

Framing counter-protest

**US newspaper representations of antifa and Black Lives Matter
counter-protesters at the 2017 Unite the Right rally**

Koen de Visscher

s4818628

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Thesis advisor: Mano Delea

Abstract

Scholars of social movements and media have developed the protest paradigm theory. This theory explains the tactics that the news media, in support of the status quo, employ in their coverage of protest. News coverage of protest movements thus contributes to the larger process of manufacturing consent. The goal of this thesis is to gain an understanding of the current applicability of the protest paradigm, learn about its application to protest movements of differing levels of militancy and extremism, and its application in situations where protest movements oppose other (extremist) movements. To this goal, the application of the protest paradigm by the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal to their online coverage of the antifa and Black Lives Matter counter-protesters at the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right rally will be analyzed. In doing so, the thesis follows the five mechanics of the protest paradigm as laid out by Douglas M. McLeod and James K. Hertog: (1) story framing, (2) reliance on official sources and official definitions, (3) the invocation of public opinion, (4) other tactics of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization, and (5) noncoverage. The findings show that both antifa and BLM counter-protesters face differing levels of marginalization, delegitimization, and demonization through application of the protest paradigm. Antifa, as the more extremist of the two movements, is, however, subjected to the protest paradigm more consistently and severely and the protest paradigm is thus proven to remain relevant in the current political climate. The effect of antifa and BLM counter-protesters' opposition to far-right protesters on the application of the protest paradigm remains uncertain.

Keywords

antifa, Black Lives Matter, counter-protest, framing, media coverage, protest paradigm

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Introduction

From August 11-12, 2017, Charlottesville, VA was the site of the Unite the Right rally. At this event, far-right protesters clashed with counter-protesters of different movements, among them antifa and Black Lives Matter (BLM). The event was organized by white supremacist Jason Kessler to protest the removal of the statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee from Charlottesville's Emancipation Park. Participants were aligned with several far-right movements and included the alt-right, white-nationalists, and neo-Nazis (Morlin par. 1). Among the prominent far-right and white supremacist spokespeople in attendance were Richard Spencer, Austin Gillespie (Augustus Sol Invictus), David Duke, and Elliott Kline (Eli Mosley). Scholars like Mark Bray and Stanislav Vysotsky argue that the election of Donald Trump as President emboldened white supremacists and the far-right to mobilize and present themselves more publicly than they had done before, including at events such as the Unite the Right rally. This resurgence of white supremacist and fascistic violence consequently elicited counter-protests. These tensions led to clashes between the far-right and counter-protesters in several cities including Berkeley, CA, Portland, OR, and Charlottesville, VA (Bray xi-xii; Vysotsky 1, 59). Several clashes between protesters, and especially the terror attack by white supremacist James Alex Fields Jr., who killed Heather Heyer and injured nearly forty others, grabbed the attention of the news media who have the important task of mediating these events for the public. The media reported not only on the events of that weekend and the actions of both sides, but also dealt more in depth with several issues that came to the fore, including protest, extremism, militancy, and political violence. One part of this was an examination of who the far-right protesters were and how society should respond to them, but the media also looked at who the counter-protesters were and what role they played in the events, and especially the violence, that occurred that weekend. What follows is a short overview of the events of August 11-12, 2017 in Charlottesville, as well as some of the aftermath on August 13.

On Friday, August 11, far-right protesters marched through the University of Virginia campus while chanting various anti-Semitic and white supremacist slogans and carrying related flags and other symbols. At the site of a Thomas Jefferson statue, they came upon counter-protesters. Fighting between the two groups occurred, which after several minutes was ended by police. The following day, protesters and counter-protesters started gathering at Emancipation Park, where the far-right protesters chanted similar slogans as the day before.

Counter-protests began with a gathering of interfaith clergy who linked arms, among them academic and activist Cornel West. Later, anti-racist and anti-fascist activists appeared and chanted anti-racist and anti-white supremacist slogans. Again, clashes between the two sides occurred. Protesters on both sides carried firearms. According to Cornel West, the anarchist and anti-fascist protesters protected the clergy from the far-right protesters while police stood by (West 42:26-43:00). Media later also reported about the police's inactivity during fights between protesters (Beckett; Thompson). Later that afternoon, white supremacist James Alex Fields Jr. drove a car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one and injuring nearly forty others. Other, less reported, incidents that day include the intimidation of worshippers at the Beth Israel synagogue by armed white supremacists and the assault of DeAndre Harris by white supremacists. On August 13, organizer Jason Kessler held a press conference, but was forced to leave when he was attacked and chanted at by counter-protesters.

This thesis is interested in the news media's coverage of the counter-protesters present during the weekend of the Unite the Right rally. The focus is on antifa and BLM protesters, as both movements have received considerable media attention during the last few years and were represented at this event and identified as such in the media. The representation of protest movements such as antifa and BLM in the media has been an object of study for a considerable amount of time. However, due to the ever-changing political landscape and continued resistance to the status quo, this field of study always leaves opportunities for further research. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency—and with it the boldness with which far-right and white supremacist people presented themselves more publicly, as well as a Republican Party in the grip of “Trumpism” in conflict with its capitalist status quo (Birnbaum 695; Post 100)—might signal a new era for America's social and political climates. In this new political environment, not only the far-right but also those who most strongly oppose them, including movements like antifa and BLM, become more visible and, perhaps, mainstream. The clashes that result from this environment—most famously in Charlottesville—are thus a great opportunity to study how the news media make sense of this political situation and answer some of the lingering questions surrounding the protest paradigm. One important question that some authors who studied media coverage of protest have asked is: Are all protest movements treated the same or do media differentiate between them? The presence of both antifa and BLM provides an opportunity for such a comparative study. Studying media coverage of protest in the context of the Unite the Right rally also offers the opportunity to look at the representation of movements which did not initiate the

protests or events, but rather appeared in opposition to those who did. This also raises questions like: How are (leftist) protest movements that might normally be marginalized by the media covered when they appear in opposition to far-right and white supremacist movements? In an ever-changing political landscape, it is also important to keep asking if the conclusions drawn previously about media coverage still apply today. In order to begin to find answers to these questions, this thesis will conduct a survey of the online media coverage of two US newspapers—the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal—of two prominent groups among the Charlottesville counter-protesters, namely antifa and BLM. The focus will be on the online coverage during that weekend as well as for two weeks after the last incident on August 13. This thesis will thus analyze the coverage from August 11, 2017, through August 27, 2017. The research will focus on how the coverage of antifa and BLM differ, as well as why this might be the case, and how their opposition to far-right groups might affect their coverage. Next, the literature review will provide an overview of research on the protest paradigm, a concept which will be very useful for answering the questions posed previously, after which the theoretical framework, justification, and methodology of this thesis will be explained.

Status quaestionis

As mentioned before, the coverage of protest movements has been a subject of study for some time. This specific topic should be seen within the context of media or communication studies with clear connections to political science as well. A number of academics such as Todd Gitlin, Joseph Man Chan, and Chi-Chuan Lee have concerned themselves with the role that protest movements play in a society and how these movements have been covered and mediated by the mainstream media. There is considerable consensus within the field that the mainstream media function in support of the status quo and to that end marginalize, demonize, and delegitimize protest movements in various ways. Some academics have thus theorized these media functions as contributing to the ‘manufacture of consent,’ such as Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, which in the case of protest movements takes the shape of the ‘protest paradigm.’ Academics such as Michael P. Boyle, Douglas M. McLeod, James K. Hertog, and Cory L. Armstrong have theorized what mechanisms this protest paradigm exactly encompasses.

Todd Gitlin wrote an extensive and influential study of media coverage of the New Left protest movements in 1980. This study should be considered part of the founding texts of the idea of manufacturing consent and an early example of the protest paradigm (Boyle et al., “Adherence to the Protest Paradigm” 129; Cottle, “Reporting demonstrations” 856; McCurdy 246; McLeod and Hertog, “Social Control” 311). In this study of the dynamics between the New Left, especially Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the mass media, Gitlin describes the centralized and commercialized mass media as “instruments of cultural dominance” (8). The media function to contribute to the spread and hegemony of an ideology, and therefore work to manufacture consent among the public (Gitlin 8-10). According to Gitlin, if an issue that is being protested is too close to the political elites’ core interests, the media might entirely ignore this resistance. More often, however, the media “process” social opposition and absorb what can be absorbed “into the dominant structure of definitions and meanings,” while the rest is marginalized (Gitlin 5). Gitlin identifies six initial themes and devices employed by the media to marginalize the New Left: trivialization, polarization, emphasis on internal dissensions, marginalization, disparagement by numbers, and disparagement of the movement’s effectiveness. The movement’s later turn to more militant tactics led to a new set of themes being added to the first group, namely: reliance on statements by government officials and other authorities, emphasis on the presence of

Communists, emphasis on the carrying of “Viet Cong” flags, emphasis on violence in demonstrations, delegitimizing use of quotation marks, and considerable attention to right-wing opposition to the movement (Gitlin 27-28). Some of these tactics identified by Gitlin also return in theories by other academics.

Patrick McCurdy points to Joseph Man Chan and Chi-Chuan Lee’s 1984 article as the inventors of the protest paradigm (245). They define a ‘paradigm’ as “a ‘metaphysical’ world view or a gestalt that defines the entities of concern, indicates to journalists where to look (and where not to look), and informs them about what to discover” (Chan and Lee 187). They discussed how the ideological alignment of the Hong Kong media—rightist, center, or leftist—determined their journalistic paradigm and consequently their coverage of the 1977 Jubilee School Affair where teachers and students participated in sit-ins to protest the defrauding and profiteering by school authorities (Chan and Lee 191). Chan and Lee write that “[t]he practices of newspapers across the full political spectrum are conditioned by different sets of ‘paradigms’” (187). Rightist newspapers were found to be very critical of the protesters, while leftist newspapers supported them and centrist newspapers were more moderate and diverse in their coverage (Chan and Lee 199). Although they did not yet employ the term “protest paradigm,” this idea can be found in their description of the paradigm of rightist newspapers.

Douglas M. McLeod and James K. Hertog, in 1998, built on Chan and Lee’s concept of the paradigm and propose a more complete theory of the protest paradigm; a blueprint for how the media handles protest (“Social Control”). They identify a range of mechanisms of social control in the media coverage of protest groups: (1) story framing, (2) reliance on official sources and official definitions, (3) the invocation of public opinion, (4) other tactics of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization, and (5) noncoverage (McLeod and Hertog, “Social Control” 305). Note that some of these overlap with tactics that Gitlin identified. McLeod and Hertog list a number of protest-story frames that are included in the protest paradigm. Among these are eight varieties of “marginalizing frames”—which are used most often—seven varieties of “mixed frames,” and four varieties of “sympathetic frames”—which are usually only found in the “alternative press”—as well as a balanced “debate frame” (McLeod and Hertog, “Social Control” 312-13). McLeod and Hertog write that these frames might either be used as the “dominant organizing scheme” or as a subtheme within a story, but they can also be used in combination (“Social Control” 312). The second mechanism they identify is reporters’ heavy reliance on official sources for information, which happens for

several reasons: it adds prestige to the story, it increases the efficiency of news production, and it helps to maintain the illusion of objectivity (McLeod and Hertog, “Social control” 312-14). The third mechanism is the invocation of public opinion as a tool to marginalize protest. This is discussed more extensively in a 1992 article by McLeod and Hertog (“The manufacture of ‘public opinion’”). Media characterizations of public opinion often question the protest’s legitimacy, contribute to a fear of isolation and therefore constrain the growth of radical movements. These depictions also help audiences to determine what is mainstream and acceptable and what is not. (McLeod and Hertog, “The manufacture of ‘public opinion’” 259-62). McLeod and Hertog argue that public opinion can be found in news-coverage at two levels: “characterizations of public opinion at the micro-descriptive level and general conceptions of public opinion at the macro-conceptual level” (“The manufacture of ‘public opinion’” 260). Portrayals of public opinion are in line with the process of delegitimization that others like Gitlin have described (McLeod and Hertog, “The manufacture of ‘public opinion’” 262). The three mechanisms of the protest paradigm described so far contribute to the processes of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization. Mechanism number four includes other tactics that contribute to these processes. For example, quotation marks are used to doubt the legitimacy of a group or concept and delegitimization can further be achieved by not using quotations to allow protesters to speak for themselves. The protest paradigm also marginalizes by accentuating protesters’ deviance from the mainstream. Media often fail to explain the issues and viewpoints of protesters and thus prevent the audience from finding common ground with them. Furthermore, the size and effectiveness of protests is often downplayed and demonization also often happens by exaggerating the potential threat of a protest group (McLeod and Hertog, “Social control” 319-20). The last tool for achieving social control that is discussed is noncoverage: “[I]deas that challenge the status quo are at a disadvantage when it comes to getting attention from the media” (McLeod and Hertog, “Social control” 321). To conclude, Hertog and McLeod ask how strictly the mainstream media follow the protest paradigm for different protest movements and hypothesize that “the more radical a group is perceived to be, the more closely journalists will conform to the protest paradigm when covering the group” (McLeod and Hertog, “Social control” 311). They begin to answer this question themselves by posing that there are two important factors that determine how protest groups are covered: extremism and militancy (McLeod and Hertog, “Social control” 305). In short,

Extremism is defined by the ideological goals of the group, whereas militancy refers to a group's overt behaviors (i.e., methods, strategies and tactics). The degree of extremism of a group is defined by the degree of social change that it seeks. ... In general, the greater the degree of extremism of a protest group's ideological goals, the more likely its members are to incur the brunt of social control messages. (McLeod and Hertog, "Social control" 310)

This theory is discussed more extensively in a 2012 article by Michael P. Boyle, Douglas M. McLeod, and Cory L. Armstrong. They write that previous research has found that "more radical groups, whose goals and tactics threaten the status quo, are more likely to trigger coverage that adheres more closely to the protest paradigm" (Boyle et al. 129). This study also finds that, in line with earlier research by Boyle and Armstrong, "group tactics [as opposed to ideology] were the driving force behind news coverage" (Boyle et al. 137). Other factors that influence news coverage, but not as strongly as tactics, are protest location and protest type. Boyle et al. conclude that these results are in line with the social control function of the media and reinforce the importance of the protest paradigm as a perspective through which to study media coverage (137-39).

Fiona Donson, Graeme Chesters, Ian Welsh, and Andrew Tickle make another argument about how anti-capitalist protesters are marginalized and demonized in their 2004 article. According to them, UK and Czech media have constructed protesters in London and Prague as a new type of folk devil, differing from the traditional understanding of this concept (Donson et al. 2). The traditional definition of the folk devil is "a class of people or group that become constructed, as 'the personification of evil' ... within society" (Donson et al. 3). These people do not have to be further understood and cannot be accepted members of society, but are only defined by their negative and harmful characteristics, which allows the state to mobilize to stop their harmful behavior (Donson et al. 3). The difference between anti-capitalist protesters and the conventional understanding of the folk devil, however, is that these protesters do have a voice and are not silent as "teenage single mothers, travellers or asylum seekers" are and have emerged without an accompanying moral panic (Donson et al. 7). This article is relevant because Donson et al. view this construction of protesters as folk devils as being fueled by attempts to trivialize and dismiss the activists (2), which is closely related to the processes of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization that McLeod and Hertog and Gitlin describe. Donson et al. write that the media, adhering to authority definitions, reproduce expectations and fear for protesters' "behaviour, foregrounded violence, and criminal intent" (10). "Trouble and violence thus become pre-event expectations associated with the anticipated presence of so-called 'rent-a-mob' groups and the *necessary*

use of strong policing tactics” (Donson et al. 9). The media exaggerate participant numbers and the type of damage and violence that occurs, predict that the initial incident will be followed by more and more violent and destructive events, and treat basic symbols such as words, names, and objects as “negative indicators of deviancy” (Donson et al. 4-5). Protesters are silenced and demonized by anonymizing them and reducing their identities to the “mob,” which allows their underlying issues and concerns to remain unaddressed (Donson et al. 10, 25-26).

Simon Cottle, writing in 2008, adds a critical note to the discussion surrounding the protest paradigm and argues that a lot has changed since those studies which demonstrated the marginalization of protest movements by the news media (855). Instead, “[t]he media politics of dissent ... exhibits far more complexity and contingency, and possibly therefore more opportunities for democratic engagement and advance, than has often been conceded in earlier research” (Cottle 866). Cottle appreciates the work by Gitlin and other early proponents of the manufacturing consent theory, but asks how relevant these findings still are. He discusses a number of changes that might influence how the media report on protest and might lead to more space for different representations. “Where once dominance and determination were found to frame the media politics of dissent and were theorized in terms of ‘manufacturing consent’, today discursive contention and complexity reintroduces ‘the political’ ... into the heart of processes and forms of mediated representation” (Cottle 867).

Theoretical framework

Before moving on to the topic of this thesis, some aspects of the literature require some further explanation and justification. Why is it essential to understand the role of the media in representing protest movements to the larger public and what role do the manufacture of consent, framing, and the protest paradigm play in this?

The news media play an influential role in society by providing the public with news and information and by shaping this information into stories; they frame news events. In representative liberal democracies, news media influence voters' choices through their coverage of events and are therefore often designated as the fourth estate. US Supreme Court Justice Powell reflected this idea when he observed that “no individual can obtain for himself the information needed for the intelligent discharge of his political responsibilities.... By enabling the public to assert meaningful control over the political process, the press performs a crucial function in effecting the societal purpose of the First Amendment” (as quoted in Herman and Chomsky 297). But is this an accurate representation of how the news media function and use their powerful position? Do they accurately and objectively report events to allow voters to make informed decisions? Todd Gitlin perfectly captures the centrality, pervasiveness, and influence of the news media, as well as the risk that comes with that centrality:

The media bring a manufactured world into the private space. From within their private crevices, people find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, even for language. Of all the institutions of daily life, the media specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness—by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity. They name the world's parts, they certify reality *as* reality—and when their certifications are doubted and opposed, as they surely are, it is those same certifications that limit the terms of effective opposition. To put it simply: the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology. (1)

The media are not “passive channels” or “neutral recorders of events” (Oliver and Maney 465). They hold a lot of power and often employ it to defend and uphold the status quo and its ideology; they manufacture consent. The phrase “the manufacture of consent” was coined by Walter Lippmann in his 1922 book *Public Opinion*, where he described the process of the creation of public opinion as “the manufacture of consent,” open to be manipulated by

anyone, including the media (248). In 1988, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky published their book *Manufacturing Consent* in which they argue that due to “government and elite domination” over the media, “the mass media of the United States are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion,” but with covert mechanisms to induce obedience to the status quo and established narratives (305-06).

One important mechanism in the creation of news and the manufacture of consent is framing. A frame is often explained as an interpretation mechanism to fit an event into a larger existing narrative, allowing for easier interpretation. Gitlin explains it in the following way:

Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters. In everyday life, as Erving Goffman has amply demonstrated, we frame reality in order to negotiate it, manage it, comprehend it, and choose appropriate repertoires of cognition and action. Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences. (6-7)

The importance of studying media frames is in recognizing that they are fundamental to the creation of public discourse and understanding (McCurdy 246). When individual instances of framing add up, the public is exposed to “a relatively consonant symbol system” (McLeod and Hertog, “Social Control” 308). “By extending the idea of frames beyond the single story, more complicated layers of latent meaning can be tapped” and the media can shape how its public views and interprets the world (Gamson 159).

The media’s social control function, the manufacture of consent, is most clear when it reports on individuals and groups which challenge the status quo. Protest movements are therefore consistently covered with frames that emphasize their deviancy (McLeod and Hertog, “Social Control” 305-06). Media coverage of protest movements is important because, due to their centrality, the media are large players in the battle over public opinion; protest movements are largely dependent on the media for spreading their message, mobilizing support, gaining validation, and influencing the political and social agenda (Cottle

853-54; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 116; Leopold and Bell 720-21). According to William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld, both media and protest movements are dependent on each other, but this is not an equal relationship. Protest is only one of many possible sources of news for the media, whereas protest movements are largely dependent on the media for mobilization, validation, and scope enlargement (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 115-16). Protest movements also have very little influence over how the media interpret and frame their activity and often, due to the public's dependency on the media for information, the processed image of the movement becomes the movement (Gitlin 3). To some extent, movements have been able to avoid the news media and communicate through social media. However, due to filter bubbles these messages are likely to only reach those who are already sympathetic to a movement. To reach the wider population, movements remain largely dependent on the news media. The way in which news media report on protest movements to manufacture consent has been termed the protest paradigm. Through the protest paradigm, the media delegitimize, marginalize, or demonize protest groups that challenge that status quo. This coverage tends to focus on protesters' appearances and potential violence rather than on the issues they try to address (Douglas and Detenber 3; McCluskey et al. 355). This is the lens through which this thesis will approach the coverage of antifa and BLM counter-protesters at the 2017 Unite the Right rally. McLeod and Hertog explain the protest paradigm as "a routinized pattern or implicit template for the coverage of social protest" ("Social Control" 311). According to them, the protest paradigm includes a number of story frames as well as other mechanisms of marginalization (McLeod and Hertog, "Social Control" 311-12). However, several scholars point out that journalists and the media often do not consciously apply standardized frames to protest movements. Rather, these are the result of a myriad of factors such as the news production process, routines, and limitations as well as ideological biases and links to the social power structure (Donson et al. 4; Gamson 160; McLeod and Hertog, "Social Control" 309, 311).

McLeod and Hertog also write that news media make distinctions between those movements which hold more extreme views or use more militant tactics and those which are more moderate. Normative commentary on the appropriateness or value of the behavior of protesters reinforces conformity and punishes deviance. Negative news coverage thus affects the viability of protest groups and could also discourage group members and like-minded individuals from speaking out (McLeod and Hertog, "Social Control" 308, 310, 323-24). Framing effects theory looks at what happens when audiences encounter story frames.

McLeod and Benjamin H. Detenber studied the effects of the protest paradigm on audiences by testing the framing impact of differing levels of status quo support in television news on people's perceptions of protesters and authorities. They found that higher levels of status quo support produce higher levels of criticism toward protesters, decreased identification with protesters, decreased support for protesters' expressive rights, decreased criticism of the police, and a decrease in the perceived effectiveness and newsworthiness of, and public support for, the protest (McLeod and Detenber 20). However, academics have also hypothesized that negative coverage may be better than no coverage at all and have found that "people will stand up against a majority if they have social support" (McLeod and Hertog, "Social Control" 324).

Protest movements, as a form of social movements, play an important role in the pursuit of social change: they address and pinpoint important issues and give a voice to disenfranchised people in pursuit of material and nonmaterial ends that the state denies them (Boyle et al. 127-28; Fuentes and Frank 185, 187). Protest never appears in a vacuum, but in response to bills, speeches, other actions by politicians, military actions, as well as stagnation on certain issues. It "arises from and feeds back into institutional politics" (Oliver and Maney 464). But due to mechanisms such as ideological dominance and the media's dependence on information and definitions from officials, government and institutional politics also play a large role in how the movements that respond to them are framed by the media. Protest movements are part of the democratic political system and therefore they should be covered accurately and without being limited by the effects of media coverage, specifically the protest paradigm.

The two protest movements that are the focus of this thesis are antifa and Black Lives Matter, but these are not tightly organized groups with clear definitions. Some background information and discussion on what antifa and BLM are and stand for is therefore justified. The Black Lives Matter campaign is best described as an anti-racist movement; it opposes racism, racist violence, and systemic oppression, and has its main focus on police brutality against black people. This form of anti-racism is, however, a specifically American and Black kind of anti-racism, focused on the fate of black people in the United States. Alastair Bonnett writes that there are different anti-racist traditions worldwide, but she gives "[a] minimal definition of anti-racism" which "refers to those forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism" (3). In the United States, BLM can thus be seen as a Black American variation of anti-racism. Partially due to the broad definition of anti-

racism, the movement has been criticized for not having a coherent set of goals. In response to these criticisms, BLM created the “Campaign Zero” website which proposes ten policy solutions for specifically ending police violence (Campaign Zero; Clayton 455). On the website blacklivesmatter.com/about/, this focus on police violence is, however, not as clear. Here, the organization writes that their goals are “to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes” (Black Lives Matter par. 1). Dewey M. Clayton describes BLM as a grassroots organization which “has grown from a hashtag to a network that now encompasses over 30 chapters in the United States and other countries” (Clayton 449). Despite having its roots in Black American anti-racism, the movement has thus been adapted by black people worldwide, mainly in Europe. BLM is loosely structured, and “as a confederation of local groups, empowers each one to set its own agenda” (as quoted in Clayton 449). BLM tactics mostly consist of civil rights movement-inspired nonviolent direct action (Clayton 449), although some of their actions have at times also been condemned by that generation for being too militant: from “disrupting the St. Louis Symphony, to interrupting presidential campaigns” (as quoted in Clayton 458). Although the movement has been associated in the media with violence and looting by individuals in the aftermath of incidents of police brutality, violence is not a tactic of BLM movement organizers and campaigns associated with the organization.

Whereas BLM might be considered a new incarnation of American Black anti-racist activism, antifa or anti-fascism is a designator that has been around longer in both the United States and Europe. Mark Bray writes that antifa has its roots in the 1920s, and describes it as a “political tradition” (xiii). Whereas BLM is mainly aimed at combating racism, antifa opposes fascism, which includes, but is not limited to, a racist tradition. According to Stanislav Vysotsky, antifa is “a social movement, a subculture, a stigmatized and criminalized phenomenon, a challenge to existing norms of political engagement and social control, as well as a means of protection and social control” (19). Despite representing a general opposition to fascism occasionally, Bray also points out antifa’s strong connections to socialist, anarchist, and communist currents, and describes antifa as “a method of politics, a locus of individual and group self-identification, and a transnational movement” (xiv). This also means that there are antifa groups who associate themselves with a range of leftist ideologies (Bray xv). Antifa is a movement without a national organization and is thus even more loosely organized than BLM. There are, however, formal groups that identify themselves as militant antifascists.

“These groups are not chapters of a formal organization; however, they are affinity groups operating to achieve the goal of opposing fascist mobilization” and they decide about their own strategies. Because of these loose structures, there are also no spokespeople (Vysotsky 19, 51). The main goal of these groups is self-defense against the far-right (Bray xvi). Because, at its core, anti-fascism exists in opposition to fascism, many of its activities are aimed at opposing fascist movement actions (Vysotsky 2-3). Some antifa groups focus on disrupting fascist organizing, others build community power and promote their leftist politics to harness society against fascism (Bray xvi). Among antifa activists, Vysotsky identifies those with militant tactics—which includes confrontational tactics like violence—and those who employ non-militant tactics including “intelligence gathering, education campaigns, public shaming campaigns, and the construction of antifascist culture” (Vysotsky 86), which also includes doxxing: “publicly identify[ing] or publish[ing] private information about (someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge” (Merriam-Webster).

To conclude, BLM aims to end racism and racist violence, whereas antifa wants to halt far-right activities, which also includes racist practices. For the purposes of this thesis, antifa will thus be considered to have more extremist goals, because their goals are not only limited to fighting racism, but include fighting a (racist) ideology. Also, when looking at militancy (tactics) antifa will be considered more militant, because their tactics include, but are not limited to, the use of violence and doxxing, whereas BLM does not employ such tactics.

Justification, methodology, and hypothesis

Several of the authors discussed above raise questions about the applicability of the protest paradigm. In the conclusion to their 1998 article, McLeod and Hertog ask, “how strictly do media follow the protest paradigm across different protest groups, in different situations and at different points in time?” (“Social Control” 325). One of those potentially interesting situations is one in which the protest movements that are subject to media framing oppose other protesters. Is the protest paradigm also applied to protesters who oppose another more extremist or militant movement? Cottle raises the important question of whether the conclusions of Gitlin and others are still relevant today (867). To answer these questions, this thesis will look at the online coverage of antifa and Black Lives Matter counter-protesters at the Unite the Right rally by the New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

There are several reasons why this specific event is worthy of consideration. Considering Cottle’s claim that the protest paradigm might no longer be relevant, it is good to look at recent protest movements and events to see whether the protest paradigm is still applicable. Furthermore, the Unite the Right rally gained national attention as an important event during the first year of Donald Trump’s presidency. Because both antifa and BLM counter-protesters were present, it allows for a comparison of the coverage of these two groups. The presence of both groups could be considered a result of their rather closely aligned ideas about racism. However, although both oppose racism and discrimination, their organizational structure, goals, tactics, and ideas differ on several important points. This presents an opportunity to compare the potential application of the protest paradigm to two movements with differing levels of extremism and militancy which had the same goal of opposing the far-right and white supremacy. It also is an interesting case study, because it might say something about the application of the protest paradigm to protesters who appeared in opposition to extremists like the far-right. Does the media divert from the protest paradigm and present antifa and BLM as reasonable opposition to the far-right or are they perhaps equated to the far-right?

Following Patrick McCurdy’s definition of the term ‘mainstream media,’ this concept is understood to refer to the public and corporately owned media, available through radio, print, television, and the internet (244-45). Considering the constraints in time and space, this thesis will only consider the representations of antifa and BLM in the online coverage of two US

newspapers: the New York Times (NYT) and the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). These two newspapers have been selected because they are among the largest US newspapers and appear to have considerable ideological distance between them: AllSides rates the NYT news section as leaning left and its opinion section as “left,” whereas the WSJ news section is identified as “center” and its opinion section as leaning right (AllSides). A Pew Research Center article places the NYT’s audience among the most consistently liberal of the newspaper audiences, while the WSJ’s audience is considered among the most conservative, just on the liberal side of a liberal to conservative scale (Mitchell et al., “Political Polarization” 1). Furthermore, both are nationally known newspapers and, according to April-June 2020 data from Similarweb, are among the newspapers whose websites receive the most visitors, with the NYT website receiving the most of all newspapers (Similarweb). Both websites also allow for filtering of articles by publication date on their websites which was very important for the purposes of this thesis. This possibility and the relatively large ideological distance to the NYT are the main reasons why the WSJ was chosen over other newspapers whose websites receive more visitors like the Washington Post, USA Today, the New York Post, and the LA Times. It is also relevant to consider Michael McCluskey et al.’s conclusion that “patterns in news about social protests vary by community structural characteristics in which the news organizations originate” (366) and Pamela E. Oliver and Gregory M. Maney’s finding that “national” newspapers generally cover events in their own metropolitan area more extensively (495). The fact that both newspapers are headquartered in New York is thus likely to decrease the impact that location has on the differences that are found in the coverage between these two newspapers, making it more likely that differences between them are attributable to their different ideological alignments.

Online newspapers were chosen because online news is the second largest source of news for American adults after television. In 2016, 38 percent of US adults named online news (social media, websites, apps) as one of their sources of news (Mitchell et al., “The Modern News Consumer” 2). Online articles are, however, considerably easier to analyze than tv news, which is why the decision was made to focus on this news source. Within the online news category, social media is also an important source of news for many people. Studying this would, however, require a significant proportion of the research and writing of this thesis to be dedicated to the very unique features of social media, which is not the intended focus of this thesis. Besides newspapers and social media, other popular websites also fall into the online news category. Among these are websites such as yahoo.com,

msn.com, and news.google.com (Similarweb). However, these websites are not as suitable for study because they gather content from a range of online sources and contain no to little original articles. This means that these websites are likely to frame the news less consistently than online sources that do produce their own content. They are therefore less interesting when studying the protest paradigm.

This thesis will look at media representations of antifa and BLM during the rally of August 11-12, 2017 and during the aftermath on August 13, as well as the discussions that followed the weekend's events. Antifa and BLM were chosen for study because they are two recognizable names that have received considerable media attention and were both present in Charlottesville and identified as such in the media. The period under consideration has been limited to two weeks to allow for a considerable range of articles featuring different subjects that may have entered the public discourse as a result of the events in Charlottesville. The article searches on both websites were thus limited from August 11, 2017, through August 27, 2017, two weeks after the last events on August 13. The initial selection of articles was done by the use of the search term "Charlottesville." This search term was chosen to find all articles that deal with the events that took place there and the discussions surrounding it. It also helps to prevent a selection bias by the use of terms such as "antifa" or "BLM," which would have kept relevant articles that ignore these movements out of consideration and would therefore not allow for studying the application of noncoverage as a mechanism of the protest paradigm. On nytimes.com, using the search term "Charlottesville" to search articles from August 11-27, 2017, resulted in 383 results. The same search on wsj.com came up with 224 results.

To bring the number of articles further down to a manageable number, it was decided to only select two types of articles; those that either directly reported on the events of August 11-13 (category one) and those that deal with the discussions afterwards surrounding extremism, militancy, (counter-)protest, and possible future protests or unrest (category two). These categories are believed to represent both the framing of antifa and BLM in the reporting of events, represented in category one, as well as the broader discussions and expectations about these groups, represented in category two. This means that a range of common topics in the aftermath of Charlottesville had to be excluded. These topics include the far-right and white supremacists—although they might be discussed in articles dealing with extremism, militancy, and protest more generally—articles which deal with individuals—this includes most notably the response of President Trump, but also responses from other US and foreign

officials and leaders, as well as portraits of victims and perpetrators—and reporting on arrests and investigations into the events that occurred. Also, fact-check articles, opinion pieces, videos, photo collections, and week overviews or “briefings” were excluded. Furthermore, it must be noted that this thesis does not take into account the photographs that accompany the selected articles. Although this is an interesting aspect of the news media which might be suitable for further research, the protest paradigm theory is mainly focused on written and spoken text. Constraints in time and space, unfortunately, also prevent this aspect from receiving adequate consideration.

The two categories mentioned above were chosen because they are believed to reveal something important about the portrayal of the counter-protesters. The initial reporting on the events will say something about the role antifa and BLM had according to these media, while reporting on discussions about militancy, extremism, and (counter-)protest might shine a light on whether the NYT and WSJ chose nuanced discussion or marginalization of the counter-protesters as well as how they view them in comparison to the far-right in broader discussions. Selecting articles fitting these two categories has resulted in ten articles from the NYT and six articles from the WSJ that will be examined in the following chapters. Category one consists of four NYT articles, numbered articles one through four, and two WSJ articles, articles one and two. Category two includes six NYT articles, numbered articles five through ten, and four WSJ articles, articles three through six (see table 1). The appendix also lays out which articles are included in each category and provides details on each article. The numbers in the text (for example: “NYT article two”) refer to the numbers in table 1 and the appendix. Useful to note is that the ten NYT articles were written by thirteen different writers in ten different arrangements, and the six WSJ articles were written by seven different writers in five different arrangements. Any results and conclusions are therefore not attributable to just a few different writers.

Table 1

Overview of the NYT and WSJ articles included in categories one and two

	New York Times			Wall Street Journal		
	No.	Title	Publishing date	No.	Title	Publishing date
Category one	1	White Nationalists March on University of Virginia	Aug. 11	1	In a Tense Charlottesville, Rally Organizer is Booed Off the Stage	Aug. 13
	2	Man Charged After White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville Ends in Deadly Violence	Aug. 12	2	One Dead as White Nationalists, Protesters Clash in Charlottesville	Aug. 13
	3	A Far-Right Gathering Bursts Into Brawls	Aug. 13			
	4	As White Nationalists in Charlottesville Fired, Police 'Never Moved'	Aug. 25			
Category two	5	Police Brace for More White Nationalist Rallies, but Have Few Options	Aug. 14	3	Boston Braces for Weekend Rally and Counterprotest	Aug. 14
	6	Right and Left on the Violence in Charlottesville	Aug. 14	4	After Charlottesville, Cities Brace for More Rallies, Monument Removals, Vandalism	Aug. 15
	7	Who Were the Counterprotesters in Charlottesville?	Aug. 14	5	Police Struggle With Right Approach to Politically Charged Protests	Aug. 15
	8	Alt-Right, Alt-Left, Antifa: A Glossary of Extremist Language	Aug. 15	6	Organizers Cancel Two Rallies in San Francisco Bay Area	Aug. 26
	9	After Charlottesville Violence, Colleges Brace for More Clashes	Aug. 16			
	10	'Antifa' Grows as Left-Wing Faction Set to, Literally, Fight the Far Right	Aug. 17			

This thesis will thus look at whether and how the coverage of antifa and BLM differ. Leading in this analysis will be McLeod and Hertog's theory of the protest paradigm. This research goal has resulted in the following research question: How does the New York Times and Wall Street Journal online coverage of antifa and Black Lives Matter counter-protesters at the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally of 2017 differ and why? The first sub question necessary to answer this research question is: Is counter-protest covered, and if so, which protesters or movements are identified? Once this has been established it is possible to engage with those articles that mention antifa and/or BLM to answer the following question: How are antifa and BLM subjected to the protest paradigm in their online coverage by the NYT and WSJ? Finally, the last sub question asks how and why potential differences between the two movements occur. What is the influence of their differing levels of militancy and extremism and of their opposition to the far-right? This chapter will also consider the current relevancy of the protest paradigm.

It is hypothesized that the marginalization of antifa is more severe than that of BLM due to their more militant tactics being less accepted than BLM's protest tactics; the coverage of BLM is expected to be more nuanced. Marginalization of either group is, however, expected to be more severe in the WSJ than in the NYT because of its more conservative/rightist alignment, which would also be in line with the findings of Chan and Lee. Overall, these effects are expected to be somewhat subdued in comparison with other coverage of antifa and BLM because, in this instance, they appear in opposition to far-right protesters, which are also expected to be condemned and marginalized. If this hypothesis were to be right, it is expected to result in a relatively high use of "mixed frames," as opposed to the "marginalizing frames" which are more common in the coverage of protest movements according to McLeod and Hertog. What follows is an overview of the chapters of this thesis.

Overview of chapters

To determine how antifa and Black Lives Matter are covered by the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, it must first be determined whether they are covered at all. Chapter one therefore deals with the question: what counter-protesters are mentioned by the NYT and WSJ? An analysis of the selected articles will reveal whether the counter-protesters in Charlottesville are mentioned, and if they are, who they are said to be. Do these articles specify what movements or groups were part of the counter-protests? McLeod and Hertog's theory of the protest paradigm will be leading and chapter one thus already deals with the fifth mechanism of the protest paradigm: noncoverage.

Chapter two looks at the instances in which antifa and BLM are mentioned in the articles and asks: "how are they each framed and legitimized or delegitimized?" This chapter will thus look at the other four mechanisms described by McLeod and Hertog: framing, reliance on official sources and official definitions, public opinion, and other tactics of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization. The two different categories of articles are looked at separately to reveal potential differences between them. Category one in the WSJ is discussed first, after which category one for the NYT follows. Then, a discussion of category two follows, with the NYT articles being considered first and the WSJ articles afterwards.

Finally, chapter three will create an overview of the results and discuss how the framing of antifa and BLM differ and why this might be the case. This chapter will thus explore a number of questions raised before. Do the media stick more closely to the protest paradigm when discussing the more militant and extremist of the two movements? Do the media stick less closely to the protest paradigm when an article discusses both the antifa and BLM counter-protesters and the far-right protesters? And finally, is the protest paradigm still relevant today?

Chapter 1

Noncoverage and identification of counter-protesters

Todd Gitlin writes that if groups protest issues which lie too close to the political elites' own interests, the media might just completely ignore this protest (5). McLeod and Hertog captured the same idea in the fifth mechanism of their theory of the protest paradigm: noncoverage (321). This is the first lens through which the selected articles of the New York Times and Wall Street Journal will be considered: Is counter-protest covered, and if so, which protesters or movements are mentioned?

Of the ten NYT articles that were selected, all but one made direct mention of “counter-protester(s),” “counter-protest(s),” “counter-demonstrator(s),” or “counter-demonstration(s)” which opposed the far-right on August 11-13 or are expected to partake in future clashes between the far-right and its opponents. The article which does not mention any of these phrases does mention possible opposition to far-right speakers at future events in other terms. The same goes for the WSJ articles; all of which, except one, employ above mentioned variations of “counter-protest” to describe opposition to far-right protesters and speakers. Again, the final one describes these in other words.

Differences between the NYT and WSJ become apparent, however, when considering which counter-protesters are named. Of the NYT category one articles, two out of four mention “antifa” or “anti-fascist(s)” and one mentions “Black Lives Matter.” In the two WSJ category one articles, neither movement is mentioned anywhere. In category two, the NYT mentions “antifa” or “anti-fascist(s)” in five out of six articles and “Black Lives Matter” in two out of six articles. Again, for the WSJ this is considerably less with zero out of four articles for “antifa” or “anti-fascist(s)” and two out of four articles for “Black Lives Matter.” With both categories combined, the NYT mentions “antifa” or “anti-fascist(s)” in seven out of ten articles, which would be 70% of all articles. “Black Lives Matter” is mentioned in three articles, or 30%. Of the six WSJ articles, however, not one article mentions “antifa” or a variation of that term, which amounts to 0% of articles. Only two articles, or about 33%, mention “Black Lives Matter.” In large part, this difference in mentions of antifa is attributable to the fact that the NYT selection includes a number of category two articles which specifically look at who the counter-protesters were and what they represent. Such

articles are not found in the WSJ. Also, two out of three NYT articles which mention Black Lives Matter fall in this category. It is thus clear that the NYT has given quite a considerable amount of attention to the counter-protesters, especially antifa, whereas the WSJ has not. The NYT talks about protesters without any mention of who they are (antifa or BLM) in only three out of ten articles, or 30%, the WSJ does so in four out of six articles, which amounts to around 66%.

The results of this sample are not directly in line with Chan and Lee's conclusion that (more) rightist newspaper are more critical of protesters (199), but seems to go a step further and follow Gitlin's claim that protesters might be (almost) entirely ignored in the case of the WSJ (5). Whether the WSJ, as a more conservative paper, is more closely aligned to the status quo than the more liberal NYT, and therefore is more likely to erase dissent in its reporting is another question of itself. Still, the results for the NYT might be somewhat surprising, considering they give quite a lot of attention to the more radical of the two movements. To be specific: antifa is mentioned in seven out of the ten NYT articles, whereas BLM is mentioned in only four articles. Important is, however, what this attention consists of. The next chapter will look at how antifa and BLM are framed and might therefore reveal more about whether the extensive coverage of antifa is more critical than the more limited coverage of BLM. Besides that, it will also reveal how the NYT and WSJ deal with the opposition between antifa and BLM counter-protesters on one side and the far-right protesters on the other. Are these newspapers less critical of antifa and BLM when presented or discussed in opposition to the far-right?

Chapter 2

Application of the protest paradigm

In discussing the framing of antifa and Black Lives Matter counter-protesters and the application of the protest paradigm to them, McLeod and Hertog's theory of the protest paradigm will be guiding. The fifth mechanism they describe, noncoverage, has been discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter will thus look at the remaining four mechanisms and how the New York Times and Wall Street Journal employ these when covering antifa and BLM. These four mechanisms are (1) story framing, (2) reliance on official sources and definitions, (3) the invocation of public opinion, and (4) other tactics of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization, which can also be found in other texts such as those from Gitlin and Donson et al. These other tactics include a lack of direct quotations from protesters, comparisons to the far-right, considerable attention to right-wing opposition, and expressions of expectations of violence. Analyzing the NYT and WSJ articles at the hand of these criteria will help to answer the question: To what extent are antifa and BLM subjected to the protest paradigm by the NYT and WSJ? The articles from category one, reporting on events of August 11-13, will be discussed first. Then, articles from the second category, those that go into the discussion surrounding (counter-)protest and expected future unrest, will be analyzed. Chapter one already covered that some articles do mention there were counter-protesters, but do not identify these as being part of either antifa or BLM. Although the framing of counter-protesters more generally is an interesting topic in itself and worthy of further research, the following discussion will only consider those instances where antifa or BLM were identified in the article, as these movements are the subject of this thesis.

Category one

The articles of category one, which deal directly with the events of August 11-13, will be discussed first. Chapter one established that the WSJ did not identify antifa as part of the counter-protesters in any of its articles. All mentions of BLM in the WSJ are in articles that are part of category two. The two WSJ articles that fall into category one thus contain references to neither antifa nor BLM. Despite a lack of information, this does still say something quite consequential about WSJ coverage of the events in Charlottesville, as also mentioned in the previous chapter. Compared to the NYT, the WSJ contained little reporting

of category one; there were only two WSJ articles compared to four NYT articles. This might be attributable to the newspaper's larger focus on business news, but it can also not be ruled out that the WSJ attributed less importance to the events in Charlottesville, and especially the resistance to the far-right, due to its more right-leaning tendencies. Unfortunately, no hard conclusions regarding the reason why the WSJ gave less attention to these movements can be drawn from this limited sample of articles.

New York Times

Mentions of antifa and BLM are not significantly more widespread in the NYT articles of category one than in the WSJ, but some opportunity for more in-depth study does present itself here. Among the four NYT articles of category one, there are two articles that mention antifa and only one that mentions BLM. Article two mentions BLM and antifa activists as part of the counter-protesters, among others like religious leaders. The article is written with a mixed frame, namely a showdown frame or a comparison frame, or perhaps a combination of the two. The article starts with a description of the "skirmishes" and "violence" that took place on Saturday between "white nationalists and counterprotesters" (Stolberg and Rosenthal par. 1, 3), but does not condemn either side as the instigator. This coincides with McLeod and Hertog's definition of the showdown frame as depicting "a confrontation between two or more groups without a designated 'bad guy'" ("Social Control" 313). Later in the article, different prominent people, including government officials, are quoted to condemn the white nationalists. It therefore might also be argued that this is a comparison frame. McLeod and Hertog define this as a frame which "contrasts a group with some other group to connote either legitimacy or deviance" ("Social Control" 313). There is little use of public opinion in this article, and especially not to define the counter-protesters. There are, however, a few ways in which the counter-protesters are marginalized over the far-right protesters. For example, one "white nationalist" is quoted to explain his stance as well as three white supremacist leaders, whereas there are no counter-protesters quoted besides Cornel West, who was there as part of a church, and is not identified as aligned with either antifa or BLM. In conclusion, this article employs a mixed frame. Although it does not condemn the counter-protesters, they are also not clearly legitimized through their opposition to white supremacists. This conclusion applies to both antifa and BLM, as both are identified as part of the counter-protesters and no distinction is made between the two.

Article three only makes mention of antifa, not of BLM. Antifa is said to, together with other protesters, have “faced off” with the “white nationalists” (Spencer par. 5). It is not just antifa protesters who are associated with these fights, but they are the only ones that are mentioned specifically on the counter-protesters’ side. Like in the previous article, no side is assigned blame or victimhood and thus this article also seems to apply a showdown frame to the protesters. Public opinion is employed in the form of a bystander who condemns the car attack as “an intentional terrorist attack” (Spencer par. 7), but this bystander does not make any judgements about the counter-protesters. Although this statement does place the counter-protesters in opposition to “white nationalists,” antifa is not legitimized by it. They are seen as having played an equal part in the fighting that occurred. Overall, this article seems quite similar to article two, except that that article had both more condemnation of the white supremacists by public figures as well as more legitimization of them by allowing them to express their views. Similar to this is Gitlin’s description of the news coverage of the 1960s and 1970s New Left movement, which he writes gave “considerable attention to right-wing opposition to the movement, especially from the administration and other politicians” (28).

Overall, the NYT articles of category one contain a limited number of references to antifa and BLM. A majority do not mention them and even those articles that do, do so only once. Unfortunately, these articles therefore do not tell us much about the difference in coverage between antifa and BLM. It could be argued that their presence is erased to some extent. The sample is limited, but antifa seems to be associated with the violence on one more occasion than BLM and thus they appear more militant in this sample. When antifa or BLM is mentioned, they are discussed in a mixed frame. They are not legitimized by their opposition to the far-right, who, at times, even receive some legitimization through their quotations being used, although they occasionally also are condemned. Extremism or the goals of either group are not discussed in any way in the articles of category one.

Category two

What follows is the discussion of the category two articles, which deal with discussions about (counter-)protest and violence as well as expected future unrest. The NYT articles are discussed first and then the WSJ articles follow. Category two can be divided into two sub categories. One consists of articles that are mainly discussions of who were on either side of the events in Charlottesville: NYT articles six, seven, and eight. The other part consists of a number of articles which look at expected unrest in other American cities like Boston and San

Francisco as well as several college campuses: NYT articles five, nine, and ten and WSJ articles three, four, five, and six. The fact that newspapers have written about this possible upcoming unrest is interesting, because one tactic to marginalize protest groups is to portray them as violent and create false expectations about their future actions. Donson et al. write that “[s]uch fear [for violence and criminality] is amplified by politicians and reproduced by the media, facilitating the creation of an environment conducive to suspicion and fear in the mind of the public. Trouble and violence thus become pre-event expectations associated with the anticipated presence of so-called ‘rent-a-mob’ groups and the *necessary use* of strong policing tactics” (Donson et al. 9). This framing thus also serves to justify harsh policing before the event has even occurred. It is interesting to see whether antifa and BLM are expected to be part of these predicted future clashes.

New York Times

The coverage of antifa in category two articles of the NYT will be discussed first, after which a discussion of BLM coverage will follow. Of the six NYT articles in this category, only one (article five) did not mention either antifa or BLM. In the other five articles, mentions of antifa were considerably more prevalent. The boundaries of McLeod and Hertog’s frames are not very well defined, but most articles belonged to either the marginalizing frames category or to the mixed frames category, with a tendency toward mixed over marginalizing framing. Article six might even be considered to work with a debate frame—which, despite being often preached by the media, is rarely used according to McLeod and Hertog—wherein an overview of responses by commentators from the right, left, and center are listed. Protesters from either side are, however, not given an opportunity to express themselves. The only mentions of antifa in this article are of how the right sees them: as the “radical left” which accuses all its opponents of racism. Antifa could thus be argued to receive a marginalizing frame in this article. In these category two articles, antifa is often framed as the violent part of the counter-protesters. This happens, for example in article six: “Others on the right condemned white supremacist ideology, but were eager to point to the violence of Antifa, the anti-fascist group that comprised many of the counterprotesters” (Dubenko par. 2). Other instances can be found in articles seven, nine, and ten: “Unlike most counterdemonstrators in Charlottesville and elsewhere, members of antifa have shown no qualms about using their fists, sticks or canisters of pepper spray to meet an array of right-wing antagonists whom they call a fascist threat to American democracy” (Fuller et al. par. 4). These tactics are repeatedly rejected, for example, by writing that antifa activists are violent

towards anyone who disagrees with them: “Groups that identify as anti-fascist ... have been physically confronting neo-Nazis, white supremacists and, in some cases *speakers who merely challenge the boundaries of political correctness* on college campuses across the country” (Stockman par. 8, emphasis added). Another way in which these actions are rejected, and antifa activists are marginalized is by employing disagreements within what the writers consider to be the left. Article seven mentions, for example, that “[s]ome on the left say confronting the far right gives white nationalists exactly the attention and violent street theater they want” (Stockman par. 13) and article ten states that “[o]thers on the left disagree, saying that antifa’s methods harm the fight against right-wing extremism and have allowed Mr. Trump to argue that the two sides are equivalent” (Fuller et al. par. 7). These statements also work to marginalize antifa by indirectly employing horseshoe theory, which equates antifa or others on the far left to right wing extremists, through the words of other leftists. This also creates an image that even within the left people disagree with antifa’s tactics and that therefore everyone should reject them. Gitlin, writing about media coverage of the New Left, likewise points out an emphasis in the media on internal dissensions and marginalization by “balancing” the anti-war movements “against ultra-Right and neo-Nazi groups as equivalent ‘extremists’” (27). Another sentence in article ten which draws such an equivalence is the following: “Like many of their opponents, some antifa members insist that they are merely reacting to pre-existing aggression” (Fuller et al. 28). Article eight also creates an image of equivalence between the far left and far-right with its title “Alt-Right, Alt-Left, Antifa: A Glossary of Extremist Language” (Stack). The article also allows the “alt-right” to characterize antifa as at least partly responsible for the violence (Stack par. 18). However, the article also legitimizes antifa by giving some background of the movement, although not comprehensive, and rejects the argument of equivalence by paraphrasing “analysts” who said that “comparing antifa with neo-Nazi or white supremacist protesters was a false equivalence” (Stack par. 19). Claims that antifa’s tactics are inefficient, especially when according to the authors these claims come from the left, also help to marginalize the group. Again, there is some similarity with Gitlin’s description of the coverage of the New Left. He writes that that “disparagement of the movement’s effectiveness” was also an important framing device at the time (28). Article ten, despite condemning the violence, also attempts to explore why antifa uses violent tactics and allows an exceptionally high number of six antifa activists to speak and be directly quoted. This is remarkable, since McLeod and Hertog write that not allowing protesters to speak for themselves is a common tactic to delegitimize protesters, since directly quoting someone grants them “a certain degree of legitimacy as a source” (McLeod and

Hertog 319). Article ten is, however, the only article to directly quote protesters and explore their reasons for using violence. The other articles, by not allowing protesters to speak and not explaining their reasoning, are more in line with Boyle et al.'s finding that a group's tactics, not their ideology and ideas, are "the driving force behind news coverage" (137). Similarly, Donson et al. concluded that protesters are silenced and demonized by anonymizing them and reducing their identities to the "mob," which is seen here by identifying protesters only as antifa and not as individuals (10). Article seven, however, affords antifa some legitimacy in another way through a defense by "scholar and activist" Cornel West, who is quoted as saying: "We would have been crushed like cockroaches were it not for the anarchists and the anti-fascists" (Stockman par. 11). At the same time, this article also allows far-right spokespeople like Gavin McInnes of the Proud Boys and Richard Spencer to be quoted or paraphrased. This is something that also occurs in articles eight and nine. Quotations and paraphrasing of President Trump and Vice President Pence will not be discussed further, although these might also be considered to be legitimizing the far-right despite the legitimacy and more mainstream status afforded to them by their offices. Although the far-right is condemned to some extent, its leaders are often allowed to speak for themselves, in articles eight, nine, and ten, affording them also a certain degree of legitimacy. This is another tactic that was identified by Gitlin, who writes that disproportionate attention was given to right-wing opposition during the 1960s and 1970s (28).

Of the three articles of this category that look at expected future unrest, namely articles five, nine, and ten, two make mention of antifa. Donson et al. write that protesters are oftentimes already accused of violence before an event takes place, which justifies police action and creates fear, and thus opposition, among the public. This also seems to be the case here to some extent. Article nine characterizes antifa as among those who engage in violence in response to "controversial speakers" (Goldstein par. 18). Although it does mention non-violent antifa tactics, article ten's main focus is on the violence that antifa protesters at times engage in. Again, they are expected to violently respond to far-right activity. The article's title makes this extra clear: "'Antifa' Grows as Left-Wing Faction Set to, Literally, Fight the Far Right" (Fuller et al.).

Another tactic to marginalize protesters that McLeod and Hertog mention is not engaging with the issues they want to address, instead focusing purely on the protesters' actions. McLeod and Hertog write that "protest stories tend to be framed around the actions of the parties to the protest rather than around the issues at hand" ("Social Control" 314). This

also aligns with Donson et al.'s theory of the protester as a folk devil, which does not have to be understood but is purely defined by their negative and harmful characteristics (3). Of the five articles that mention antifa, all discuss their actions to some extent, but only one, namely article ten, also discusses the reasoning and issues behind these actions. The other four articles focus completely on antifa's actions and do not discuss why they believe these actions are necessary. Article eight describes antifa as wanting "to assault them [white supremacists] and engage in street fighting" (Stack par. 17), but does not consider why they may want to do this. Bray and Vysotsky discuss the logic and reasoning behind this violence and write that it is not antifa's only tactic. Again, article ten is the only one which mentions other antifa activities, such as "community organizing, advocating prison reform and distributing anarchist literature at punk rock shows" (Fuller et al. par. 17). Still, this article also states earlier on that "[t]he closest things antifa may have to a guiding principle is that ideologies it identifies as fascistic or based on a belief in genetic inferiority cannot be reasoned with and must be physically resisted" (Fuller et al. par. 12). The idea that violence would be antifa's guiding principle is rejected by Bray and Vysotsky's writing on antifa and the movement's many tactics. What may also help to legitimize, or at least provide fair coverage to antifa, is a mention of its history of fighting fascism, including in pre-war Germany and Italy. However, besides article ten, the only other article which briefly, and incompletely, mentions antifa's history is article eight.

The remaining two mechanisms of the protest paradigm that McLeod and Hertog describe—reliance on official sources and the invocation of public opinion—are not or barely present, despite a clear presence of mixed and marginalizing framing and other methods of delegitimization, marginalization, and demonization. No instances of reliance on official sources for coverage of antifa were identified in the NYT articles of category one or two. The invocation of public opinion was virtually nonexistent as well. One instance of this occurring was identified in article ten: "Sabaté is an adherent of a *controversial force* on the left known as antifa" (Fuller et al. par. 3, emphasis added). Although this statement about the public's opinion might be considered to contribute to the marginalization of antifa, especially as other groups are not defined as controversial, the use of public opinion does not seem to be a major aspect of marginalization in NYT coverage of the events in Charlottesville and the subsequent public discourse.

Next is a discussion of the application of protest paradigm tactics to BLM in the category two coverage of the NYT. As mentioned before, BLM is mentioned considerably

less often than antifa in these articles: only in articles six and ten. Interesting here is that in neither article BLM is the main focus, or even the main focus of the paragraph in which the movement is mentioned. Article six quotes a commentator from “the left” (Dubenko), Paul Blest from *The Outline*, who wrote: “In the wake of recent protest movements including Black Lives Matter, authoritarian state legislators across the country have been working to legitimize the act of crashing a car into people on the street if those people happen to be protesting” (as quoted in Dubenko par. 24). Here, BLM is framed as an important part of recent protest movements that now face unreasonable backlash. Together with other protesters, BLM protesters are the victim of car attacks and “authoritarian state legislators” working to legalize these attacks (as quoted in Dubenko par. 24). As far as it is reasonable to identify a frame for one sentence, this would be a rare sympathetic frame.

The other mention of BLM is in article ten, which takes a look at antifa. Here BLM is framed as one of the many groups that antifa aligns itself with:

“In the fight against the far right, antifa has allied itself at times with local clergy, members of the Black Lives Matter movement and grass-roots social-justice activists. It also supported niche groups like Black Bloc fighters, who scrapped with right-wing forces in Berkeley this year, and By Any Means Necessary, a coalition formed more than two decades ago to protest California’s ban on affirmative action for universities.” (Fuller et al. par. 10)

As discussed above, antifa receives mixed coverage in this article. BLM is framed as among the peaceful groups that antifa aligns itself with at times. This article is the only one of the three articles that deals with expected future clashes that mention BLM. Whereas antifa is clearly expected to engage in violence at future protests, this expectation does not apply to BLM.

Although these are two limited examples, the framing of BLM appears positive, painting them as victims or peaceful protesters. Like the coverage of antifa, the coverage of BLM does not depend on either official sources or the invocation of public opinion. Other tactics of delegitimization, marginalization, or demonization were also not identified. The coverage of BLM, as opposed to the coverage antifa received, might thus be considered to be sympathetic. This conclusion is, however, based on only two mentions in two sentences and the lack of coverage might also be seen as an example of noncoverage. It is not possible to say whether framing would have been similar if the presence of BLM protesters in Charlottesville had been discussed more extensively. It might be interesting for future research to compare

the framing in articles where BLM is the main focus to these short mentions of the movement in relation to opponents or allies.

Wall Street Journal

The last discussion is of the category two articles from the WSJ. Of these four articles, only two made specific mention of BLM, namely articles three and four, and zero articles mentioned antifa. This complete absence of antifa in the reporting by the WSJ was already discussed in chapter one and this section will thus focus on the coverage of BLM. Somewhat striking is that none of these articles' main focus is a discussion of the Charlottesville counter-protesters, like some of the NYT articles, but instead all look at expected future unrest in Boston and other cities. Article three deals with the planned "Boston Free Speech Rally" (Levitz and Kamp par. 2). BLM is first mentioned when the article paraphrases "Augustus Invictus [Austin Mitchell Gillespie], a former Libertarian Party candidate for the U.S. Senate from Florida who runs a website called 'the Revolutionary Conservative.' He was listed among key attendees on a flier for the 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville" (Levitz and Kamp par. 8). The article states: "In a video on his Facebook page on Sunday, Mr. Invictus described the Charlottesville rally as an event that had unified 'the right wing' and given them a 'common enemy,' mentioning state and local elected officials, police and groups like Black Lives Matter" (Levitz and Kamp par. 9). Gillespie, who is a white supremacist, is described here as "a conservative internet figure." Like in some of the NYT articles discussed above, extremist right-wing opponents are quoted or paraphrased while BLM activists do not get to speak. Ultimately, the opposition Gillespie creates between himself and BLM seems to work out favorably for BLM. This is, however, not because Gillespie is discredited as a right-wing extremist, but only because BLM is placed in the same category as elected officials and police. The other mention of BLM also frames them as opposed to the organizers of the Free Speech Rally. The connection that is made to Charlottesville suggests that this would also be a far-right rally, but this remains somewhat unclear because an organizer, Alexander Sender, is allowed to contradict this by saying: "We are not white supremacists in any way shape or form" (as quoted in Levitz and Kamp par. 6). BLM's position as "counterprotesters" who "planned their own march and rally Saturday in Boston 'to demand justice and stand in defiance of white supremacy'" therefore remains somewhat vague (Levitz and Kamp par. 11). BLM is afforded legitimacy in another way, however. "Organizers," although it remains unclear who these people are, "said they would have marshals, safety teams and legal observers on site" (Levitz and Kamp par. 11). This degree of organization and planning seems

to award the counter-protesters, including BLM, a certain degree of legitimacy. Donson et al.'s theory that protesters are already accused of violence pre-event does not seem to apply to this coverage of BLM. Ultimately, the framing of BLM in this article seems rather mixed; it is neither positive nor negative.

Article four does seem more negative in its coverage of BLM, although this coverage is rather limited again. Here, the only mention of BLM is in the following paragraph:

“In Baltimore, two monuments of Confederate Generals bore new graffiti on Tuesday that said ‘Remember C-Ville,’ and ‘Black Lives Matter.’ A spokesman said Mayor Catherine Pugh, who has called for quickly removing the monuments, said she understands the emotions surrounding the issue but doesn’t support vandalism.” (Kamp and Levitz par. 19)

Although it is not said that the graffiti was sprayed by BLM activists, this is the natural assumption a reader would make. This framing should be classified as a marginalizing frame, perhaps as a combination of the property crime story and romper room frame categories. Property crime stories detail “the commission of property crimes such as vandalism, graffiti and other acts of civil disobedience” (McLeod and Hertog, “Social Control” 312). In this story, the act of spraying graffiti on a monument is condemned as “vandalism” (Kamp and Levitz par. 19). The statement by the mayor also suggests that the people who did this cannot control their emotions and for that reason committed this act of vandalism. This could be argued to fit the romper room frame, which McLeod and Hertog describe as a frame which “portrays the protesters as immature deviants engaged in childish antics” (“Social Control” 312).

Chapter conclusion

In category one, the WSJ did not make mention of either antifa or BLM. No hard conclusions can be drawn from this, but it seems to indicate noncoverage to some extent. Category one for the NYT did, however, provide some interesting insights, despite their limited mentions of either protest movement. Antifa is clearly associated more with violence than BLM is and antifa and BLM’s opposition to the far-right does not seem to legitimize them. Rather, the far-right is legitimized at times through the use of direct quotations, although they are also condemned occasionally. Mixed frames seem to be most common here and neither antifa nor BLM seems to be favored over the far-right.

Category two contained more articles and therefore allowed for some deeper analysis. In this category, the NYT again mainly employed mixed frames, although marginalizing frames can also be found. Antifa is, for example, often seen as the violent component of the counter-protesters and their tactics are clearly rejected through the use of multiple mechanisms of the protest paradigm. This, at times, also leads to the creation of a false equivalence between antifa and the far-right. Still, some articles try to provide some nuance by looking at antifa's history and other tactics, but actions, not ideology, remain the driving factor in coverage. Antifa is also marginalized by rarely being allowed to speak for themselves and through expectations of involvement in future violence. BLM received less attention from the NYT in category two than antifa. They do, however, receive mixed or even positive coverage and are seen as peaceful protesters or even victims. Unlike antifa, BLM is not expected to participate in future violence. In WSJ category two coverage, antifa is erased, but BLM receives neutral or mixed treatment due to their peaceful opposition to a vaguely defined Free Speech Rally and association with vandalism. Again, expectation of violence is not applied to BLM in the WSJ coverage.

Chapter 3

Interpreting the application of the protest paradigm

Chapters one and two discussed the application of the five different mechanisms of the protest paradigm in the coverage of antifa and Black Lives Matter counter-protesters at the Unite the Right rally. This chapter will summarize how the coverage, and the application of the protest paradigm, differed between antifa and BLM in both the New York Times and Wall Street Journal and what this tells us. In the case of the WSJ, antifa was completely removed from the coverage, both in the category one and category two articles. Mentions of BLM were found only in category two articles. Here, they received mixed framing, with one article legitimizing them through association with officials and police and another article delegitimizing them through property crime and romper room frames. Whereas the WSJ erases the antifa completely and provides only limited coverage to BLM, the NYT gives considerably more attention to the more radical movement of the two. Especially in category two articles, where the writers look more in-depth at who the counter-protesters were, antifa receives a lot of coverage. In their coverage, antifa is, however, associated considerably more often with violence than BLM is. The expectation of violence is also greater for antifa, as it is virtually non-existent for BLM. Mixed frames are very common in NYT coverage of the events, although marginalizing frames can also be found. Neither antifa nor BLM is clearly preferred over the far-right. Especially antifa is at times even equated to the far-right. There are limited attempts to provide some insights into the background and ideas of antifa. BLM coverage is considerably more positive, with mixed or even sympathetic framing. Still, their coverage remains very limited in the selected NYT articles. In conclusion, WSJ coverage applies the protest paradigm strongly to antifa, erasing them from the events and discussion altogether, whereas BLM receives mixed coverage. In the NYT, BLM receives mixed to sympathetic coverage, whereas antifa is more clearly marginalized and delegitimized.

In the theoretical framework, it was decided that antifa has both more militant tactics and more extremist goals than BLM. Following Boyle et al.'s and McLeod and Hertog's claims that the media will more closely follow the protest paradigm when covering more extremist groups (137; 311), it was hypothesized that coverage of antifa would thus exhibit more features of the protest paradigm than coverage of BLM (Boyle et al. 137; McLeod and Hertog 311). Noncoverage might be the most extreme form of the protest paradigm as it

provides no opportunities to a protest movement to present and redeem itself in the eyes of the public. McLeod and Hertog write that “any publicity may be better than no publicity at all. There may be individuals who are strongly inclined to support a protest group who become aware of the group’s activities and join the group despite the negative tone of the news coverage” (324). Considering that noncoverage is the most extreme form of the protest paradigm, it is in line with the expectations that antifa would more often be met with a complete lack of coverage than BLM, as is the case for the WSJ. If there is coverage of both movements, it would be expected that the more radical of the two would be more strongly marginalized, delegitimized, and demonized through other tactics than noncoverage. This is indeed the case for the NYT. Despite some attempts to explain the movement, antifa faces considerably more marginalizing mechanisms of the protest paradigm such as marginalizing frames, being equated with the far-right, and being expected to engage in future violence, than BLM.

Another interesting aspect about studying this specific event was also how the media would deal with the opposition between the antifa and BLM counter-protesters and their far-right opposition. Does their opposition to the far-right legitimize the counter-protesters and perhaps negate some of the effects of the protest paradigm? In the one WSJ article where BLM counter-protesters were identified as opposition to the self-identified “right wing,” article three, this opposition did not afford BLM any legitimacy (Levitz and Kamp par. 9). Their legitimacy in this article only arose from the fact that they were associated with other parts of the right’s “common enemy” which included, besides BLM, elected officials and police (as quoted in Levitz and Kamp par. 9). In the other WSJ article which mentions BLM, article four, no clear connection of opposition between BLM and the far-right is established. In this limited sample of WSJ articles, BLM’s opposition to the far-right does therefore not lend them any legitimacy. At most, their association by the far-right with other groups provides them some legitimacy.

In the NYT, the opposition of antifa and BLM to the far-right does also not serve to legitimize them. In article two, BLM is, together with antifa, identified as part of the counter-protesters. Later in the article, counter-protesters, and thus BLM and antifa, are portrayed as having played an equal part in the violence to the far-right. In article six, one of the pundits who are quoted portrays BLM as among the victims of car attacks and Republican “authoritarian state legislators” (as quoted in Dubenko par. 24). This might be interpreted as legitimizing BLM to some extent. The last mention of BLM is in article ten. Here, BLM is

again not mentioned in relation to the far-right, but they are identified as peaceful allies of antifa. Overall, the NYT does not attribute much, if any, legitimacy to BLM based on their opposition to the far-right. Because antifa is more extensively discussed in the NYT articles, there is more to look at here. On multiple occasions, antifa is part of the counter-protesters who are framed as playing an equal part in the violence. Article three also assigns somewhat equal blame to antifa and the far-right for the violence that occurred in Charlottesville, outside of the car attack against counter-protesters, as does article seven. Antifa's opposition to the far-right is not legitimized by such narratives. In article eight, antifa requires explanation just like the "alt-right" (Stack) does, whereby they are presented as a oppositional but comparable movements. Analysts are quoted as saying that comparing "antifa with Neo-Nazi or white supremacist protesters was a false equivalence," but this is not elaborated upon (Stack par. 19). Article nine compares a recent increase in campus protests to "the relatively peaceful student activism of the 1990s and early 2000s" (Goldstein par. 16). This change is not only attributed to the far-right, but also to the response of antifa. Article ten does things somewhat differently and dives deeper into what antifa is and allows activists to speak for themselves. Their claims are, however, called into question with sentences such as the following two: "The closest thing antifa may have to a guiding principle is that *ideologies it identifies as fascistic or based on a belief in genetic inferiority* cannot be reasoned with and must be physically resisted" (Fuller et al. par. 12, emphasis added) and "*Like many of their opponents*, some antifa members insist that they are merely reacting to pre-existing aggression" (Fuller et al. par. 28, emphasis added). The article thus should not be seen as legitimizing antifa, despite creating a more balanced image than most articles. As illustrated before, antifa is often portrayed by the NYT as playing an equal part in the violence that occurs in confrontations between the left and right and their motives are not explained. Their opposition to the far-right does thus not serve to legitimize them.

The last question to discuss was raised by Simon Cottle who, writing in 2008, said that "[m]uch has changed since earlier studies documented how the mainstream news media invariably reports protests and demonstrations through a dominant law and (dis)order frame" (855). This thesis has found, however, that the mechanisms of the protest paradigm as described by Hertog and McLeod are still visible in the reporting on today's protest movements, despite a lack of dependence on official definitions and public opinion. According to Cottle, "the media politics of dissent" now allows for more democratic engagement (866). This might be true; perhaps the media are more aware of different

perspectives and allow these to be voiced. Article six of the NYT, for example, summarizes the responses to the violence in Charlottesville from commentators on the left, center, and right, and article ten allows antifa protesters to explain their views. However, article six is still very limited in the responses that are highlighted. Many of them reject the violence on the right and the response from President Trump, but none of the commentators that were selected by the NYT defend antifa or BLM protesters and the violence that some of them used in response to the far-right. Article ten does quote antifa protesters who defend their tactics, but these tactics are still clearly rejected and the protesters' claims are called into question. So, perhaps there is some more room for democratic engagement in the media than there was during the 1970s about which Todd Gitlin wrote. But, the terms of this discussion are still determined by the media, who remain subject to ideological biases and institutional connections. Besides, a large part of the coverage still consists of reports of what happened and one-sided discussions of the violence that occurred. One possibility to further investigate this topic might be to look at how protest movements, including antifa and BLM, are framed in opinion pieces in newspapers to see whether perhaps these offer more diverse viewpoints, as this category of articles falls outside the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

The 2017 Unite the Right rally has offered an opportunity to consider some of the questions that still exist surrounding the protest paradigm. Looking at the application of the protest paradigm to antifa and Black Lives Matter counter-protesters in the coverage of this event, and the differences between the treatment of these two movements, provides an opportunity to answer some of these questions. Some scholars have argued that the political environment has changed significantly since the election of President Trump. Is the protest paradigm still relevant now that more extremist groups on the left and right are more visible and mainstream? Does this opposition to far-right extremist movements provide legitimation to protest movements on the (far-)left, or does this have no effect on the application of the protest paradigm? And between movements on the left, is the protest paradigm applied equally or do more extremist movements face stronger marginalization?

The most powerful tactic employed by the media as part of the protest paradigm is noncoverage. This mechanism of the protest paradigm is especially prevalent in the coverage of the Wall Street Journal. BLM counter-protesters receive very limited coverage, and the more radical group, antifa, is even erased from the events completely. Strongly applying the noncoverage tactic of the protest paradigm to antifa, but also to BLM to some extent, seems to indicate that the WSJ does, as hypothesized, more closely adhere to the protest paradigm in covering antifa than BLM. In the NYT, however, both movements have been covered. Therefore, in order to determine if the NYT also applied the protest paradigm more strongly to antifa than to BLM, it was necessary to look at what the coverage of both movements looked like.

In category one, the NYT indeed applies the protest paradigm more uniformly to antifa than to BLM, although BLM is also the target of marginalization techniques. Mixed frames are applied to both antifa and BLM, and the media does not consistently view either antifa or BLM as more legitimate than the far-right. Antifa is, however, associated considerably more often with the violence that took place in Charlottesville than BLM is. Category two, like category one, saw a combination of mixed and marginalizing frames being used. Antifa is frequently portrayed as the violent part of the anti-racist counter-demonstrators and their violent tactics are clearly rejected and, at times, equated with the far-right. A few attempts to give some background or allow protesters to speak for themselves do not negate the rejection

of the movement by the articles in which they appear. This category also partly consisted of articles that looked at expected future unrest and therefore provided an opportunity to look at another tactic of demonization: the expectation of violence. Antifa was indeed associated with expected unrest and violence in these articles, whereas BLM was not. Overall, in category two, BLM received mixed to positive coverage as peaceful protesters and even victims. In the WSJ coverage of category two, antifa is completely erased. BLM, however, receives neutral or mixed treatment and is not expected to participate in future violence like antifa is in the NYT coverage.

But what do these conclusions say about how close the media will stick to the protest paradigm when covering movements of different levels of extremism and militancy? Were the media more sympathetic to the counter-protesters when discussing both these counter-protesters and their far-right opposition? And do these results mean that the protest paradigm is still relevant today? The clearly stronger marginalization of antifa when compared with BLM does indeed confirm the hypotheses and findings of Hertog and McLeod and Boyle et al. that “the more radical a group is perceived to be, the more closely journalists will conform to the protest paradigm when covering the group” (Hertog and McLeod, “Social Control” 305). One newspaper, the WSJ, erases the more radical of the two movements, and the other, the NYT, applies other tactics of marginalization, delegitimization, and demonization than noncoverage more strongly to antifa than to BLM.

These results confirm the hypothesis that the marginalization of antifa is more severe than that of BLM. The focus on their violent tactics indicates that limited acceptance of these tactics is indeed the reason for this stronger marginalization. That is not to say that the BLM movement does not face marginalization, but in the coverage of this specific event, their marginalization is significantly less than that of antifa. It was also hypothesized that marginalization of both groups would be more severe in the WSJ than the NYT, due to that newspaper’s ideological position further to the right. This hypothesis has proven to be more difficult to investigate. The application of the protest paradigm to BLM protesters is about equal for both newspapers. Antifa, however, was completely erased in the WSJ and received rather marginalizing coverage in the NYT, both of which are mechanics of the protest paradigm. As argued before however, noncoverage should be seen as the most severe form of the protest paradigm as it offers no opportunities to a movement to present itself to the public. The WSJ therefore is confirmed to more strictly apply the protest paradigm in this instance. This hypothesis is thus confirmed for coverage of antifa, but not for coverage of BLM.

When it comes to BLM, their opposition to the far-right does not seem to afford them any legitimacy according to both the NYT and WSJ articles. Oftentimes, no clear juxtaposition between BLM and the far-right is established. When it is, this often happens in a mixed frame where neither side is clearly favored. Antifa, on the other hand, is more often portrayed as opposition to the far-right by the NYT. Again, they are often seen as having played an equal part in the violence that occurred in Charlottesville and are expected to play an equal part, or even initiate, future violence. At times, antifa is seen as an oppositional but comparable movement, creating a false equivalence between antifa and the far-right. Their tactics of opposing the far-right are rarely explained and thus also cannot afford them any legitimacy. Even if an article attempts to explain these tactics, the reasoning behind them is called into question by the author of the article. In the coverage of the Unite the Right rally, left-wing protesters' opposition to the far-right does not serve to legitimize them.

It was hypothesized that the effects of the protest paradigm would be somewhat subdued in comparison with other coverage of antifa and BLM. This remains somewhat uncertain, as further research is necessary to determine how strictly the protest paradigm is applied to antifa and BLM in circumstances where they do not appear in direct opposition to the far-right. However, the hypothesis did prove to be right in its prediction of a relatively high number of mixed frames. McLeod and Hertog believe these frames to be rather uncommon in the coverage of protest movements, which, usually, are covered with marginalizing frames. Protesters might thus have been marginalized even more if they had not appeared in opposition to the far-right, but at their own demonstrations. The relatively high number of mixed frames might thus indicate that the application of the protest paradigm was somewhat subdued as a result of the counter-protesters' opposition to the far-right, though further research is required to confirm this suspicion.

To answer the last question that was posed in chapter three: the protest paradigm is still very much applicable. Many of its mechanisms still appear in the coverage of the antifa and BLM protest movements, although there was a noticeable lack of dependence on official sources and definitions and invocation of public opinion. Perhaps further research into the use of the specific mechanisms of the protest paradigm might reveal which ones have fallen out of use and if new tactics have become more commonplace. Cottle might, however, be right in his assertion that today there is more space for democratic engagement. Still, this space is restricted by the newspapers who decide who is allowed to speak and whether these persons are contradicted and delegitimized. Furthermore, this is only a part of the news media's

reporting, as another large part still consists of one-sided reports where there is no room for discussion and engagement. In conclusion, the protest paradigm is still relevant and provides a valuable way of analyzing the coverage of protest movements.

As the political environment is always changing, it is important to continually re-assess the applicability of the protest paradigm and learn how strictly the news media follow it when reporting on new protest movements in many different situations. Further research might investigate the treatment by the news-media of counter-protest more generally, as opposed to these instances where counter-protesters were identified as belonging to the antifa and BLM movements, in order to gain more knowledge on the way in which counter-protesters are framed. Considering Cottle's assertion that there is room for more democratic engagement in the news media, and the findings of this thesis that this room remained limited in the selected articles, it is also good to look at other types of articles, such as opinion pieces, to find out whether these provide a more balanced view of protesters such as antifa and BLM. As also mentioned before, other research could look at articles which present antifa and BLM not as counter-protesters to the far-right, but as the initiators of protest. A comparison between such research and this thesis might provide further knowledge on the effect of such an opposition to the far-right on the application of the protest paradigm to leftist protesters. This analysis of the application of the protest paradigm to the antifa and BLM counter-protesters at the 2017 Unite the Right rally has, however, provided a starting point for further research. It has shined a light on the current usefulness of the protest paradigm and its application to movements of differing levels of militancy and extremism as well as to movements in opposition to other extremist or non-mainstream groups. Hopefully this thesis can therefore contribute to further research into this phenomenon and the creation of awareness of the central and influential role that the news media play in a society where the population depends on them to interpret the political situation that affects all of us.

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Appendices

Category one

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Koen de Visscher

s4818628

Master student at the Faculty of Arts of Radboud University Nijmegen,

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