

WHY IS PARIS BURNING? COMPARING FRENCH AND AMERICAN
NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF THE 2005 RIOTS IN PARIS' SUBURBS

Rachel Michelle Kurowski

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Approved by
Donald Searing
Milada Vachudova
John Stephens

ABSTRACT

RACHEL KUROWSKI: Why is Paris Burning? Comparing French and American newspaper framing of the 2005 riots in Paris' suburbs
(Under the direction of Professor Donald Searing)

In this paper, I compare the newspaper coverage by French and American newspapers of the riots that occurred in Paris' suburbs in 2005. These riots were a highly publicized event, as they highlighted the problems with France's integration model. Most of the rioters were Muslim youths, who live in ghettos with poor socioeconomic conditions. I analyzed the articles of a conservative and a liberal paper from each country during the three weeks after the first articles appeared. I looked for national and political framing in each paper. I also found a third frame while doing my research: collective action or injustice.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I analyze the difference in French and American newspaper coverage of the civil unrest in the suburbs (*banlieues*) of Paris in October and November 2005. The “civil unrest” refers to three weeks in late October and early November when mostly immigrant, Muslim youths who live in the suburbs of Paris burned cars, public buildings, and caused trouble, often through violent means, for the police and authorities.

The events were incited by the death on October 27, 2005, of two young men of North African descent, Zyed Benna, 15, and Bouna Traoré, 17, in Clichy-sous-Bois, a suburb northeast of Paris. The teenagers were electrocuted while hiding in a power station’s transformer. It has been publicly debated among the French authorities, residents, and friends of the boys whether the teenagers had been running from the police or not. This event was the catalyst to what turned out to be a worldwide media fury discussing the difficulties of integrating Muslim immigrants into secular France.

There are multiple reasons that scholars and authorities give for the civil unrest. Later in the paper I discuss in further detail reasons for the violence, but one outstanding reason is the frustrations of these minority youths with the French authorities.

This topic is important for one trying to understand the current immigration and integration policies in France. There has been much debate in the past decade in France regarding its policies towards minorities – France does not keep track of ethnicity or race, a policy unlike many other Western countries with multicultural populations. In this paper, I mostly compare France’s integration policy with that of the United States.

The media’s coverage of these riots was important for both French politicians and policy-makers, as they read these articles to get a feel for what those who live in the *banlieues* feel (outside of actually talking to the residents). Furthermore, the way in which these riots and social problems are communicated to the public in France shapes national opinion about the minorities and their integration in French society.

Furthermore, by reading about how politicians dealt with these riots, the French public formed opinions about their public servants. This is especially important as there were presidential elections in the spring of 2007, only a year and a half after the riots, and potential candidates for this election, notably current president Nicolas Sarkozy, were publicly dealing with the civil unrest.

The articles from American papers covering the riots are equally important because France and the U.S. have extremely deep political and business ties; thus what happens in each respective country is noted by the other.

One of the most crucial ways that Americans develop their opinions about France is through the media. In this case, Americans were learning about the socioeconomic status of minorities, as well as immigration policies in France. France's integration model is quite different than that of the U.S. These articles are a critical source of information for Americans who work with or visit France, including but not limited to diplomats, business people, educators and tourists. Thus the ramifications of how these riots are explained to newspaper readers in both the U.S. and France is important for the public and leaders in each country.

In my research for this thesis, I collected newspaper articles from two newspapers from each country. For French newspapers, I used *Le Figaro* and *Libération*. For American newspapers, I used *The Washington Times* and *The New York Times*. In reading the articles, I was looking for the national and political framing of the articles. I used the online academic news library LexisNexis to gather articles. In the search engine, I used the dates October 27, 2005 to November 17, 2005.

After reading the articles, I did additional research on the effects of media on the public and the subject of media framing. I also researched the policies on integration of France and the U.S. This knowledge gave me a better understanding of the historical and political context of the situation of the rioters in France. From the U.S. perspective, it helped me understand how American newspapers and publics may react to such events and how the media's framing can draw attention to a nation's policies towards minorities.

My hypothesis regarding political framing was that the conservative papers (*Le Figaro* and *Washington Times*) would suggest that the riots were caused by cultural and religious factors. I hypothesized that these papers would mention the religious affiliation

of the rioters (Muslim) more than would the liberal papers. On the other hand, I hypothesized that the politically left-wing papers (*New York Times* and *Libération*) would suggest that the riots were caused mainly by socioeconomic factors. For example, the articles from these papers would cite more frequently the unemployment and other economic difficulties that people in the *banlieues* face.

I hypothesized regarding national framing that the American newspapers would make analogies to violence related to disagreements between blacks and whites in America's past, notably the Civil Rights events of the 1960s. Many of the elements of America's Civil Rights movement had similarities to the riots in France – notably the minorities getting news attention because they feel they do not have the same opportunities as whites.

I hypothesized that the French newspapers would link the violence to France's history of colonization in Africa and how that affects French attitudes towards immigrants from former colonies. I also hypothesized the papers would spend more time discussing the challenges of integrating the Muslim immigrants and their children in secular Western France.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND ON THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE

To properly understand why these riots happened, one must understand that those living in the *banlieues*, or *cites*, are mostly first- or second-generation immigrants from North Africa. They are also mostly Muslim. France has Europe's largest population of Muslims. And here we approach the issue that France does not count the ethnicity or race of its citizens. I will explain this policy, then return to the demographic makeup and socioeconomic status of those in the *banlieues*.

France has a distinct policy on integration and *laïcité*. In the Third Republic of France, from the mid-1880s to the mid -1920s, this idea of *laïcité* developed. The concept is that the Church has no role in public life, public life meaning schools, government, and any institution linked to the government.

In an interview for John Bowen's book Why the French don't like Headscarves, French political philosopher Blandine Kriegel, who was once an advisor to Former French President Jacques Chirac, explained that although individuals come to the work they do with their individual traditions and histories, "...here in France each individual has to abstract her/himself from those traditions and accept the transfer of certain rights to the law" (Bowen 2007, 14).

If we look at the French legal doctrine, Article 2 of the law of 1905 says that "the Republic will not recognize any religion" (Bowen 2007, 18). The idea behind this law is that the state will not favor one religion or school of thought over another. All citizens are supposed to be equal; race and religion are not supposed to affect one's status as a citizen of France. France developed such laws after a violent history of religious wars between the Catholics and Protestants and Catholics and the secularists (Bowen 2007, 17).

According to this ideology, the fact that most immigrants are of Muslim religion, while the white, Gallic French who have been in France for centuries, are Catholic,

should be of no importance to one's success or opportunities in life. This may sound feasible in theory, but in reality this is not the case.

To give context to my comparison of American and French newspaper articles, I will touch on the difference between American and French integration policies. In the U.S., it is permitted to show one's religion and race as freely as one wishes.

Bowen writes, "In the Anglo-Saxon mirror-image of France, agents of the state display their separateness in their turbans or their headscarves, and the people follow suit" (2007). In the U.S., race and religion are taken into account by the government. The U.S. has affirmative action, which gives additional help to minorities in getting jobs and access to education, among other things. Whether affirmative action is beneficial or not is heavily debated. An opposing viewpoint is that the policy implies that the minorities are not as capable as whites and thus need special help – a concept that is demeaning to the minorities.

France and the U.S. have different integration models due to their different histories of immigration. The U.S. is a mixed soup, or "melting pot," founded by immigrants who came seeking a land where they could practice freely whatever religion they wanted. American laws were thus founded with this mindset. Bowen quotes Vianney Sevaistre, Chief of the Central Office of Organized Religions within the French Ministry of the Interior from 2002 to 2004, about the U.S. perspective on acknowledging one's religion, compared to that of France "...in the United States you have a different history: the Pilgrims fled from constraints on their individual liberty, so there anything can be a religious practice. There are even racist religions. They could not be allowed to practice here because they would contravene public order" (2007). Each country's history has affected its present-day laws.

France is not as tolerant of the open practice of religion due to a history of violence caused by religious differences. Regarding the practice of the Muslim religion in France, some of the practices of Islam are seen by some as a threat to public order. These practices include sacrifice, scarf-wearing, and prostrations in exotic buildings. The issue with such practices in France is that they bring back memories of France's recent colonial past in Muslim North Africa (Bowen 2007, 20).

This policy of *laïcité* is not an antiquated word in the history books. As an

example of this policy in action today, in 2004, France banned the wearing of anything indicating a student's religious affiliation. Although the law did not explicitly state it, it was geared to prevent the wearing of headscarves by Muslim girls. The reason behind the law? Two commissions advised the government, saying it was necessary because the headscarves represented a Muslim religious symbolism that was a serious danger to French society and the tradition of *laïcité* (Bowen 2007, 1).

The dominating idea behind this law is the French government's worry about the growing Muslim population, and its potential to cause violence and disturbance, as has happened in other Western countries. The government was hoping to put out any fire that might fuel Islamic radicalism, a notion that many Western governments take into consideration today. Thus, to return to the present-day situation in Paris' *banlieues*, we must acknowledge that the French government doesn't count who is Muslim or not.

Bowen writes, "Since French census takers are not allowed to gather data on 'faith,' figures on religions in France draw from immigration histories and surveys on religious practice" (2007). Consequently, "the number of Muslim residents in France is estimated to be four to five million people, nearly all of them immigrants and their children" (Bowen 2007, 51). Furthermore, 60-70 percent of Muslim immigrants to France come from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Bowen 2007, 51).

And many of these immigrants can be found in the suburbs of Paris where the violence occurred. What is of concern is the statistics on their poverty and unemployment compared to the averages for France. According to various news articles covering the unrest, unemployment among youth in the *banlieues* is estimated to be around 40 percent, compared 20 percent for youths in France overall.

Since France does not keep track of how many minorities are represented in schools and the workplace, there are no polls, surveys, or statistics recording the conditions of minorities. But the reality is that many of the minorities are discriminated against when looking for jobs. Many interviews in the articles I analyzed quote frustrated first or second-generation immigrants complaining about the difficulty of finding a job due to his/her name. But France has no programs such as affirmative action that could provide these frustrated unemployed immigrants an outlet to fight for their rights. Thus I further explore these riots by examining the articles written. In the next part of the paper,

I discuss how I analyzed the articles. The theoretical framework I have applied is “media framing.”

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA FRAMING

The *frame* of an article is the organizing idea that informs and shapes the newspaper's conversation (Gamson 1992, 3). Journalists and editors form these frames by their word choices in the newspaper articles they publish. Their influence on articles is important, as Gamson writes in Talking Politics, because "...media messages can act as teachers of values, ideologies and beliefs and provide images for interpreting the world, whether or not the designers are conscious of this intent" (1992). Thus, the way the French and American journalists conveyed the riots and the related social issues to their countries shapes the public's interpretation of the events.

Why is media framing important? Let's look at what can happen if "misframing" occurs. Goffman gives the example of a tourist going into a jewelry store and selecting a jade bracelet. When he asks the manager the cost, the manager replies, "One fifty." The customer says, "I'll take it," and hands over \$1.50, when really the bracelet cost \$150.00. The tourist had no previous experience with or knowledge of expensive jewelry, thus based his interpretation of the manager's price quote on his own experiences buying jewelry (obviously not very pricey jewelry). Goffman says this is what happens when the tourist is not familiar with, and has not been exposed to the situation (1992).

We can draw an analogy here to a reader of one of the newspaper articles who is not familiar with France's social equity model or its policy on the integration of minorities. This is a practical scenario, as the average American, unless he or she is very well-read on France or has studied the subject, may not know how these policies work. Thus when they read about these riots and the analyses of French social policies, they will interpret it based on their prior experience with the topics, such as minorities, immigration, Muslims, and city ghettos. When the article describes the "impoverished cités, an American reader from Chicago, for example, will likely relate to the unsafe, poor areas of Chicago, if he has no prior knowledge of France's cites. And thus he may

not understand the situation in France correctly, based on how the journalist has described it.

So that is why the framing of these articles is important – because it affects how well a reader will understand what the events being described were really like.

It is important to see how the media portrays these issues because the topic is very much alive today in political circles. Immigration of Muslims to Western Europe is an issue growing in importance every day. In the past half century, the Muslim population in Western Europe has grown from 250,000 to between 15 million and 20 million people (Alexiev and Gaffney 2005). France has Western Europe's largest Muslim population, with 10 percent of its population (estimated, since France does not take official counts). Other countries in Western Europe are dealing with the exact same challenge of integrating the Muslims into the Western Christian cultures.

One example is from September 2005, when the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* printed a controversial cartoon about the prophet Muhammed, and there was a subsequent worldwide public uproar about how it was insulting to Muslims.

In his book Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West, Christopher Caldwell cites a poll that suggests only 19% of Europeans think immigration to be a good thing for their country, and 57% think that their country has “too many foreigners” (“A Treacherous Path?” 2009).

Thus, examining these articles highlights the importance of this issue that is a pressing matter for France and Western Europe. Bowen cites the editor of *Le Monde* giving his two cents on the challenge of integrating this large population of Muslims in France, “*Le Monde*’s editor explained that tensions rising from the international situation and the processes of integrating Muslim immigrants into the society have “triply challenged our society (2007, 157).

Their views on issues such as the integration of immigrants in France, France's social ladder “en panne,” and the worry of Islamic fundamentalism were without a doubt influenced by these articles.

Gamson explains that media coverage of such issues is crucial to forming an opinion about the issue. He says, “Each policy issue has a relevant public discourse – a particular set of ideas and symbols that are used in various public forums to construct

meaning about it. This discourse evolves over time, providing interpretations and meanings for newly occurring events” (1992, 24). The “public discourse” about Muslims, the integration of immigrants was shaped by what phrases, words and interviews were used in the articles. As I discuss later, many phrases and words were repeated constantly in the discussion of these events. Some descriptive phrases appeared in nearly every article; so naturally such phrases shaped the public discourse of the issues.

In reading the articles, I was looking for the national and political framing of the articles. One notable element I looked for in the national framing, to distinguish between the French and American articles, was how much each country’s history was mentioned. Gamson says that history is important to understand the media’s messages: “Public discourse must be studied historically; the discourse of the moment cannot be understood outside of this necessary context. Media discourse on each issue is a continuing story that develops over time. Only in looking at the whole story can we see ways of thinking and assumptions, once taken for granted, that are now contested” (1992).

For my study, I chose *The New York Times* (referred to also as the *Times*) and *The Washington Times* primarily because of their distinct political stances, as well as for the fact that both provided significant coverage of the riots in Paris. I hoped the *Times* would provide a good example of a liberal framing of the riots, and that *The Washington Times* would show a conservative framing of the riots. The daily circulation of the *Times* is 1.04 million, while that of *The Washington Times* is 93,775 (Arango 2008, and “Circulation falls at most top newspapers,” 2008). This is a large difference in circulation numbers, but circulation numbers was not a main factor when selecting papers.

Regarding the French newspapers, I chose them for their political outlooks as well. *Le Figaro* is known as a conservative paper. Its circulation as of 2006 was 321,500. *Libération*, known for its leftish leanings, has a daily circulation of 134, 800 as of 2006. (“The Press in France”, 2009).

Quantitative/Qualitative Analysis

To determine what frames appeared in the articles, I did a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the articles. In regards to the quantitative analysis, I counted the number of articles published by each paper during the time frame. The number of articles

about the events published by the paper shows how much importance the paper places on the events.

The LexisNexis search between October 27, 2005, and November 17, 2005, turned out a different number of articles regarding this subject for each paper. I chose these dates because October 27 was the first day of the riots, and November 17 is three weeks after the event. I used this time frame to stay close to the actual event, and to control the number of articles – had the time frame been shorter I would not have enough analysis of the event by the papers. Had the time frame been longer, I would simply have had too many articles to analyze.

I did not include any articles of less than 300 words. These were often “briefs” by the papers just stating a few numbers, for example, number of cars burned. They were often briefs from press agencies, such as Associated Press (U.S.) or Agence-France Presse (France). The press agency articles, even if they may have been published by one of the papers, are not written by journalists at the respective papers, thus do not count towards my analysis. I did include guest columnists who wrote about the issue, as long as their piece was longer than 300, words, because if the paper published the piece, it is part of the paper’s coverage of the events.

When searching *Le Figaro* and *Libération* databases, I used “*violences*” as the search term. The French papers had significantly more articles than the American articles. When searching for American articles, I used the search term “*Paris*” and then eliminated the articles not referring to the riots.

I used quantitative analysis to determine the political and national framing. For political framing, I kept track of mentions of religion, culture and Islam, comparing the liberal papers (*Times* and *Libération*) and the conservative (*Le Figaro* and *The Washington Times*). For national framing, I kept track of historical references, references by each country’s papers to their countries’ respective pasts.

For the qualitative analysis, I looked for the “reasons why” the unrest happened. I noted how the newspapers described the events. How the newspapers describe such events helps them to categorize the events they are reporting, to put them in a primary framework. The words “Muslim,” “immigrant,” “impoverished suburbs” help the reader “familiarize” himself with the events, even if the reader is living in far away Maryland, or

a small village in rural France, and is not familiar with the life in the *banlieues* or the integration problems. He will frame the riots he is reading about based on what his prior knowledge is about the vocabulary used. In Frame Analysis, Goffman explains, "...each primary framework allows its user to locate, perceive, identity and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (1986, 21).

The qualitative analysis was the frame identification – examining the national and political frames, and finally finding a third frame from outside research.

CHAPTER 4

NATIONAL FRAMING

The comparison of the French and American papers' framing of the events was the initial idea that sparked this thesis. To search for national framing, I analyzed how often and how in-depth each country's papers used national and historical references in the articles.

I had hypothesized regarding national framing that the American newspapers would bring up events from American history related to problems between blacks and whites. For example, the Civil Rights movement, affirmative action, busing from the inner cities. Furthermore, I expected references to the sometimes violent inner cities of the U.S., which often have minorities as the majority population. The U.S. inner cities are probably the closest American equivalent to the French *banlieues*.

For the papers on the other side of the Atlantic, I hypothesized that the French newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Libération* would link the suburban violence to France's history of colonization in North Africa and the challenges of integrating the Muslim immigrants and their children in secular Western France.

In this section of the paper, I present the results of my research. I look at each of the four papers' national framing, then each of their political framings to see if my hypothesis was correct for the paper.

***The Washington Times* and National Framing**

I will look first at the American newspaper the *Washington Times*. This conservative paper definitely let its nationality be known when analyzing the events, not only in the reporting articles, but also in the editorial pieces and columns. I found the opinion pieces (editorials and columns) in this newspaper to be the most opinionated of all four papers I looked at, especially pieces written by the paper's editor, Wesley Prude.

I had hypothesized that the American papers would tie these events to problems

America has had in its past with minorities. My hypothesis was wrong regarding *The Washington Times*. The coverage of the violence by minority immigrants did not draw any analogies to violence between blacks and whites in the U.S., as I thought it might. The paper did give historical background on France's past, the elements that contributed to the riots, although most of it was with a bias. Halle Dale of the conservative Heritage Foundation wrote a piece with a lot of historical information on France and its colonization and immigration. This piece was strongly chiding France (2005).

However, I found many other elements in the paper's articles that gave it a "national framing," or made it clear that the articles were coming from an American perspective. The following section describes examples of themes of "national framing" in the *Times* that I had not hypothesized would occur.

Social Equity Models

When comparing the social equity models of the U.S. and France, the paper was strongly favorable to the U.S.'s affirmative action policy and other proactive measures to integrate minorities into their education systems and workforces, while putting down France's social model.

Dale's piece chided France's integration model, citing it as a reason for the discontented minority immigrants. "Even French President Jacques Chirac is now admitting that the French approach toward their immigrant population has failed. The French immigration policy has focused on assimilation into the secular French state, but this is more theory than practice," she wrote (November 9, 2005).

Columnist Suzanne Fields blamed the French state for the poor socioeconomic conditions of the immigrant suburbs: "The Paris government has alternately patronized and isolated the Muslim have-nots in their midst, preferring to keep them in the decaying suburbs with welfare benefits without hope for rising into the middle class" (November 10, 2005).

Another columnist, Diana West, wrote, "The problem driving 'youths' to incinerate lines of parked buses or immolate the occasional *grand-mere* on crutches is French racism, institutional neglect, failure to integrate" (November 11, 2005).

The Washington Times published a piece that strongly chided not only France but

also Europe as a social model. This was written by Academics Frank J. Gaffney Jr. and Alex Alexiev of the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C.

They wrote:

Today, however, the European project is in shambles. Somewhere along the way, its social market model lost steam and became counterproductive to economic growth. Current statistics indicate that by the mid-1990s, Europe had already begun falling behind the United States, as measured both by gross domestic product and productivity growth (November 10, 2005).

These opinion pieces show that *The Washington Times* has a very pro-American framing to the articles that “America knows and does best.” Had a reader been very unaware of what the real circumstances are in Europe, he could have easily developed a very condescending view of Europe’s social model from reading these articles. This would be a prime example of the effects of national media framing.

Mention of America’s relations with Muslims

The paper also made a lot of connections to the U.S.’s relations with Muslims, citing the riots alongside the September 11 attacks in New York City as examples of Muslim threats. Diana West’s column referenced the riots in Paris in a list of reasons why Americans need to be wary of Islamic fundamentalism (November 4, 2005).

Hurricane Katrina

Another national element of *The Washington Times* articles was references to Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in fall 2005. Some French media, when reporting on the event, laid the blame of the subsequent devastation to the U.S.’s Gulf Coast on racial divisions and poverty in the U.S. *The Washington Times* opinion pieces pointed out that the riots showed the French media that their country, too, has problematic issues with minorities and poverty (November 5, 2005). Editor Prude wrote, “Only yesterday, our French friends were chiding us for inviting the ocean in to drown the poor folks of New Orleans” (November 8, 2005).

The overall thrust of *The Washington Times* articles was very pro-American and anti-French, construing the frame that France’s social model is no longer viable. The articles did not necessarily give examples of how America’s solution to integrating

immigrants was better, mainly concentrating on what was wrong with France's solution.

The New York Times and National Framing

Now I will report the results of the national framing I observed in *The New York Times*. My hypothesis did prove to be correct regarding the *Times*' national framing. The paper mentioned multiple times clashes resulting from race relations in the U.S.'s past as analogies to the riots in France. By mentioning similar problems in the U.S. the *Times* gave the impression that the U.S. is a country that can identify with France's problems. The tone of the *Times* articles was much more sympathetic to the French than the tone of *The Washington Times*.

One article it published, by Craig Smith, a journalist who wrote the majority of the articles covering the issue, did something *The Washington Times* did not, which was to give an in-depth look at how the French politicians were reacting to this event. This is something both French papers spent a lot of time discussing in their articles. The fact that the *Times* published this article shows that it spent a lot of effort giving its readers a thorough background and context on the unrest.

Overall, the paper brought up several of the same issues as *The Washington Times*, although it was not nearly as "pro-American" and "anti-French." The wording to describe problems in France was not as harsh as that of *The Washington Times*. For example, both U.S. papers gave the impression the U.S. method to integrate minorities worked better than that of France, but *The Washington Times* used much more forceful wording to express this opinion.

Hypothesis on national framing correct: Mentions of problems between whites and blacks in U.S. history

In a November 6 article, Craig Smith argued that France's history of problems with minorities is much less developed than that of the U.S.: "France has an underclass, but its roots are still shallow" (2005). He makes a distinct reference to America's past of race relations, calling the "corrosive gap between America's whites and its racial minorities, especially African-Americans, the product of centuries: slavery, followed by cycles of poverty and racial exclusion that denied generation after generation the best the

United States could offer.”

Furthermore, he relates the violence to urban violence in American cities, violence caused by youths who felt isolated, like the youths in France. The violence, he wrote, “reflects something that any American who lived through the urban upheavals of the 1960’s, or the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, might recognize: a dangerous degree of isolation felt by a growing segment of its population, especially its young” (November 6, 2005). Smith was pointing out that American had experienced similar problems, but further back in its past, and furthermore, has dealt with the problems caused by race relations (addressed in social equity models sections).

Social Equity Models

The paper also brought up the topic that *The Washington Times* had addressed, which is the wave of immigration to all of Western Europe, and how the countries’ social models must accommodate the changing demographics. According to immigration analysts, “The current segregation is precursor to an inevitable reshaping of European societies forced to reopen their borders to increase the tax rolls and balance their aging, shrinking populations with immigrants” (Smith 2005).

The article also describes the French as being “slow to open their arms to newcomers who are told that they should enjoy the same rights,” pointing out the difficulty of getting a job without a “French” name on the CV. The paper said that President Jacques Chirac and his ministers’ were “floundering” and couldn’t hide the reason for the unrest, which was the following: “A failed approach to absorbing immigrants into society, an out-of-touch political elite and ministers more interested in a presidential election that’s still nearly two years away than in coming up with answers for today’s literally burning problems” (Smith 2005).

Another outstanding use of national framing is noticeable when Smith compares France and the U.S.’s approaches to integrating minorities with whites. Though not as demeaning as *The Washington Times* towards France’s social model, he points out how much effort the U.S. has made over the past half-century to give minorities equal opportunities. He writes that the French model “has actually limited their ability to define themselves as a political interest group.” When comparing different Western countries’

integration models, he shows the national framing by explaining Britain's policy as similar to that of the U.S.

Hurricane Katrina

The *Times*' mention of French media coverage of the hurricane was nowhere near as biting as that of *The Washington Times*. For example, an article mentioning this event said, "The French watched in horrified fascination at the anarchy of New Orleans, where members of America's underclass were seen looting stores and defying the police in the wake of Hurricane Katrina" (Smith 2005).

Overall, the national framing of the American papers gave fewer references to rough race relations in American history than I had hypothesized. Only the *Times* did so, and the history of race relations in the U.S. was only mentioned in-depth in one article by Smith. The *Times* gave a lot of information on the history of France's immigration, as much information as I had hypothesized the French papers would share.

French Papers and National Framing

I hypothesized that the French newspapers would link the violence to France's history of colonization in Africa and how that affects French attitudes towards immigrants from former colonies. I also hypothesized the papers would spend more time discussing the challenges of integrating the Muslim immigrants and their children into secular Western France. This proved to be true for both papers. First I will look at the national framing of *Le Figaro*.

Le Figaro and National Framing

For *Le Figaro*, my hypothesis proved to be true, as the articles made a lot of reference to France's ties to Africa, and how the cultures and lifestyles of immigrants differ from those of non-immigrant or non-minority French people, thus causing clashes.

In the following section I give examples of cultural and historical references that *Le Figaro* makes in order to explain why the riots happened, to "read between the lines." These examples include information on the family lives, as well as references to French laws and the country's political ties with Africa. Finally, the last element of the national framing I found in *Le Figaro* was its coverage of how French politicians reacted to this

event. The coverage from French newspapers on the politicians was much more in-depth than that of the American newspapers. Why is that? The French newspapers' job is to keep the public informed, so they needed to provide French citizens with as much information possible on their leaders.

References to France's history and the African origins of the immigrants

French journalist Cécilia Gabizon explained that there are cultural differences among the immigrants in the *banlieues*. The Sub-Saharan (black) and North African (Maghreb) immigrants live in different neighborhoods within the Parisian suburbs. She says that because of their specific cultural practices, the black immigrants have worse chances of success than the Maghreb immigrants (November 11, 2005).

The main reason is their family situations. The black families are on average twice as large as other families. They have continued the practice of polygamy, which is accepted in the home countries of the immigrants, but not in France (where there are an estimated 12,000 households practicing polygamy). This means the areas where the black immigrants live are overcrowded, forcing the children to spend their time in the streets. Due to a lack of stable family structure and large families, the children have little supervision. On top of this, the families are nearly all poor. This leads adolescents as young as 12 or 13, unsupervised and poor, to start stealing and causing trouble (Gabizon 2005).

This is an element of the national framing, for such detailed events of the situation are more known to the French than the Americans, who would be less likely to report on this.

Another culture-specific element I noticed was the more detailed information about the family lives of those people living in the *banlieues*. Gabizon explained that the parents are often absent and unsupportive. She quotes an adolescent who says he is ashamed of his parents and that he is mad at them for giving him nothing to start his life with. Children of immigrants find "families" amongst their friends. And when these groups of adolescents are frustrated, they have no adult guidance to deter them from creating violence. This is the case among families in which the parents emigrated from Africa. "While the parents have their eyes riveted to Africa, the children are getting lost

in the ghettos,” she explained (November 13, 2005).

Another reference to French history was regarding the curfew set in place. Setting such a curfew became a possibility when the “state of urgency” law was passed in 1955. That law was in response to violence and unrest that occurred when Algeria, then a French colony, started an independence war. The curfew meant police could, at any time, storm any location and stop suspicious people.

Voicing the view from the other side of the Mediterranean

Still another aspect of *Le Figaro*’s coverage adds to the national framing – an article by Arezki Aït-Larbi and Thierry Oberlé that discusses the reaction among Maghreb media and those living in North Africa. American papers did not do this, but as the French have much closer ties to the area, it is important to the country to keep abreast of the area’s media and popular opinion. The article reported that the opinion there was mixed. Some who were quoted were not supportive of their cultural comrades’ violence: “They have a chance to live in a rich and democratic country, and they’re complaining,” one lady said. Another lamented that these riots would make it harder to get a visa into France (November 14, 2005).

Other North Africans interviewed supported the rioters, noting especially how they felt the French leaders were not supportive of the immigrants. What didn’t help matters was at-the-time Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy publicly calling the troublemakers in the suburbs “*racaille*,” which means scum. When those of African descent heard those words from Sarkozy, they naturally took up a dislike towards him.

French politicians

Another element distinguishing the French and American papers was that the French papers spent more time discussing how the French politicians were reacting to the violence. Since there was a presidential election in the future (2007), it was an opportunity for the candidates to show how they would handle this important French policy issue. Two of the future candidates from the UMP party, Nicolas Sarkozy and Dominique de Villepin, both had the spotlight on them as the events played out. This was an unexpected publicity opportunity for them, and the French newspapers did not hesitate

to act upon it. Although the *Times* did one article with an in-depth analysis, and also mentioned the politicians quite often, the French papers as a whole spent a lot more time on this issue.

Libération and National Framing

I found that, as I had hypothesized regarding the French newspapers, *Libération* linked the violence to France's history of colonization in North Africa and the challenges of integrating Muslim immigrants and their children in secular Western France. The paper also spent a lot of time discussing French politicians, and was more or less critical of their handling of events.

References to France's history and African origins of the immigrants

One article published in *Libération* by Turkish-born French academic Esther Benbassa, was entitled “Faults of integration, in France the arrogance of the elites and the blindness of the policies are a hindrance to social mobility.” It lamented the fact that France, in the nation’s collective memory (expressed through education, media, government spokespeople), doesn’t like to acknowledge elements of the colonization, decolonization and slavery of its past. She said today’s discrimination towards Arabs and Muslims is similar to the persecution of Jews in the past. “The Muslims have replaced the Jews of the 19th century and the between World War period. In this context, our exacerbated nationalism is stopping us from seeing the multiculturalism of France.” If France would recognize its history, it could bring the immigrants more pride and confidence, she wrote (November 10, 2005).

Comparing France to the U.S.

An interesting element of the national framing in *Libération* was an article which questioned the social model for integrating immigrants. The article says “Don’t we remember that we have an integration model that everyone envies, that France isn’t America or Great Britain, and doesn’t have ghettos?” It is an interesting statement when put in contrast with the American papers that claimed that the Anglo-Saxon model of positive discrimination and affirmative action is in fact the enviable model (November 9,

2005).

French politicians

The paper spent a lot of time critiquing the politicians and discussing the different political parties. This was an important aspect of the national frame. The in-depth coverage of the political parties' reactions to the unrest would not have interested an American readership. For example, the countless abbreviations and politicians' names (outside of the principal leaders) are foreign jargon to American readers. A November 9 article cites the UMP, PCF, UDF and PS as well as many more local and regional political figures – no coverage this depth was found in American papers.

There was also analysis of Sarkozy's mandate to deport foreigners who had been connected to the violence committed in the riots (November 10, 2005). Though a harsh statement, which drew French press coverage and criticism at the time, it was part of a series of public statements about the events that in the end of the situation would earn him public approval for his handling of the events, because he was not afraid to take action. This mandate was briefly mentioned in American papers but was not as heavily discussed.

Libération gave French President Jacques Chirac no break for having to deal with this sticky situation. "Like always when he is in difficulty, Jacques Chirac is taking his time and putting distance between his job and the events," a November 11 article said. It then criticized the discrepancy between his words and actions. "He multiplied the last three years his speech about social cohesion, the fight against discrimination and the promises of future economic prosperity with no result except a major crisis in the suburbs."

Discussion of punishment, law enforcement

Another notable difference in the French and American coverage was the discussion of the more specific nuances of the unrest: What is the best way for law enforcement to deal with the rioters? Are the police officers adequately prepared (evidently they were not)? How do we punish these youths? What is the proper punishment? These issues were not discussed in the American papers, as they are much

more French national-specific topics.

A November 10 commentary article by a magistrate complained of the inadequate police forces. France needs to concentrate its law enforcement efforts more on prevention than on consequences, like the other European countries, he wrote. “In the French suburbs, there are no prosecutions for stealing goods, nor are there real investigations into the underground economies. It’s a major problem.”

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL FRAMING

Regarding political framing, I had hypothesized that the conservative papers (*Le Figaro* and *The Washington Times*) would suggest that the riots were caused mainly by cultural and religious factors. I hypothesized that these papers would mention the religious affiliation of the rioters (Muslim) more than the liberal papers. On the other hand, I hypothesized that the liberal papers (*The New York Times* and *Libération*) would suggest that the riots were caused mainly by socioeconomic factors. For example, the articles from these papers will cite more frequently the unemployment and other economic difficulties people in the *banlieues* face. First I will look at the coverage by the liberal papers, the *Times* and *Libération*.

***The New York Times* and Political Framing**

In analyzing the *Times* for political framing, I was expecting that the paper would mention unemployment, discrimination and other such socioeconomic problems faced by those living in the *banlieues*. This proved to be true, and the paper did put less blame for the riots on religious factors than did its conservative American counterpart.

The fact that the paper spent so much time explaining the problems of France's integration policy was an example of framing that suggested the unrest was caused by socioeconomic problems. Had the paper been suggesting the unrest was caused by religious motivation, it would have spoken more of the threat of Islam, like *The Washington Times* did. The difference in the political framing of the two American papers was the most striking element I found in my research.

Blaming the unrest on socioeconomic problems

In addition to framing France's social and economic policies as faltering, the *Times* framed the youths and their living conditions as poor and impoverished.

Smith described the immigrants as those “who have borne the brunt of France’s economic weakness” who live in “immigrant, working-class neighborhoods.” Furthermore, it says that “the government’s failure to provide jobs has created a sense of disenfranchisement among the young” (November 3, 2005).

And the biggest socioeconomic problem ... integration model

So the youths that caused the riots are poor, unemployed and living in impoverished ghettos. But why? A theme visible through all of the *Times*’ articles is the critique of France’s integration of immigrants. It is because of France’s failing policies that these first and second-generation immigrants have social and economic difficulties, according to the *Times*’ framing. The *Times* explains the policy of ignoring race and ethnicity that I outlined earlier in the paper, but says it doesn’t work. Smith wrote, “But discrimination has flourished behind the oft-stated ideals, leaving immigrants and their French-born offspring increasingly isolated in government-subsidized apartment blocks to face high unemployment and dwindling hope for the future” (November 6, 2005).

Mentioning of religious and cultural aspect of the unrest

As I had hypothesized, the paper did not lay the play of the unrest on religious reasons. This concept was mentioned often but the wording was usually gentle, never directly blaming the Muslims. Often experts were cited who said the riots “may” have been influenced by religious reasons, but the paper was very careful in its references to Islam. For example, in this November 5 article, Smith wrote regarding religion and culture, “The cultural divide between these second- and third-generation immigrants and the native French is deeper because they come from Muslim families, but to date the violence has had nothing to do with Islam. The violence seems to have been the work of unfocused teenagers and young adults without a clear political agenda,” he wrote.

Instead, the paper framed the cultural question as a question of identity. Smith explained that the French-born children of immigrants “find themselves questioning where they really belong...they are also discovering that, contrary to what they have been taught in school, they are not fully French” (November 6, 2005). For example, he writes, “French-Arabs regularly claim that when identical résumés are submitted to an employer

with an Arab name on one and a French name on another, the résumé with the French name will get the priority.”

The Washington Times and Political Framing

My hypothesis regarding political framing was that the conservative papers (*Le Figaro* and *Washington Times*) would suggest that the riots were caused mainly by cultural and religious factors. I hypothesized that these papers would mention the religious affiliation of the rioters (Muslim) more than would the liberal papers.

My hypothesis proved to be correct here, as *The Washington Times* adamantly made clear that the unrest not only was influenced by religious and cultural reasons, but also that it was part of a worldwide threat from Islamic fundamentalism. This issue was the most prominent result from my research and analysis of the newspaper articles.

Blaming the unrest on socioeconomic problems, faulty integration system

The Washington Times, like the *Times*, did attribute blame to the failure to give immigrants equal chances. The paper made many of the same points as its liberal counterpart, critiquing the French government for its lack of effort to aid the minorities and immigrants. The greatest difference was *The Washington Times* also added religious and cultural factors to their explanations for the riots.

Mentioning of religious and cultural aspect of the unrest

This aspect was the most surprising of all my research results - the forcefulness of the editorials from *The Washington Times*. The paper not only framed the events as being caused by “dangerous” Muslims, it linked the violence to part of a worldwide Muslim unrest, and it chided other international media for being too “politically correct” and not blaming the violence on Muslims. The article titles alone show the frame of the paper’s coverage:

“Jihadism and denial; U.S. officials kowtowing for Ramadan”

“Unrest hits Paris as riots spread afar; Hundreds arrested as angry immigrant youths ignore Muslim leaders' pleas for calm”

“Revolution in France; Chirac and Jihadists”

“Islamic threat in France; Critical lessons for the West”

“Baghdad on the Seine; That ringing noise in France is a wake-up call”
“Farewell to Europe”
“Weapons of Mass Attraction”

Regarding the threat of violence from Muslims in France, a November 5 editorial said the riots were a “violent wake-up call” to the French that “terror is a threat with many masks.”

“Some of our most sensitive carin' and sharin' journals here avert their eyes,” wrote Wesley Prude, the editor-in-chief of the paper, in an OP-ED piece about the international media’s denial to attribute the violence to religious factors (November 8, 2005).

Furthermore, he blamed cultural differences for the problems – those from non-traditional European backgrounds just cause problems in France and the rest of Europe, according to him. He acknowledged the immigrants’ struggle to find an identity in France, but he showed no sympathy.

He wrote in the November 8 article, “The "youths" who have joined the struggle to dismantle the civilization that gave them refuge from their miserable Arabian and African homelands of origin are far less assimilated than their parents or their grandparents were...They offer no reason why they are entitled to respect.” He acknowledges that these youths, culturally and religiously different from the “Gallic” French, do have difficult social and economic situations, but he does not objectively describe this situation. He frames it in a manner in which it was nice of France to even let these immigrants in, and now the result is that the immigrants are literally burning the city down.

An editorial from the paper on November 10 said, “The veneer of French secularism has given way to reveal an unstable balance of Western complacency and Muslim contempt. And in the face of French weakness, that contempt has turned to confidence. This bodes ominously for not only the French, but for all of us committed to resisting Islamist aggression.”

This and other *Washington Times* articles use extreme political framing that would give a person who is not knowledgeable about the subject the idea that the Muslims in France are deadbeat troublemakers, not contributing anything to French society.

Part of an Islamic threat to Western Europe and the U.S.

Editorial page editor Tony Blankley was the one who tied the riots to a more global Islamic movement. “As the Muslim populations and their level of cultural and religious assertiveness expand, European geography will be “reclaimed” for Islam,” he wrote in “Islamic threat in France; Critical lessons for the west.” He linked the rioting to terrorist acts by citing attacks in London, and of course September 11 in New York. His framing gives us the impression that these youths were being violent because of their religion – their socioeconomic conditions are their own fault, his framing implies.

Another conservative commentary, “Farewell to Europe,” also incites fear of an Islamic “takeover” of Europe:

Today, an intolerant and violent extremist political ideology known as Islamofacism has taken hold throughout Muslim communities in France and much of Western Europe. Moreover, this fast-spreading strain is on its way to becoming the dominant face of Islam in the EU. It is profoundly anti-Western, supported directly or indirectly by Saudi sources, and marked by wholesale rejection of such fundamental European values as democracy, secularism, separation of church and state, human rights and modernity (November 10, 2005).

The authors then said the U.S. should seriously consider a future without Europe as an ally because the Islamic threat is so serious. The authors of that commentary that *The Washington Times* published are president and co-president of the Center for Security Policy, a think tank in Washington, D.C. The decision of *The Washington Times* to publish such a radical article adds to its very right-wing political framing of these events.

The Washington Times wonders why the rest of the Western media is not covering the unrest from the same angle

The paper’s November 10 editorial lashed out at *The Washington Post* and the *Times* for hardly ever mentioning Muslims in their coverage. “But to ignore the Islamist threat in France, as the U.S. media has done for 14 days, betrays a politically correct ideology that is willfully ignorant of the facts,” the editorial stated. The article said *The Washington Post* was “clearly wrong” when it “denied any Islamist influence” on the events; it pointed out that the most recent *Times* article didn’t once use the words Islamic

or Muslim.

Struggle of police to cope with violence

One theme mentioned through several of *The Washington Times* articles, which I did not find in the *Times* (although it was mentioned in the French newspapers), was the struggle for the police officers to fight back against the unrest. The paper explained that the police were untrained, mostly all-white (non-minority/non-immigrant), and came from regions that were nothing like the violent suburbs.

First-person interviews with these policemen show the problem. A November 10 article by Jennifer Joan Lee quotes a police officer in Essone, calling the dangerous suburb a “ghetto” that “police do not dare to enter.”

The religion/cultural element was even tied in to the description of police inadequacy. Lee quotes a police officer who was patrolling in Essone: "It's also a cradle of radical Islam, controlled by professional criminals involved in drug and weapons trafficking and who have links to al Qaeda. We cannot even stop here for long because they are always surveying the area for police, and if they see us, there will be serious trouble." The fact that the editorial staff of *The Washington Times* chose to publish such a quote shows their propensity to frame the events with a religious tone.

However, Lee does finally quote a researcher on Islamic affairs, who denies the influence of religious motivation, thereby allowing the paper to claim credit for covering both sides of the story.

Le Figaro and Political Framing

My hypothesis regarding political framing was that the conservative papers (*Le Figaro* and *Washington Times*) would suggest that the riots were caused mainly by cultural and religious factors. I hypothesized that these papers would mention the religious affiliation of the rioters (Muslim) more than would the liberal papers.

My hypothesis proved to be true for the *The Washington Times*, but not for the conservative *Le Figaro*. *Le Figaro* is known to be more of a center-right paper and *The Washington Times* more extreme right, so perhaps that is a reason.

Blaming the unrest on socioeconomic problems, faulty integration system

Le Figaro definitely made clear that there were socioeconomic reasons for the violence. A conservative paper like *The Washington Times*, it did not publish articles as radical as *The Washington Times* regarding the Islamic influence on the youths. Its mentions of Islam were mainly in regard to the immigrant children's 'lost identity,' not identifying with their parents' African roots nor with the French culture in which they live.

Rioufol wrote in an article entitled "Rebellion against the French model," that "the unemployment, segregation and withdrawal that the young people, from Maghreb or African immigrants, live with, is a reality that can only result in the pursuit of 'positive discrimination' and the development of a social policy." (November 11, 2005).

Le Figaro also spent a lot of time describing the family lives of these immigrants and how the families need to be more involved with their children to prevent such accidents from happening, as I mentioned in the national framing section.

Libération and Political Framing

I hypothesized that the liberal papers (*New York Times* and *Libération*) would suggest that the riots were caused mainly by socioeconomic reasons. This proved to be true with *Libération*. It even published an article suggesting that the French government should be more accepting of the Muslims' culture and religious practices – essentially taking the opposite position to *The Washington Times*, which blamed the riots on religious reasons.

Blaming the unrest on socioeconomic problems, faulty integration system

Libération, as I hypothesized, focused on socioeconomic reasons for the unrest in the suburbs. A November 9 article called "Trapped by the Republic" blamed, as the title suggests, the French government for the youths' socioeconomic status, saying the youths are stuck in an unfortunate situation and there's no social ladder for them to climb. The article outlines different areas of life in which these youths face "humiliation" that keeps them on the streets instead of up the avenue to a more successful future. The article says the youth experience educational and economic "humiliations" in their relations with the "white" police, and in politics. This article argues that the French social model has failed these youths. "Of the French social model, they [the rioting youths] only know

unemployment or temp work...They feel cornered in a net that keeps them at a distance from a society that doesn't want them." This article is an example of the political framing that socioeconomic problems caused the riots.

One article published in *Libération* by Turkish-born French academic Esther Benbassa that was mentioned in the national framing section was a strong critique of the discrepancy between the authorities and the immigrants in the suburbs. Furthermore, she applauds the American system of integrating minorities while critiquing France. In America, you are "American and black," or "American and Muslim," she wrote. "The 'and' is crucial....This 'and', which is unacceptable here in France, is what has allowed in the U.S. the promotion of a Condoleezza Rice and a Colin Powell."

An element of socioeconomic problems – lack of quality education

The paper also had an article covering Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin's announcement that the education system in France, notably the schools in these suburbs, was at fault for the unrest (November 9, 2005). The article seems to be supportive of the fact that the education system can be improved to help these youths – more resources, less crowded classrooms, more technical or vocational options at an early age for those who aren't suited for the university or intellectual path.

Benbassa's article also has a suggestion for education – teach religion. But, she explained, when we propose this idea to teachers (which would be another way to create links between students of different cultures...) "the opposition is strong, not only in the name of laïcité but also of the laïcist dogma. » Perhaps if the students were more educated about each others' religions, bonds and understanding could be developed among the country's future leaders.

Furthermore, the immigrant youths don't see people of the same background or ethnicity in the public service positions, leading businesses, or in the media. Sure there are some of immigrant backgrounds that get attention, but they are few and far between. Thus they are more likely to be against such people, because they don't identify with them. There need to be more people from minority backgrounds in public authority positions, the article says. But then we arrive back to the point that the French integration model does not allow for this special effort to be made.

Mentioning of religious and cultural aspect of the unrest

The paper did not at all blame the unrest on religious or culture reasons. It even took the opposing stance, sympathetic to the Muslims complaint that the French government won't let them freely express their religion (for example, the headscarf ban) (November 9, 2005). It said that, in fact, the French system of "communautarisme" is unsupportive to the immigrants' religion and that *laïcité* in fact makes them suppress their religion, which is part of the individual. The French social model has abandoned the world of the immigrants, the article said.

Libération said that the violence, caused by the youths' struggle to find identity, is mis-interpreted as religion-based.

CHAPTER 6

OTHER MEDIA FRAMES

In Talking Politics, Gamson brings up other media frames that I was not initially looking for in my analysis, but which are evident in the data. The collective action frame that he describes applies to these articles. Collective action framing means the media is a voice for groups to express their concerns and problems. Collective action frames have the elements of injustice, agency and identity. They don't exist in isolation but frequently support each other.

"The identity component of collective action frames is about the process of defining this "we," typically in opposition to some "they" who have different interests or values" (1992, 84).

In this case, the group expressing itself through the media is the immigrants in the suburbs. Many of the articles in all four papers include first person interviews with the immigrants. The immigrants, the minority youths, are the "we" in opposition to the French government, the white authorities, the "they."

Gamson explains that the injustice element of the collective action frame is found in media coverage of affirmative action. Since the issue behind these riots is related to affirmative action, essentially France's lack of it and consequent frustrated minorities, this is relevant to the framing of these articles.

One issue with injustice framing is the "danger that people will miss the underlying structural conditions that produce hardship and inequality. They may exaggerate the role of human actors, failing to understand broader structural constraints, and misdirect their anger at easy and inappropriate targets" (1992, 33). Could this have happened in the four newspapers I analyzed? Did the articles blame the unrest on the wrong targets? It is possible, but so many targets were mentioned that it is difficult to know which are correct and which not. Muslims were blamed, Nicolas Sarkozy was blamed for his harsh words towards the youths, Jacques Chirac was blamed for doing

nothing, and finally, most commonly, the French model of integration was blamed. And that last source of blame, which I believe is the main reason behind the violence, cannot be pinned on any one person but instead on years and years of history.

Perhaps the first three “targets” I mentioned were indeed a part of misdirected injustice framing. It is after all, easier, and more attention-getting to readers, to blame a city on fire on a living person whose face is plastered throughout the media, such as Sarkozy and Chirac. And, as *The Washington Times* did, it is all too easy to target a religious group associated in the public mind with other recent frightening events (and a religious group that evidently had no representation on *The Washington Times* editorial staff). After September 11 and terrorist attacks in London, the face of Osama bin Laden and his counterparts were plastered throughout the Western media. Thus it was easy to bring these characters back into “more attacks versus the West.”

However, most academics and experts on Islam who were quoted in the articles denied that these riots were part of Islamic fundamentalist violence. The real reason behind this violence, the French model of integration, is not an easy concept to explain in news articles, nor is it as attention getting, or “sexy” as other candidates. Which news headline is going to get the most attention: “Faulty French integration model needs to be reformed?” or “Muslims set Western Europe on fire”?

Gamson explains that adding a bit of drama to the news is indeed often done in the media. “As news events unfold and changes appear in the conditions of people’s daily lives, human agents are typically identified as causal agents in a morality play about good and evil or honesty and corruption. The more abstract analysis of socio-cultural forces favored by social scientists is deemphasized, if it enters the story at all” (1992, 34). The collective action frame, notably the injustice and the identity element in it, is a third frame that I found in all four newspapers

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This topic is relevant today even though these riots occurred four years ago, because the issue of France's "faulty" integration model has not disappeared from public discussion, nor have relations between the minorities and the white French improved. In August 2009, similar violence occurred again in the Parisian suburbs, when a pizza delivery boy was killed as he fled a police identity check. And the current French Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux recently held a meeting with police from the suburbs to discuss the continuing problems with frustrated youths there.

Moreover, as explained earlier in the paper, Muslim immigrants are continuing to come to France and all of Western Europe from North Africa. And how the media explains this social and political issue is crucial to the country's reaction to the movement.

In The Whole World is Watching : Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left, Todd Gitlin explains the importance of the media : "...people are pressed to rely on mass media for bearings in an obscure and shifting world...The media bring a manufactured public world into private space...the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology" (1980, 2).

The media affect what people talk about at the dinner table, at parties with friends, and, most importantly in this case, the government's agenda. "Mass media define the public significance of movement events or, by blanking them out, actively depriving them of larger significance" (Gitlin 1980, 4). In the case of the minority youths in Paris' suburbs, did it take attracting media coverage to get the government to pay attention to them? Possibly. These youths, who feel ignored, with no hope for the future, suddenly were the headlines in France and America's top newspapers.

And why must we look at the frames of the newspapers? "Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and,

in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (Gitlin 1980, 7).

I chose the national and political frames because they were the most obvious ways to distinguish between the four newspapers and examine what frames may exist. The purpose of this thesis was to determine the difference between the American and French media’s framing of the riots. The national framing gives us a look at how the issues, Islam v. the West, integration of minorities, and France’s social model are interpreted by each country.

The political frames of papers consequently must be examined. Just as each country does not have just one political stance, using a paper from different political spectrums in each country ensures that we hear the different voices.

Finally, the third frame that emerged from my research, the collective action or injustice frame, is a type of frame specifically applicable to this set of events. For example, it would not be a useful frame for analyzing newspaper coverage of the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. But here it turned out to be an important and prominent frame applicable to all four newspapers, as it applies to the “we” versus “they” storyline used to explain groups who experience discrimination. All papers framed the events as the immigrants being frustrated with the French government.

Looking at my hypotheses

I had hypothesized that the French newspapers would discuss more the history of France's ties with the countries from which the immigrants come. This proved to be true for both *Le Figaro* and *Libération*. The French papers spent more time describing the culture and way of life of those in North Africa. One article in *Libération* explained that when the immigrants bring these cultural practices (for example, polygamy) to France, it only makes their living situation worse.

An element of the national framing that I had not anticipated was the greater coverage by the French papers of the responses of political parties and politicians to the unrest. Since there was a presidential election scheduled only a year and a half after these riots, the riots gave two of the candidates for president from the UMP party an unplanned chance to publicize their leadership skills. The American papers provided some coverage

of the French politicians' reactions, but it was not nearly as thorough.

I had hypothesized that the American papers would link the unrest to previous violence in the U.S. related to race relations, for example, the civil rights movement in the 1960s. I also thought the papers would link the poverty, violence and shabby living conditions to that of the inner cities in the U.S. My hypothesis here proved correct, although the American papers made fewer references than I had anticipated to American history.

On the whole, however, the papers had more background information on French history and political situations than I had expected. There was a discrepancy between *The Washington Times*' and *New York Times*' national framing. *The Washington Times* was more pro-America and anti-France, whereas the *Times* was nearly neutral regarding its support for the one country or the other, except for its endorsement of the American integration model over the French model.

Regarding the political framing, my hypothesis that the liberal papers would concentrate more on the socioeconomic issues, discrimination, poverty and unemployment underlying the riots proved to be correct. But this fact, in addition to the mention of France's failing integration system, was actually highlighted in all four papers. There was not a large difference between the French conservative and liberal paper's political framing.

However, the difference between the conservative *Washington Times* and liberal *The New York Times* was the most striking element I found in my analysis. *The Washington Times* was the only paper to blame the culture and religion of the Muslim youths for the violence. All of the papers delicately mentioned that Islamic fundamentalism could be tied to the riots, but always quoted experts saying that this was probably not the case. Except for *The Washington Times* – its editorials and commentary explicitly said that this was part of a radical Islamic movement taking over Western Europe. Thus the framing of these articles may cause readers to become more fearful of Muslims. However, it must be noted that the circulation of the *The Washington Times* is much smaller than the *Times*, so its articles were read by fewer people.

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