negative news coverage of protests as news media may use negative portrayals of protests to delegitimize them, and increased protest contention as this employment inequality may indicate inequality across other institutions in a community.

(Figure 2 here)

In addition to this employment inequality ratio, I use a rate of full-time sworn enforcement officers (FTSO rate) as a community characteristic. This rate was calculated using the total number of full-time sworn officers from the Law Enforcement Agency Roster 2016 (LEAR) and multiplying this by 100,000. This FTSO rate is important to include in the models, as an increase in this rate may be likely to be related to increased grievances (police killings of citizens) and increased rates of protests, both which could potentially impact tone and contention. The LEAR 2016 collects data from the 2008 and 2014 Census of State Local Law

Enforcement Agencies, the 2013 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics, and takes a census of over 15,000 different law enforcement agencies (Hyland 2019).

Furthermore, I include measures on the rurality and political ideology of a county as community characteristics that could potentially impact tone and contention. The ordinal rural/urban variable was recoded from the USDA's Rural-Urban Continuum Codes spanning 9 levels from most urban (=1) to most rural (=9). These codes are divided into two categories: metro and nonmetro counties. Metro counties include codes 1-3: 1=Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more; 2=Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population; and 3=Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population. Nonmetro counties include codes 4-9: 4= Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area; 5=Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area; 6=Urban population of 5,000 to 20,000, adjacent to a metro area; 7=Urban population of 5,000 to 20,000, not adjacent to a metro area; 8=Urban population of fewer than 5,000, adjacent to a metro area; and 9=Urban population of fewer than 5,000, not adjacent to a metro area. These codes were determined by the population of a county, or the number of people that reside in that county, and the county's proximity to a metropolitan area. The recoded categories are as follows: 1=1-3, Most urban, metro county with a population of 200,000 or more; 2=4+5, Somewhat urban, metro or non-metro adjacent county with a population of 20,000-200,000; 3=6+7, Somewhat rural, metro or non-metro adjacent county with a population of 2,500-20,000; and 4=8+9, Most rural metro or non-metro adjacent county with a population under 2,500. While seeking to maintain the combination of the proximity to a metropolitan area and population of a county is important to my analysis, utilizing the USDA's original 9-category exacting schema is unnecessary for this overall county analysis.

In addition to rurality, I am interested in the political context of communities. Racial injustice and police protests are highly politicized in American society with Republicans and Conservatives being much less supportive of protest in general and racial injustice protest in particular. The dummy variable identifying a county's vote for Trump/Clinton vote in 2016 came from the MIT Election Data and Science Lab dataset in Harvard Dataverse (MEDSL Dataverse 2018), and it simply measure whether counties voted more for Trump or Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. This dataset includes county-level data for presidential elections from 2000-2020. This variable is important to my models, as counties who voted for Trump in 2016 may have more negative news coverage of protests, as their customer base would be more interested in such stories and as a tool to delegitimize protesters. In addition to this potential impact on tone, counties that voted for Trump in 2016 may have decreased protest contention as they may have had less protest activity or protest activity supportive of the status quo (such as Blue Lives Matter or Back the Blue protests).

As one of my control variables, I use a variable measuring the number of protests that occurred in a county, the youth population, and the population with a bachelor's degree. Data about the number of protests was obtained from ACLED's (2021) list of verified protests by county for the study period and aggregated to the county level. I use this as a control in the models, given that increased protesting would likely be associated with many of the variables, such as increased police killings of citizens, increased urbanism, increased rates of education, etc. Data about the percentage of the youth population and the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree that is at least 25 years old, as mentioned before, were both obtained from the ACS (2022). The number of protests, the youth population, and the population with a bachelor's are all used in my models as control variables, given that they may all be extraneous.

Each of these variables have been aggregated to the county-level. This has been done to cover the approximate “reach” of a news sources’ readership market. For example, while *The News & Observer (N&O)* is headquartered in Raleigh and focused on Raleigh protest events, their readership market, and their span of influence over public opinion about the topics covered by *N&O* news stories reaches beyond the geographic boundaries of Raleigh and throughout surrounding Wake County. Likewise, other media sources have a reach beyond the city of their location, likely to at least the county level. This is especially true for places with large populations, places with more protest activity, newspapers that produced more articles, and places that are more urban. It is possible that for large subscription news sources or non-print news sources, a larger geographic area than the surrounding county defines the media market, while for small market media, the county-level may be a little too large. Given that my sample is diverse in the reach of the news source containing both large and small media outlets with both wide and narrow readership, for purposes of my thesis research, I argue that defining the county as the appropriate level for observing community factors on contention and protest paradigm is reasonable.

RESULTS

With the background information, literature, methodology, and data analysis in mind, I now turn to describe the study findings. I begin with univariate descriptive statistics, move to bivariate correlation analysis, which informs the multivariate analysis. I will discuss each section in order of their analysis: the correlations between contention and independent variables, tone and the independent variables, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression with contention, ordinal regression with ordinal contention, OLS regression with tone, and the ordinal regression with ordinal tone.

Univariate Analysis

I present descriptive statistics of all variables in Table 7 as the initial step in moving toward multivariate analysis. This includes measures of the dependent variables and all independent variables in the study. One thing to keep in mind is that while for Table 7 I include overall county-level descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables, there are two separate datasets being used for the rest of this analysis: one dataset for contention analysis and one dataset for tone analysis. This is because contention and tone have different units of analysis. Contention is based on the article's coverage of the overall protest event with an N of 346, while tone is based on the articles covering these protests with an N of 835. Below I go into further analysis and description for each individual variable. Furthermore, in the contention dataset, only counties that had a protest event verified by a news article are included, and in the tone dataset, only counties that produced a news article covering a protest event were included in the analyses. I chose to include these "qualifiers" as it makes the events and articles verifiable, and I am able to conduct PEA with the information from the articles for my analysis.

(Table 7 here)

Contention. Contention ranges from 0 to 6.5, with zero being no contention and 6.5 being highly contentious. The closer to zero an event gets, the less contentious it is - although many argue that any form of protest activity is inherently contentious. With the mean around ~ 1.6 , it is interesting to note that while it appears that there are more negative stories, there is not as much contentiousness reported at the actual protest events; the negativity of the stories may be disproportionate to the actual contentiousness of the protests.

From this analysis of contention, I recoded it into an ordinal variable given how it is clustered around the lower end of contention, potentially skewing the analysis to center around low-contention events. This ordinal approach to measuring contention has the benefit of making it more intuitive to understand – it is difficult to imagine exactly what a contention value of “6.5” means. But it is instead much more intuitive to think about (and analyze) contention as something that ranges from more to less contention. I recoded contention so that 0-1.630=1, slightly contentious; 1.631-3.250=2, somewhat contentious; 3.251-4.880=3, moderately contentious; and 4.881+=4, highly contentious.

Tone. Tone can range from 0 to 100, but in the NewsBank sample it ranges from 1 to 90.24, with one being the most negative stories and 90.24 being the most positive stories. The closer to 0 a story gets, the more negative it is. Here, we can see that the stories in my sample tend towards the lower end of this range, with the mean being ~ 25 . It is interesting to note that while the maximum is 90, the minimum is 1, showing that the most negative stories are almost completely negative, while even the most positive stories are not completely positive.

From this univariate analysis of tone, given the way that the stories are clustered in tone scores on the more negative end of the spectrum I recoded the variable into an ordinal tone

variable consisting of four ordered categories at an attempt to mitigate any skewedness towards the more negative stories. I recoded this categorical tone variable based on tone's mean and standard deviation statistics. This resulted in the following categories: 0-9.0=1, completely negative; 9.01-40=2, more negative; 40.01-56.0=3, somewhat negative; 56.0+=4, more positive.

Segment. This “segment” variable measures the individual stories for each event. So, Table 10 shows that the maximum number of stories one event had was twenty-four articles, with the mean being around three stories per event.

Descriptives for all independent variables. In Table 7, we see that the counties in my analyses average: 72% White population; about two police killings between 2013-2020 pre-George Floyd's murder; 7.5% Hispanic/Latino population; 1.09 White/Black employment inequality; a rate of 203 full-time sworn officers per 100,000 citizens; somewhat urban, metro or non-metro adjacent counties with a population of 20,000-200,000; are more likely to have voted for Trump in the 2016 presidential election; averaged about 7 protests in 2020; have about 12% of the population comprised by 15-24-year-olds; and average about a population of about 15% that have a bachelors and are at least 25-years-old.

Bi-Variate Analysis

Contention. In Table 8, I present zero-order bi-variate correlations between contention, ordinal contention, and the independent and control variables. Contention and ordinal contention have similar correlations across all the independent and control variables. Firstly, I look at the correlations between contention, ordinal contention, the percentage of the White population, the number of police killings, and the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population, which are all variables I am using to measure racial threat and grievance in my analysis. Contention and

ordinal contention are negatively correlated with the percentage of the White population (contention $r=-.15$, $p<0.01$; ordinal contention $r=-.12$, $p<0.01$), positively correlated with the number of police killings (contention $r=.20$, $p<0.01$; ordinal contention $r=.22$, $p<0.01$), and positively correlated with the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population (contention $r=.20$, $p<0.01$; ordinal contention $r=.19$, $p<0.01$). These correlations show that counties that had an increased percentage of White population had decreased protest contention. Additionally, counties that had increased incidents of police killings and an increased Hispanic/Latino population had increased protest contention. We can imagine that counties with an increased White population may have less grievances and incidents with law enforcement agencies, whereas counties with increased Hispanic/Latino and other minority populations and increased police killings of citizens may have increased grievances against law enforcement agencies. So, increased contention would make sense in conjunction with these increased grievances and police presence amongst these communities. Furthermore, these counties with increased Hispanic/Latino populations and increased police killings may be viewed as more justified in their grievances for racial justice and against police brutality, leading any increased protest contention in these areas to be seen as more threatening.

Next, I conducted bi-variate correlation tests with protest contention, ordinal protest contention, the ratio of White/Black employment inequality, the FTSO rate, the urban/rural categorization of a county, and the 2016 presidential election vote of a county, which are all variables I am using to measure the impact of community characteristics. Contention and ordinal contention have no significant correlation with White/Black employment inequality, are positively correlated with the FTSO rate (contention $r=.14$, $p<0.01$; ordinal contention $r=.16$, $p<0.01$), are negatively correlated with the urban/rural categorization (contention $r=-.14$, $p<0.01$;

ordinal contention $r=-.15$, $p<0.01$), and negatively correlated with the 2016 presidential election vote of a county (contention and ordinal contention $r=-.19$, $p<0.01$). Although it is surprising that the White/Black employment inequality does not play into protest contention, given that higher employment inequality may insinuate increased racial inequality in other areas in a community, as seen in the descriptive analysis in Table 7, this ratio averages around one (indicating virtually no employment inequality between White and Black 16-year-olds). From these correlations we see that counties that had an increased FTSO rate had increased protest contention. Furthermore, counties that were more rural and more likely to have voted for Trump in the 2016 presidential election had decreased protest contention. Both findings make sense: counties with increased police officers had increased protest contention at the racial injustice and policing protests in 2020 because they likely had increased grievances and protest activity. Conversely, counties that are more rural and voted for Trump in 2016 may have less grievances (around racial justice and police brutality) and less protest activity.

Finally, I look at the correlations between contention, ordinal contention, the number of protests in a county, the percentage of the youth population, and the percentage of the population that has a bachelor's degree at 25-years-old, which are my control variables in my analysis. Contention and ordinal contention are positively correlated with the number of protests that occurred in 2020 in a county (contention $r=.21$, $p<0.01$; ordinal contention $r=.23$, $p<0.01$), have no significant correlation with the percentage of the youth population, and are positively correlated with the percentage of the population that has a bachelor's and is at least 25-years-old (contention $r=.22$, $p<0.01$; ordinal contention $r=.24$, $p<0.01$). These correlations show that counties that had increased protest activity and a higher percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree had increased protest contention. While it follows from contention theorists

that counties with increased protest activity would have increased contention (McAdam 1982; McAdam et. al 2001), it is surprising to note that counties with increased populations with bachelor's degrees had increased protest contention. One reason for this may be that counties with populations that are more educated may be more aware of and interested in political and economic issues, leading law enforcement agencies to employ more contentious tactics at protests to subdue protesters' tactics and delegitimize their claims-making and political power.

(Table 8 here)

Tone. In Table 9, I present the results of bi-variate correlations between news story tone, ordinal news story tone, and the independent and control variables. Tone and ordinal tone have similar correlations across all the independent and control variables. Firstly, I look at the correlations between tone, ordinal tone, the percentage of the White population, the number of police killings, and the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population, which are all variables I am using to measure racial threat and grievance in my analysis. Tone and ordinal tone are positively correlated with the percentage of the White population (tone and ordinal tone $r=.11$, $p<0.01$), has no significant correlation with the number of police killings, and is negatively correlated with the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population (tone $r=-.09$, $p<0.05$; ordinal tone $r=-.07$, $p<0.05$). From this, counties that had an increased percentage of a White population had increasingly positive news coverage of protests. Inversely, counties that had an increased percentage of a Hispanic/Latino population had more negative news coverage of protests. This is in alignment with racial threat theory, which would expect to see more negative news coverage in places with increased minority populations or decreased White populations (Blalock 1967; Blauner 1971; Blumer 1958; Bonilla-Silva 2015). It makes sense that tone may not be correlated to police killings, as the presence of increased grievances may provide “validation” to protest

activity, which news media would not want to portray if they were in adherence to the protest paradigm (Halloran et. al 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Hertog and McLeod 1995, 2001; Brown and Harlow 2019; Harlow et. al 2020; Harlow and Bachmann 2023).

Next, I look at the correlations between tone, ordinal tone, the ratio of White/Black employment inequality, the FTSO rate, the urban/rural categorization of a county, and the 2016 presidential election vote of a county, which are all variables I am using to measure the impact of community characteristics. Tone and ordinal tone are have no significant correlation with White/Black employment inequality, negatively correlated with the FTSO rate (tone and ordinal tone $r=-.10$, $p<0.01$), positively correlated with the urban/rural categorization (tone $r=.11$, $p<0.01$; ordinal tone $r=.10$, $p<0.01$), and positively correlated with the 2016 presidential election vote of a county (tone and ordinal tone $r=.14$, $p<0.01$). So, counties that had an increased FTSO rate had more negative news coverage of protests. This would be in alignment with protest paradigm theory, which would assert that these news stories may have sourced more from authorities (demeaning protesters and their logic), and with news media seeking to dehumanize and diminish the power of protests, especially since counties with increased rates of officers may actually have increased grievances, leading news media to attempt to decrease the validity of protesters' claims by increasing negativity of protest news coverage. Additionally, counties that were more rural and were more likely to have voted for Trump in the 2016 presidential election had more positive news coverage of protests. One potential reason for this is that these more rural counties and counties that voted for Trump in 2016 may have had less protests in general, and protests that occurred may have been in favor of law enforcement agencies (i.e., Blue Lives Matter gatherings), which would be in alignment with the status quo, leading news media to

want to highlight them more favorably. Essentially, these counties are less threatening as they are less politically powerful.

Finally, I conducted bi-variate correlations between news story tone, ordinal story tone, the number of protests in a county, the percentage of the youth population, and the percentage of the population that has a bachelor's degree at 25-years-old, which are my control variables in my analysis. Tone and ordinal tone are negatively correlated with the number of protests that occurred in 2020 in a county (tone $r = -.14$, $p < 0.01$; ordinal tone $r = -.12$, $p < 0.01$), has no significant correlation with the percentage of the youth population, and is negatively correlated with the percentage of the population that has a bachelors and is at least 25-years-old (tone $r = -.12$, $p < 0.01$; ordinal tone $r = -.11$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that counties that had increased protest activity in 2020 and an increased population with bachelor's degrees had more negative news coverage of protests. It aligns with the protest paradigm that counties that had increased protest activity experienced more negative news coverage, since news media would see the increased activity as a larger threat to the status quo and potentially increased political power, so they would tailor more negative news articles to combat it. It is surprising that while the youth population has no significant correlation with tone, the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree is significant. One potential reason for this is that while younger protesters may already be viewed by news media as less politically powerful (as they are less likely to contribute to the community economically as older populations), having a more educated population that may be more aware of issues, have more economic power, and may be more inclined to mobilize is more threatening to the news media, leading them to again employ more negative news coverage of protests.

(Table 9 here)

In summary, the correlations between protest contention, ordinal protest contention, and the independent variables, I found that racial threat, grievance, and community characteristics may all impact protest contention. Counties with a larger White population had less protest contention, possibly because law enforcement agencies and state authorities view these counties as less threatening than counties with an increased Hispanic/Latino population, which saw increased protest contention. Furthermore, counties that more police killings experienced increased protest contention, which is consistent with grievance-based theoretical expectations since these counties have more justification in their grievances against racial injustice and police brutality, leading state authorities to utilize more contentious tactics to diminish protesters' legitimacy and potentially heighten flashpoints for protest contention (McAdam 1982; McAdam et. al 2001; Waddington and King 2005; Waddington 2008). For community characteristics it was shown that counties with larger police (FTSOs they occur rate) had greater levels of protest contention, which is also consistent with grievance-based theoretical expectations since these counties likely have increased resources (police force and equipment) to deploy at police protests as they occur. On the other hand, those counties with an more law enforcement per capita may have more protest contention because they have increased police brutality and racial injustice, and protest activity, leading to more contentious tactics among protesters. Additionally, counties that were more rural and voted for Trump in 2016 had lower levels of protest contention. This makes sense because state authorities likely view these counties as less threatening, therefore necessitating less resources and tactics to subdue the few protests that occurred in these areas, although demonstrations in these counties may have been more focused on support for law enforcement rather than against it. With the control variables, there were significant correlations between contention, ordinal contention, and protest activity and the percentage of the population

with a bachelor's degree. Counties with increased protest activity and increased populations with a bachelor's degree had increased protest contention. These counties may be more aware of and interested in these political issues due to both factors, leading to them having increased "repertoires of contention" (Tilly 1978, 1995, 2008), which would result in potentially more contentious tactics used by both protesters and law enforcement agencies.

Turning to the bi-variate correlation tests of news story tone, ordinal story tone, and the independent variables I found that racial threat and certain community characteristics may impact the tone of news coverage of protests, but that grievance (i.e., the number of police killings) may not impact the tone of the news coverage of protests as it had no significant correlation with tone or ordinal tone. For example, counties with larger White populations saw more positive news coverage of protests, whereas counties with larger Hispanic/Latino populations experienced more negative news coverage of protests. This is consistent with racial threat theory, which leads us to expect that counties with larger White populations would be perceived as less threatening in comparison to counties with larger Hispanic/Latino populations. Regarding community characteristics, counties that had higher levels of law enforcement per capita (FTSO rate) had more negative news coverage, and counties that were more rural and voted for Trump in 2016 had more positive news coverage of protests. So, while counties with increased rates of police officers may have news media that employ more negative coverage of protests to combat protesters' political power and tactics, counties that are more rural or voted for Trump in 2016 may have had decreased protest activity or had protest activity in favor of the status quo (in support of law enforcement agencies, for example), which news media would favor and portray more positively to again combat protesters' political power and tactics. With the control variables we saw that those counties with increased protest activity during this time

and increased populations with bachelor's degrees had more negative news coverage of protests, which follows because both instances could potentially boost awareness and political opportunities for protests, which news media would attempt to disrupt through negative portrayals of the protests and protesters.

Although the strength of these coefficients is limited, they still show some relationship between news story tone (adherence to the protest paradigm), contention, racial threat, and the impact of certain community characteristics. The univariate and bivariate analyses establish the basis for proceeding to multivariate analysis, which primarily takes the form of multivariate regression analysis.

Multivariate Regression Analysis

While the bi-variate correlation analysis is useful to conduct for a variety of reasons, especially when using aggregate county-level data, what follows builds to a multivariate regression analysis to understand the full picture and conduct more rigorous testing of my research expectations, especially to determine the extent to which racial threat explains protest event contention and the extent to which protest paradigm explains variation in the tone that protests received in news coverage. I move to a multivariate analysis because, while the correlations above are interesting and provide some initial context, there are no control variables implemented, so other factors could be potentially confounding the correlation results. Below, I will examine OLS regressions of contention and tone with the independent variables. Then, I will explore ordinal regressions between the recoded ordinal contention variable with the independent variables, and an ordinal regression with a recoded ordinal tone variable and the independent variables. Ordinal logistic regression is based on the proportional odds assumption, which states

that all the ordered categories of a dependent variable have the same odds of occurring (Fullerton 2009). This is important when wanting to conduct multivariate analysis and trying to determine any possible effects of confounding factors. For example, a county with more or less protests, a higher or lower FTSO rate, who was more or less likely to vote for Trump or Clinton in 2016, etc., should be just as likely to have more contentious protests as less contentious protests. So, if the ordinal regression results are significant, then that means that a county with any of the characteristics of the independent variables are disproportionately likely to experience more or less contentious protests.

I conduct my regressions in blocks to infer which variables are associated with changes in the effects of variables already entered into the regression model. This allows me to test each theory/concept (racial threat, grievance, and impact of community characteristics) by entering a distinct block of measures that represent the underlying concepts of the theories I am examining. I use three different models and combinations of variables. Model 1 includes my primary variables measuring the concepts of racial threat and grievance: the percentage of the White population, the number of police killings between 2013-2020 pre-George Floyd's murder, and the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population. Model 2 includes variables used to measure the impact of community characteristics: the variables included in Model 1, the White/Black employment inequality ratio, the FTSO rate in a county, the urban/rural categorization of a county, and the 2016 presidential election vote. Model 3 includes the variables from Models 1 and 2, and three control variables: the number of protests that occurred in a county in 2020, the youth population, and the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree.

Contention. Surprisingly, Table 10 shows no significant relationships between contention and the variables, except for Model 1 in which the number of police killings is significant

($r=.021$, $p<0.05$). However, this significance is rendered moot after implementing community characteristics and the control variables. This does not follow from the correlations seen in Table 8, which highlighted the potential relationships between contention, racial threat, grievance, and community characteristics. One reason for this is that contention is skewed towards the lower end of the spectrum in this sample, which leads me to conduct more rigorous analyses through recoding contention into an ordinal variable. Although contention exists on a spectrum, there can be imagined to be certain “cut points” at which contention increases or decreases, leading them to be categorically different. For example, a protest with low contention - such as an unmoving vigil with little/no police presence - can shift to be somewhat contentious, such as the vigil starting to march across a city and disrupt traffic flow. These two instances would be seen as categorically different in their contention, especially if law enforcement agencies at the event shifted the contentiousness of their tactics as well. For example, a protest that is standing at a town square, but is unmoving and peaceful, that sees law enforcement officers suddenly throw teargas into the crowd. A once low contention protest has then shifted into a categorically different level of protest contention. Hence, the following ordinal regression analyses.

(Table 10 here)

Compared to the above OLS regression analyses, the regression between ordinal contention and the three models in Table 11 show some more stable findings. Again, the number of police killings has a significant relationship in Model 1 with a coefficient of .031 ($p<0.05$) that dissipates in Models 2 and 3. In Model 2, the FTSO rate is significant with coefficient of .003 ($p<0.05$) but is not significant in Model 3 after including the control variables. The last significant variable is the urban/rural categorization of the county in Models 2 and 3. The coefficient for the first category in the urban/rural variable – Most urban, metro county with

population of 200,000 or more – are 19.031 in Model 2 and 19.409 in Model 3 (both $p < 0.01$). The coefficient for the second category in the urban/rural variable – Somewhat urban, metro or non-metro adjacent with county pop 20,000-200,000 – are 18.75 in Model 2, and 19.063 in Model 3 (both $p < 0.01$). The coefficient for the third category in the urban/rural variable – Somewhat rural, metro or non-metro adjacent with a county pop 2,500-20,000 – are 18.115 in Model 2 and 18.649 in Model 3 (both $p < 0.01$). The parameter for category 4 was set to zero due to redundancy, so no coefficients were reported. Essentially, this highlights that after accounting for all of the other variables - the percentage of the White population, the number of police killings, the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population, the White/Black employment inequality, the FTSO rate, the 2016 presidential vote, the number of protests that occurred, the percentage of the youth population, and the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree - the more urban a county is, the more protest contention increased in 2020 in that county.

(Table 11 here)

While the model fit statistics are fine and show significance, the goodness of fit statistics show some concern given that they are also significant (with goodness of fit, you are looking to have no significance, as significance here implies that there are differences between the model and the data). Since there was little significance found in the OLS regression with contention, this makes sense. However, it is still relevant to point out that, after controlling for all other factors, more urban counties have increased protest contention in racial injustice and policing protests in 2020.

Tone. Table 12 showcases OLS regression analyses for tone with the three models. In Model 1, there is only significance with the percentage of the White population, indicating that with each one-percent increase in the White population, the tone of the news coverage increases by 0.128. This is in alignment with racial threat theory, which would state that increases in Black or minority populations would increase racial threat as viewed by state authorities. In this analysis, I look at this theory inversely: the Whiter a county becomes, the less threatening it is deemed by state authorities, the public, and law enforcement agencies. This White population variable is not significant in Model 2, which looks at the impact of community characteristics, but after including the control variables in Model 3, it becomes significant again. In Model 2, there is significance between tone and the number of police killings, the FTSO rate, and the 2016 presidential election vote. With each single-incident increase in police killings, tone increases (becomes more positive) by .181. This is surprising, since we would expect to see counties with increased police killings to have more negative news coverage of protests, to essentially diminish the claims-making of the protests, but here we see that these police killings may be being used by news media as potential justification for the protests. The FTSO rate has an inverse relationship with tone, so with each unit increase in the FTSO rate, there is a decrease in the tone (more negative) for news coverage of protests by .015. This would adhere to the protest paradigm, with news media potentially portraying protests more negatively by either sourcing officials (like law enforcement officers) more, or portraying protests more negatively to increase the power of state authorities and maintain the status quo. The 2016 presidential vote has a positive relationship with tone, so if a county voted for Trump they had a 3.591 increase in positive tone in news coverage of protests. As described above in the correlation analysis, this could be explained by counties such as these that voted for Trump in 2016 may have had less protest activity, and any

protest activity that occurred may be more likely to have been protest favorable to the status quo (such as Blue Lives Matter demonstrations or Trump rallies). Despite these findings in Model 2, in Model 3, only the percentage of the White population and the number of police killings are significant after implementing the control variables.

(Table 12 here)

Table 13 shows the results for the ordinal regression I conducted between ordinal tone and the independent variables. In Models 1-3, the percentage of the white population has a positive relationship with ordinal tone. This indicates that the higher the percentage of the White population in a county, the more negative news coverage of protests that county had, which is in alignment with racial threat theory. The number of police killings and the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population are not significant in Model 1. In Models 2 and 3, the urban/rural categorization of a county is significant and has an inverse relationship with tone. The coefficient for the first category in the urban/rural variable - Most urban, metro county with population of 200,000 or more - are -2.428 in Model 2 and -2.469 in Model 3 (both $p < 0.01$). The coefficient for the second category in the urban/rural variable - Somewhat urban, metro or non-metro adjacent with county pop 20,000 - 200,000 - are -1.877 in Model 2, and -2.052 in Model 3 (both $p < 0.05$). The coefficient for the third category in the urban/rural variable - Somewhat rural, metro or non-metro adjacent with a county pop 2,500-20,000 - are -2.532 in Model 2 and -2.623 in Model 3 (both $p < 0.01$). The parameter for category 4 was set to zero due to redundancy, so no coefficient was reported. This means that after controlling for all other variables, the more urban a county becomes, the increased negative news coverage of protests a county had in 2020. The White/Black Employment inequality, FTSO rate, and the 2016 presidential election vote were

not significant in Model 2. Only the White population and the urban/rural categorization of a county are significant in Model 3.

(Table 13)

Overall, these findings are somewhat surprising. Given the racial threat focus and theoretical foundation in my analyses, it makes sense that counties with increased percentages of White populations have increased positive news coverage of protests, because the White population still holds the majority of the political and economic power in that area. Also, one reason that rural counties may have more positive news coverage of protests is that they may have been less “critical” in their protest tactics, focusing on building a sense of community rather than trying to dismantle the (racist) status quo. This is a trend I noticed while conducting my informal content analysis when collecting the NewsBank articles; smaller, more rural areas harped more on a “community building/uplifting” approach and tended to have less protester participation. An example of this can be found in Appendix A, which includes a full-length article from my sample. This was one of the more positive articles, which repeatedly notes a smaller protest that occurred in a smaller town, remained purposefully peaceful, explained that while the protest was about Black Lives Matter, their focus was on “peace, love, and unity”, and the protesters even go so far as to thank the police department/police authoritative figures for their “assistance at the event”. Finally, it is surprising to note that the inverse the FTSO rate has with tone. However, it was not significant when controlling for the Trump/Clinton 2016 vote, the number of protests, the youth population percentage, or the percentage of the population with a bachelor’s degree over 25-years-old. One explanation for this could be that there is an effect between these variables and the White population, the number of police killings, the

Hispanic/Latino population, the White/Black employment inequality, and the urban/rural category.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to explore several questions about the relationships between police protest tone, police protest contention, racial threat, protest grievance, and the impact of community characteristics. First, my analysis described the level of protest contentiousness in North Carolina from May 27, 2020, to August 31, 2020. Second, the analysis provided a summary measure to describe the overall sentiment of news stories about police protests published by media outlets when covering protests in North Carolina during this time. Last, the analysis presented multivariate models testing the extent that police protest event contentiousness and police protest news story tone can be explained by racial threat, protest issue grievance, and community characteristics. In examining protest event contention, I found that many of the protests during this period were only “somewhat contentious,” with them leaning on the lower end of the contention spectrum averaging a score of about 1.6 out of 6.5. When looking at the overall sentiment of the news coverage of protests, it seemed to be highly negative, with scores pooling towards the lower end of the tone spectrum, with a theoretical range of 1-99, averaging at around a score of 25. The closer the tone gets to zero, the more negative it is. This potential discrepancy is important, showcasing that the news coverage of protests during this time may be disproportionately negative in comparison to the actual empirical contention present at the protests, which would be in adherence with the protest paradigm (Halloran et. al 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Hertog and McLeod 1995, 2001; Brown and Harlow 2019; Harlow et. al 2020; Harlow and Bachmann 2023) as news media is intentionally portraying protests more negatively as a way to delegitimize protest activity.

After developing these preliminary descriptive statistics on contention, tone, and the independent and control variables, I conduct bivariate correlation analysis between contention,

ordinal contention, tone, ordinal tone, and the independent variables. In my correlation analysis between contention, ordinal contention, and the independent variables, I find significance across variables that may indicate that racial threat, grievance, and community characteristics may all impact protest contention. I found that counties with increased White populations had decreased protest contention and counties with an increased Hispanic/Latino population had increased protest contention. These both may implicate that state authorities may assess threat and specifically choose the contentiousness of their tactics based upon the percentage of the White population (or Hispanic/Latino population) of a county, as reflected in the overall measure of protest contention. In terms of grievance, counties that increased police killings saw increased protest contention. This makes sense as these counties would have an increased justification and potentially increased political power in their claims-making against racial injustice and police brutality, not only increasing contention on the protester side but potentially on the law enforcement side as well, as they would use more contentious tactics to mitigate the protesters' power.

As for the impact of community characteristics, counties with an increased FTSO rate had increased protest contention. Two reasons for this may be that counties with an increased FTSO rate may have increased grievances, or law enforcement agencies simply have increased resources to be able to carry out more contentious tactics. Furthermore, counties that were more rural and voted for Trump in 2016 had decreased protest contention. Potential reasons for this relationship may be that more rural counties and counties that voted for Trump in 2016 may have decreased grievances when it comes to racial injustice and police brutality, the law enforcement agencies in these counties may have decreased resources, the citizens in these counties are seen as less threatening due to lower political or economic power, these counties may have had less

protest activity, or any protest activity may be in support of the status quo (such as Blue Lives Matter demonstrations or Trump rallies). Regarding the control variables, counties with increased protest activity and an increased population with bachelor's degrees had increased protest contention. This may be because these counties are more politically and socially aware of social movement mobilization and racial injustice and policing issues, or they may be "protest hubs" such as the state capitol, which may lead both protesters and state authorities to use more contentious tactics as these places would be deemed more threatening to the status quo.

In my correlation analysis between tone, ordinal tone, and the independent variables, I found that racial threat and certain community characteristics may impact the tone of news coverage of protests, but the grievance of the number of police killings may not impact the tone of the news coverage of protests as it had no significant correlation with tone or ordinal tone. Regarding racial threat, counties with increased White populations saw increased positive news coverage of protests, whereas counties with increased Hispanic/Latino populations saw more negative news coverage of protests. This is in alignment with racial threat theory, as counties with increased White populations may not only be seen as less threatening to state authorities but may also already be viewed as less legitimate in grievances around racial injustice and police brutality as they may have less incidents with either issue. Either way, news media essentially may not have to use news coverage of protests in these counties as much of a delegitimizing tool as in other more threatening counties. Concerning the impact of community characteristics, counties that had an increased FTSO rate had increased negative news coverage of protests. This may be due to news media employing more negative coverage of protests to delegitimize them as these counties may have increased grievances against law enforcement agencies, or it may be because the news articles are relying more on official sources (i.e., quotes from law enforcement

officers on what happened at a protest). Furthermore, counties that were more rural and voted for Trump in 2017 had more positive news coverage of protests. These counties may have had decreased protest activity, or had protest activity in favor of the status quo, neither necessitating increased scrutiny from news media to maintain the status quo. Between tone, ordinal tone, and the control variables, it was found that counties with increased protest activity and increased populations with bachelor's degrees had more negative news coverage of protests. This follows a similar logic of contention discussed above: these counties may be more socially and politically conscious, making state authorities and news media more sensitive in wanting to maintain the status quo.

Next, I conducted multivariate analysis for contention and tone using three different models in each regression. Model 1 includes the percentage of the White population and the Hispanic/Latino population to measure racial threat and the number of police killings that occurred from 2013 to 2020 pre-George Floyd's murder to measure the concept of grievance. Model 2 includes a ratio for White/Black employment inequality, the FTSO rate, the urban/rural categorization of a county, and a county's 2016 presidential election vote (Trump or Clinton) as community characteristics. Model 3 includes all previous variables, adding the number of protests that occurred in a county in 2020, the youth population, and the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree as control variables. First, I examine an OLS regression between contention and the three models, then an ordinal regression between a recoded ordinal contention variable and the three models. After this, I analyze an OLS regression between tone and the three models, then an ordinal regression between a recoded ordinal tone variable and the three models.

In the OLS regression between contention and the three models, there was only significance in Model 1, with the number of police killings, although this is not followed in Models 2 and 3. So, this regression did not seem to show significance for a relationship between contention, racial threat, grievance, and the characteristics of a community. This was surprising, given the findings in my correlation analyses. Given that contention seemed to be skewed toward the lower end of the spectrum, and although contention exists on a spectrum this spectrum is ordered in nature (low contention, medium contention, high contention), it seemed appropriate to confirm this non-significance by recoding contention into an ordinal variable and run ordinal regression analyses. This regression showcased significance for the urban/rural categorization of a county. Essentially, after controlling for all other variables, the more urban a county was, the more protest contention that county had in the 2020 protests. While these findings in my multivariate analysis are limited and are not promising when it comes to examining the relationship between contention, racial threat, grievance, and the impact of other community characteristics, it is relevant to point out this relationship between contention and rurality.

In the OLS regression between tone and the three models, I found significance for the percentage of the White population in Models 1 and 3, significance for the number of police killings in Models 2 and 3. The conclusion from the relationship between the percentage of the White population and tone is that as the White population of a county increases, the more positive the news coverage of protests in that county is. This is in alignment with racial threat, which would assert the inverse: as the minority population of a county increases, the more negative the news coverage of these racial injustice and policing protests would be. As for the number of police killings having a significant relationship with tone after controlling for community characteristics and implementing the control variables. Essentially, after controlling

for these other factors, as the number of police killings in a county increases, the more positive the news coverage of the protests in that county was. This is contrary to my research expectations, although it makes sense: these protests may be seen as more justified, since the protesters have increased grievances (police killings) to cite. Similarly to contention, tone was skewed towards the more negative side, I followed this OLS regression analysis with an ordinal regression analysis using a recoded ordinal tone variable. This ordinal regression analysis highlighted more stable findings for the percentage of the White population across all three models and the urban/rural categorization of a county in Models 2 and 3. Ordinal tone has a positive relationship with the percentage of the White population, indicating that the whiter a county becomes, the more positive news coverage of protests - again, in alignment with my conceptualization of racial threat theory. Ordinal tone has an inverse relationship with the urban/rural categorization of a county, indicating that the more urban a county becomes, the more negative news coverage of protests.

In summary, the descriptive analyses starting to examine the relationship between contention and tone highlight a pertinent finding: that the news coverage in North Carolina of the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests seem to have been disproportionately negative in comparison to the empirical protest contention that occurred. Another finding from this thesis is that my sample of news articles from NewsBank from North Carolinian sources covering the 2020 racial injustice and policing protests were more negative, less positive, and had increased themes of conflict and power in my comparative analysis between this sample and Boyd et. al's (2022) sample of *New York Times* articles used for the development of the LIWC dictionary in their "Test Kitchen Corpus". This shows that not only is news coverage of protests different from regular news articles, but they are also more negative, which is in adherence with the protest

paradigm (Halloran et. al 1970; Gitlin 1980; Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Hertog and McLeod 1995, 2001; Brown and Harlow 2019; Harlow et. al 2020; Harlow and Bachmann 2023). While my bivariate correlations were promising and showed relationships between contention, ordinal contention, tone, ordinal tone, and the independent variables, my OLS and ordinal regression analysis resulted in unstable findings supporting the relevance of racial threat, the concept of grievance, and the impact of community characteristics on contention and tone. The most stable findings include significant relationships between: ordinal contention and the urban/rural categorization of a county, ordinal tone and the percentage of the White population, and ordinal tone and the urban/rural categorization of a county. The more urban a county was, the more protest contention that county had in 2020. The more White population a county had, the more positive news coverage of protests that county had. The more urban a county was, the more negative the news coverage of protests.

While these regression results are not entirely promising, these multivariate results are based on a contention dictionary and analysis conducted using LIWC which is strictly quantitative and may neglect key details not captured by machine learning or word counts. Future research on protest paradigm would benefit from a qualitative approach, such as hand-coding themes or classifying articles based upon the four typologies of protest paradigm (riot, confrontation, spectacle, debate) as seen through Chan and Lee's (1984), Brown and Harlow's (2019), Harlow et. al's (2020), and Harlow and Bachmann's (2023) work. Given that news media in the United States can tend to be biased towards more conservative or liberal ideologies, protest paradigm's hard stance that all news media is always negatively portrays social movements is less applicable than previously thought. Keeping this and the results of this study in mind, future research would benefit from a more discursive approach to protest paradigm theory that takes

other factors into account, such as specific kinds of protest contention, which may impact news coverage of social movements. Amenta, Caren, and Yuan (2024) conduct such research, developing four categories of news articles – ranging across low-to-high substance and unfavorable and favorable sentiment – which include hard news, bad news, good news, and soft news. It would also be helpful to include data on protester race, protest size, protest actors, public opinion on protests/protesters and specific protest subjects, police budget and/or usage of military equipment, and include more market characteristics (such as psychographics) to further determine the relationship between tone, contention, racial threat, protest paradigm, and community characteristics and the capitalist aspect of news coverage. Additionally, having a larger sample from different states and possibly aggregating to the “place” level of analysis may provide for more concise, regional results, which is especially important given the nature of news media, the news media cycle, and the news coverage of protests.

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TABLES

Table 1. Top 10 News Sources in North Carolina with Most Stories from May 27, 2020 – Aug 31, 2020.

News Source	Number of Stories
The News & Observer (Raleigh)	114
The Charlotte Observer (Charlotte)	72
Winston-Salem Journal (Winston-Salem)	65
CBS – 17 WNCN (Charlotte)	58
The Herald-Sun (Durham)	40
Star-News (Wilmington)	40
News & Record (Greensboro)	37
ABC – 9 WSOC (Charlotte)	37
The Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville)	28
Fox – 8 WGHP (High Point)	27

Table 2. Top 10 Locations in North Carolina with Most Protests from May 27, 2020 – August 31, 2020.

Location	Number of Protests
Raleigh	48
Charlotte	36
Winston-Salem	34
Durham	29
Wilmington	22
Asheville	22
Greensboro	19
Chapel Hill	18
Fayetteville	12
Graham	11

Table 3. Frequency of Event Counties.

County Name	Frequency	Percent	Cont.		
Wake	46	13.3	Brunswick	2	.6
Mecklenburg	37	10.7	Carteret	2	.6
Forsyth	32	9.2	Chatham	2	.6
Durham	21	6.1	Hoke	2	.6
Buncombe	16	4.6	Johnston	2	.6
Guilford	16	4.6	Lenoir	2	.6
New Hanover	13	3.8	Madison	2	.6
Cumberland	12	3.5	Nash	2	.6
Orange	12	3.5	Randolph	2	.6
Alamance	11	3.2	Rockingham	2	.6
Pitt	8	2.3	Stanly	2	.6
Gaston	6	1.7	Union	2	.6
Haywood	6	1.7	Wilkes	2	.6
Cabarrus	5	1.4	Wilson	2	.6
Craven	5	1.4	Ashe	1	.3
Davidson	5	1.4	Avery	1	.3
Henderson	5	1.4	Beaufort	1	.3
Jackson	5	1.4	Cherokee	1	.3
Robeson	5	1.4	Chowan	1	.3
Stokes	5	1.4	Dare	1	.3
Rowan	4	1.2	Gates	1	.3
Surry	4	1.2	Harnett	1	.3
Burke	3	.9	Hyde	1	.3
Catawba	3	.9	Macon	1	.3
Cleveland	3	.9	Moore	1	.3
Iredell	3	.9	Pasquotank	1	.3
McDowell	3	.9	Pender	1	.3
Onslow	3	.9	Swain	1	.3
Person	3	.9	Wayne	1	.3
Watauga	3	.9	Total	346	100.0

Table 4. Frequency of Source Counties.

Source County	Frequency	Percent	Cont.		
Mecklenburg	141	16.9	Gaston	3	.4
Wake	122	14.6	Richmond	3	.4
Guilford	81	9.7	Stanly	3	.4
Forsyth	69	8.3	Carteret	2	.2
Wayne	60	7.2	Cherokee	2	.2
New Hanover	49	5.9	Cleveland	2	.2
Durham	46	5.5	Macon	2	.2
Cumberland	28	3.4	Moore	2	.2
Iredell	27	3.2	Perquimans	2	.2
Alamance	24	2.9	Randolph	2	.2
Pitt	22	2.6	Stokes	2	.2
Buncombe	15	1.8	Wilkes	2	.2
Davidson	10	1.2	Yadkin	2	.2
Haywood	8	1.0	Ashe	1	.1
Burke	7	.8	Brunswick	1	.1
Orange	7	.8	Chatham	1	.1
Pasquotank	7	.8	Chowan	1	.1
Craven	6	.7	Dare	1	.1
Jackson	6	.7	Greene	1	.1
Surry	6	.7	Harnett	1	.1
Wilson	6	.7	Hertford	1	.1
McDowell	5	.6	Hyde	1	.1
Rockingham	5	.6	Lenoir	1	.1
Rowan	5	.6	Martin	1	.1
Scotland	5	.6	Nash	1	.1
Beaufort	4	.5	Onslow	1	.1
Catawba	4	.5	Swain	1	.1
Person	4	.5	Union	1	.1
Robeson	4	.5	Vance	1	.1
Watauga	4	.5			
Cabarrus	3	.4	Total	835	100.0

Table 5. Definitions/Example Words for Select LIWC Variables.

LIWC Variable	Definition or Example Dictionary Words
Tone	Degree of positive/negative tone – the closer to zero, the more negative the content is.
Positive tone	Accomplish, good, well, new, love, altruism, joy, kindness, better, benefit, light-hearted
Negative tone	Bad, wrong, hate, fright, abandon, accuse, ptsd, quarrel, rage, grievance, alarmed
Power	Order, resist, allow, power, oppose, obey, permit, police, political, comply, repress
Conflict	Fight, kill, attack, annoy, argue, assailant, assault, conflict, co-opt, confrontation, found guilty
Dictionary	Percent of words captured by LIWC dictionary

Table 6. Comparison of Means and Standard Deviation between NYT (from Test Kitchen) and Sample of Articles from NewsBank.

Variable	NewsBank Mean	NewsBank Standard Deviation	NYT Mean	NYT Standard Deviation
Tone	24.64	16.07	37.08	22.3
Positive tone	1.7	0.96	2.33	1.25
Negative tone	1.56	0.76	1.38	1.25
Power	3.66	1.64	2.85	2.3
Conflict	1.83	1.03	0.41	0.47
Dictionary	80.76	5.1	80.34	5.61

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables*.

Concept	Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range	Notes
Contention	Contention	1.59	1.19	6.5	Philbrook-defined dictionary
Contention	Ordinal contention	1.52	.703	3	
Protest Paradigm	Sentiment	24.64	16.07	89.24	Low scores indicate more negative tone
Protest Paradigm	Ordinal sentiment	2.10	.680	3	
Segment	Segment	2.82	2.48	23	Number of articles per event
Racial Threat	Percent White	72.05	17.74	65.89	County-level ACS 2016-2020
Grievance	Number of police killings	2.09	3.57	26	Fatal encounters
Racial Threat	Percent Hispanic /Latino	7.50	4.12	22.33	County-level ACS 2016-2020
Community Characteristics	White/Black Employment Inequality	1.09	.21	2	County-level ACS 2016-2020
Community Characteristics	Full-Time Sworn Officer Rate	203.12	65.78	394.88	County-level LEAR 2016
Community Characteristics	Urban /Rural Category	2.07	1.15	3	Rural-Urban Continuum Codes, USDA 2013
Community Characteristics	County vote for Trump /Clinton in 2016	.76	.43	1	MEDSL Dataverse 2018
Control	Number of Protests	6.53	10.15	45	ACLED: May 27, 2020-August 31, 2020
Control	Percent Youth Population	12.24	3.39	24.31	County-level ACS 2016-2020
Control	Percent Bachelors 25yrs+	14.89	5.44	25.84	County-level ACS 2016-2020

*Notes: Contention N=346; Tone and Segment N=835; ACS, FE, LEAR 2016, MEDSL Dataverse, and USDA 2013 N=100

Table 8. Bivariate Correlations for Protest Contention and All Independent Variables*.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Contention	-										
2.Ordinal Contention	.91**	-									
3. Percent White	-.15**	-.12*	-								
4. Number of police killings	.20**	.22**	-.47**	-							
5. Percent Hispanic/Latino	.20**	.19**	-.62**	.51**	-						
6. White/Black Employment Inequality	-.04	-.08	.08	-.10	-.16**	-					
7. FTSO Rate	.14**	.16**	-.14*	.33**	.05	.02	-				
8. Urban/Rural	-.14**	-.15**	.21**	-.29**	-.32**	.48**	-.13*	-			
9. Trump/Clinton 2016	-.19**	-.19**	.52**	-.54**	-.49**	.11*	-.37**	.37**	-		
10. Number of protests	.21**	.23**	-.38**	.69**	.53**	-.14**	.69**	-.37**	-.71**	-	
11. Percent Youth	-.002	-.04	-.12*	-.10	-.04	-.04	.01	-.03	-.19**	-.08	-
12. Percent Bachelors	.22**	.24**	-.22**	.64**	.36	-.17**	.69**	-.42**	-.67**	.83**	.07

*Notes: N=346; **=p<0.01; *=p<0.05

Table 9. Bivariate Correlations Between News Article Tone and All Independent Variables*.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Tone	-										
2. Ordinal Tone	.88**	-									
3. Percent White	.11**	.11**	-								
4. Number of police killings	-.05	-.05	-.40**	-							
5. Percent Hispanic/Latino	-.09*	-.07*	-.58**	.52**	-						
6. White/Black Employment Inequality	.05	.02	.06	-.12**	-.16**	-					
7. FTSO Rate	-.10**	-.10**	.06**	.25**	-.07*	-.04	-				
8. Urban/Rural	.11**	.10**	.17**	-.28**	-.37**	.40**	-.17**	-			
9. Trump/Clinton 2016	.14**	.14**	.53**	-.61**	-.39**	.07*	-.36**	.26**	-		
10. Number of protests	-.14**	-.12**	-.23**	.72**	.49**	-.16**	.67**	-.35**	-.70**	-	
11. Percent Youth	-.03	-.04	-.10**	-.14**	-.17**	-.01	.01	-.10**	-.13**	-.15**	-
12. Percent Bachelors	-.12**	-.11**	-.11**	.69**	.27**	-.20**	.70**	-.42**	-.61**	.87**	-.01

*Notes: N=835; **=p<0.01; *=p<0.05

Table 10. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Protest Contention*.

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Percent White	-.001 (.585)	.001 (.006)	-.002 (.007)
Number of police killings	.021* (.009)	.014 (.012)	.008 (.013)
Percent Hispanic/Latino	.044 (.026)	.048 (.032)	.044 (.032)
White/Black Employment Inequality		.228 (.613)	.275 (.614)
FTSO rate		.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)
Urban/Rural		-.155 (.138)	-.120 (.141)
Trump/Clinton 2016		-.111 (.218)	-.026 (.231)
Number of protests			-.006 (.011)
Percent Youth			-.005 (.021)
Percent Bachelors			.023 (.020)
Constant	1.16 (.85)	.76 (.87)	.62 (.10)
R-square	.053	.066	.070
F statistic	6.3283	2.653	2.512
D.F.	3	9	10

*Notes: Coefficients with standard errors reported in parentheses.

N=346; **=p<0.01; *=p<0.05

Table 11. Ordinal Regression Predicting Ordinal Protest Contention*.

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Percent White	-.002 (.010)	-.002 (.011)	-.004 (.013)
Number of police killings	.031* (.016)	.010 (.017)	.009 (.022)
Percent Hispanic/Latino	.078 (.046)	.081 (.051)	.102 (.061)
White/Black Employment Inequality		-1.185 (3.016)	-.972 (2.813)
FTSO Rate		.003* (.001)	.004 (.002)
Most urban		19.031** (.779)	19.409** (.788)
Somewhat urban		18.75** (.883)	19.063** (.894)
Somewhat rural		18.115**	18.649**
Most rural		0 ^a	-
Trump/ Clinton 2016		.044 (.320)	.234 (.411)
Number of protests			-.021 (.020)
Percent Youth			-.051 (.042)
Percent Bachelors			.021 (.037)
Model Fit			
Chi-square	17.10**	30.284**	32.2391**
D.F.	3	9	12
Goodness of fit			
Pearson Chi-square	189.81	225.066**	212.158**
DF	171	165	162

*Notes: Coefficients with standard errors reported in parentheses.

N=346; **=p<0.01; *=p<0.05. a. Parameter set to zero because it is redundant.

Table 12. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting News Article Tone*.

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Percent White	.128* (.058)	.090 (.064)	.172* (.076)
Number of police killings	.009 (.073)	.181* (.084)	.332** (.116)
Percent Hispanic/Latino	-.187 (.247)	-.221 (.261)	.151 (.357)
White/Black Employment Inequality		2.841 (7.780)	.333 (7.875)
FTSO Rate		-.015* (.007)	.006 (.013)
Urban/Rural		2.040 (1.303)	1.690 (1.391)
Trump/Clinton 2016		3.591* (1.719)	.927 (2.275)
Number of protests			-.179 (.127)
Percent Youth			-.035 (.255)
Percent Bachelors			-.166 (.200)
Constant	18.05 (5.44)	16.75 (9.91)	12.68 (12.01)
R-square	.013	.038	.043
F statistic	3.783	4.635	3.659
D.F.	3	7	10

*Notes: Coefficients with standard errors reported in parentheses.

N=835; **=p<0.01; *=p<0.05

Table 13. Ordinal Regression Predicting Ordinal News Article Tone*.

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Percent White	.021** (.008)	.018* (.009)	.023* (.010)
Number of police killings	.001 (.010)	.018 (.012)	.029 (.016)
Percent Hispanic/Latino	.005 (.033)	.002 (.035)	.021 (.048)
White/Black Employment Inequality		-.977 (1.042)	-1.179 (1.040)
FTSO rate		-.002 (.001)	.000 (.002)
Most urban		-2.428** (.810)	-2.469** (.830)
Somewhat urban		-1.877* (.838)	-2.052* (.863)
Somewhat rural		-2.532** (.857)	-2.623** (.864)
Most rural		0 ^a	-
Trump/Clinton 2016		-.320 (.234)	-.174 (.315)
Number of protests			-.008 (.018)
Percent Youth			.010 (.034)
Percent Bachelors			-.019 (.027)
Model Fit			
Chi-square	9.906*	29.914**	31.019**
D.F.	3	9	12
Goodness of fit			
Pearson Chi-square	364.96**	290.326**	293.112**
DF	174	168	168

*Notes: Coefficients with standard errors reported in parentheses.

N=835; **=p<0.01; *=p<0.05; a. Parameter set to zero because it is redundant.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Contention Dictionary.

Contention Dictionary Words		
Armed protesters	Kettling	Riot gear
Arrest/s/ed	Law enforcement	Rubber bullets
Blockade/s/ed	Marching	Sheriff
Broken	Oppose	State police
Contest/ed	Property damage	Suppress/ed/ion
Counter	Pepper spray	Teargas
Counter-demonstrators	Police	Ticket/s
Dispersal orders	Police officers	Traffic
Hurt	Police line	Unauthorized
Incendiary devices	Police presence	Vandalize/ed
Incite/d	Riot	Weapon/s
Injury/ed/ies		

Figure 2. White/Black Inequality Variable Equation.

$$\left(\frac{\text{White 16 Year Olds in Civilian Labor Force that are Employed}}{\text{White 16 Year Olds in Civilian Labor Force}} \right) / \left(\frac{\text{Black 16 Year Olds in Civilian Labor Force that are Employed}}{\text{Black 16 Year Olds in Civilian Labor Force}} \right)$$

APPENDIX: MORE POSITIVE ARTICLE, WITH SENTIMENT SCORE OF 90.24.

Wilkes Journal – Patriot, 8-Jun-20. North Wilkesboro. Headline: *New Elkin-based group is promoting peace, unity and justice*

"Elkin-based Yadkin Valley Community Matters, which organized a five-hour 'Black Lives Matters' protest event Saturday in Elkin, issued a press release Monday saying the group was started last week 'to promote peace, unity and justice' and empower each person in the Yadkin Valley 'to have and use their voice.'

The release said Saturday's event showed that many like-minded individuals live across the Yadkin Valley and have the strength to speak out and demonstrate that the words, 'Liberty and Justice, for All,' mean something.

It said a smaller event in Elkin on June 2 led to Yadkin Valley Community Matters being organized and the larger event Saturday, with peaceful protests being the objective of both.

After people attending the June 2 protest expressed interest in holding a larger 'Black Lives Matter' protest, West Caudle of Elkin asked Elkin Mayor Sam Bishop that evening what Yadkin Valley Community Matters needed to do to accomplish this.

'Mayor Bishop stated that we all have a First Amendment Right to gather and all that was asked was a courtesy contact with Town Manager Brent Cornelison,' the release stated. Caudle contacted Cornelison the next day and shared plans for the protest event held Saturday. 'Mr. Cornelison was supportive, understanding and encouraging of the plan,' the release said.

'The plan conveyed to Mr. Cornelison was to hold a peaceful stationary protest in the community green space at the corner of Market Street and Bridge streets in downtown Elkin, as well as offer the opportunity for those who wished to march... in a safe and peaceful manner.' A route for a protest march, mostly on Main Street, was planned in the meeting. The event began about 10 a.m. Saturday with a crowd of around two hundred people hearing opening remarks from Caudle and a prayer from the Rev. Wallace Hairston. The protest march followed, with about one hundred participants. It was promoted as an event 'for neighbors' in Surry, Wilkes, Yadkin and Alleghany counties.

'We would like to express a heartfelt thank you to the Elkin Police Department and Chief Monroe Wagoner, the Elkin Fire Department and Chief Kevin Wilson, the Jonesville Police Department, Surry County Emergency Services and the Surry County Sheriff's Office and Sheriff Steve Hiatt' for their support and assistance with the event, the release said.

‘We cannot thank the community members and the public servants enough for a successful event on Saturday and we look forward to more peaceful, powerful, and unifying events moving forward.’

Details of future events planned by Yadkin Valley Community Matters will be on the organization’s Facebook page. The release said these include a Juneteenth Community Awareness and Unity March planned June 20. Details will be available soon.

Juneteenth commemorates slaves being declared free by President Abraham Lincoln with his Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War. "

