Origins, Partisanship, and Media Coverage of Black Lives Matter vs. Blue Lives Matter

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On August 9, 2014, Darren Wilson fatally shot an unarmed Black man, Michael Brown, in Ferguson Missouri, setting off a media firestorm that would place Ferguson at the epicenter of American race relations.[[1]](#footnote-1) Through the intervening Black Lives Matter movement, Ferguson has played a significant role in shaping the narrative of contemporary race in America. The events of Ferguson were discussed so prominently on social media that #Ferguson became the most tweeted hashtag in what was then Twitter’s ten-year history.[[2]](#footnote-2) Ferguson gained media attention due to the protests that erupted in response to Brown’s death. Protests of Brown’s death destroyed more than a dozen Ferguson businesses as the city’s Black population lashed out against this oppressive system.[[3]](#footnote-3) Brown’s death was arguably the last straw for the largely Black population of Ferguson, where hyper-aggressive police issued 32,975 arrest warrants to a population of 21,000 residents in 2014 and an average of 567 non-traffic related court cases per 1,000 residents. St. Louis, located just twelve miles from Ferguson, issued just 80 non-traffic related court cases per 1,000 residents.[[4]](#footnote-4)

At the time of the event, political activists created the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM in reference to tweets) for tweets referencing Ferguson as a means of using the event to create a movement, attempting to categorize all incidents like Ferguson into a larger theme of police killings, police brutality, and a malfunctioning criminal justice system.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The explosion of activism related to the Black Lives Matter movement post-Ferguson caused two intertwining Twitter response movements: #AllLivesMatter (#ALM—reference to tweets) and #BlueLivesMatter (#BlueLM—only in reference to tweets). #ALM began to appear on Twitter in August of 2014 as a corrective response to #BLM.[[6]](#footnote-6) #BlueLM usage began after two New York police officers were killed in their squad car in December 2014.[[7]](#footnote-7) In sum, 13.3 million tweets about #BLM, #ALM, and/or #BlueLM were tweeted between July of 2013 and July 7, 2016 (the Dallas Police Officer shooting occurred July 9, 2016 and was not included in PEW’s original dataset).[[8]](#footnote-8)

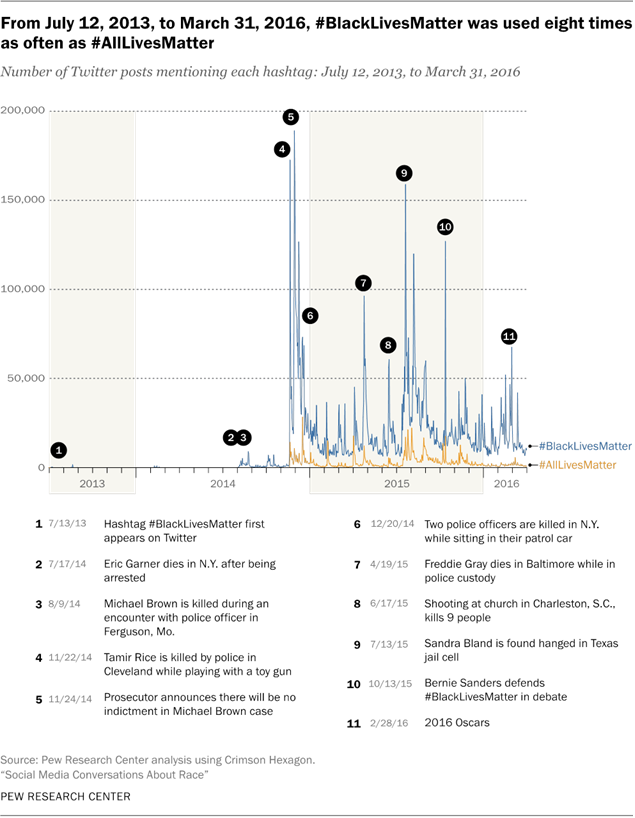
Despite the Twitter-trending status of #Ferguson and #BLM, public opinion data from PEW revealed one-third of Americans were unfamiliar with the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) and/or did not understand its goals at the time of the study. The information discrepancy raises the question of whether there were systemic gaps in traditional news coverage of the events relating to the movement and of the movement itself. #BLM was also tweeted eight times more frequently than #ALM and/or #BlueLM, creating inquiry surrounding the extent to which traditional media echoed this pattern.[[9]](#footnote-9) For these reasons, this study aims to explain the movements themselves, examine newspapers to ascertain the extent to which peak coverage echoed peak tweet content, determine the extent to which newspaper coverage is partisan by state, and evaluate the political implications partisan coverage has on improving the criminal justice system in America.

**Background**

“Black Lives Matter” was first posted on Facebook in July of 2013 by Alicia Garza, one of three co-founders of the Black Lives Matter organization (BLMo—in reference to the organization), as an exasperated response to George Zimmerman fatally shooting Trayvon Martin.[[10]](#footnote-10) Between Ferguson’s 2014 eruption and July 7, 2016, #BLM was tweeted approximately 11.8 million times.[[11]](#footnote-11) Based on PEW’s usage chart, the hashtag was most used after Michael Brown’s killing, 12-year-old Tamir Rice’s killing, Darren Wilson’s indictment, Freddie Gray’s killing while in police custody, the Charleston, South Carolina shooting that killed nine Black people, and Sandra Bland’s hanging, all of which went viral on social media (See Figure 1).[[12]](#footnote-12) These viral events, along with the day-to-day fatal actions towards Blacks that never go viral, are equally situated within the movement and organization. Fatal shootings that do not go viral are difficult to learn about because no governmental agency officially documents them.

The FBI does not track police killings in the United States.[[13]](#footnote-13) While larger events—detailed in part by PEW—gain media attention, Americans have no database that allows them to search how often police fire their guns and how often those shootings are fatal.[[14]](#footnote-14) To solve this problem, *The Washington Post,* [FatalEncounters.org](http://fatalencounters.org/), the [U.S. Police Shootings Database](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cEGQ3eAFKpFBVq1k2mZIy5mBPxC6nBTJHzuSWtZQSVw/edit), [KilledbyPolice.net](http://killedbypolice.net/), and mappingpoliceviolence.org have begun official databases that attempt to track all lives taken by police fire.[[15]](#footnote-15) Ben Montgomery of the *Tampa Bay Times* created a database focusing on Florida police officers (Florida has the best public records laws). Montgomery found that between 2009 and 2014, police shot people an average of 827 times per year, 41% of whom are Black. This compares to a Black population of only 16%.[[16]](#footnote-16) Expanding this data to encompass all fifty states is important to uncover further disproportions.

Figure 1. PEW tracking of frequency of #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) and #AllLivesMatter (#ALM)

 (http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/08/15/the-hashtag-blacklivesmatter-emerges-social-activism-on-twitter/#fn-16486-8.)

1. 7/13/13 Hashtag #BlackLivesMatter first appears on Twitter
2. 7/17/14 Eric Garner dies in N.Y. after being arrested
3. 8/9/14 Michael Brown is killed during an encounter with police officer in Ferguson, MO.
4. 11/22/14 Tamir Rice is killed by police in Cleveland while playing with a toy gun
5. 11/24/14 Prosecutor announces there will be no indictment in Michael Brown case.
6. 12/20/14 Two police officers are killed in N.Y. while sitting in their patrol car
7. 3/19/15 Freddie Gray dies in Baltimore while in police custody
8. 6/17/15 Shooting at Church in Charleston, S.C. kills 9 people
9. 7/13/15 Sandra Bland is found hanged in Texas jail cell
10. 10/13/15 Bernie Sanders defends #BlackLivesMatter in debate
11. 2/28/16 2016 Oscars[[17]](#footnote-17)

In the #ALM response movement, #ALM was tweeted 1.5 million times in the time studied, most after two police officers were killed in their patrol car in New York (see Figure 1).[[18]](#footnote-18) PEW’s study revealed the #ALM response hashtag has been tweeted 1/8 as many times as #BLM in America.[[19]](#footnote-19) However, the full breadth of the original PEW opinion data is incomplete due to the further rise of the #BlueLM hashtag after the killings of five police officers in Dallas, Texas. Dallas occurred one day after the study was published. There were144 police officer deaths, 63 of which were by gunfire, in 2016.[[20]](#footnote-20) At least ten of the 63 victims were targeted and killed just for being police officers.[[21]](#footnote-21) Some may posit that this kind of targeting was due to BLM, but zero shootings were executed by BLMo members.[[22]](#footnote-22) Mainstream media comprehensively covered the five police officers killed in Dallas, the three killed in Baton Rouge, and the two killed in Des Moines.[[23]](#footnote-23)

#ALM and #BlueLM proponents overlap (A/BlueLM will be used in reference to the combination of these proponents, not tweets).[[24]](#footnote-24) PEW published an update in August 2016 that included an analysis of the tone (positive or negative) of post-Dallas tweets. The majority of the 72 tweets that used #BlueLM tweeted from the time of incident until July 17, 2016 were positive in tone.[[25]](#footnote-25) This same time period showed that tweets using #BLM that were negative in tone nearly quadrupled, suggesting sharper critiques of #BLM.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Animosity between groups post-Dallas spiked. Black Lives Matter supporters take issue with the “Blue Lives Matter” and the “All Lives Matter” concepts in general because they assert that the concepts undermine and whitewash the very real problems of mass incarceration and police brutality against Blacks in America (A/BlueLM—in reference to the concepts together). Black men are shot by police at five times the rate of white men and are eleven times more likely to spend a portion of their lives in jail than white men.[[27]](#footnote-27) All Lives Matter supporters believe #BLM is exclusionary, or as Mayor Giuliani phrased it, “inherently racist,” and a divisional force.[[28]](#footnote-28) To ALM supporters, everyone should be considered, not just Black Americans. Blue Lives Matter (BlueLM—in reference to the concept) supporters charge that police officers have difficult jobs, must be supported, and should not be killed for the uniforms they wear. However, even if all 63 police officers killed by gunfire in 2016 were fatally shot because of the uniform they wore (which is unsupported by the data), they would represent 27.03% of Black Americans fatally shot by police in 2016 and 6.5% of all Americans fatally shot by police in 2016. The issues are asymmetrical.

When a grievance with political implications arises, those raising the grievance do not seek to ally it within a partisan framework. Criminal justice reform activists aim to improve the underlying structure that causes and allows Black people to be killed and imprisoned disproportionately to their population sample; they do not place priority on a political party to achieve it. BLM activists held out against any endorsement of party or candidate until just two weeks before the general election.[[29]](#footnote-29) In an America that is the most politically polarized it has been in the last three decades, movements with political agendas become associated with parties despite their best attempts to avoid them.[[30]](#footnote-30) However, Democrats were careful include both Black Americans and police officers in the Democratic Party Platform (“We will push for a societal transformation to make it clear that Black lives matter and that there is no place for racism in our country.” And “Across the country, there are police officers inspiring trust…demonstrating that it is possible to prevent crime without relying on unnecessary force. They deserve our respect and support.”)[[31]](#footnote-31) The Republican Party did not recognize BLM and makes no mention of Blacks or African Americans in its 66-page document. The Republican Party Platform drew ALM and BlueLM lines with, “The Republican Party, a party of law and order, must make clear in words and action that every human life matters.”[[32]](#footnote-32) The prescription of “law and order” suggests a strict alliance with police. For example, during an interview during the Republican nominating convention, Trump criticized the Black Lives Matter movement for instigating violence against police, and called the group a threat that must be watched carefully.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Although police officers and forces do not publicly associate themselves with a particular political party, the National Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) and the National Border Patrol Council (BPC) endorsed Donald Trump in the months leading up to the 2016 election.[[34]](#footnote-34) Mitt Romney did not receive such endorsements in 2012.[[35]](#footnote-35) The endorsements have serious implications. The FOP’s endorsement shows growing dissatisfaction with the criminal justice reform movement and demonstrates an urgency for the issue to be prioritized.[[36]](#footnote-36) Trump gave trepid Blue Lives Matter supporters a home. The 2016 Republican National Convention was peppered with posters asserting the claim, and an unofficial survey indicated 75% of police officers supported Trump.[[37]](#footnote-37) The party lines on this topic were largely drawn by the Republicans, due to their failure to recognize BLM or voice concern with the criminal justice system. In reality, the interests of BLM, to eliminate excessive imprisonment and fatalities of the Black community, and the interests of police, to protect and serve members of the communities they represent, are not inherently at odds with one another.

Public opinion data collected by PEW, which outlined BLM supporters and opponents as well as those who are uninformed about the movement, largely reflects this assumed divide. Supporters of BLM are largely minorities, whites younger than 30, and Democrats (67% of surveyed Democrats were at least somewhat supportive of BLM).[[38]](#footnote-38) The opposition, A/BlueLM proponents and those that have unfavorable feelings towards BLM, are largely whites older than 65 and Republicans (only 20% of surveyed Republicans were at least somewhat supportive of BLM).[[39]](#footnote-39) This is unsurprising because opinion formation is shaped by partisanship and vice versa.[[40]](#footnote-40) The Pew Research Center (PEW) published two studies on #BLM/BLM and #A/BlueLM/A/BlueLM: hashtag usage collected between July 2013 and February 2016 and public opinion data collected from Feb. 29-May 8, 2016. Public opinion data revealed that 30% of whites older than 50 say they have heard nothing about BLM. In addition, one-third of all respondents echoed they had not heard of BLM or that they were unfamiliar with its goals. Of the American population over 18, eighty-six percent use the Internet. Of Internet-using Americans, twenty-one percent are on Twitter. So, approximately 43 million Americans are on Twitter.[[41]](#footnote-41) Of that, thirty-one percent are users over 50, representing 17 million of the 43 million total American twitter populace and 6.4% of the total American population over 50.[[42]](#footnote-42) It is unsurprising that a portion of the 93.6% of Americans over 50 who are not on Twitter is uninformed or confused about a movement that largely began there. Here, traditional media must be examined to address this gap.

Newspapers remain one of the top news sources for Americans over 65.[[43]](#footnote-43) Young adults are less likely to retrieve news from print newspapers; however, a considerable portion of adults aged 30-64 get their news from online news services, including digital newspapers.[[44]](#footnote-44) Studies on newspaper coverage show that newspapers use approximately fifteen percent of available material, giving them a huge selection latitude.[[45]](#footnote-45) Over 400 studies in the last three decades have committed themselves to assessing the agenda-setting function and power of media.[[46]](#footnote-46) There is no consensus on the extent to which news conglomerates impact opinion formation; however, media has been proven to at least determine “what to think about.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Media has a dominant political agenda-setting power. With the advent of social media, recent studies have begun to assess the extent to which mainstream media responds to trending topics on social media and vice versa. A study published in 2014 asserts that traditional media still primarily sets the issue agenda, how issues are framed, and which attributes of issues are emphasized.[[48]](#footnote-48) However, depending on the issue, mutual and reciprocal “causality” between social media and traditional media emerge.[[49]](#footnote-49) The study revealed topics pertaining to social issues are reported and discussed on social media at an 8:3 ratio to traditional media.[[50]](#footnote-50) Black Lives Matter falls into this category.

Marlow’s “rapid information flows” have recently been interpreted in accordance to Twitter data. Such flows cause certain topics to become “trending” on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram and contribute to a “contagion” effect.[[51]](#footnote-51) The contagion effect refers to the “person-to-person dissemination of information” that accompanies media reporting of big events or phenomena.[[52]](#footnote-52) An indeterminable number of sources influence public conversation. Mass media conversations and social media conversations influence both one another and public conversation. Therefore, the reporting origin of a certain issue is not only impossible to determine with certainty, but it is also of lesser importance overall. Black Lives Matter is one such movement whose origins in the media cannot be expressly determined. Tweet volume of #Ferguson and #BLM were both in the top three most used hashtags at the time of Twitter’s 10-year anniversary in 2016.[[53]](#footnote-53) Data suggests some “buzz,” online attention, parallels mass media content.[[54]](#footnote-54) The newspaper data I collected on this topic fits into the category of buzz-turned-mass media.

**Method:**

Data collection and analysis involved LexisNexis keyword searches of US national newspapers from August 1, 2014 to March 31, 2017 as well as gathering of other state-level data on the two-party presidential vote, the frequency of police-perpetrated Black fatalities by state, and Black population by state. All newspaper articles were searched through LexisNexis Academic using two searches. A first search involved various keywords for articles pertaining to #BLM using "Black Lives Matter" or #BlackLivesMatter.” A second search involved articles pertaining to #ALM and #BLM using search terms "Blue Lives Matter" or "Police Lives Matter" or "All Lives Matter" or “#AllLivesmatter” or “#bluelivesmatter” or “#policelivesmatter.” After an initial sweep, “Police Lives Matter” or “#policelivesmatter” were added to my inquiry because early general searches returned articles with these key terms that referred interchangeably to the Blue Lives Matter phenomenon. Both searches covered every month from August 2014 (the earliest month that returned results for either search) to the end of March 2016. I then coded articles for every month of #BLM/BLM and #ALM/#BlueLM//A/BlueLM by article title, date, state of origin, and publication. I sorted articles by date of publication to create a daily frequency chart mimicking that of PEW’s for hashtag usage. I also used these data to create frequency charts by state over time. The data also allow an assessment of overlap of #ALM/#BlueLM//A/BlueLM and #BLM/BLM in certain articles.

The two-party popular vote is the Democratic and Republican candidates’ percentage share of the popular vote by state.[[55]](#footnote-55) Police-Perpetrated Black Fatalities are counts of police-perpetrated Black fatalities from August 2014 to March 2017 aggregated to the state level.[[56]](#footnote-56) Black Population is the percentage of African-Americans by state.[[57]](#footnote-57)

There are several limitations to the data on newspaper coverage. First, the data are exclusively for newspapers and do not cover other print, broadcast, cable, or digital media. It is important to note that newspaper coverage is not a measure of all information sources available to citizens of a state. Second, within the realm of newspapers, not all newspapers are included in the LexisNexis Academic database. Further, there is variation in newspaper inclusion across states. There are no newspapers in the database from Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Hawaii, Nebraska, New Jersey, Rhode Island, South Dakota, or Tennessee. Of the states included, there is variation from one newspaper in most states to as many as 22 for California. Thus, the overall number of stories may vary across states due to the density of papers included in the LexisNexis database. Thus, the analysis should be interpreted as a measure of frequency of coverage of papers in the sample defined by the LexisNexis database. It is not a random sample, but a function of licensing agreements.

The data for police-perpetrated fatalities may also have some measurement error because the data were obtained from both mappingpoliceviolence.org and the *Washington Post*, which may or may not have access to all relevant events. State and local law enforcement agencies do not fully or consistently report these events to federal agencies (FBI Crime statistics or the Center for Disease Control, which record such data). Variations in state and local reporting of police killings may result in imperfect measurement. The census data do not account for demographic drift since completion of the 2010 Census. Finally, the timeframes for comparing Twitter data to newspaper coverage only partially overlap since the PEW study ends in February 2016 while the other data continue to March 2017.

**Results**

Including articles that discuss both sets of key terms, 83.8% of articles published across the United States from August 2014 to March of 2017 pertained to BLM. Accordingly, articles published mentioning A/BlueLM, and/or Police Lives Matter accounted for 16.2% of data. When the articles that mention both are eliminated, the percentages shift to 88.4% and 11.6%, respectively. PEW uncovered an 8:1 ratio for tweets including #BLM versus tweets including to #ALM. Because PEW counted mentions of #BLM and #ALM, not tweets just mentioning one hashtag or the other, this study will use the 83.8/16.2 figures for means of comparison. Through adding #BlueLM and #policelivesmatter data content to ALM content, the ratio for articles discussing #BLM and/or BLM versus #ALM, #BlueLM, A/BlueLM, #policelivesmatter, and/or

Police Lives Matter was between 8:1 and 9:1. My data revealed a parallel to PEW’s findings. 11,891 articles addressing these movements were published and available on LexisNexis during this time period, in comparison to 13.3 million tweets. Articles published represented 0.89% of tweet volume. It should be noted, however, that a 140 character tweet is incomparable in significance to a 500-plus newspaper article with a guaranteed audience.

I will make sense of this statistic, articles representing .89% of tweet volume, with the Neuman et al (2014) study of public attention and agenda setting. The study set out to determine whether social media dictates traditional media, or vice versa. Neuman et al found that traditional media and social media exist on a foundation of “interdependence.”[[58]](#footnote-58) Spikes in social media attention to certain issues “are as likely to precede traditional media as to follow it.”[[59]](#footnote-59) This phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 1 with newspaper data in the top panel, and Twitter data in the bottom panel. In average issue attention, social media covers issues 3:1 to traditional media. In terms of social issue attention, this ratio becomes 8:3. With regard to all general issues, traditional media typically encompasses 24% of all coverage, while Twitter encompasses 2%. Because the Neuman study did not disassemble traditional media by type (broadcast, newspapers, online news, etc.), it is impossible to match its findings to my own. However, coverage ratios aligning suggests that the “buzz” created by social media was assimilated enough into traditional media for newspaper media to echo it. Spikes in subject matter of newspaper articles versus tweets do not correlate. While the Twitter data reflects reactions to viral videos of fatal police shootings as well as two officers’ deaths in a police car, the newspaper coverage primarily details BLM protests and interruptions of primary campaign rallies (labeled spikes 1-7 and 9-11), with the fatal shooting of five Dallas Police officers creating a spike at data point 8 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Frequency of “blm” and #BLM versus “ALM,” “BlueLM,” “police lives matter,” #ALM, #BlueLM, and #policelivesmatter by day August 1, 2014 to March 31, 2017

Panel 1:

1. 12/14/14 BLM Protesters Stage “Die-ins” across the country/march on D.C.
2. 1/19/15 Protests across country on MLK Day
3. 8/10/15 Sanders campaign interrupted with BLM protest

8/19/15 Hillary Clinton meets with BLMo

9/3/15 BLM organizer arrested/protesters back bill to address police shootings

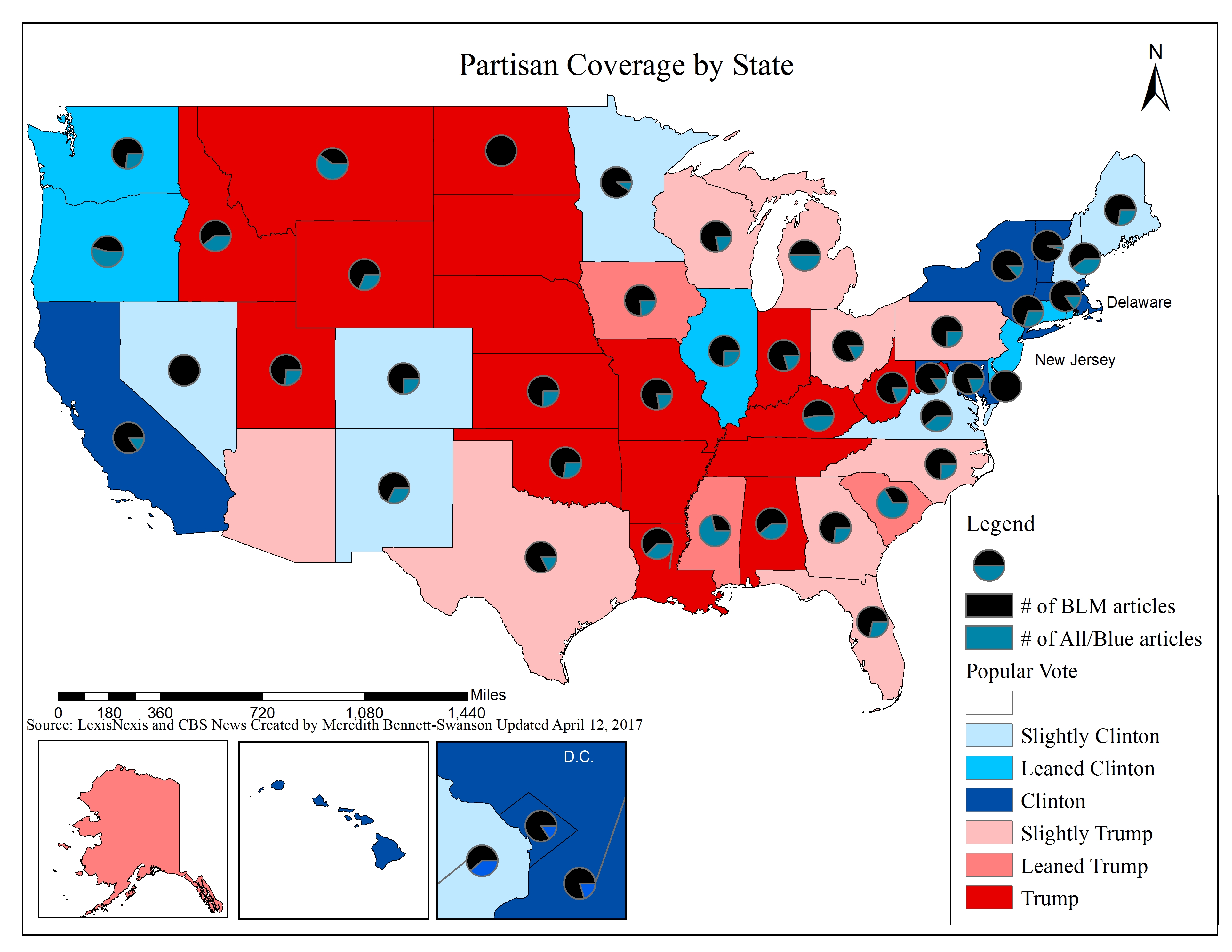
1. 11/25/15 Minneapolis BLM protesters are shot at
2. 12/27/15 Articles reflecting on shootings of 2015/reviewing 2015 with mentions of #BLM
3. 1/19/16 MLK BLM protests
4. 5/11/16 Obama says BLMo has made organizational progress, wagers on Clinton versus Sanders Black vote, and Trump discussion in relationship to Black vote.
5. 7/9/16 Dallas Police Officers are shot and killed at what was scheduled to be a peaceful community gathering.
6. 10/5/16: flash Black Lives Matter protests around the country

10/11/16: Ava DuVerney releases documentary *13th*.

1. 11/13/16 “Million Student March” and “Day of Rage” nationwide protests.
2. 1/21/17 Anti-Trump protests across the country.

This analysis will make sense of newspaper coverage by state through four statistical categories: the general election two-way popular voting behavior/partisanship of each state, the percentage of each state population living in an urban center, the percentage of Blacks fatally shot by police relative to the total fatal shootings by police by state, and the percentage of Blacks residing in each state.[[60]](#footnote-60) The general election popular vote percentage assessment versus coverage is displayed in Figure 3. I consider states with 80 percent or more people living in urban centers as large urban states, and those lower than 80 percent as small urban states. I use 80 percent because it is the national average population living in an urban center.[[61]](#footnote-61) The ten highest and ten lowest urban populations will be used. The percentage of Blacks fatally shot by police will be compared to the Black population’s state percentage to assess any disproportion. The ten highest and ten lowest disproportional figures will be used. I refer to the 27 available months (Jan 2015-March 2017) of the *Washington Post’s* fatal police shootings data as the base in my calculations.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Figure 3: Partisan Coverage by State Vote

Figure 4: National Average Newspaper Coverage of BLM/#BLM versus A/BlueLM/#A/BlueLM

H1: I hypothesize that states that meet or exceed the Black Lives Matter National Coverage Average **(BLMNCA)** of 83.8% article frequency will fall into one or more of the following categories: state majority voted for Clinton, large urban population (over 80% state total), high percentage of Black residents (13% or higher), and/or have disproportionately high Black fatalities in comparison to the state’s Black population sample.

H2: I hypothesize that states that meet or exceed the All/Blue Lives Matter National Coverage Average **(A/BlueLMNCA)** of 16.2% article frequency will fall into one or more of the following categories: state majority voted for Trump, small urban population (under 80% state total), low percentage of Black residents (13% or lower), and/or have disproportionately low Black fatalities in comparison to the state’s Black population.

“Article Frequency by State,” Figure 3, below shows the general coverage trend by state. Key states by statistical category will be discussed below.

Figure 5: Article Frequency by State

Section 1: Of the top 10 Clinton states with the highest percentage popular vote, only Washington and Illinois fell short of the 83.8% Black Lives Matter national coverage average **(BLMNCA)** (See Table 1). Hawaii and Rhode Island published zero articles about either matter because no papers from either state are in the LexisNexis database. Washington and Illinois were the farthest from the BLMNCA (9.5% and 5.3% lower, respectively). Washington falls 9.26% below average in Black population, yet 31% of those fatally shot by police in Washington were Black, causing Blacks in Washington to be fatally shot by police at 2.67 times higher than their population sample. Illinois is 1.9% more populated by Blacks than the national average, and Blacks are fatally shot by police 3.9 times their population sample. Washington and Illinois primarily published articles relating to the Black Lives Matter movement itself, Martin Luther King Day rallies planned by Black Lives Matter, and protests relating to Black Lives Matter. Here, we see a divergence from Twitter data, wherein trending tweeted events surrounded viral videos of fatally shot Black men. The information divergence may contribute to the uninformed status of one-third of those surveyed by PEW on this issue. Rally and protest coverage may overlook what causes such rallies and protests: fatal shootings. A 1991 study posits that traditional media concentrates on “thematic, abstract, and structural issues rather than concrete details of the episodic event at hand,” which may be the case with #BLM/blm newspaper coverage.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Table 1: Newspaper Coverage in top Clinton-voting states



Section 2: Publications from New Jersey, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Arizona are not available on LexisNexis, so analysis is impossible. Of the remaining six states that had available coverage, only two fall below the BLMNCA, Florida and Utah. Florida and Utah voted for Trump in the 2016 election, perhaps explaining their failure to meet the BLMNCA. The lapse may be because residents of Florida and Utah do not want to read coverage of BLM or because their interest in A/BlueLM is greater, causing papers to cover A/BlueLM more thoroughly. A type of hyper-partisan media bias may be at play.

Table 2: Newspaper Coverage in High Urban Population States

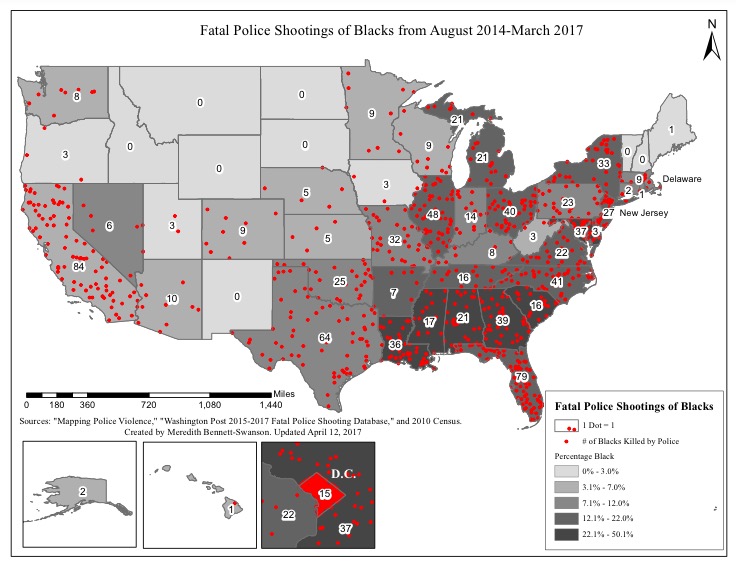


Section 3: With high percentage Black states, part of H1 is largely disproven. Only Delaware, District of Columbia, and Maryland exceed the BLMNCA (Table 3). Of the remaining seven states, six voted for Trump. Sixty percent of states with the highest concentration of Blacks in America voted for Trump, and the other forty percent for Clinton. Of the states that voted for Trump, coverage was between 5.9% and 71.3% lower than the BLMNCA. Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana’s coverage was 71.3% to 13.8% lower than the BLMNCA. H1 is in part built upon the assumption that states with a high concentration of Black residents would have a higher interest regarding information on a movement—Black Lives Matter—whose principle aim is to address the inequities associated with Blackness in contemporary America. The potential hyper-partisan media bias of Black Lives Matter versus blue/All Lives Matter is likely at play in these states. More than sixty percent of residents in Alabama and Louisiana voted for Trump. Mississippi and South Carolina had 57.4% and 59.5% of their vote shares, respectively, go to Trump. This occurrence supports H2, wherein states that voted for Trump would have ≥16.2% A/BlueLM articles. Georgia and North Carolina were respectively only 5.9% and 5.3% lower than BLMNCA, and they also then meet the same, Trump-voting provision of H2. However, these two states only voted for Trump by 6% and 4%, respectively, so their proximity to BLMNCA is unsurprising. Virginia is the complete hypotheses anomaly, with Black Lives Matter state coverage 30% below BLMNCA. Because Virginia is similar to North Carolina in location, racial composition, and disproportional fatal shootings of Blacks (VA 2.38:1 NC 1.9:1), one would expect Virginia coverage to mimic North Carolina’s. However, this discrepancy may have been due to a sampling error, given Virginia published only 16 articles in LexisNexis, while North Carolina published 390. Additionally, Virginia may be explained by the fact that it was only won by Clinton by 5%, but no certain conclusions can be drawn.

Table 3: Newspaper Coverage in States with High Percentage Black Population



Figure 6: Black Population Density and Fatal Police Shootings of Blacks August 2014-March 2017



Section 4: Rhode Island and Nebraska have no publications in LexisNexis. Of the remaining states with high fatal police shootings of Blacks, only Minnesota and Massachusetts exceed BLMNCA (Table 4). Of the remaining six states, all but two, Illinois and Maine, were won by Donald Trump in the general election. Maine may have fallen 8.3% lower than BLMNCA because it was won by Hillary Clinton by just 3% of the popular vote. Utah and Maine also more easily qualify for disproportion because they each have Black populations of approximately one percent. Three fatal shootings and one fatal shooting, respectively, put both at the top of the list. Wisconsin and Iowa were all between 1.2% and 4.4% lower than BLMNCA. Each is historically a battleground state, so their proximity to the BLMNCA is unsurprising. Illinois, a state that reliably votes Democratic in the presidential election and voted for Clinton at 58.4%, is a slight anomaly. While it drops just 5.3% behind BLMNCA, its political leanings, urban population, Black population, and disproportion in fatal police shootings of Blacks should cause its coverage to exceed BLMNCA. Additionally, the raw number of articles published from Illinois on LexisNexis cause it to qualify for deeper analysis. Section 1 details the type of articles Illinois publishes and an impact analysis. Missouri is interesting because of the raw number of articles it published as well as its proximity to BLMNCA. The state went to Trump by 20% in a two-way race, its urban population is below average, and its Black population is slightly below average. Missouri is one of the view states that qualifies on the disproportionately fatal shootings of Blacks measure of H1. Figure 6 further illustrates Black population density and the number of fatal shootings in each state. One can see the “bible belt” of the southeast has many more fatal shootings in raw number, but the disproportion is not such that they qualify for this analysis.

Table 4: Newspaper Coverage in States with High Fatal Police Shootings of Blacks



Section 5: This figure supports elements of H1. Eight of the ten states voted for Clinton (Table 5). North Dakota and Texas voted for Trump, yet both exceed the BLMNCA, causing both to be inapplicable to H2. However, it is important to note that the size of North Dakota’s sample makes it suspect for concrete analysis. Texas may have exceeded BLMNCA because it was only won by Trump by 10%. All other states on the list also exceed BLMNCA. Vermont, New York, and Maryland saw ≥65% of the popular vote won by Clinton, suggesting partisan reinforcement of information. Delaware Nevada, and Minnesota had respectively 56%, 51.4%, and 50.2% vote share go to Clinton. Minnesota news covered several Black Lives Matter-related protests, one at the Mall of America and one during the Twin Cities Marathon, which were responsible for the bulk of the press. Minnesota’s Black population is also fatally shot by police at 4.8 times its population sample, potentially explaining the overrepresentation of BLM articles. Delaware and Nevada have too small an article sample to analyze.

Table 5: Highest Percentage Newspaper Coverage Black Lives Matter



Section 6: Three states in this category, Arkansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota, have no newspapers available in LexisNexis. North Dakota is the only true anomaly to H2 in this group, and this is likely because of publications access restriction due to LexisNexis collection limits. West Virginia and Oklahoma are noteworthy because of the raw number of articles published in each state relating to this issue as well as the coverage percentage. West Virginia is 0.6% lower than BLMNCA, and Oklahoma is 6.5% lower. In West Virginia and Oklahoma, Blacks are fatally shot by police 3.4 and 2.6 to 1 respectively. Each state has a low Black population and has a below-average urban population. All seven states with LexisNexis data satisfy H2 and A/BLUELMNCA, likely due to the states’ partisan leanings.

Table 6: Newspaper Coverage in top Trump-voting states



Section 7: Arkansas and South Dakota have no newspapers available in LexisNexis. Vermont is the anomaly to H2 in this set. This is likely due to the state’s population voting for Clinton ≥65%. West Virginia is discussed in Section 6. All states with LexisNexis data satisfy H2 and A/BLUELMNCA, likely due to the states’ partisan leanings.

Table 7: Newspaper Coverage States with Small Urban Populations:



Section 8: South Dakota has no newspapers available in LexisNexis. Vermont is discussed in Section 7 and North Dakota is discussed in Sections 5 and 6. The remainder satisfy H2 and A/BLUELMNCA. Utah is home to a heavily-concentrated Mormon population. Article titles suggest Mormons ally with the Black Lives Matter movement, defending the movement on a premise of inclusion and the historical detriments of Black Americans.

Table 8: Newspaper Coverage in Low Percentage Black States



Section 9: South Dakota has no newspapers available in LexisNexis. Vermont is discussed Section 7. North Dakota is discussed in Sections 5 and 6. Idaho and Wyoming support H2 and satisfy A/BLUELMNCA, yet have notably small article frequencies. New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Montana’s article frequencies are too small to merit analysis. Clinton won New Mexico with 54.7% of the popular vote, yet New Mexico Falls 13.3% below BLMNCA. New Mexico is <3% Black, perhaps explaining this trend. In this data, Mississippi is the most interesting. While its sample size is too small to make any lasting conclusions, the seven A/BlueLM articles collected explicitly covered blue Lives Matter-related events. Its voting behavior, 59.5% Trump, makes satisfying A/BLUELMNCA unsurprising; however, for it to flip frequency at a percentage higher than BLMCNA is remarkable, distinguishing it as potentially the state with the most hyper-partisan media bias. Its low disproportional fatal shootings of Blacks may be a product of its high Black population, 37.3%. As Mississippi has the highest state Black population, its one #BLM-related article is puzzling; however less so due to its partisan alliance. Further newspaper data collection is necessary to determine the extent to which preliminary collection suggests a trend.

Table 9: Newspaper Coverage in States with Low Fatal Police Shootings of Blacks:



Section 10: In terms of voting behavior, only Virginia simultaneously does not satisfy H2 and BLMNCA (discussed in section 3). Mississippi, Montana, South Carolina, Kentucky, Alabama, Idaho, and Michigan satisfying H2 is likely due to the partisan-reinforcement of A/BlueLM. Oregon and New Hampshire do not qualify for analysis due to the low article frequency.

Table 10: Highest Percentage Newspaper Coverage Blue/All/Police Lives Matter



**Conclusion:**

Of the four statistical categories (popular vote, urban population, percentage Black, and disproportional Black fatalities) popular vote most directly predicted how closely percentage coverage matched BLMNCA versus A/BLUELMNCA. This result supports the hyperpolarization of partisanship in contemporary America. Restructuring and reforming police forces that lead Black Americans, on average, to be fatally shot by police 2:1 disproportionately to their overall population sample should be a bipartisan issue. The LexisNexis newspaper coverage of this issue diverges from tweet coverage. High frequency tweets responded to viral videos of police brutality—both in support of #BLM and in the defense of all lives with #ALM—while high frequency newspaper articles responded to BLM events—protests and rallies—with the exception of the Dallas Police shooting (Figure 1). This exception stands out because newspapers in LexisNexis covered this event more than the fatal shootings of Black Americans. Coverage surrounding the events related to the movement rather than coverage on the details and context of #BLM may have caused one-third of Americans to not understand the goals of BLM, or to have never heard of it. What remains at the centerfold of this discussion is the extent to which partisan alliances formed “sides,” surrounding an issue that demands cooperation. A now widely-used police department motto originating at the Los Angeles Police Department, “to protect and serve” does not include an asterisk that includes only persons of a certain class, status, race, ethnicity, gender, etc. An ideal police force protects all community members equally, writes the same citations for the same misdemeanors, and uses lethal force only when a member’s survival is in question.

Daytona Beach Police Chief-turned County Sheriff Mike Chitley made the ideal police a reality in the city he served. As Police Chief of the Daytona Beach Police Department (DBPD), Chitley required all officers to learn the racial history of the United States and, as a result and in congruence with this history, to learn their own biases.[[64]](#footnote-64) In a city of 62,000 people, only four police shootings occurred in 2016.[[65]](#footnote-65) Officers were instructed to engage in community policing in accordance with DBPD guidelines, leading them to know which members of the community suffer from mental illness (1/5 fatal police shootings take mentally ill victims).[[66]](#footnote-66) Knowing which community members suffered from mental illness helped them exercise caution and patience in incidents involving said community members. Additionally, DBPD officers are taught to anchor their trigger fingers on the side plate of their guns, rather than on the trigger, when they feel they need to pull their guns in order to prevent misfires and create time to fully assess the situation.[[67]](#footnote-67) Lastly, in 2016 DBPD officers arrested and issued tickets to citizens nearly in congruence to their population samples; sixty percent of those arrested and/or ticketed were white, forty percent of those arrested and/or ticketed were Black—same goes with the Daytona Beach population.[[68]](#footnote-68) Sheriff Chitley is a member of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), comprised of police chiefs and sheriffs across the country whose guiding principle is “the sanctity of human life.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Eight months after criticizing PERF’s principles, members of the FOP adopted portions of them.[[70]](#footnote-70) These developments show that the conversation about police reform is taking root in certain instances, even though police chiefs and sheriffs represent only a fraction of the problematic criminal justice system. Progress on this issue demands recognition of the issues and cooperation in seeking solutions.

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