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Stereotyping Online? Internet News, Social Media, and the Racial Typification of Crime

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A substantial body of research indicates that television news consumption is associated with criminal stereotyping. However, less is known about how online media, such as Internet news and social media news consumption, is associated with such attitudes. Using a multisite sample of mostly young adults, the current study examines the relationships between multiple types of online news consumption and crime news engagement on racially typifying African Americans as violent, property, and drug offenders. Findings reveal that Internet news consumption is negatively related, but social media news consumption is positively related, to racially typifying African Americans as criminals. Beyond consumption, social media crime news engagement is negatively related to racial typification. Last, there is some evidence that the association between online media consumption and engagement varies by race and political ideology. Findings and direction for future research is discussed.

KEYWORDS: media consumption; news; public opinion; race; social media; stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

For over a half century, scholars from various disciplines have explored the connection between media consumption and outcomes associated with crime and justice. In fact, a large body of research illustrates that television news consumption, particularly local news viewership, is positively related to fear of crime and increased punitiveness (Baranauskas and Drakulich 2018; Callanan 2012; Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz 1997; Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz 2000; Dixon 2008a; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Gross and Aday 2003; Roche, Pickett, and Gertz 2016; Rosenberger and Callanan 2011; Weitzer and Kubrin 2004). One key explanation for these prior findings is the distortion of race found on local television news broadcasting. Specifically, television news programs overrepresent African Americans as criminals and are more likely to depict whites as victims and officers (Dixon and Linz 2000a, 2000b; Gilliam et al. 1996; Sonnett, Johnson, and Dolan 2015). As a result, heavy television news exposure may activate or reinforce stereotypes of African Americans as criminal and violent, which ultimately heightens levels of fear and increases support for punitive crime policies (Dixon 2006a; Dixon and Azocar 2007; Gilliam and Iyengar 1998, 2000).

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In contrast to the research on traditional media consumption and attitudes associated with crime and justice, a small but growing number of studies suggest that Internet news consumption shows a different pattern. That is, Internet news consumption tends to be negatively associated with fear of crime and punitive attitudes (Kohm et al. 2012; Roche et al. 2016; Simmons 2017). To date, it is unclear why Internet news exposure yields divergent opinions and attitudes about fear and punishment than are commonly found among traditional news consumers; however, recent research illustrates that African Americans are portrayed and/or represented differently in Internet news stories (Josey 2015; Josey et al. 2009). One possibility is that the negative findings found among Internet news consumers may be due to a weaker association between race and criminality in stories on Internet news sites. Another reason may be that online news platforms have unique characteristics that traditional-based media does not offer. For example, online media allow users to engage/interact with news and information (e.g., commenting on stories, posting/sharing news to others), to have global access to a variety of content and viewpoints, and to have the option to search, control, and select information to consume (Metzger 2009). As a result, the distinctive characteristics found among online news may cultivate attitudes and beliefs differently among consumers compared to those who obtain news from traditional sources.

In the current study, we examine how online media consumption is associated with stereotypical views of African Americans as criminals. We contribute to—and advance upon—previous literature in three important ways. First, because the proportion of adults who access a variety of online media content for news and information is increasing,[3] we measure both *Internet* and *social media* consumption. Specifically, our study utilizes Internet and social media measures that gauge both news consumption frequency (e.g., "how many days") as well as crime news engagement ("how often comment, post, or share"). Second, we explore three attitudinal measures of racial crime stereotypes about violent, property, and drug offending. Specifically, we use *relative* measures that gauge individuals' perceptions of the percentage of African Americans responsible for committing violent crime, property crime, and drug crime relative to the percentage of whites committing these acts. Third, we consider two audience characteristics, race and political ideology, that may moderate the relationship between media consumption and criminal stereotyping.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Scholarship on media effects has typically turned to cultivation theory in order to understand how media consumption impacts consumers' attitudes and beliefs. The cultivation hypothesis suggests that heavy exposure to media shapes our

[3] For example, current trends show that the gap between consumers who report "how often" they obtain the news from television and online is narrowing (Gottfried and Shearer 2017). Furthermore, recent reports illustrate that approximately 93% of U.S. adults turn to online outlets to get the news (e.g., websites, social media) (Pew Research Center 2018a) and 69% of U.S. adults use at least one social media platform to connect with others, engage in news content, and share information (Pew Research Center 2018b).

conceptions of social reality (Gerbner and Gross 1976; Morgan, Shanahan, and Signorielli 2014). Stated differently, the more time spent consuming mass media (e.g., heavy television users), the greater likelihood that individuals' perceptions of the real world will reflect the content portrayed in the media. Yet, scholars note that cultivation theory was formulated to explain media effects from traditional outlets, such as television, and that this perspective may not be suitable to explain media effects in an online environment where individuals can select and create their own content to consume. Thus, it is important to consider different, more current theories that focus on the influence of mass media in an online setting (Josey 2015; Metzger 2009). Specifically, there are two theoretical frameworks that may provide a clearer understanding of how media exposure may contribute to the construction of racial stereotypes among online media consumers. These perspectives include social identity and categorization theories and selective exposure theory.

Social identity and categorization theories are key perspectives that can explain media stereotyping. These theories contend that membership of an ingroup (e.g., social class, race, political) will affect stereotyping of members of an outgroup (Tajfel 1974). As stated by Dixon (2016:170), "we feel better about ourselves by negatively judging and evaluating outgroup members." Regarding media effects, members of one racial ingroup (e.g., whites) may select media messages that negatively portray members of their outgroup (e.g., blacks) in order to maintain or enhance ingroup members' self-image (Appiah, Knobloch-Westerwick, and Alter 2013; Mastro 2003; Mastro and Tukachinsky 2012). Previous research has used social identity/categorization theories to explain how racial group membership affects consumers' evaluation and interpretation of media content (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, and Kopacz 2008).

Selective exposure theory posits that individuals will choose mass media that align with their beliefs or predispositions (Knobloch-Westerwick and Alter 2007; Melican and Dixon 2008). Specifically, media users may select information, stereotypically, based on their demographics and belief systems. In fact, prior research illustrates that characteristics such as gender, race, and political affiliation influences the type of news content that users consume (Knobloch-Westerwick and Alter 2007; Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick, Appiah, and Alter 2008). Because the Internet and social media allow access to a diverse body of news, ideas, and opinions, online media users may seek out information that aligns with their interests or opinions and exclude/avoid news content that is contrary to their beliefs or biases.

Based on theory and prior efforts, we focus on two audience characteristics that may moderate the effects of online media consumption and criminal stereotyping. First, we consider *race* because media effects on crime-related attitudes have shown differential effects between whites and nonwhites. For example, Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) found that exposure to crime news scripts involving a black perpetrator increased punitiveness and heightened negative racial attitudes among white participants but not blacks (see also Gilliam and Iyengar 2005). Furthermore, research illustrates that whites associate African Americans with crime and danger (Gordon, Michels, and Nelson 1996; Quillian and Pager 2001). Thus, among white

media consumers, media messages regarding race and crime may resonate or heighten attitudes that stereotype African Americans as criminals.

Second, we consider consumers' *political ideology*. Exposure to racialized crime news has shown to increase support for Republican candidates and decrease support for race-related policies among white viewers (Mastro and Kopacz 2006; Valentino 1999). Furthermore, Roche and colleagues (2016) found the effects of Internet news exposure on punitive attitudes and perceived victimization risk was positive among conservatives and negative among liberals/moderates. Similarly, Simmons (2017) found that among white consumers, Internet news exposure was associated with increased punitiveness among conservative respondents and decreased punitiveness among liberal respondents. Therefore, political ideology may be another important audience characteristic that moderates the effects of online news consumption and criminal stereotyping.

Finally, consumer characteristics such as race and political affiliation may influence how users choose (e.g., selective exposure) and interpret (e.g., social identity/categorization) news and information. As noted by Melican and Dixon (2008:155), "people with a particular political or racial perspective would be inclined to seek out those sites that have information supporting their personal views and filter out sites with opposing views." Thus, in a digital landscape, one's background (e.g., race and/or political affiliation) may result in selecting (or avoiding) news/content that is consistent (or contrary) to their stereotypical beliefs (Josey 2015:60). In the next section, we review evidence about the portrayal of race in mass media and how exposure to racialized news content affects audience members.

RACE AND ETHNICITY PORTRAYED IN MASS MEDIA

Stories involving crime and violence are a large component of news coverage (Pew Research Center 2013; Surette 2007). With respect to race/ethnicity and crime, the traditional news media are more likely to depict African Americans in a negative or stereotypic fashion such as criminals, intimidating, threatening, and associated with poverty (Dixon 2006a, 2008b; Entman 1992, 1994; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Josey et al. 2009; for exceptions, see Dixon 2017) and portray whites as victims and police officers (Dixon 2017; Dixon and Linz 2000a; Romer, Jamieson, and Coteau 1998). For instance, a study on homicide coverage in printed media found that victims who are white, younger, women, and of high socioeconomic status receive more coverage than victims who are black or Hispanic (Sorenson, Manz, and Berk 1998). In a similar study on Latino coverage in newspapers, Latinos were more likely, in comparison to whites, to dominate news stories involving crime and other problem issues (Turk et al. 1989).

Regarding local television news, Romer and colleagues (1998) found that African Americans were more likely to be portrayed as criminals as opposed to victims, and whites were more apt to be depicted as victims rather than criminals. Similarly, comparing official arrests statistics in California, Dixon and Linz (2000a) found that African Americans accounted for 21% of arrests but delineated in 37% of local

television news stories involving crime. Further, comparing employment records of police personnel, the authors found that whites composed of 59% of police employed in Los Angeles but appeared as officers 69% of the time on television news. A more recent assessment suggests that the disparities of African Americans depicted on local television news have improved. In fact, Dixon (2017) found that African Americans composed of 24% and 27% of criminal and homicide arrests, respectively, compared to being 27% and 31% of all criminal and homicide perpetrators, respectively, portrayed on local television news. In addition, African Americans were accurately depicted as victims and officers, relative to official statistics. In the cable and network news sphere, Dixon and Williams (2015) found that compared to actual crime data, African Americans are underrepresented as victims and offenders.

Two studies examined the portrayal of race/ethnicity on Internet-based news sites. Utilizing the 11 most popular news websites in 2006, Josey and colleagues (2009) analyzed the portrayal of race in news headlines, images, and stories (e.g., popular news and top news). Comparing the proportion of racial characters highlighted in headlines, images, and popular/top news stories to Census data, the authors found that African Americans were less likely to be mentioned in headlines, shown in images, and featured in popular/top news compared to their relative proportion in the United States. In contrast, whites were mentioned in headlines, shown in images, and represented in popular/top news at a greater frequency relative to Census population data. Last, the authors examined how racial groups are stereotyped in online news. Examining the negative stereotype of poverty, they found that African Americans were more likely to be portrayed as poor compared to whites.

In a more current and comprehensive study, Josey (2015) examined the portrayal of race in the top 10 traditional (e.g., CNN, *New York Times*) and top 10 nontraditional (e.g., Yahoo, The Drudge Report) Internet news sites across one full year. Three principal results are noteworthy: first, African Americans were represented in Internet news stories relative to their overall proportion in the U.S. population; however, they were twice as likely to be portrayed with a negative stereotype (e.g., criminal, drugs, poverty) compared to a counter-stereotype (e.g., black CEO). Whites, in contrast, were overrepresented in Internet news stories relative to their overall population proportion and were less likely to be negatively stereotyped. Second, when comparing traditional versus nontraditional online news websites, minorities were significantly more likely to be stereotyped on nontraditional Internet sites than traditional Internet sites (see also Melican and Dixon 2008). Last, "Popular" and "Top" stories on Internet news websites were significantly found to portray minorities in more stereotypical ways.

In sum, a large body of research illustrates that African Americans are more likely to be negatively depicted on local television news than whites. In an online environment, the scant amount of research suggests that African Americans are negatively depicted on Internet news sites; however, results appear to differ based on the Internet news source examined (e.g., traditional vs. nontraditional) and how news is portrayed (e.g., headlines, images, top/popular news stories). Yet, scholars contend that exposure to distorted news media can influence and/or activate

consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward African Americans by negatively associating this minority group with criminality that can heighten fear, lead to support for punitive policies, and be used in subsequent judgments about black stereotypes (Dixon 2006a, 2008a, 2008b; Gilliam and Iyengar 1998, 2000; Oliver and Fonash 2002).

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA EXPOSURE ON RACIAL STEREOTYPES

Prior studies have found consumption of television news to be negatively related to perceiving African Americans as financially successful and positively related to racism and punitiveness (Busselle and Crandall 2002; Dixon 2008b; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). Regarding race and crime, Dixon (2008a) surveyed 506 Los Angeles adults and found that consumption of local television news was positively related to perceiving African American suspects and race-unidentified suspects, but not white suspects, as being culpable for their alleged offense. In addition, exposure to news stations that overrepresented African Americans was positively associated to perceiving African Americans as violent. However, network news exposure did not observe these patterns.

Many media studies use experimental settings in order to understand how exposure to racialized news scripts influences consumers' social reality and judgments about race and crime. For example, extant studies have found that individuals exposed to African American crime scripts increases fear, punitiveness, and/or promotes racial stereotyping (Dixon 2006a; Gilliam and Iyengar 1998, 2000, 2005). Studies have also examined how stereotypical crime news influences whether consumers evaluate hypothetical suspects as guilty. For instance, Dixon and Azocar (2007) randomly exposed participants to crime news that featured one of three scenarios: majority white suspects, majority African American suspects, or race-unidentified suspects. Participants were presented with a scenario involving a race-unidentified suspect fitting the description (but not charged) of a crime and were asked to rate the culpability (e.g., guilt) of this suspect committing the crime. In their assessment, the authors found that individuals exposed to crime stories involving a majority of African American suspects, as opposed to the other scenarios (e.g., stories involving white suspects), were significantly more likely to perceive a race-unidentified suspect being culpable for their offense. Thus, this finding suggests that exposing individuals to racialized crime news activates or reinforces stereotypic schemas that link to memory, which may influence the interpretation of new information (e.g., evaluate racial minorities) (Dixon 2006b, 2008a; Mendelberg 2001; Oliver and Fonash 2002).

Less is known about how actual news consumption (rather than experimentally manipulated and temporary exposure) patterns influence endorsement of racial stereotypes, especially in an online setting. To our knowledge, there is only a single attitudinal study that has examined online media consumption and criminal stereotyping. Using multiple samples in his research, Dixon (2016) found that Internet news consumption was associated with assuming that hypothetical, race-unidentified, suspects were African Americans among a sample of 500 urban respondents.

Further, in the same study using a different sample consisting of 40 liberal-leaning graduate students, the author found that overall social media consumption, but not Internet news consumption, was positively related to stereotyping African Americans as violent.

CURRENT STUDY

Several theories on media effects suggest that media consumption habits (e.g., cultivation) and how news media is selected (e.g., selective exposure) and interpreted (e.g., social identity/categorization) influence consumers' attitudes and perceptions toward crime and social issues. Media effects are important because racial stereotypes foster greater fear of victimization and increased punitiveness, which may influence crime policy (Hurwitz and Peffley 2010; Ramirez 2013). The only study to investigate Internet news consumption and African American stereotyping yielded divergent findings based on the type of sample used and whether a measure of social media consumption was in the analysis (Dixon 2016). Surprisingly, though, a growing body of work illustrates that Internet use/news consumption is negatively related to attitudes and perceptions toward crime and justice (Gross and Aday 2003; Intravia, Wolff, and Piquero 2018; Kohm et al. 2012; Roche et al. 2016; Simmons 2017). Thus, we first hypothesize that Internet news consumption will be *negatively* associated to typifying African Americans as criminals. In contrast, a developing body of literature shows that social media consumption is positively related to heightened fear, increased punitiveness, and criminal stereotyping (Dixon 2016; Intravia 2019; Intravia et al. 2017). Thus, our second hypothesis is that social media consumption will be *positively* related to typifying African Americans as criminals.

Last, selective exposure and social identity/categorization theories suggest that media effects vary by audience characteristics (e.g., demographics, social backgrounds). Specifically, previous research suggests that (at least) two audience characteristics, race and political ideology, are important in moderating the relationship between news consumption and public opinion issues related to crime and justice (Appiah et al. 2013; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000, 2005; Mastro et al. 2008; Melican and Dixon 2008; Roche et al. 2016; Simmons 2017). As a result, our third hypothesis is the relationship between online news consumption and criminal stereotyping will be more pronounced among consumers who are white and those who are conservative.

DATA AND METHODS

Sample

To test our hypotheses, multisite data were collected through an online survey administered to mostly young adults attending two large universities located in the Northeast and Midwest in the spring of 2018. Researchers from the two locations attended various classes, addressing students with a brief oral description and instructions for taking the survey. In the Northeast site, a researcher recruited students from a large introductory criminal justice course and provided participants

with a web link to access and take the survey. In the Midwest site, participants were recruited and provided the survey web link from both on-campus and off-campus (e.g., online) class sections. Prior to accessing the online instrument, the survey instructions explained the voluntary nature of participation, the anonymity of responses, and that there were no penalties associated for nonparticipating.

In order to measure the response rate, the researchers assigned each distinct class section with a unique web address on SurveyMonkey. From there, the response rate was calculated by taking the number of participants who took the survey divided by the number of individuals enrolled in that specific course. The single classroom surveyed in the Northeast location yielded a response rate of 74.9% (146 surveys completed out of 195 students enrolled). The Midwest location surveyed 10 classes that resulted in a response rate of 59.4% (283 surveys completed out of 476 students enrolled). Overall, between the two locations and 11 total class sections surveyed, the response rate was 63.9% (429 surveys completed out of 671 students enrolled). The majority of respondents reported being a criminal justice or criminology major (59%). The final sample demographics consisted of 43.8% male, 68.5% white (12.0% African American, 11.5% Hispanic/Latino, 8.0% other race/ethnicity), and a mean age of 19.4 years old.

Measures

Dependent Variables The analysis includes three dependent variables to gauge the racial typification of crime. Consistent to prior research (Drakulich 2012; Pickett and Chiricos 2012; Unnever and Cullen 2012), we utilize *relative* measures to capture the perceived percentage of violent, property, and drug crimes committed by African Americans in relation to the perceived percentage of these crimes committed by whites. *Typification of Criminals as African Americans* was measured by asking respondents, "Out of every 100 people who commit [a violent crime/a property crime/sell illegal drugs] in this country, what number do you think are white, black, Latino, or some other race/ethnicity?" The three outcomes (violence, property, and selling illegal drugs) were calculated by subtracting the responses about whites from the responses about blacks (e.g., percentage committed by blacks minus percentage committed by whites) for each typology of crime, respectively. Higher scores equate to respondents believing that African Americans commit a greater proportion of crime (violent, property, and selling illegal drugs) relative to whites.

Independent Variables We focus on five key independent variables to gauge online media consumption in two distinct ways: frequency of online news consumption and engagement in crime-related news content. Consistent with prior research on media effects (Chiricos et al. 1997; Roche et al. 2016; Simmons 2017), *Internet news consumption* and *social media news consumption* were measured by asking respondents, "In a typical week, on how many days do you do each of the following?" (1) look at news stories posted on Internet news websites (e.g., Yahoo.com, CNN.com, Foxnews.com, NYtimes.com) and (2) look at news stories on social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). Response categories ranged from "0 days" to "7 days."

As noted above, online news content has many advantages over traditional-based media (e.g., television) by allowing users to engage in news and information by posting, sharing, and commenting on stories. Owing to the unique nature of online news content, we utilized three measures to assess online media "engagement." Specifically, *crime news engagement* was measured by asking respondents, "How often do you do the following?" (1) comment on news stories about crime on Internet news websites, (2) post, share, or comment on news stories about crime on Facebook, and (3) tweet, retweet, or reply to news stories about crime on Twitter.[4] Response categories ranged from 1 = *never* to 4 = *often*.

Control Variables We also controlled for several measures that could potentially confound our results. First, personality and emotionality traits can influence habits of Internet and social media users (Correa, Hinsley, and De Zuniga 2010; Klama and Egan 2011; McElroy et al. 2007). As a result, we measured dispositional affect using the brief Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) from Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) (see also MacKinnon et al. 1999). The brief scale consists of five positive descriptors (inspired, alert, excited, enthusiastic, and determined) and five negative descriptors (afraid, upset, nervous, scared, and distressed). Respondents were asked to indicate "to what extent you generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on average" to the 10 personality traits/emotions. Response categories ranged from 1 = "very slightly or not at all" to 5 = "extremely." The 10 emotions loaded on two separate factors corresponding to either a positive affect or negative affect (eigenvalues = 2.22 and 2.00, respectively). Thus, we averaged across the responses to create a *Positive Affect* scale ($\alpha = .75$) and *Negative Affect* scale ($\alpha = .78$). The two indices were weakly correlated ($r = -.02$).

We also controlled for several demographics including *race* (1 = *white*), *sex* (1 = *male*), *age* (measure continuously), *political status* (1 = *very liberal* to 5 = *very conservative*), *household income* (1 = *$0–$24,999* to 7 = *$150,000+*) and criminal justice/criminology major (1 = *major*). Descriptive statistics for all variables included in the current study are displayed in Table I.

Analytic Strategy

In order to examine whether online media consumption is related to typifying African Americans as criminal, a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were estimated using STATA (version 14). Prior to the multivariate analysis, we checked for multicollinearity. Specifically, variance inflation factors (VIF) were examined for each equation to ensure that collinearity was not an issue in the current analysis with the highest VIF observed was 1.79. Next, the normality of the dependent variable was examined. A preliminary examination of the dependent variables revealed that their distributions approached normality as the skew and

[4] We chose the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter because recent statistics show they are among the most popular social media sites utilized by U.S. adults. Specifically, 68% and 24% of adults stated that they use Facebook and Twitter, respectively, in 2018 (Smith and Anderson 2018). Furthermore, 68% of Facebook users and 74% of Twitter users, respectively, reported that they obtain news from these social media sites (Shearer and Gottfried 2017).

Table I. Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables

Variables	Mean (SD)	Range
Typification of Violent Crime as Blacks	−2.106 (21.519)	−75–85
Typification of Property Crime as Blacks	−4.985 (23.087)	−73–85
Typification of Drug Crime as Blacks	1.897 (20.549)	−75–87
Race (1 = white)	.685 (.464)	0–1
Sex (1 = male)	.438 (.496)	0–1
Age	19.361 (1.561)	18–37
Political Status	2.876 (.969)	1–5
Income	3.655 (1.925)	0–1
Criminal Justice Major (1 = yes)	.590 (.492)	0–1
Positive Affect	17.147 (3.404)	5–25
Negative Affect	10.805 (3.809)	5–25
Internet/Social Media News Measures (# of days)		
Internet News	3.436 (2.465)	0–7
Social Media News	5.235 (2.086)	0–7
Internet/Social Media Crime Engagement		
Internet News Crime Engagement	1.582 (.901)	1–4
Facebook Crime Engagement	1.994 (1.058)	1–4
Twitter Crime Engagement	1.850 (1.010)	1–4

kurtosis were within normal range. However, White's (1980) test statistic for heteroskedasticity was significant, indicating that the residuals obtained were not homoskedastic. As a result, we estimated all models using robust standard errors.

RESULTS

Table II displays the bivariate relationships between each of the variables included in the current analysis. Twitter crime news engagement is negatively associated with typifying African Americans as violent ($r = –.107$, $p < .05$). In addition, several of the control variables are also significantly correlated with this dependent variable such as sex (male) ($r = .171$, $p < .05$) and political status ($r = .262$, $p < .05$). Internet news consumption ($r = –.136$, $p < .05$) and Twitter crime news engagement ($r = –.113$, $p < .05$) are both negatively correlated with the typification of property crime among African Americans. Furthermore, political status ($r = .090$, $p < .10$) is positively correlated with this outcome. Last, Internet news consumption is negatively associated with typifying African Americans as selling illegal drugs ($r = –.105$, $p < .05$).

Tables III–V present the results of the multivariate analyses for each of the three racial typification dependent variables. We begin by looking at the racial typification of African Americans as violent outcome. Model 1 of Table III is the baseline model, which includes all controls and demographics. The results illustrate that individuals who are more conservative are significantly more likely to racially typify African Americans as violent. In Models 2–6, we introduce each of the key online media measures individually (Internet news consumption, social media news consumption, Internet news crime engagement, Facebook news crime engagement, and Twitter news crime engagement). Of all the online media measures considered independently, none of the measures were significantly associated with typifying African

Table II. Bivariate Correlations for Key Study Variables

	Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
(1)	Typification of Violent Crime as Blacks	1.000															
(2)	Typification of Property Crime as Blacks	.439*	1.000														
(3)	Typification of Drug Crime as Blacks	.467*	.354*	1.000													
(4)	Race (1 = white)	.047	−.068	−.003	1.000												
(5)	Sex (1 = male)	.171*	.018	.040	.064	1.000											
(6)	Age	.034	.029	.03	.072	.156*	1.000										
(7)	Political Status	.262*	.090†	.079	.157*	.302*	.072	1.000									
(8)	Income	.054	.021	−.030	.183*	.168*	−.089†	.155*	1.000								
(9)	Criminal Justice Major (1 = yes)	.005	.031	.077	.036	−.048	−.017	.053	−.085†	1.000							
(10)	Positive Affect	.003	.003	−.055	−.082†	−.045	−.077	.128*	−.087†	.120*	1.000						
(11)	Negative Affect	−.028	.072	.050	−.083†	−.185*	−.023	−.161*	.046	−.044	−.019	1.000					
(12)	Internet News	−.084†	−.136*	−.105*	.124*	−.002	.040	−.053	.019	−.011	.119*	.025	1.000				
(13)	Social Media News	.021	.020	.028	.046	−.137*	−.053	−.068	−.045	.082†	.064	.022	.396*	1.000			
(14)	Internet News Crime Engagement	−.016	−.059	−.046	−.083†	.022	−.051	−.024	−.077	−.060	.169*	.085†	.204*	.075†	1.000		
(15)	Facebook Crime Engagement	.026	.005	.022	−.071	−.136*	.025	.007	−.102*	.125*	.183*	.128*	.146*	.213*	.428*	1.000	
(16)	Twitter Crime Engagement	−.107*	−.113*	−.024	−.026	−.058	.001	−.093†	.033	.071	.132*	.040	.117*	.221*	.265*	.359*	1.000

Notes: N = 375. †$p < .10$, *$p < .05$.

Table III. OLS Regression of Racial Typification of Violent Crime on Key Predictors

Variables	Model 1 b (SE)	Model 2 b (SE)	Model 3 b (SE)	Model 4 b (SE)	Model 5 b (SE)	Model 6 b (SE)	Model 7 b (SE)
Race (1 = white)	.822 (2.737)	1.589 (2.835)	.593 (2.777)	.795 (2.737)	.907 (2.732)	.730 (2.763)	1.634 (2.871)
Sex (1 = male)	3.977 (2.406)	4.228 (2.393)	4.166 (2.452)	4.026 (2.424)	4.417 (2.428)	3.757 (2.426)	5.143 (2.507)*
Age	.090 (.629)	.100 (.642)	.099 (.627)	.083 (.634)	.016 (.622)	.150 (.643)	.175 (.670)
Political Status	5.627 (1.266)**	5.487 (1.299)**	5.708 (1.267)**	5.617 (1.271)**	5.578 (1.265)**	5.435 (1.259)**	5.109 (1.285)**
Income	.073 (.658)	.068 (.659)	.138 (.662)	.063 (.663)	.151 (.667)	.154 (.656)	.390 (.661)
Criminal Justice Major (1 = yes)	−.895 (2.170)	−1.210 (2.154)	−.951 (2.192)	−.928 (2.164)	−1.230 (2.182)	−.740 (2.191)	−1.693 (2.180)
Positive Affect	.042 (.353)	.152 (.363)	−.026 (.356)	.054 (.359)	−.044 (.348)	.109 (.346)	.098 (.357)
Negative Affect	.212 (.299)	.223 (.297)	.178 (.301)	.214 (.300)	.165 (.304)	.207 (.297)	.112 (.294)
Internet/Social Media News Measures (# of days)							
Internet News		−.683 (.460)					−1.141 (.508)*
Social Media News			.745 (.511)				1.449 (.563)*
Internet/Social Media Crime Engagement							
Internet News Crime Engagement				−.324 (1.213)			−.229 (1.457)
Facebook Crime Engagement					1.526 (1.031)		2.215 (1.218)
Twitter Crime Engagement						−1.701 (1.149)	−3.038 (1.273)*
Constant	−25.313 (14.788)	−25.158 (14.972)	−28.246 (15.367)	−24.868 (15.027)	−25.059 (14.719)	−24.078 (15.068)	−29.104 (15.849)
R-Squared	.084	.092	.087	.084	.089	.089	.123

Notes: N = 375. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Table IV. OLS Regression of Racial Typification of Property Crime on Key Predictors

Variables	Model 1 b (SE)	Model 2 b (SE)	Model 3 b (SE)	Model 4 b (SE)	Model 5 b (SE)	Model 6 b (SE)	Model 7 b (SE)
Race (1 = white)	−6.331 (3.092)*	−5.186 (3.185)	−6.451 (3.125)*	−6.481 (3.100)*	−6.358 (3.105)*	−6.046 (3.112)	−4.973 (3.213)
Sex (1 = male)	−.373 (2.530)	−.101 (2.495)	.001 (2.554)	−.131 (2.564)	−.491 (2.558)	−.429 (2.553)	.927 (2.575)
Age	.234 (.662)	.299 (.680)	.246 (.660)	.205 (.668)	.261 (.662)	.324 (.669)	.454 (.706)
Political Status	3.158 (1.416)*	2.870 (1.433)*	3.274 (1.421)*	3.101 (1.423)*	3.183 (1.423)*	2.827 (1.426)*	2.592 (1.440)
Income	.223 (.709)	.222 (.708)	.327 (.715)	.167 (.713)	.187 (.716)	.278 (.706)	.423 (.717)
Criminal Justice Major (1 = yes)	2.114 (2.372)	1.783 (2.344)	1.780 (2.415)	1.960 (2.375)	2.103 (2.395)	2.626 (2.386)	1.365 (2.409)
Positive Affect	−.232 (.354)	−.062 (.368)	−.229 (.354)	−.167 (.362)	−.214 (.356)	−.127 (.346)	.030 (.358)
Negative Affect	.455 (.335)	.472 (.330)	.479 (.339)	.466 (.337)	.474 (.341)	.470 (.333)	.486 (.336)
Internet/Social Media News Measures (# of days)							
Internet News		−1.104 (.528)*					−1.490 (.586)*
Social Media News			.582 (.577)				1.561 (.634)*
Internet/Social Media Crime Engagement							
Internet News Crime Engagement				−1.604 (1.452)			−.675 (1.617)
Facebook Crime Engagement					−.228 (1.141)		.856 (1.337)
Twitter Crime Engagement						−2.667 (1.200)*	3.173 (1.413)*
Constant	−16.153 (15.851)	−16.567 (16.138)	−20.272 (16.432)	−13.955 (16.251)	−16.642 (15.931)	−14.709 (15.906)	−23.324 (17.092)
R-Squared	.031	.044	.034	.034	.031	.043	.073

Notes: N = 375. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Table V. OLS Regression of Racial Typification of Drug Crime on Key Predictors

Variables	Model 1 b (SE)	Model 2 b (SE)	Model 3 b (SE)	Model 4 b (SE)	Model 5 b (SE)	Model 6 b (SE)	Model 7 b (SE)
Race (1 = white)	.129 (2.463)	1.137 (2.554)	−.068 (2.487)	.048 (2.464)	.169 (2.474)	−.349 (2.466)	.540 (2.579)
Sex (1 = male)	.689 (2.336)	1.008 (2.311)	.747 (2.386)	.842 (2.361)	.886 (2.402)	.322 (2.330)	1.404 (2.488)
Age	.050 (.575)	.073 (.594)	.021 (.570)	.032 (.583)	.016 (.567)	.078 (.571)	.079 (.600)
Political Status	2.060 (1.452)	1.852 (1.476)	2.058 (1.461)	2.028 (1.460)	2.035 (1.453)	2.004 (1.477)	1.682 (1.495)
Income	−.457 (.643)	−.457 (.641)	−.383 (.651)	−.492 (.658)	−.420 (.652)	−.353 (.628)	−.207 (.644)
Criminal Justice Major (1 = yes)	2.779 (2.126)	2.391 (2.099)	2.772 (2.159)	2.678 (2.138)	2.651 (2.112)	2.581 (2.107)	1.728 (2.093)
Positive Affect	−.396 (.353)	−.252 (.367)	−.428 (.358)	−.354 (.370)	−.434 (.354)	−.367 (.357)	−.257 (.380)
Negative Affect	.383 (.275)	.398 (.271)	.362 (.279)	.391 (.276)	.361 (.281)	.358 (.274)	.321 (.281)
Internet/Social Media News Measures (# of days)							
Internet News		−.934 (.463)*					−1.257 (.481)**
Social Media News			.340 (.472)				1.042 (.494)*
Internet/Social Media Crime Engagement							
Internet News Crime Engagement				−1.016 (1.549)			−.821 (1.591)
Facebook Crime Engagement					.646 (1.127)		.907 (1.206)
Twitter Crime Engagement						−.734 (1.231)	−1.280 (1.265)
Constant	−2.322 (14.331)	−2.137 (14.728)	−2.936 (14.821)	−.970 (14.918)	−2.126 (14.326)	−1.210 (14.591)	−3.574 (15.596)
R-Squared	.020	.032	.021	.021	.021	.019	.044

Notes: N = 375. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Americans as violent criminals. Finally, Model 7 of Table III presents the full model of results that includes all controls and media-related measures. As shown in Model 7, when all the variables are included, sex (males) and political status (conservatives) are positively associated with the racial typification of violent crime outcome. Moreover, Internet news consumption and Twitter news crime engagement becomes negatively and significantly related—and social media news consumption becomes positively and significantly associated—to typifying African Americans as violent.

Table IV illustrates the results for the second outcome of interest, which is racially typifying African Americans as property crime offenders. Model 1 of Table IV shows that whites are significantly less likely to associate property crimes with African Americans, whereas individuals who are more conservative are significantly more likely to racially typify African Americans with this crime typology. When looking at the key online media measures individually (Models 2–6), Model 2 shows that Internet news consumption is negatively and significantly related to perceiving African Americans as property crime offenders. In addition, Model 6 illustrates that individuals who engage in crime news stories on Twitter are also significantly less likely to associate African Americans as property crime offenders. Last, similar to the full model in Table III, Model 7 in Table IV shows that when all variables are considered, Internet news consumption and Twitter crime news engagement are negatively and significantly associated, whereas social media news consumption is positively and significantly related, with the typification of property crime as African American. Yet, none of the control measures are significant in the full model.

The same stepwise analysis is carried out for the last outcome—the typification of African Americans as selling illegal drugs. As shown in Model 1 of Table V, none of the controls are significantly related to the outcome. Additionally, when examining all the online media measures individually (Models 2–6), Internet news consumption is negatively and significantly associated with perceiving African Americans as selling drugs. Furthermore, similar to Tables III and IV, when all the variables are included together (Model 7), Internet news consumption remains negatively and significantly associated with typifying African Americans as drug dealers and social media news consumption becomes positively and significantly related to this outcome. Once again, none of the controls reached significance in the full model.[5]

Overall, a number of patterns are present among our analysis. First, Internet news consumption is negatively associated, and social media news consumption is

[5] We also replicated the analysis (Tables III–V) using *absolute* measures of racial typification of crime (see Chiricos, Welch, and Gertz 2004; Pickett et al. 2012). Specifically, the outcomes considered what respondents reported for the percentage of crimes committed by African Americans only (violent, property, selling drugs) as opposed to the *relative* measures (e.g., percentage committed by blacks minus percentage committed by whites) used in the current analysis. Some differences in the full models did emerge with respect to significance in the online media measures. For example, Internet news consumption was not significantly related with any of the *absolute* racial typification outcomes. However, social media was positively and significantly related to all three *absolute* racial typification measures and twitter crime news engagement was negatively and significantly associated with the *absolute* racial typification of property crime outcome.

positively associated, with all three racial typification outcomes: violent crime, property crime, and selling illegal drugs. Second, engaging in crime news content on Twitter is negatively related with perceiving African Americans as committing violent and property crimes but not for selling illegal drugs. Collectively, the findings support our first hypothesis and show that Internet news consumption is negatively related to criminal stereotyping. However, our second hypothesis is partially supported due to the differential media effects found among social media news *consumption* and social media crime news *engagement*. We return to the implications of these findings in the discussion section.

Disaggregating Online Media Effects by Race and Political Ideology

As noted above, selective exposure research argues that media consumption has differential effects on consumers based on their personal characteristics, ideologies, and social backgrounds. In line with the research on audience characteristics, previous scholarship contends that two demographic characteristics, race and political ideology, are important in the media consumption and criminal stereotyping relationship (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000, 2005; Josey 2015; Melican and Dixon 2008; Roche et al. 2016; Simmons 2017; Stroud 2008). Stated differently, audience characteristics such as race and political affiliation may influence the reception of media-related messages (see Melican and Dixon 2008; Simmons 2017). Consistent to prior efforts on testing audience characteristics (Chiricos et al. 2000; Intravia 2019; Weitzer and Kubrin 2004), only the online media measures that were significantly related to the outcomes in the full models (Models 7 in Tables III–V) are further assessed in the disaggregated analysis. As a result, we examine whether the relationships between Internet news consumption, social media news consumption, and Twitter crime news engagement on all three racial typification outcomes is conditional by race and political ideology.[6]

Table VI presents the results for the disaggregated analysis on race and political ideology and criminal stereotyping for Internet news consumption. The findings illustrate that among whites and those who identify as liberal/moderate, more time spent consuming news on the Internet is negatively associated to typifying African Americans with violent, property, and drug-related crimes. There were no significant effects of Internet news consumption among nonwhite and conservative respondents with any of the three outcomes.

In Table VII, social media news consumption is examined. The results show that among whites and those who are liberal/moderate, consuming news on social media is positively related to typifying African Americans as violent and property-related criminal offenders. None of the audience characteristics were related to racially typifying African Americans as drug dealers. Further, there were no significant effects of social media news consumption among nonwhite and conservative respondents. Finally, Table VIII presents the results for Twitter crime news

[6] Consistent to previous research in this domain (Intravia 2019; Intravia et al. 2017; Roche et al. 2016) and to maintain consistency with the other measures in Tables VI–VIII, political ideology was dichotomized (1 = conservative and 0 = liberal/moderate) in the disaggregated analysis.

Table VI. Demographic Subsamples Analysis for Internet News Consumption

Variables	N	DV = Racial Typification for Violent Crime b (SE)	DV = Racial Typification for Property Crime b (SE)	DV = Racial Typification for Drug Crime b (SE)
White	268	−1.620 (.547)**	−2.192 (.576)**	−1.375 (.563)*
Nonwhite	107	−.178 (1.141)	.638 (1.255)	−.713 (.983)
Test for Equality of Coefficients	**z**	1.001	**1.783***	.509
Conservative	86	−1.892 (1.070)	−1.659 (1.195)	−1.082 (1.261)
Liberal or Moderate	289	−1.412 (.564)*	−1.586 (.616)*	−1.567 (.508)**
Test for Equality of Coefficients	**z**	.243	.035	.231

Notes: Models include all reported control variables presented in Tables III–V. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Table VII. Demographic Subsamples Analysis for Social Media News Consumption

Variables	N	DV = Racial Typification for Violent Crime b (SE)	DV = Racial Typification for Property Crime b (SE)	DV = Racial Typification for Drug Crime b (SE)
White	268	1.880 (.673)**	1.663 (.707)*	1.101 (1.041)
Nonwhite	107	.975 (1.208)	1.444 (1.332)	.693 (.690)
Test for Equality of Coefficients	**z**	.544	.119	.268
Conservative	86	2.438 (1.423)	1.514 (1.585)	.999 (1.677)
Liberal or Moderate	289	1.303 (.651)*	1.513 (.711)*	1.016 (.585)
Test for Equality of Coefficients	**z**	.424	.001	.004

Notes: Models include all reported control variables presented in Tables III–V. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Table VIII. Demographic Subsamples Analysis for Twitter Crime News Engagement

Variables	N	DV = Racial Typification for Violent Crime b (SE)	DV = Racial Typification for Property Crime b (SE)	DV = Racial Typification for Drug Crime b (SE)
White	268	−2.587 (1.442)	−2.182 (1.515)	−.100 (1.483)
Nonwhite	107	−4.035 (2.432)	−6.739 (2.676)*	−3.114 (2.096)
Test for Equality of Coefficients	**z**	.320	.916	.701
Conservative	86	−2.011 (2.521)	−5.900 (2.806)*	−3.447 (2.972)
Liberal or Moderate	289	−4.181 (1.373)**	−2.765 (1.497)	−1.178 (1.236)
Test for Equality of Coefficients	**z**	.280	.334	.225

Notes: Models include all reported control variables presented in Tables III–V. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

engagement among the selected respondent characteristics. As shown in Table VIII, only three significant results are present. Specifically, among those who are liberal/moderate, more engagement with crime-related stories on Twitter is negatively associated with perceiving African Americans as violent. In addition, among those who are nonwhite and those who are conservative, greater Twitter crime news engagement is negatively associated with typifying African Americans as property crime offenders.

To test the significance of the differences between the groups specified in Tables VI–VIII, a *z*-test for equality of regression coefficients (i.e., slope difference test) was conducted (see Paternoster et al. 1998). This procedure tests the null hypothesis that the two regression coefficients (e.g., male and female) are equal. Results of these tests suggest that the effect between Internet news consumption and racially typifying African Americans as property crime offenders varies between whites and nonwhites ($z = 1.783$, $p < .05$). There were no significant differences observed among the other subgroups examined. Nonetheless, looking at the disaggregated analysis as a whole, and providing partial support for our third hypothesis, the evidence suggests that the effect of online news consumption (measured in various ways) and racial stereotyping may differ across race and political ideology.[7]

DISCUSSION

For several decades, scholars from various disciplines have investigated the portrayal of race in the news and the effects of stereotypical news on media consumers. Most prior efforts in this area have focused on offline media formats, such as local and national television news broadcasts (Dixon 2006a, 2008b, 2017; Dixon and Linz 2000a, 2000b; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Romer et al. 1998). But despite the increasing popularity of online media usage, there has been little research on how Internet and social media news consumption is associated with public opinion about race and crime. To fill this void in the literature, we used a multisite sample of mostly young adults to examine how (1) Internet news and social media news consumption and engagement may be associated with criminal stereotypes, and (2) whether the relationships between online media consumption/engagement and criminal stereotyping is more pronounced across race and political ideology. We discuss our findings and their implications below.

First, the results suggest that Internet news consumption is negatively associated with all three criminal stereotype outcomes. This result is consistent to the growing body of work that illustrates Internet news consumption is either negatively or unrelated to attitudes associated with crime and justice (e.g., fear, punitiveness) (Baranauskas and Drakulich 2018; Kohm et al. 2012; Roche et al. 2016;

[7] Similar to prior work investigating media effects on crime and justice outcomes, our disaggregated samples based on the selected audience characteristics resulted in small subsample Ns (see Chiricos et al. 1997; Chiricos et al. 2000; Intravia et al. 2018; Roche et al. 2016; Weitzer and Kubrin 2004). Although small Ns are commonly reported in media-related analyses, it is important to note that the results for nonwhite and conservative respondents should be interpreted within the context of their relatively small sample sizes, and conclusions about the lack of significant effects are weakened by models containing minimal statistical power to detect an effect. Replication using data with larger sample sizes is recommended.

Simmons 2017). Further, this finding suggests that racial elements of crime may not be portrayed in the same manner on Internet news sites compared to traditional news formats (e.g., television). Moreover, these results also elude to the possibility that prior attitudes do not motivate the selection of race and crime stories that are consistent to one's beliefs. In other words, selective exposure does not drive the effects of Internet news consumption.

Second, our results showed that social media news consumption is positively associated with all three criminal stereotypes, whereas social media crime news engagement (Twitter) is negatively related to two out of three criminal stereotypes. Initially, these findings are quite puzzling; however, we believe the distinction between social media news *consumption* and social media crime news *engagement* is important to clarify these results. Research illustrates that racialized news events receive a great amount of attention on social media platforms (Anderson et al. 2018; Bonilla and Rosa 2015; Carney 2016). As a result, *consuming* racialized crime news stories through selective exposure may reinforce prejudiced beliefs (e.g., associating African Americans with crime) and ultimately influencing consumers' judgments about stories involving race and crime (Dixon 2006a). Yet, in a similar fashion, controversial events involving race and crime, such as the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, and police officers in Dallas, Texas, may encourage engagement on social media and spark digital protests or hashtag activism (e.g., #Ferguson, #HandsUp, #BlackLivesMatter; see Bonilla and Rosa 2015). For example, approximately 53% of Americans have been civilly active on social media in the previous year by encouraging others to take actions on social issues, using hashtags related to political/social issues, and/or being part of a group that shares similar interests (Anderson et al. 2018). Individuals who partake in social and political *engagement* on social media (e.g., Tweet, post, comment) may cause some users to change their views/opinions about an issue. In fact, a recent survey showed that 20% of social media users have modified their views about a social or political issue because of the content on social media (Anderson 2016). Thus, the divergent findings between social media *consumption* and social media *engagement* on criminal stereotyping may be due to, in part, whether crime news stories reinforce prejudiced beliefs or whether crime news stories encourage social engagement that influences one's stance on racialized crime issues.

Third, the split-sample analysis reveals mixed support across audience characteristics. Specifically, the effect of Internet news consumption on racial stereotyping shows a negative trend among whites and liberals/moderates, whereas social media news consumption suggests a positive effect among whites and liberals/moderates. An unclear pattern was found among those who engage in crime news on Twitter, where significant findings suggested nonwhites, conservatives, and liberals/moderates who engage in crime news on this social media platform are less likely to stereotype African Americans as criminals. With respect to Internet news consumption, our disaggregated results provided evidence that criminal stereotyping varies by the race of audience consumers; however, not in a pattern consistent with arguments embedded in social identity and categorization theories. As stated above, these frameworks contend that members of an ingroup (e.g., whites) may select stereotypical information about an outgroup (e.g., African Americans) to increase one's self-

image (Appiah et al., 2013). Furthermore, our split-sample findings with political ideology are consistent with prior work in this domain (see Roche et al. 2016; Simmons 2017), which illustrates the effect of Internet news consumption on crime and justice-related outcomes (e.g., punitiveness, perceived victimization risk) differs among those who identify as nonconservative. Yet, the trend for social media news consumption on criminal stereotyping is positive among whites and liberals/moderates, providing support for social identity/categorization theories among the race findings and opposite support among the political ideology findings. Future studies should further examine the nuances between Internet news sites and social media platforms to understand the reasons why public opinion on crime differs between these two online media sources.

The current study is not without limitations. As with virtually all studies examining media effects with crime and justice outcomes, we were limited to cross-sectional data (for one exception, see Shi et al. 2018). Although we were able to examine associations between various online media variables and criminal stereotyping, future research should utilize longitudinal data to address issues with causality. Yet, although not a direct comparison with our study, it is important to acknowledge that previous efforts have shown that media consumption has a stronger effect on crime-related outcomes (e.g., fear of crime) than the reverse (see O'Keefe and Reid-Nash 1987; Van den Bulck 2004). Further, experiments that establish casual order by design consistently show that being exposed to racialized crime news influences consumers' perceptions and attitudes, with criminal stereotyping increasing punitiveness (Dixon 2006a; Dixon and Azocar 2007; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). All of this research increases the plausibility of the assumed temporal direction of the relationships examined herein.

Second, our results were observed with a sample of college students and may have been attenuated due to a few reasons. Notably, majority of the sample consisted of criminal justice majors. It is possible that students majoring in criminal justice have more interest in crime-related topics as well as have different media habits when consuming and engaging with crime-related content on Internet news sites and social media. Similarly, education also impacts news consumption. In fact, studies show that individuals who have more education tend to consume more news than those who are less educated (Ksiazek, Malthouse, and Webster 2010). Last, racial issues play a central role in social activism among college students (Hope, Keels, and Durkee 2016; Rhoads 2016) and it is possible that college students engage in crime and race-related stories differently than noncollege students. Thus, our sample is not generalizable to the public, and we recommend that future studies replicate this research with a more diverse group of adults.

Third, similar to many previous assessments on Internet news and public opinion, our study did not collect information on contextual measures (e.g., neighborhood conditions, crime rate, racial composition). For example, a recent assessment by Baranauskas and Drakulich (2018) found that media effects are dependent on the racial composition of consumers' neighborhoods. Using multiple nationally representative samples, the authors found that among white respondents, the effect of television news and crime drama viewership increased perceptions of crime among those who live near a large number of African Americans, suggesting that "people

interpret crime news within the racial context of their own neighborhoods" (Baranauskas and Drakulich 2018:28). Thus, we recommend that future research to explore whether the relationship between online media consumption and criminal stereotyping differs by contextual characteristics.

Fourth, we did not ask about specific news sites and our Internet news measures did not differentiate between traditional, nontraditional, and fake (e.g., fabricated information or satire) news sites. As discussed above, Josey (2015) found that nontraditional Internet sites are more likely to portray African Americans in a stereotypical manner compared to traditional-based Internet sites. Relatedly, fake news sites are becoming more prevalent among consumers and studies show that information from fake online news platforms spreads quicker than information from traditional Internet sites (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017; Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018). Thus, it would be interesting to understand whether public opinion about race and crime differ based on the types of Internet news sites (e.g., traditional, nontraditional, fake) consumed or engaged by individuals. Last, our interpretation of the split-sample results should be interpreted with caution. Although we found that the effects of online news consumption and criminal stereotyping are significantly more likely for whites and liberals/moderates, the majority of coefficients observed (e.g., white vs. nonwhite) were not statistically different from another. Further, owing to small sample sizes in the split-sample analysis, we recommend that future assessments utilize a larger and more diverse sample in order to detect possible significant effects.

Despite these limitations, the current study contributes to—and advances—the increasing body of research associated with online news consumption and public opinion about crime and justice. Questions remain, however, as to whether diverse types of Internet news sites (traditional, nontraditional) have different effects on criminal stereotyping. Moreover, the divergent results between Internet news and social media news consumption in the current study raises questions about why attitudes differ on these platforms. As research associated with understanding the effects online news consumption continues to grow, we encourage scholars to generate new questions about media effects and explore the many promising avenues of inquiry.

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