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Riot or rebellion: media framing and the 1967 Detroit uprising

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RIOT OR REBELLION: MEDIA FRAMING AND THE 1967 DETROIT UPRISING

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

**Dedicated to my mother,
Juanita R. Washburn**

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CHAPTER 1 “MEDIA FRAMING AND THE 1967 DETROIT UPRISING”

Framing is a significant area of study found in subjects related to psychology, linguistics, and political science, to name just a few (Benford & Snow, 2000). In communication research, the study of framing has led to new insights into the role of media, political elites, and others in opinion formation, issue identification, and blame attribution. Framing has been shown to effect social change by altering how people think about issues and to whom or what they assign responsibility for them.

Simply stated, framing is the practice of highlighting certain elements of an issue, idea, or event over others to strengthen or change how people view and/or react to it. By studying framing, researchers have identified a number of framing effects, including dramatic impact on public opinion and issue judgment. Framing research has demonstrated that, under certain circumstances, frames can alter outcome preferences and impact how blame is assigned to individuals or groups. On a mass level, framing effects have been shown to alter how many of us view the world in which we live.

Framing has also been shown to affect social movements and the public’s reaction to them. The framing of a social movement can legitimize or delegitimize the actions of the group(s) involved, impact the level of support for the movement, and strengthen support for various outcomes. Social movement frames are found to be particularly powerful when they correlate with existing beliefs.

Framing research can take many forms, both qualitative and quantitative. However, much of the research offers a snapshot in time. There is a lack of longitudinal studies related to framing, which identify changes over time. Therefore, a longitudinal study of framing may offer insight into how a frame endures over time and/or changes as

circumstances change. This dissertation offers an in-depth case study of framing, one that is richly documented and consistently relevant, even 40 years after the original event. This dissertation studies the 1967 Detroit civil uprising and the frames found in media reports in both 1967 and 2007, the 40th anniversary. (Because the terms “riot” and “rebellion” are both contested frames, I have chosen to use the more neutral “uprising,” the term used in the Kerner Commission report to refer to the event.)

The Significance of Framing

Frames make sense of complex issues, while also offering suggestions for suitable solutions (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). “Frames are constructions of the issue: they spell out the essence of the problem, suggest how it should be thought about, and may go so far as to recommend what (if anything) should be done” (Nelson & Kinder, 1996, p. 1057). Ferree and Merrill (2000) defined framing as “a cognitive ordering that relates events to one another: It is a way of talking and thinking about things that links idea elements into packages” (p. 456). Snow and Benford (1992) described framing as “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (p. 137).

Framing is employed by political elites, community leaders, and the media itself. The media often engage in framing through their selection of stories and sources. “A news frame gives journalists a ‘hook’ or a ‘peg’ for their articles or stories; it helps them decide what to focus on and what to ignore” (Carroll, 1999). In other words, a journalist’s hook uses information to construct reality. Frames can be delivered through symbolic devices,

such as slogans, symbols, or analogies. In addition, the media use framing devices, such as headlines and lead sentences (de Vreese, 2004).

Failures in Framing

The fact that framing can have dramatic effects on public opinion means that it can also have serious implications for society. Opinion leaders attempt to control not only what is discussed, but also how it is presented (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). However, framing is not always successful. Elites, for example, are often unable to get their frame into the media. Elected officials engaged in framing may face opposition if they fail to read the “public mood” (Gabrielson, 2005, p. 80). A failure to anticipate the tenor of the people may lead to very public repercussions for an elected official. The least of these will be a failure to generate any media coverage or support for the issue. More seriously, the official may face a hit to his or her reputation. Even worse, officials may open the door for their opposition to seek their own media attention and frame the issue to their own benefit (Gabrielson, 2005).

In addition, the ability to get a frame into the media is often dependent on the source’s credibility, status, or resources (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005). Sheaffer (2001) found that successful political framers rely on charismatic skill, defined as the actor’s skill, performance, and talent, as well as the actor’s centrality to issues. Her study focused on the political actor’s role in achieving media legitimacy, or “public acceptance of domination,” to control media framing (p. 713). By developing the charismatic skill approach, the author was able to identify why some political actors are able to gain legitimacy, while others are not.

According to Druckman (2001), framing effects are the result of the public's choosing which elites they rely on to help sort through a number of issue frames. People may seek out credible elites as guidance for complex issues. If they do not find the elite credible, they will not accept the frame. Therefore, credible sources are able to use frames to change public opinion, whereas sources lacking in credibility are not able to successfully change public opinion, even when using the same frames.

Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) also found evidence of conditional effects, including partisanship. In their study of concealed gun opinions and blame attribution following the Columbine school shootings, the authors discovered that frames did have an effect, but that their influence was conditional on partisanship and knowledge levels. Given its potential impact, as well as the potential barriers to its success, framing is an important topic for study.

Review of Framing Literature: Types of Frames

Framing often leads to questions of responsibility. Causal responsibility focuses on the "origin" of the problem, whereas treatment responsibility focuses on the source of those with the ability to fix or transform the problem (Iyengar & Simon, 1993, p. 369). There are two forms of news frames that affect perceptions of causality: *episodic* and *thematic*. The more common of the two, episodic framing, presents the news with a focus on individuals or specific events. Television news is inherently episodic, often depicting live events at the expense of the historical background surrounding the issue (Iyengar, 1990). Thematic framing, on the other hand, presents the news in a more general format, often with the use of officials (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Thematic framing, which is less

visually appealing, “emphasizes general outcomes, conditions and statistical evidence” (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992, p. 390).

In addition to the question of responsibility, framing can also present policy issues in ways that generate public support or opposition. Issue framing can be either *general* or *specific*. General issue frames focus on government activity and offer little specific information about the policy area. When citizens encounter this type of issue frame, their responses to the policy area are determined by their pre-existing beliefs about the government. Generic frames often serve as broader constructions related to specific issues (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005). Specific issue frames, on the other hand, link government activities with specific groups or individuals, or those who will either benefit or incur costs from the government’s actions (Jacoby, 2000). Citizen responses to this type of issue frame will be affected by their beliefs pertaining to the group or individual related to the issue frame. In addition, the specific issue frame could lead to a “self-interest effect” among those who may be directly affected by the policy (Jacoby, 2000). Nelson and Kinder (1996) also found that public opinion on government policy is group-centric, or “strongly influenced by the attitudes citizens possess toward the social groups perceived as the beneficiaries of the policy” (p. 1055).

Levin, Schneider, and Gaeth (1998) identified three separate forms of framing: *risky choice framing*, *attribute framing*, and *goal framing*. Risky choice framing focuses separately on choice outcomes and risks. Attribute framing focuses on specific characteristics of an event or object, and does not rely on the presence of risk. Finally, goal framing, as its name implies, focuses on the goal of an action or behavior.

The Effects of Framing

A framing effect occurs when “in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker’s emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions” (Druckman, 2001, p. 1042). Therefore, framing effects occur when two different frames of a single issue activate different reactions among those who are exposed to the frames (Jacoby, 2000). Subsequently, different frames can affect not only how a person feels about a given issue, but also who is to blame for it (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005).

Framing often leads to questions of responsibility. When events are portrayed through episodic framing, blame is assigned to individuals as opposed to elected officials (Hetherington, 1996). Furthermore, while episodic frames are quite visual, viewers are less likely to hold government officials responsible for finding a solution to the problem (Gamson et al., 1992). Thematic frames, on the other hand, encourage assigning blame to elected officials or the government, as opposed to individuals (Hetherington, 1996).

According to Druckman (2001), there are two forms of framing effects: *equivalency* and *emphasis*. Research on equivalency framing effects “examines how the use of different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases ... causes individuals to alter their preferences” (p. 228). For example, a person may find 95 percent employment acceptable, but 5 percent unemployment unacceptable. Equivalency framing effects focus on the impact of positive versus negative portrayals of the same information. Levin et al. (1998) referred to this form of framing as *attribute framing*. Equivalency or attribute framing effects can also be found when describing alternatives in terms of success versus failure. The event will receive a more favorable rating when described positively than when described negatively,

such as highlighting survival rates as opposed to mortality rates. The authors found, however, that these effects can be mitigated. For example, topics involving issues that evoke strongly held beliefs are less likely to be susceptible to attribute framing effects. The effects are less likely when dealing with extremes.

Emphasis framing effects, on the other hand, result from placing emphasis on a subset of information. Individuals then take these considerations into account when constructing their own opinions. Rather than contrasting similar information, these frames focus on independently relevant information. Most of the research outlined in this dissertation looks at emphasis framing effects: namely, how certain arguments or elements of the uprising were emphasized over others.

Framing effects can also be seen in *goal framing*. With goal framing, the focus is either on a benefit or gain (positive), or on the ability to prevent a loss (negative): in other words, it highlights the positive aspects of performing a particular action or the negative outcomes of not doing the action. Both are considered enhancements, but the negative frame tends to have a more persuasive impact (Levin et al., 1998).

Attempts to determine who is most susceptible to framing effects have yielded contradictory results. Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997) claimed framing effects may in fact be greater for those familiar with the frame's message, thus demonstrating that those who are more politically sophisticated will experience heightened framing effects because they have the recall necessary to prioritize information.

Others believe it is those who are less knowledgeable who will be most susceptible, because they have fewer prior opinions (Druckman & Nelson, 2003). Ferree and Merrill (2000) suggested that ideology may impact framing effects, indicating that two people with

opposite ideologies will respond to a frame differently. Gabrielson (2005) claimed that the most ideological members of society are most resistant to framing effects. Druckman and Nelson (2003) found that conversations dealing with conflicting perspectives had a profound impact, often eliminating framing effects. Therefore, personal conversations are a mediating factor, dispelling many of the effects of issue framing.

Framing Research

There has been dramatic growth in communication studies focusing on framing. From 1976 to 1980, there were two articles indexed in Communication Abstracts utilizing the term "framing." From 1996 to 2000, that number increased to 76; and from 2001 to 2005, that number jumped to 165 articles (Weaver, 2007). Framing research has looked at issues including "social movements, bargaining behavior, foreign policy decision making, jury decision making, media effects, political psychology, public opinion and voting, campaigns, and many others" (Druckman, 2001, p. 226). Framing research also focuses on social issues and social movements, using experiments and survey results.

Iyengar (1990) found that episodic frames, when used in relation to the poor, led respondents to hold individuals responsible for their own plight. However, when the same issue was framed thematically, respondents were more likely to assign blame to society or the government. The author studied the way television news framed poverty as an issue. Respondents were shown television media clips of either thematic or episodic framing of poverty. In the episodic frame, poverty was covered as a personal issue, complete with individual examples of poor families. Surprisingly, the responsibility assignment was significantly higher when the individual was portrayed as a single mother, as opposed to a poor child or an unemployed male, and even more so when the individual was portrayed as

a single *black* mother. The thematic frame, on the other hand, did not include individuals, but rather depictions of public policy or general trends in poverty. In this case, the poor were not seen as being responsible for their situation or even for relieving it.

Utilizing the 1986 General Social Survey, Iyengar (1990) also found that cues contained within the family descriptions, depicting individuals as being somehow responsible for their plight, led respondents to award less monetary assistance. The survey included a vignette about an economically disadvantaged family with varying characteristics, followed by a question allowing the respondent to determine what the family's weekly salary should be.

In four experiments, Nelson and Kinder (1996) found that when issues are framed in a way that draws attention to the beneficiaries of policy, group sentiment increases. However, when frames deflect attention from the beneficiaries, the opposite occurs. These framing studies focused on the responsibility of the government versus the individual, demonstrating that group-centrism is related to how an issue is framed. The authors used four separate issues—government assistance to the poor, government spending on AIDS, preferential hiring of blacks, and Affirmative Action—to demonstrate how textual and visual frames affect public opinion.

Jacoby (2000) found that public support for government spending increases if the issue is presented through a specific issue frame. Utilizing the 1992 CPS National Election Study, the author demonstrated that specific issue frames can actually move public opinion, leading to greater public support for government spending initiatives.

Framing research can also lead to issues of voter behavior. Hetherington (1996) found that negative media portrayals of the economy during the 1992 election altered the

perceptions of voters. Even though the economy was stronger than in past elections, the negative framing of the economy led people to assess it negatively. Furthermore, the more voters were exposed to this frame, the worse their assessment was of the state of the economy. Increased media consumption swayed voters away from re-electing President George H. W. Bush.

Similarly, emphasis framing effects in media can result in varying understandings of a single event. In studying frames related to a Ku Klux Klan rally, Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) found that frames depicting the rally as a free speech issue led to greater tolerance of the event than those depicting the rally as a public safety issue. Differing media frames were shown to increase feelings of tolerance toward a hate group demonstration based on a focus on civil liberties.

Similarly, issue frames have been shown to affect public opinion and belief importance. In two experiments, Nelson and Oxley (1999) studied the effect of framing on belief content, belief importance, and issue opinion. The first experiment included a mock newspaper article about a land development controversy, stressing either an economic gain frame or an environmental risk frame. Frames were established by varying the photo, caption, and quotations within the article. The issue frames affected opinions toward the land development proposal as well as the importance attributed to environmental or economic beliefs. Finally, framing was also shown to have a limited effect on the “content of beliefs” about the economic or environmental impacts of the proposed land development (Nelson & Oxley, 1999, p. 1048). In other words, those who received the economic frame were more likely to support the land development proposal, and the economic implications were considered important to them in their decision-making.

However, Nelson and Oxley's (1999) second experiment yielded surprising results, demonstrating opposite effects on beliefs and belief importance. The second experiment looked at the issue of welfare reform—specifically, capping benefits for mothers who have more children while on welfare—using a “personal responsibility” frame and a “threat to children” frame to highlight each side of the issue (p. 1051). Again, framing affected belief importance, which had an effect on opinion. Surprisingly, however, framing in this case showed unexpected effects on belief importance. For example, respondents in the “threat to children” condition were less likely to believe that a cap would lead to a large number of children in poverty (p. 1053).

Research on framing has also looked at the impact on gender in media coverage, indicating that gender is often expressed in frames. For example, presidential election coverage over the past several years has included a gender frame, such as the “soccer mom” or the “angry white male” (Carroll, 1999). The “soccer mom” frame was created by political consultants and adopted by the media. This adoption narrowly defined women and their political interests. The media ignored many issues important to women during the 1996 election. Furthermore, the adoption of the “soccer mom” frame indicated that concern for their children took precedence over other concerns for women voters (Carroll, 1999).

Druckman and Nelson (2003) found that interpersonal communication with those holding differing views mitigates some framing effects. The authors studied framing effects in regard to campaign finance reform, with two competing frames centered around free speech versus limiting the power of special interests. They used a laboratory experiment encompassing a questionnaire and an article that included either a “free speech” frame or a

“special interest” frame (p. 733). Participants were also assigned a conversational condition: no discussion, mixed discussions (different participants read different articles), or unmixed (all participants read the same article). Their results showed strong framing effects for the “no discussion” group, but they also found that crosscutting discussions mitigated the effects. “Conversations that include conflicting perspectives (with people who received different frames) eliminate elite influence via framing ... [I]n the political world where people receive and then discuss elite information, conversations can limit elite influence—but only if those conversations involve cross-cutting groups or individuals exposed to alternative arguments” (p. 737).

When it serves their purposes, framers sometimes alter their master frames to change the focus of debate. Davies (1999) utilized interviews and various texts to develop a case study identifying two master frames related to the inclusion of religion in Canadian public education. In their effort to secure public funding for religious schools, Davies found, religious groups successfully transformed the master frame to move from one based on religion to one based on multiculturalism. In addition, the groups extended their frame to include school choice advocates.

Not all organizations are successful at translating their frame into media coverage. Perkins (2005) used qualitative methods to conduct a framing analysis of the NAACP’s public relations response to the 2000 presidential election. The analysis included comparing the NAACP’s messages posted on its websites with nearly 400 articles published in Florida and national media. The author identified five NAACP frames; however, these frames were rarely carried through to mainstream media.

Framing research has been conducted in a number of fields. In communication studies, this research includes looking at social issues, such as poverty, public assistance, voter behavior, and free speech. This dissertation looks specifically at framing in the context of a social uprising, similar in many ways to a social movement.

Social Movements and Framing

Framing effects have also been studied in connection with recent social movements. Actors in these movements are seen as active agents who engage in “collective action frames” aimed at mobilizing support and destabilizing opposition (Benford & Snow, 2000). Collective action frames are the products of framing activity, a “process-derived phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction” (Snow & Benford, 1992). They legitimize the actions of the group. In addition, collective action frames single out a social condition and define it as unjust (Snow & Benford, 1992). They identify the problem while also addressing the potential resolution.

Benford and Snow (2000) identified three framing tasks related to social movements. *Diagnostic framing* articulates the problem and who is to blame. For example, “injustice frames” that amplify the victimization of the group seeking support often define the actions of the “authority” as oppressive and identify who is to blame. *Prognostic framing* includes the “articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). However, counter groups may refute the solutions offered, known as *counterframing*. The final framing task is *motivational framing*. Motivational framing includes developing vocabularies of motive aimed at sustaining the movement.

The women's movement itself was open to a number of different frames, which could be considered motivational, producing different attitudes related to the movement. Many of the framing effects were stronger for men than for women. Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) identified five specific frames from the 1950s through the 1990s—including a sex role frame, a feminism frame, a political rights frame, an economic rights frame, and an anti-feminism frame—and their impact on attitudes of gender equality. Feminism and economic rights were the dominant frames, and each produced an unwillingness to support women's rights. The only frame that produced positive support for women's rights was the political rights frame. Furthermore, the authors found that men were more susceptible to these issue frames than women.

Frame Analysis and Social Movements

The framing process, specifically as it relates to collective action, includes the identification of a problem and assignment of blame or causality, internally or externally. Master frames "provide the interpretive medium through which collective actors associated with different movements within a cycle assign blame for the problem they are attempting to ameliorate" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 139). Furthermore, master frame codes can be *restricted* or *elaborated*. Restricted master frames offer a small range of definitions and interpretations. Elaborated master frames, on the other hand, include a wide range of flexible ideas, allowing a large number of groups to tap into the frame. The civil rights master frame is an example of an elaborated master frame. In addition, the frame is particularly powerful when it correlates with existing beliefs and myths (Snow & Benford, 1992).

Critiques of Framing Research

Framing research, particularly as it relates to the media, has come under attack for neglecting to study the link between frames and issues of power. Otherwise referred to as *hegemony*, this power includes “the dominance of a certain way of life and thought and ... the way in which that dominant concept of reality is diffused throughout public as well as private dimensions of social life” (Altheide, 1984, p. 477). Gamson et al. (1992) defined hegemonic discourse as uncontested, often unconscious social constructions that are accepted as the norm. Hegemony is learned through socialization and perpetuated through structures set up to maintain the status quo, allowing those in power to maintain their role in society (Len-Rios, Rogers, Thorson, & Yoon, 2005).

Often framing contests favor those who are in power: “A frame’s ability to dominate news discourse depends on complex factors, including its sponsor’s economic and cultural resources, its sponsor’s knowledge of journalistic practices, these practices themselves, and a frame’s resonance with broader political values” (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 216). In identifying political actors who are successful at framing, Sheaffer’s (2001) results indicated that journalists provide more positive coverage to those who represent the status quo than to those who are attempting to change the system. For example, women were represented less in both newspaper content and photos. In addition, women were shown more in “feminine” sections of the newspaper, whereas men were in more “masculine” sections. One exception to the inclusion of women, however, is that female reporters were more likely to rely on female sources (Len-Rios et al., 2005).

The sources that journalists rely on could also indicate hegemony. When covering political news, the media make extensive use of official sources, including government officials and campaign leadership. Official sources are often able to drive the framing

process by passing along status quo frames. Therefore, the media may be seen as passive conveyers of propaganda.

Altheide (1984), however, stressed the shortcomings of the hegemony perspective by refuting the three general claims of media hegemony: that journalistic socialization promotes dominant interests, that news reports are supportive of the status quo, and that international coverage is consistently pro-America and negative toward foreign countries. The author found evidence that journalists often report stories critical of the economic elite and are often agents of social change. Furthermore, Altheide (1984) disputed the idea that American journalists write overly negative stories about foreign nations.

Another criticism deals with the lasting effects of framing. Druckman and Nelson (2003) found that framing effects are short-lived. In the first, if not the only, study to examine the longevity of framing effects, the authors conducted a follow-up survey for their study of mitigating discussions 10 days after the original experiment. There was not significant movement in the direction of a framing effect. Furthermore, the “elite framing effect” disappeared. These results indicate that framing may be nothing more than a temporary episode, and that enduring attitudes ultimately return. However, further research indicated that these findings may have resulted from a failure to take into account prior attitudes that may reduce susceptibility to a frame (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Furthermore, as continuous reproductions of meaning, frames are inherently unstable. There are a number of constraints that determine the life of a frame, including cycles of protest, media processes, and hegemonic manipulations, all of which are exterior to the frame (Steinberg, 1998). Changing political cultures can delegitimize old frames and create space for new ones (Davies, 1999). Cultural shifts allow for new master frames.

In their discussion of frame alignment processes, Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986) identified the process of frame transformation, in which activities and events are redefined in an effort to gain new support or make the cause resonate better in the current political climate. One example of frame transformation is the women's movement, in which frames changed from self-blaming to system-blaming (Davies, 1999). Goffman (1974) referred to this process as *keying*, or "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (p. 44).

While studies may show an immediate impact from framing, they do not demonstrate how long this impact actually lasts. These framing effects may be nothing more than a temporary change of the subjects' opinion. The nature of the research may explain this lack of longevity, because most framing research centers around one-time case studies or real-time experiments, not prolonged and repeated exposure to the frame. The question of enduring framing effects needs to be explored further. Therefore, this dissertation studies the longevity of frames as they related to the 1967 Detroit uprising.

Why the 1967 Detroit Uprising?

The 1960s were a time of severe racial unrest in the United States. Racial tensions led to several uprisings in major American cities, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. In Detroit, the 1967 uprising devastated parts of the city, and its impact could still be seen 40 years later.

Following numerous uprisings throughout the country, including Detroit, President Lyndon Johnson commissioned a task force, referred to as the Kerner Commission, to study

racial uprisings. Included was a report on the impact of the news media, focusing on 955 television sequences and 3,779 newspaper articles. The Kerner Commission (1968) determined that 1) the media attempted to provide balanced coverage of the 1967 disorders, 2) the media exaggerated the scale and character of the uprising, and 3) the media failed to adequately cover the underlying causes of civil disorders and racial problems. Ultimately, however, the commission concluded, there was “a significant imbalance between what actually happened in our cities and what the newspaper, radio, and television coverage of the riots told us happened” (201).

This dissertation utilizes the media coverage surrounding the 1967 Detroit uprising to identify specific master frames related to the event. In addition, 2007 marked the 40th anniversary of the uprising, presenting a unique opportunity to study media coverage related to the anniversary, and determine any new or differing frames. As is evident in the following pages, little information is truly available on the longevity of frames, and the author found no scholarly research that demonstrated how frames may be altered decades after the event.

There are a number of benefits to studying this particular event. First, the event is well documented. There was extensive media coverage of the event in 1967, which was captured by the Kerner Commission and is now housed in the Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas. Along the same lines, the 40th anniversary of the uprising was covered extensively in Michigan’s daily newspapers, and included both media reports and public commentary. In addition, the inclusion of the Kerner Commission elevates the seriousness of the topic and presents a formal perspective to the uprising.

Finally, by looking at the uprising through a 40-year lens, this dissertation embarks on an area that has not been addressed in framing research: the long-term implications of framing and reframing an important and relevant event. This dissertation answers three main research questions:

- What are the dominant frames and subframes related to the 1967 uprising as they were presented in 1967 media texts?
- What are the frames associated with the 1967 uprising as they were presented in 2007 media texts?
- What are some possible explanations for the changes, or lack thereof, of dominant media frames as they were presented in 1967 and in 2007?

Methodology

This dissertation utilizes qualitative research to study media texts related to the 1967 Detroit uprising. People see things very differently, and their language is an example of this. Therefore, it is important to understand how language is used in the sense-making systems. Utilizing frame analysis, this dissertation gathered information about how the Detroit uprising was identified and communicated in 1967, as well as 40 years later. This research will give a glimpse of how those texts helped to frame the event.

The research questions required an in-depth reading of the text, a focus on associations between and among social actors, and inclusion of cultural similarities and differences over a 40-year span. Therefore, a qualitative analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method for this dissertation.

To accomplish a qualitative frame analysis, the author utilized Altheide's (1996) system of capturing and analyzing data. Altheide (1996) outlined an integrated approach

to analyzing documents. Called *ethnographic content analysis*, this approach bridges the gap between content analysis and qualitative methods. His approach is consistent with a multiple-document study, such as this dissertation, in which the investigator plays a central role, and is “also oriented to documenting and understanding the communication of meaning, as well as verifying theoretical relationships” (p. 16). This method allows for necessary flexibility. While predefined categories may guide the study initially, new ones are allowed to emerge throughout the process.

Following Altheide’s methodology, the author developed a protocol, or “a list of questions, items, categories, or variables that guide data collection from documents” (Altheide, 1996, p. 26). The protocol was refined as additional data were collected from a number of sources. For this dissertation, the protocol collected information, such as the title of the article, the date it appeared in print, and whether it was a straight article or an opinion piece. In addition, the author recorded all quoted sources, the general subject matter of the article, language pertaining to an “aggressor,” and descriptions of blame. Finally, the protocol recorded any framing devices, as well as the use of the words *riot* or *rebellion*.

Identifying Frames

Framing assumes a number of functions. “Fully developed frames typically perform four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion” (Entman, 2007, p. 164). This dissertation focused on framing as a method of moral judgment, in that it focused on the definitions of an event and their impact on blame assignment. Frames are identified by their ability to define the action in terms of who is to blame for an act and who is responsible for overcoming a problem. Language that suggests,

either overtly or subliminally, a victim, aggressor, winner, loser, manipulator, and/or manipulated can contribute to the frame. Therefore, the protocol relied heavily on the identification of any language that might suggest one of these categories.

Identification of frames began with a thorough reading of each article. In addition to the body of the articles, the author also analyzed the articles' captions and opening paragraphs, which allowed for special emphasis on the organizing ideas used to define the event as well as the focus of the article: that is, whether it focused on the "victims" or the "aggressors" as well as the problem or solution.

This initial reading allowed for the identification of recurring and repetitive framing devices. These devices led to the identification of two master frames: the riot frame and the rebellion frame. Embedded within each frame are cues related to problem identification and blame assignment. A riot frame focuses on the actions of individuals, suggesting that active participants are to blame for the event and responsible for overcoming the situation. The riot frame suggests that the actions of individuals are spontaneous and lack coordination. A rebellion frame focuses on social conditions, suggesting that blame assignment should be attributed to society in general, and a change in social conditions are required to overcome the event. The rebellion frame suggests that the actions of individuals are purposeful. It suggests a justification for behavior that otherwise would be seen as unacceptable in normal society. Ultimately, a "riot" is about destruction, while a "rebellion" is about improvement.

Gamson and Lasch (1983) identified devices that suggest frames within texts, including metaphors, exemplars, catch-phrases, visual images, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle. These devices (which are described below) were identified and were

included in the protocol. There are two parts to the metaphor: the principal subject and the associated subject. A metaphor highlights the principal subject by linking to an associated subject to create a better understanding. Exemplars, on the other hand, use real events from the past or present to frame a main issue. For example, interjecting the Vietnam War into the issue of the 1967 uprising is an example of an exemplar. Catch-phrases include a single theme statement, such as a tag-line, title, or slogan, that attempts to capture the frame: for example, in the case of the Iraq War, “If we don’t fight them there, we’ll fight them here.” Depictions are another form of utilizing catch-phrases, metaphors, or exemplars, or using a string of modifiers. For example, Vietnam War opponents were referred to as “Nervous Nellies” and “nattering nabobs of negativism” (Gamson, 1981). Visual images are icons and images that suggest the core of a frame package. Roots attempt to identify the causal dynamics of an event. In addition, consequences deal with the short- or long-term effects of an event. Finally, appeals to principle are moral appeals and general precepts, such as equality, that the frame addresses.

Data Collection

Data for this dissertation consist of local media coverage from the 1967 uprising, as well as local media coverage from the 40th anniversary of the uprising. As part of its report, the Kerner Commission (1968) collected and transcribed the media coverage in 15 cities, including Detroit, in the period of the disorder and the days immediately before and after. The media coverage collected by the Commission has since been housed at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas.

To collect newspaper articles from the 1967 Detroit uprising, the author traveled to the Johnson Presidential Library. Contained within the archives were files of original

articles related to the Detroit uprising, of which the author created digital photographs of each article. For the 2007 articles, the author purchased and maintained copies of each of the newspapers at the time that they were printed. By using original articles, the author was able to analyze the text, as well as photos, captions, and placement.

Sample

The sample consisted of 146 articles that appeared in *The Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press*, or the *Michigan Chronicle* within 30 days of the uprising. In addition, 41 articles from the same newspapers were identified that focused on the 40th anniversary in 2007.

Dissertation Outline

Including the current chapter, this dissertation has five chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 identify the master frames found within the coverage. The fourth chapter compares and contrasts the two master frames. Finally, chapter 5 includes a look at future research.

Chapter 2: The second chapter consists of a framing analysis of the media coverage from 1967. The chapter begins with an overview of the uprising itself, identifying the specific actions related to the uprising. In addition, the chapter includes examples of the language used to frame the event as a riot, and identifies the actors and language used to explain why the event took place. Finally, the chapter identifies the blame assignment reflected in the 1967 media coverage, and who was held ultimately responsible for overcoming the situation.

Chapter 3: The third chapter is devoted to master frames found within the 40th anniversary coverage. The chapter begins with an analysis of the transitioning of the master frame from a riot to a rebellion. In addition, the chapter identifies the causes of the

uprising as reflected in the media coverage. Finally, the chapter includes language related to the impact of the uprising on the region 40 years later.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter compares and contrasts the frames identified in the previous two chapters as having been used during 1967 and 2007. This chapter reiterates the frames and outlines how the frames have transformed over the last 40 years. Finally, the chapter identifies why there are differences in the frames.

Chapter 5: Finally, chapter 5 is a concluding chapter that wraps the previous chapters together in a coherent, big-picture view of framing and the 1967 Detroit uprising. It begins by restating the research questions and demonstrates how the coverage in 1967 and 2007 answers each question. The chapter also describes the transition of coverage and how that may explain a transition in framing as well. In addition, this chapter identifies potential next steps in this study of framing and offers suggestions for future research in this field.

CHAPTER 2 "THE MODEL CITY 'RIOT'"

In the early, sultry morning hours of Sunday, July 23, 1967, the Detroit Police Department conducted a series of raids on illegal after-hours drinking and gambling establishments, otherwise known as "blind pigs." In one instance, an African American police officer in plain clothes gained entry into a second-floor establishment located above a vacant print shop. The patrolman, Charles Henry, claimed he purchased a beer for 50 cents. Within minutes, Detroit police raided the United Community and Civic League at the corner of 12th Street and Clairmount, using a sledgehammer to break through a glass door and arresting the 85 people inside. While all were arrested, only three would end up being charged with a crime.

This blind pig was unusually packed that morning because the African American patrons were celebrating the return of two servicemen from Vietnam. Because of a locked back door, police were forced to bring all of the inhabitants, about half of whom were women, out through the front, where they waited for nearly an hour to load all of the arrested patrons into wagons (Fine, 1989). At the time, there were a number of people in the street, some of whom claimed to have seen the police mishandling prisoners.

At around 5 a.m., a large crowd began to amass at the scene. As the last wagon was leaving, a stone was thrown through the rear window of a police car. In the hope that tempers would calm down without an obvious police presence, all additional cars were ordered to withdraw from the area. Soon afterward, fires were reported; within an hour, there were thousands of people on 12th Street, and a full-blown disorder ensued. Within 24 hours, 800 state police officers and 1,200 National Guardsmen joined the Detroit police, with an additional 8,000 Guardsmen on their way (Kerner Commission, 1968, p. 53). By

the time the uprising was under control four days later, 43 people were dead, 4,853 were arrested, 477 buildings were burned, and property damage estimates were at \$500 million (Pannill, 1967b; Dewey & Hansen, 1967).

Initially, the role of the police in the beginning hours of the uprising was called into question. The *Free Press* questioned why so few police officers were assigned to the “disturbance on 12th Street” and why they stood by and watched “Negro rowdies” smash windows and loot stores, until a minor occurrence turned into a major event (“As We See It: Collision,” 1967). A *Free Press* photo showed police officers staring down the street at a crowd. The photo included a caption, “Police cower before riot’s start” (“As We See It: Collision,” 1967). Less than two weeks after the event, the *Free Press* questioned the “wisdom” of the raid itself. An extensive article highlighted the events of that fateful evening, including several quotes from Bill Scott, the host of the alleged blind pig, who disputed that the party was an illegal gathering. “The wisdom of the raid is, of course, suspect in light of the climate of Negro violence that had been sweeping the country and the fact that Twelfth St. is one of the most volatile Negro streets in Detroit,” said the *Free Press* (Serrin, 1967). However, as the days turned into weeks, speculation arose that the actions of authorities, both before and after the event, were a primary cause of the uprising and a reason for the length of the deadly event.

While there had been a number of similar events throughout the country in the few years preceding it, the Detroit uprising was most notable for its use of federal troops to restore law and order. Article IV, Section 4, of the United States Constitution states that “the United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the

Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.” The section is implemented by the United States Code Chapter 15 of Title 10, which covers the use of enforcement of the laws to restore public order. Specifically, 10 U.S.C. 331 states,

Whenever there is an insurrection in any State against its government, the President may, upon the request of its legislature or of its governor if the legislature cannot be convened, call into Federal service such of the militia of the other States, in the number requested by that State, and use such of the armed forces, as he considers necessary to suppress the insurrection.

There are three prerequisites for the use of federal troops in a state. First, a situation of serious domestic violence must exist. Second, the state’s resources, such as police and National Guard, must be deemed inadequate for quelling the violence. Finally, the legislature or the governor must make a request to the president to employ the armed forces. Prior to the 1967 Detroit uprising, states had requested the use of federal assistance in suppressing domestic violence 15 times since 1838. In an unusual twist of fate, the last time that federal troops had been used to quell an uprising was during the 1943 Detroit race riot.

Detroit’s newspapers indicated that one day after the outbreak of violence in the city of Detroit, Michigan’s governor began seeking federal assistance. However, it would take more than 24 hours before federal troops were actually deployed onto the Detroit streets (Fine, 1967, p. 203). Through the media and speeches, Governor George Romney insisted that he had formally requested troops Monday morning at 2 a.m. The Johnson administration, however, publicly countered that Romney did not officially request troops until 10:56 a.m., nearly nine hours later. Regardless, troops did not actually hit the streets

until the following day. Paratroopers waited more than 11 hours at Selfridge Air Force Base before being committed to “riot duty” (Joyce, 1967).

The arrival of the National Guard in 1967 was delayed because of confusion over whether troops were needed and what the law required for their deployment. However, when they did finally hit the streets, their presence was followed by an increase in violence. The behavior, training, and leadership of the nearly all-white Guard would soon be called into question (Fine, 1967).

In addition, the uprising initially fell under a media blackout intended to keep additional participants from coming to the scene. Detroit radio stations maintained a moratorium on covering the uprising until Sunday afternoon. A Canadian television station filed the first television report of the event, and the first newspaper report of the incident occurred at 8:15 p.m. on Sunday, July 23 (Fine, 1967). Many were told to avoid the area but were not told why they should do so. For example, 24,000 spectators attending a Detroit Tigers game that Sunday were simply informed via the public announcement system at Tiger Stadium that they should avoid the 12th Street area. However, while much of the white community was oblivious to the trouble, residents in the African American community were quickly learning of the uprising through rumors and word of mouth (Schmidt, 1967).

The following is an analysis of the media frames of the 1967 uprising. Specifically, this chapter analyzes the media coverage that took place in the 30 days following the event. Three newspapers were included in the analysis: Detroit’s two daily newspapers, the *Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News*; and the weekly African American paper, the *Michigan Chronicle*.

“Riot” Language

The uprising was referred to primarily as a “riot” throughout the coverage. However, at times, the media used more colorful, creative words to describe the event. The uprising was described as a “rampage” (Dewey & Hansen, 1967), an “insurrection” (Gebert, 1967), and a “Negro outbreak” (Blonston, 1967). In addition, the Detroit event was called the “worst rioting in the nation’s history” (“If It Can Happen in Detroit,” 1967) and the “Holocaust in Detroit” (Putnam, 1967). The city of Detroit itself was referred to as “a carnival atmosphere” (Gallagher, 1967) and a “riot torn ghetto” (Gebert, 1967). The location of the outbreak was described as “a street that was raped and bloodied by hatred, madness and discontent” (Holmes, 1967). The *Michigan Chronicle* called the uprising “the eruption of a cancerous sore” (“Don’t Look Past,” 1967) and “the city’s worst racial outbreak since 1943” (Watkins, 1967).

At the time of the Detroit uprising, the United States was embroiled in the Vietnam War. From the very beginning of the coverage, the uprising was linked to images of the war. *The Detroit News* quickly labeled the uprising as a “guerilla war,” stating, “Backed by tanks and armored personnel carriers, National Guardsmen and police last night and early today fought a house-to-house war on 12th Street. The scene was incredible. It was as though the Viet Cong had infiltrated the riot-blackened streets” (Lowell, 1967). *The News* also included vivid descriptions of the 12th Street area: for example, “Negro snipers turned a 169-square block area north of West Grand Boulevard into a bloody battlefield last night” (“Tanks, Troops,” 1967). In his “report to the people,” Romney said, “unless we take the proper course, this nation in years ahead could be plunged into civil guerilla warfare”

(Muller, 1967a). The *Michigan Chronicle* described the “crackling sounds of exploding materials as the area took on the appearance of a burned out war zone” (Gilliam, 1967).

Who Took Part in the Uprising?

The Detroit newspapers included descriptions of the uprising’s participants. In addition to the vivid descriptions of the scene, the papers often described the participants by their actions. Whether they were described as rioters, looters, or snipers, the one thing that was presented as fact was that they were most likely black.

Blacks were clearly described as the aggressors in the uprising. At times, the media referred to the event as the “Negro riots” (“U.S. Can Fight Reds and Riots,” 1967) or “Negro rioting” (“General Says Guard Told,” 1967). On the Wednesday following the uprising, the *Detroit News* article titled “Tanks, Troops Battle Snipers on West Side; 12 More Die” described “negro snipers” (1967). However, it is unclear how the paper was able to conclude that the “snipers” were black. In addition, newspapers also targeted young black men as aggressors: “It was profoundly shocking to note the role of Negro youth in the riot areas. While all ages participated in the looting, it was primarily our youth who opened the way with their methodical window breaking. And it was our young who were mainly responsible for the vandalism and the fires” (“If It Can Happen in Detroit,” 1967).

Similarly, the *Michigan Chronicle* clearly laid blame at the feet of the “hoodlums” who would engage in looting, arson, and sniping. The *Chronicle*, however, pointed out that lawlessness was integrated, in that both whites and blacks took part, celebrating the idea that Detroit was unique in racial assimilation. “There is, perhaps, a strange source of pride in the fact that only in Detroit could such integrated lawlessness take place.” In another article, the *Chronicle* indicated, “All through the inner heart of the city looters, both Negro

and white, continued to wreak havoc, undeterred by the blazing light of day” (Watkins, 1967).

While many “rioters” were described in terms of their race, only a few were described by their socioeconomic class. One reporter for the *Michigan Chronicle* detailed his experience of watching a man in a shiny, new Cadillac pull up in front of a looted store. “The driver emerged from his Caddy, stepped through the broken windows and shortly came out with two bottles of liquor. He calmly got back into his Caddy and drove on North to Blaine and then turned East, as if nothing had ever happened” (Cowans, 1967).

The Targets

While blacks were cast in the role of “villain,” the riot frame lacked a true “hero” in the narrative. However, a specific target of the uprising did emerge through the coverage. Local newspapers often portrayed white business owners as the victims of the uprising. In one instance, this group was highlighted not only as victims, but as targets. NBC’s Bill Matney questioned Mayor Jerome Cavanagh on *Meet the Press*, which was covered by the *Detroit Free Press*. During the interview, Matney claimed that white business owners were clearly the intended victims of the uprising, stating, “There was almost pinpoint accuracy in the fire-bombing throughout the city. It is very obvious that vengeance and the wrath was directed at the white businessmen. And in walking the streets of the riot area, I’ve been told time and time again, ‘Whitey, don’t come back, we don’t want you in here’”(“Cavanagh Text,” 1967).

The *Detroit Free Press* also covered others who believed white business owners were targeted. For example, fire department officials indicated that white-owned businesses seemed to be the focus of the arsonists. According to Fire Chief Charles Quinlan,

the fires did not appear to be organized; however, there was a “preference” for white-operated businesses, particularly those that used credit. Negro-operated businesses that burned “were attributed to fires that started elsewhere and spread” (Meyer, 1967a). In addition, the *Free Press* indicated grocery stores, furniture stores, and corner buildings seemed to be a particular target. Twelfth Street saw 65 fires over 19 blocks. Most buildings destroyed were family homes. However, among the businesses set ablaze were 19 furniture stores, 47 grocery stores, and 17 warehouses. “Surprisingly, only two loan offices and five liquor stores were involved in fires” (“Fire Department Lists Damage,” 1967).

The Detroit News, in an editorial, also insinuated that whites were the primary target of the uprising. *The News* praised both the mayor and the governor for warning against a possible “white backlash” (“Mayor, Governor Warn,” 1967). This indicates not only that whites were victims of the riot, but that they were now in a position to avenge their wrong. “The warnings were well taken in view of the fact some extremists—and people like Gov. Ronald Reagan who ought to know better—see the rioters only as ‘mad dogs and lawbreakers’” (“Mayor, Governor Warn,” 1967).

The *Michigan Chronicle* coverage partly portrayed business owners as victims as well. They, however, followed black-owned businesses. In an article titled “‘Soul Brother’ signs worked—for a while,” the newspaper chronicled the story of Carl Perry, a black proprietor who owned a drug store and a photography studio. Mr. Perry was busy in his drugstore making signs that said “soul brother.” The signs were an attempt to label those businesses that were black-owned, in an effort to keep the arsonists and looters from attacking those businesses. At the time, it seemed to be working. The drugstore was

virtually untouched. According to Perry, “As far as I can see or hear, the looters are not out to get the Negro yet” (Griffin, 1967). Unfortunately, the sign did not last long. The business next door was soon on fire, and within hours, Mr. Perry’s drugstore was demolished. An article that appeared in the same paper stated that Negro-owned businesses were generally saved, although some burned when neighboring businesses caught fire (“Suburbs Feeling,” 1967).

The Four Categories of Death

Similar to descriptions of the actors and targets, the papers also included detailed descriptions of those who died during the uprising. As in the descriptors above, most of those who died as a result of the uprising were identified as either “rioters,” “looters,” or “snipers.” Each title included a negative value judgment of active involvement in the uprising and, in many cases, an indication that these individuals’ actions had caused their own deaths. Each fatality was assigned a number indicating the rotation in which they died relative to others. In addition, descriptions often included those who performed the act of killing. Four categories emerged to describe uprising deaths: perpetrators intentionally killed by authorities, perpetrators inadvertently killed by authorities, innocent people accidentally killed by authorities, and innocent people killed by perpetrators.

An example of the first category—perpetrators intentionally killed by authorities—was Roy Banks. Authorities shot Banks, a black man in his late 40s, on July 25. According to one article, Banks was shot in the groin and knees after police and National Guardsmen went to the Mack and Rohns area to investigate looting. Detectives told the papers that Banks was ordered to halt but kept running. After he was shot, Banks was found in an alley, where detectives claim he crawled after being hit by bullets (“43rd Victim,” 1967).

In another example, Palmer Gray Jr. was described as a sniper who resisted arrest. *The Detroit News* reported that Gray was a “suspected sniper” who was arguing with three women in an apartment on Kirby. According to the article, police were called “when he threatened them with a rifle” (“Riot Ending,” 1967). In another report, *The Detroit News* highlighted two men who were shot to death by National Guardsmen after authorities claimed a “direct attack on a fire department” (“Tanks, Troops,” 1967). According to *The News*, the men were occupants in a car that opened fire on Guardsmen at a command post, after police ordered the men out of the car.

In some cases, the newspapers reported the death as inadvertent but did not blame the authorities. For example, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, Ernest Roquemore, 19, was shot and killed as paratroopers were chasing another man, who they claimed had a gun. “Roquemore raced into the line of fire and was fatally hit” (Dewey & Hansen, 1967). The *Free Press* followed up the story the next day with a similar account of Roquemore’s death. The updated report also detailed three teens wounded during the same event. The updated article indicated that police found narcotics at the house. “It was just a hangout for a bunch of people who stole,” said Inspector Albert Schwaller (“Youth Is Killed,” 1967).

The third category includes innocent people killed by authorities. While the newspapers described most of those who died in the uprising as looters or rioters killed by the authorities, a few of the deceased were described as victims of circumstance. One such victim was four-year-old Tonya Lynn Blanding, who was shot to death as she slept on the floor of her apartment with nine other children. According to the papers, someone lit a cigarette inside the apartment and police, who were reportedly looking for a sniper in the area, opened a “fusillade of bullets” (Aumente, 1967).

The coverage of this death was one of the few instances that included the African American perspective. For example, the Rev. Albert Cleage, pastor of Central United Church of God, presided over the funeral, which was covered by *The Detroit News*. According to the paper, Cleage laid the blame for the incident squarely at the feet of the Detroit Police Department. “The child was not taken because God had decided the time had come. This child was taken because of the brutality and the stupidity of the Detroit Police Department,” said Cleage (Aumente, 1967). The funeral served as a rallying cry for many. “Don’t think it was the police, but the whole system. It is destroying us bit by bit. We’re not going to stand it any longer. We’re going to build a world for little black children,” said Cleage (Aumente, 1967). Interestingly, the article’s author chose to include the observation that young men wearing Black Nationalist hats served as ushers. The National Guard issued a statement on August 8 regarding Blanding’s death, acknowledging that Sgt. Mortimer Leblanc of the 46th Infantry Division fired a machine gun into the apartment building after seeing a flash (Barkan, 1967).

Finally, the fourth category identified seemingly innocent people who were killed by looters or snipers. These descriptions included an Armenian immigrant defending his store and a white woman visiting the area for work. In each case, the papers described these victims in terms of their perceived weakness in the face of violence. Each death garnered full-length articles, which framed the individuals as focused on their future, only to have that future cut short by violence.

Krikor Messerlian, an Armenian immigrant who owned a shoe repair store, was the 37th victim. The Detroit papers chose to report Messerlian in terms of his small stature, compared to the menacing nature of those accused of his death. “Messerlian, who escaped

the Turkish massacres in his native Armenia, did not escape the violence that erupted in his adopted country” (Weston, 1967). According to the article, “Gangs of Negroes surged up his street, looting and burning,” when he was dragged from his store and beaten with baseball bats. According to some witnesses quoted in the article, Messerlian, who was under 5 feet tall and weighed less than 100 pounds, may have pulled a saber and stabbed one of the “mob” (Weston, 1967).

Mrs. Helen Hall from Oakdale, Connecticut, was reportedly killed by a sniper’s bullet around 12:45 a.m. Wednesday, while standing at her hotel window. According to the article, she was watching “a grim fight between snipers and law officers . . . in Detroit’s New Center area” (Green, 1967). The Detroit newspapers painted Hall in terms of her maternal traits, indicating that the mother of three was in town on a business trip.

The *Michigan Chronicle* covered some of the deaths in much the same way, except that, where the *Free Press* and *The News* were likely to mention the fatalities’ race when they were black, the *Chronicle* mentioned race when the deceased was white. For example, on July 29, Watkins (2007) reported, “At press time, there were eight reported deaths, including one fire death, a white rooftop sniper slain by a Guardsman, a white looter slain by a store-owner, and a young Hamtramck woman shot as she and her husband rode through a Negro district late Sunday night.” The article also highlighted some of those who received serious injuries, all of whom received bullet wounds.

Detroit Was the Last Place This Should Happen

At the same time that Detroit’s papers were focused on who was involved, they also were exploring the “causes” of an uprising in the city of Detroit. It was the opinion of many, as reported in the Detroit newspapers, that this uprising was more than a local

phenomenon. Because of its “model city” reputation, it was widely reported that Detroit was the last place that an uprising should happen. Detroit was considered by many to be a model for the country, particularly when it came to race relations. Therefore, according to a number of opinion leaders quoted in the media, the simple answers that could explain riots in other areas of the country were less applicable to Detroit. The “model city” explanation appeared in both the daily newspapers, as well as the weekly *Michigan Chronicle*, and was quoted by political and civic leaders in both the white and black communities.

For example, in an opinion article that appeared just days after the uprising, the *Free Press* stated that blacks in Detroit were uniquely integrated into the city’s leadership. “Negroes here, unlike negroes in many other places across the country, form part of the so-called power structure. They hold important jobs in business and industry and within the labor movement. They help run the city’s progressive, racially enlightened government” (“As We See It: Collision,” 1967). Five days later, the *Detroit Free Press* opined that this position may have led to the event, claiming that the Detroit uprising was possibly a “revolution of rising expectations . . . that the Negro looters drove shiny cars to smash store fronts and carted away color TV sets gives some support to this theory” (“As We See It: Detroit’s Riot Demands,” 1967).

The *Michigan Chronicle* also adopted the idea that Detroit was supposed to be different from other cities in which uprisings had taken place. In a July 29, 1967, article, the *Michigan Chronicle* asked, “Why Detroit?” (“If It Can Happen,” 1967). As the *Michigan Chronicle* surmised, “The one certain fact is that if it could happen here it can happen anywhere” (“If It Can Happen,” 1967).

The News and the *Free Press* also quoted local leaders who repeated the claim that Detroit was supposed to be immune from rioting. They claimed instead that the uprising was more an expression of national sentiments than a shortcoming in Detroit itself. For example, on July 31, 1967, the *Detroit Free Press* chose to reprint the text of Mayor Cavanagh's appearance on *Meet the Press*. The first question posed was, "Why? Why Detroit?" ("Cavanagh Text," 1967). Cavanagh posited that the Detroit event was part of a national malady, and Detroit was simply a matter of geography: "I think Detroit, by anyone's standards, has done at least all the textbook things in relation to dealing with some of these urban problems, and still it broke out. So it indicates to me that it was more than just a local problem" ("Cavanagh Text," 1967).

Governor Romney echoed these sentiments in his televised speech, which was covered by the Detroit papers. According to Romney, in a Sunday night speech to Michigan, "The riot in Detroit was not caused just by events and circumstances in Detroit. It was caused more by national conditions than Detroit conditions, although we could and should have done much more on our own to prevent it" ("Text of Romney Speech," 1967). Like Cavanagh, Romney was quoted indicating that the Detroit uprising was simply a condition of a larger, national phenomenon. "What happened in Detroit could start in most big cities," said Romney (Muller, 1967a).

The Militant Black

To back up the claim that the Detroit uprising was part of a national phenomenon, Detroit papers began to report on a possible orchestration by outside agitators. The militant black comprised a small subset of blacks thought to be particularly violent and threatening to white society. In Detroit, it was the opinion of some, and highlighted by

media coverage, that outsiders, in the form of the militant black, came into the city specifically to engage in rioting behavior and stir locals into action. Soon, media coverage began questioning whether the uprising would have happened or been as severe without the inclusion of these outside influences. For example, in one editorial, the *Free Press* stated, “How much this philosophy of militancy, this preaching of violence, contributed to Detroit’s riot is, of course, difficult to assess . . . but in our view it did contribute, it did serve to feed the fires as surely as gasoline fed the fires and helped to turn what might have been a minor disturbance into the nation’s worst riot in history” (“As We See It: Collision,” 1967).

According to newspaper reports, two people in particular were symbolic of the militant black: Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced “snick”). Ralph McGill (1967) wrote an article claiming that radical groups, primarily SNCC and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), organized the sniping during Detroit’s uprising. This assertion was partially based on “excerpts from a document prepared for the instruction of members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee” as well as “reliable informers” (McGill, 1967). According to McGill (1967), “There is now evidence that the sniping against police, firemen and individuals was organized. It primarily was directed at firemen and police, secondly against individuals.” The article insinuated that this group should be feared, not just by whites, but by many blacks as well, because SNCC was after not only whites but also middle-class blacks. Further, the article implied that as a radical, revolutionary group, SNCC was a threat to society itself.

According to *The Detroit News*, even the international press laid blame at the feet of militant blacks. In an article outlining international coverage of the Detroit uprising, *The*

Detroit News quoted a number of overseas sources. Among them, *Le Figaro* of Paris claimed that the rioting followed plans created by Black Power leaders, warning that “extremism by the blacks carries very serious risks of giving white racists new arguments in affirming their opposition to any kind of integration” (“Riots Make World Headlines,” 1967). *The Detroit News* also cited an article from the Philippine newspaper *Manila Times*, which indicated that the Black Power leaders demonstrated an increasingly sharp temper.

In addition to the local and international media, the Detroit papers also quoted national opinion leaders who raised questions about the extent of involvement among militant blacks. According to the papers, in his charge to the Kerner Commission (referred to as “Johnson’s commission on riots” in the *Free Press*), President Johnson told the commission that he wanted to know “to what extent, if any, there has been planning and organization in any of the riots” (“President’s Panel Begins,” 1967). However, Otto Kerner, the chair of the Kerner Commission, seemed to dispel the idea rather quickly. During a visit to Detroit, Kerner was quoted in the *Free Press* as saying, “I can see no organization behind the outbreaks around the country, but that doesn’t mean it might not develop. However at this point I have no evidence of organization” (“LBJ’s Riot Panel,” 1967). However, the same papers noted that Kerner and two members of his commission met with several black leaders in Detroit, but “absent from the meeting were leaders of Detroit’s militant Negro bloc” (“LBJ’s Riot Panel,” 1967). The *Detroit Free Press* indicated that black leaders also raised questions about the role of the militant black. The papers quoted national black leaders Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, who expressed concern that all Negroes were being blamed for the actions of “a militant minority” (Goldman, 1967).

The Detroit papers quoted other state and national figures discussing the role of outsiders in the uprising. For example, in one article, Governor Romney deviated from a foreign policy speech to say that riot agitators should be prosecuted “under the laws of treason” (Muller, 1967b). Romney specifically named Stokely Carmichael during the speech. The article also notes that the chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities voted to investigate the role of “subversive groups in racial rioting.” The article quoted its chairman, Edwin Willias (D-La), stating “certain subversive elements have been involved in some of these riots and in creation of racial unrest generally” (“Black Power Leaders,” 1967).

Militant groups continued to receive blame at the national level. In the days following the Detroit uprising, the papers covered the work of Congress in passing a series of resolutions calling for investigations into the nation’s uprisings. Under one proposal submitted by Congressman Gerald Ford of Michigan, a “12-man bipartisan committee, with six members from each chamber, would be ‘expected to find out whether the riots of the past four summers were a result of a conspiracy of Communist subversion, and whether federal, state and local law enforcement agencies are adequate to the task of controlling them’” (Ludvigsen, 1967a).

In his speech to Michigan, Romney was quoted by the papers as mentioning extremists on both ends of the racial spectrum. In speaking about whites, Romney said, “Some white people and public officials will advocate the return to states rights as a way to legalize segregation. White extremist organizations are preaching hate and arming” (“Text of Romney Speech,” 1967). However, while he mentioned the whites as preaching hate and

arming, it was the angry black male doing the same that was painted as dangerous and organized. For example, the Detroit papers covered Romney stating,

More and more Negroes are listening to and supporting Negro leaders who advocate a separate black society in America. These militant, revolutionists are preaching hate, violence and rebellion. Furthermore, they are organizing on a national basis, and they are arming for that purpose. We should not ignore these grave facts. (“Text of Romney Speech,” 1967; Muller, 1967a).

The Detroit News shared in the concern that radical groups were organized, and questioned whether their actions would lead to a white backlash. “There will be more demands for a crack-down—and not just on the looters, arsonists and murderers—so long as extremists such as those in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Snick), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and other radical groups call for a Negro revolution in this country” (“Mayor, Governor Warn,” 1967). The same op-ed piece states that these extremist groups call on members to infiltrate the government, attack public services, and “exterminate” the “black traitors” as they see fit: “The outline of such a program lends credence to the belief that at least some of the looting, pillaging and sniping in Detroit and elsewhere was planned and organized in advance. The repetition of the pattern of violence in city after city supports the theory. Coincidence couldn’t account for the similarity of the rioters’ actions” (“Mayor, Governor Warn,” 1967).

The only reported interview with someone who claimed to be a “shooter” (the man reportedly objected to the term *sniper* because it was a “white man’s word”) seemed to suggest that the rioting was an organized effort. *Detroit Free Press* writer Gene Goltz met a black man named Frank on the first day of the uprising. A few days later, Frank introduced Goltz to a “shooter” named Eddie. Goltz (1967) interviewed both men as they sat with their guns on their laps and a shortwave radio nearby to monitor the police. Both men claimed

to have seen two friends killed by the police. Eddie admitted to shooting at police and firemen throughout the uprising, while polishing off 24 pints of whisky with his fellow “shooters.” He claimed the empty bottles were then used as Molotov cocktails.

“This has been in the making for a little while. It just didn’t start on sight. This was an out-of-town doings. You might have noticed there was a quite a few people from out of town around here on Sunday,” said Eddie (Goltz, 1967). Eddie, who said he was in the area at the outbreak, claimed to be one of the local organizers. After they “had kicked off the disturbance the rioters put their plan into action,” moving from 12th to Grand River, where they “looted and ignited more stores and when they felt the police were following them to Grand River, they doubled back to Twelfth and repeated the process” (Goltz, 1967). According to the article, the specific purpose of the rioting was to burn every “whitey” store to the ground. Then, when firemen arrived to put out the fires, the sniping began in earnest (Goltz, 1967).

The men claimed that snipers would sleep all day and stay up all night. However, Eddie could not or would not answer certain questions, such as what national group was involved in the planning, and where the money came from to purchase weapons. Regardless, the article took these individuals at their word, and reported the information provided as fact. It would appear, however, that the credibility of the sources could have, and should have, been called into question.

Others mentioned in local papers were quick to point fingers at organized black groups and offered seemingly superficial suggestions for overcoming such forces. In perhaps the most bizarre example, the *Free Press* covered the “sermon” of Dr. William Joseph Bryan, a visiting medical doctor and the editor of the national *Journal of the*

American Institute of Hypnosis, who claimed that “professional agitators” were responsible for riots. During his remarks at the Dearborn Baptist Temple, Dr. Bryan claimed that mechanisms, such as playing the national anthem or creating a spontaneous street dance, could be used to capture and then divert the rioters’ attention. “Telling angry citizens who have had their emotions stirred up by professional agitators that they cannot express these feelings and must disperse and go home is merely clamping a lid on a boiling tea kettle,” said Dr. Bryan. “In controlling riots, we must consider how they are caused. . . . They are caused by professional agitators who hypnotize the people with incendiary speeches and repetitive stimuli until the multitude is persuaded. Therefore, to stop a riot, you must first gain the rioters’ attention. This can be accomplished by playing the national anthem, a well-known religious hymn, or other attention getter. When the mobs’ attention is captured, one must quickly divert the mob to an acceptable method of letting off steam” (“An MD’s Sermon,” 1967).

Caught in the Moment

While the “militant black” theory may have explained the actions of those who took part in sniping and similar activities, it did not necessarily explain the actions of thousands of people accused of looting. In the days and weeks following the uprising, the Detroit papers transformed the “looter” from active participant to one who was simply caught up in the moment. Unfortunately, rather than seeking out those who admitted to taking part, the papers often relied on official sources to identify these actors and explain their actions. In the August 2 edition of *The Detroit News*, journalist John Gallagher (1967) asked the question, “Who were the looters during last week’s rioting?” Using Recorder’s Court testimony from some of the 4,000 who had been arrested during the uprising, a “composite

picture” began to emerge. They were described as everyday citizens who were simply caught in the moment. Similarly, Mayor Cavanagh was quoted as describing the participants as everyday folks. During an interview on *Meet the Press*, and reported in the Detroit papers, Cavanagh said, “Many of the looters [were] mothers and fathers with 7- and 8-year-old children walking along in . . . sort of a carnival-like spirit, gathering up groceries and shoes and things like that” (“Cavanagh Text,” 1967).

The Detroit News gave examples of those who had appeared in hearings to determine whether there was enough evidence to justify a trial. Three of the examples included young, black men who were accused of stealing and yet were by all accounts upstanding members of society. Each was looking at up to five years in jail if convicted. One young, black woman, a mother of six, was also charged with looting a local market. While the article identifies each by name, the reporter does not quote any of them, instead relying on the comments of judges and the prosecutor to explain the behavior of participants.

Using similar methods, the papers began to paint a picture of participants who were simply caught up in the excitement of the event, with no real intent prior to the uprising. Official sources, including Judges Colombo, Olson, Maher, and Gillis, and Wayne County Prosecutor William Cahalan, described those who were being adjudicated as everyday citizens. “Strangely enough, most of them are decent citizens with good jobs who apparently got caught up in the heat of the riot and decided to take advantage of the circumstances,” said Judge Robert J. Colombo (Gallagher, 1967). Judge Olsen said, “It’s difficult to understand what made these people act the way they did. I believe they just got caught up in the heat of events and ran wild” (Gallagher, 1967). “The terrible shame of it is

the fact that most of these people were law-abiding citizens with no record. Most had jobs and were leading normal lives. Now they face possible jail sentences,” said Traffic Judge Richard Maher, who filled in at the Recorder’s Court. The article deemed that the temptation of “an open store window” and the knowledge that the police were occupied with greater issues was too much to pass up for many (Gallagher, 1967). The assumption, of course, was that these individuals would not have taken part in these activities had the uprising never happened.

While reporters were not likely to speak with those who took part in the uprising, the *Detroit Free Press* did partner with a local organization to survey those in the community. The *Free Press* reported on an extensive “survey of attitudes in the riot area” sponsored by the Detroit Urban League (Meyer, 1967e). Black interviewers spent time in the community speaking with those who were first-hand witnesses to the uprising.

Based on the responses of 437 interviews with black citizens, the *Free Press* reported that the rioters comprised mostly a minority of residents who held negative opinions of white attitudes. The survey responses showed that only 12 percent admitted to taking part in the uprising. According to the paper, this was consistent with other riots in America, where only approximately 10 to 15 percent of the Negro community actively participated (Meyer, 1967b).

According to the *Detroit Free Press*, participants were a small percentage of the total black population, tended to be young, and lacked a “stake in society” (“As We See It: Frustration, Alienation,” 1967). In addition, rioters were three times as likely to have been born in the North as the South. They were as educated as non-rioters and made the same amount of money. However, unemployment was slightly higher for rioters than for non-

rioters. In essence, according to the *Free Press*, “Younger negroes seeing success all about them want it faster than they’ve been getting it. These are Northern negroes, native Detroiters, alienated to some extent from both Negroes and whites whom they consider to have made it” (“As We See It: Frustration, Alienation,” 1967).

Social Conditions

While the papers indicated that participants were likely caught in the heat of the moment, they also acknowledged that existing conditions could explain the level of anger expressed through the uprising. Several newspaper articles included societal issues and racial or economic inequities as a likely cause of the uprising. However, the *Chronicle* indicated that whites were just now realizing what the black community already understood. In writing for the paper, Schmidt (1967) indicated social conditions for blacks were a cause of the uprising. However, many whites did not understand the plight of blacks. Schmidt, a non-black reporter for the *Chronicle*, indicated that most blacks learned of the uprising via rumors and a community communication chain. It took whites, on the other hand, much longer to hear of the violence because of the lack of early press reports. Whites were ignorant of the uprising, much as they were ignorant of the conditions in which blacks lived: “Rumors trampled early press reports in the inner-city, but the white community was isolated from the knowledge of the scope of the problem until much later, just as the white community had been insulated from the knowledge of the scope of the problems all their lives, knowledge which might have given them answers before now, to their repeated, ‘Why? What do they want?’” (Schmidt, 1967).

In its quest to answer the question “Why Detroit,” the *Free Press* looked to their extensive survey of African Americans in Detroit. Coverage of the survey indicated that a

small number of people with specific complaints and expectations executed the uprising. The *Free Press* survey of blacks in Detroit “indicate[d] that one of the keys to whether a Negro will join a riot is what changes he expects in white attitudes over the next few years” (Meyer, 1967e). Those who believed white attitudes would get worse were three times more likely to be rioters. As Meyer (1967e) pointed out,

As the survey has revealed, the riot was not something that had to happen. The grievances that led to it were real, but they did not create a tension so great that it could be released in no other way. It was a temporary displacement of the existing codes of social behavior with the code of a deviant minority within a law-abiding Negro community. . . . The problems are not so great that people of good will of both races cannot keep the deviants under control while working to wipe out the irritating remnants of racial discrimination.

Furthermore, the paper suggested that while the rioters were protesting against society in general, they were also challenging “prevailing negro social standards” (Meyer, 1967b). Unlike the rioters, the paper stated, most Negroes seek solutions within the established social structure, “rather than the revolutionary ideology of black nationalism” (Meyer, 1967b).

The survey also found that most blacks thought that they were better off than those in other Northern cities, in terms of education, jobs, and income. Yet, 84 percent of “Detroit Negroes” believed that a riot “like the one that began a month ago” could happen again. That number jumped to 94 percent among those who told the interviewers that they took part in the riot (Meyer, 1967e). “They know we mean business now. . . . They’ll do better. If they don’t, this could happen again,” said a 31-year-old West side resident (Meyer, 1967e). Among those who did not take part in the uprising, the majority (81 percent) thought the police should have been firmer once the event began, “though it seems inconsistent with

the belief among Negroes that police brutality was the leading cause of the riot” (Meyer, 1967e).

Blacks Isolated from Society

Social issues included the alienation of blacks. The uprising’s cause was at times associated with the lack of opportunities for blacks, leaving many to feel that they had no stake in society. As a result, it was suggested that blacks’ disassociation with traditional society stemmed from social inequities. For example, the *Free Press* highlighted factors that may have contributed to the uprising, including unemployment, education, and housing. Unemployment among blacks in the city of Detroit was twice as high as that among whites. “So, jobless Negroes need jobs. They need training for jobs and education so they can benefit from training and get better jobs. Inner-city housing, excellent in some Negro neighborhoods, is wretched in others. It must be improved. Negroes, feeling excluded and alienated, need to belong to society” (1967, “As We See It: Collision”).

The *Michigan Chronicle* said that the answers could be found in a lack of understanding and communication. While the paper indicated a possibility of “a national black power conspiracy,” they were more concerned about the nameless blacks who felt “left behind, by both their leadership and middle class blacks, between the haves and have nots” (“If It Can Happen,” 1967). According to *The Detroit News*, even international papers claimed that poor conditions were a root cause of the violence. According to the Paris paper *L’humanite* (as cited in *The Detroit News*), “the deep causes of the revolts breaking out today are the intolerable conditions of life in which the blacks live—parked in the ghettos of the big cities of the United States” (“Riots Make World Headlines,” 1967).

The *Free Press* also opined that many Negroes were still not a part of integrated society. "Amid general economic prosperity, many Negroes continue to live in abject poverty. As the nation moves into the era of the college graduate, too many Negroes try to enter the labor market with only an eighth grade education or less. This is the stuff on which radical elements feed" ("As We See It: Detroit's Riot Demands," 1967). In addition, the *Detroit Free Press* partially blamed the uprising on an attitude of permissiveness in society: "a parental and individual permissiveness and an official permissiveness that has left a slackness, a fuzzing of responsibilities. It's become, almost, an existentialist philosophy which allows each man to decide for himself what's right and what's wrong" ("As We See It: Collision," 1967).

On August 17, *The Detroit News* reported that Lt. Gov. Milliken indicated that false federal promises to the poor, including those related to education, employment, and housing, helped contribute to rioting. "We cannot, any longer, disillusion the poor through great pronouncements of massive federal programs that subsequently are only partially funded, partially enacted. This is the stuff of which riots are made" ("False Promises," 1967).

In fact, poverty, as well as a lack of policies related to poverty, was a consistent theme among many editorials and articles. As one stated, the riots sweeping the nation's cities were "rooted in deep frustrations but have many similarities to a revolution of rising expectations" ("As We See It: Frustration, Alienation," 1967). *The Detroit News* stated,

The American Negro has fallen tantalizingly short of full opportunity. The gains he has made have encouraged hope and therefore intensified frustration. Minor irritants then touch off irrational reactions. What is needed is faster escape from grinding, infuriating poverty; more jobs, more and better education; better housing, with a chance to move freely into white neighborhoods when one can afford it; and something to do on a hot summer night other than liquor up in bars and roam the

streets in gangs. Because progress in these goals has slowed in recent years, extremists and black racists have begun to displace moderates as leaders of the civil rights movement. (Frye, 1967)

Societal blame assignment lends to a societal responsibility for overcoming the situation. At times, the Detroit newspapers mentioned societal fixes that could alleviate the conditions that might lead to a riot, beginning with everyone's working together. As the *Free Press* indicated, "The total community, dedicated to a better society, can achieve a better society" ("As We See It: Collision," 1967).

In addition, the *Free Press* reported that Romney offered a number of recommendations in his speech, including full integration of public schools, open housing laws, low-cost housing, and an end to restrictions on job opportunities for Negroes (Pannill, 1967a). "Romney recommended 'personal involvement' in the race problem. He urged greater educational opportunity for the underprivileged, equal job opportunities for the Negro, open housing on a statewide basis, the provision of low-cost housing through nonprofit organizations" (Muller, 1967a). The *Free Press* (Pannill, 1967a) also covered Romney's televised speech, which was delivered in Michigan on Sunday, July 30, 1967. During the speech, Romney offered a number of "causes of the Detroit riot," including "economic progress largely of those 'who have organized the greatest amount of private power.'"

Martin Luther King Jr. was quoted as saying that poverty and unemployment could be tied directly to the nation's riots. In an article that appeared in *The Detroit News*, King called on President Johnson to create a national full-employment agency as a means of preventing riots. "Every single outbreak without exception has substantially been subscribed to gross unemployment, particularly among young people. In most cities,

unemployment of Negro youth is greater than the unemployment level of the depression '30s" (Nelson, 1967). He also questioned whether every uprising should be considered a riot. "Too many people tend to confuse riots with demonstrations" (Nelson, 1967).

Similarly, in an op-ed article, Bishop Richard S. Emrich opined that a lack of access to private property ownership left many blacks feeling alienated. In this article, the bishop contended that private owners were wronged by the rioting. "For most people their property rights are clearly part of their human rights. So we must have sympathy for those persons whose human rights were assaulted in the recent riots as their houses were burned or their stores looted" (Emrich, 1967). However, blacks have also been wronged in a system that prevents them access to the benefits of ownership. According to Emrich, property owners strive for law and order, learn patriotism, and develop a sense of responsibility, as well as a desire to pass their possessions along to their children. But above all, ownership of private property is essential to freedom in that it limits the government's power over the individual. Being locked out of this basic element of freedom leads to a lack of respect for the traditions of law and order. "If private property is a blessing, it must be true that the absence of it is a curse. And this truth opens up to us the deepest underlying cause of the sickness of our cities. If private property gives us freedom, dignity and the desire for law and order, what will be the attitude of people who are locked hopelessly in a rat-infested slum?" (Emrich, 1967). Emrich acknowledged and agreed that blacks should simply work for their ownership. However, he continued, "The plain fact is that Negroes did work for generations as slaves and harder than their white masters. Lincoln saw this clearly, calling it 'unrequited toil.' And the fact is that Negroes are

ghettoed, poorer as a group, with a higher percent of unemployment, many of them living in miserable slums, simply because they are Negroes” (Emrich, 1967).

The *Michigan Chronicle* agreed that social inequities created resentment. In covering a meeting of community leaders gathered to discuss how the community could quell the looting and burning, the *Michigan Chronicle* quoted a member of the faith community saying, “This looting does not represent the general citizenry of this district. It reflects the resentment and unrest where there is poor housing and no education” (Gilliam, 1967). However, in the quest for civil rights, the *Michigan Chronicle* said, there must be a better way than by rioting (Cowans, 1967).

As a result of their social treatment, the uprising’s participants were described as being outside of traditional society. For example, the *Detroit Free Press* cited Mayor Cavanagh defining the rioters in terms of “us” and “them.” “They” were not bound by the same rules as the rest of us. “Basically, we were confronted with thousands of people that felt alienated from our society, that proposed to take the law into their own hands and violate the law, that weren’t bound by any of the precepts that you and I understand, which constitute regular law and order in this country” (“Cavanagh Text,” 1967). Cavanagh continued, “There are people that are outside of our society—not just the white society but the society in which most of the Negroes and most of the whites belong. And given the slightest provocation—in many instances no provocation is needed—the law is taken into their own hands. You can characterize it as protest: you can characterize it as resentment. They have been properly classified as the ‘have-nots’” (“Cavanagh Text,” 1967).

Police Brutality

Unemployment, lack of education, and poverty all received attention. However, there was one “social” ill that was considered by many black and white citizens as a primary cause of the uprising. This (mostly white) subgroup was law enforcement, namely the Detroit police and National Guardsmen. In the black community, rumors of police brutality during the raid began to circulate. The *Michigan Chronicle* said that rumors indicated that both black and white officers were brutally beating those arrested during the raid. One of the rumors included police beating a pregnant woman. However, a police officer denied the rumors, blaming the rumors started when a woman in custody stuck her head out of a police car and yelled, “Brutality” (Gilliam, 1967).

The idea that the police might be mistreating citizens during the uprising was not a surprise to many who thought their mistreatment of citizens was a norm. In their survey of blacks in the 12th Street area several weeks after the event, the *Detroit Free Press* indicated that black respondents overwhelmingly blamed the uprising on “police brutality” (“As We See It: Frustration, Alienation,” 1967). However, in reporting on the results, the *Free Press* indicated that police brutality could mean many different things, and began to define what it meant for blacks in Detroit. According to the paper, for many African Americans, brutality included not just physical altercations, but a lack of respect for the black community (Meyer, 1967d).

In describing what they believed blacks meant by police brutality, the *Free Press* stated, “By police brutality, the Negro means something apart from beatings by policemen and those rioters who were interviewed even listed insulting treatment by policemen ahead of beatings in their chart of complaints. By insulting treatment they include such

innocuous things as a friendly policeman's waving to a white man and not waving to a Negro man. They include the failure of Detroit's police department to give Negroes as much protection as they think Negroes ought to have" ("As We See It, Frustration, Alienation," 1967).

In a subsequent article, the *Free Press* compared these results with other areas affected by similar events. "On the surface, this looks bad for the police. Compared to data in the UCLA study of the Watts riot, it looks relatively good. In that study, twice as many Negroes, 79 percent of the men and 64 percent of the women—accused police of insulting, disrespectful behavior. Thirty-four percent of the men and 13 percent of the women said it had happened to them" (Meyer, 1967d). Furthermore, 82 percent of blacks taking part in the Detroit survey believed that police brutality was a cause of the riot, even though most of them did not report ever being the victim of police malfeasance. Age was a factor in this response. Young African Americans were most likely to report that they had experienced brutality first-hand. Nearly three-fourths of the people who said they had been mistreated were under age 35 (Meyer, 1967d).

By including the descriptions of brutality, comparisons to Watts, and age, the *Free Press* may have been diminishing the impact of police brutality as a cause. To further exemplify this, the paper emphasized that most blacks did not admit to being the victims of police abuse, indicating that the trigger event was not significant. "The fact that a majority of Negroes in the survey did not respond affirmatively to any of the specific complaints suggests that it was mainly coincidence that caused the riot to be sparked by a police incident—a chance coming together of combustible ingredients" (Meyer, 1967d).

In a significantly less scientific survey, Mayor Cavanagh and Senator Philip Hart toured the scene and asked those on the street their thoughts on the uprising. Most were trying to answer that question themselves, to no avail. One person, however, claimed the blame lay squarely with the police. Cecil McIntosh, a meat-store owner whose business was destroyed, said, "You want to know why? Because the people on 12th street couldn't do anything without the police bothering them. They just got mad" (Falbaum, 1967).

While the actions of the police and National Guard were called into question before and during the raid, it was their behavior during the several-day uprising that received the majority of coverage. However, it is interesting to note that, contrary to their coverage of the "looters," the newspapers were much more respectful in their coverage of the police. When describing potential abuses by the police, the newspapers were careful to use qualifying words, such as "alleged." For example, Mollison (1967) covered a meeting held by Congressman John Conyers, in which members of the community outlined what they said was a litany of complaints against the police. Mollison was careful in how he described the complaints brought before Conyers. The article began, "An unofficial investigation began Saturday into alleged abuses by police and public officials during the riot, including at least one reported case of police arson" (Mollison, 1967). Additional complaints covered during the meeting included police mistreatment, such as using force, entering without warrants, drinking beer on the job, robbing citizens, and committing arson and murder. Essentially, Conyers accused a "few vindictive policemen" of taking the law into their own hands (Mollison, 1967). Police Commissioner Ray Girardin was quoted as retorting, "Never in any revolution, if this be one, have the rights of those involved been so protected. If there are charges of misconduct, we want specific charges and we will investigate and take

whatever action is necessary” (Mollison, 1967). Girardin would get his wish. An August 4 article in the *Free Press* claimed that over 200 complaints of police brutality during the uprising were received by investigating agencies, including the NAACP, ACLU, and Conyers’s office; and over half of them had been forwarded to the Justice Department and FBI for investigation.

Similarly, *The Detroit News* carried an article about five white citizens who charged the police with brutality. The article seemed to give unique credibility to the individuals, who lived in an “all white building” and were “engaging in protecting themselves from Negro marauders from the surrounding neighborhood” (R. A. Popa, 1967). The article mentioned that four men and a girl (later described as an 18-year-old female) were arrested after police raided an apartment building looking for suspected snipers. The five accused the police of beatings, indignities, and theft. While the five were held in jail for 32 hours, they were eventually released without any charges or explanations.

In the weeks following the event, the police and National Guard as a whole were lambasted for their lack of training and ineptness during the uprising. Within a week of the outbreak, city officials began questioning the riot training of National Guardsmen. One aide to the mayor stated, “They are gutsy guys . . . but they have no more training for this kind of situation than a good troop of Boy Scouts” (Roberts, 1967).

By August 24, both the National Guard and the police were accused of being inept and inadequately trained. *The Detroit News* criticized the National Guard for its incompetence and “trigger happy” mentality (“The Guard’s ‘Empty Guns,’” 1967). However, while the article insists that citizens’ rights were clearly violated, it also suggests that

consideration must be given “in times of such confusion and panic as gripped our city for three days in July” (“The Guard’s ‘Empty Guns,’” 1967).

The newspapers covered General William Throckmorton’s testimony before Congress, in which he stated that he ordered troops to remove their ammunition from their weapons in order to prevent innocent deaths. “I was confronted with a bunch of trigger-happy, nervous soldiers in the National Guard,” Throckmorton said (Ludvigsen, 1967b). In another interview, Throckmorton made similar statements, saying, “I was confronted with a bunch of trigger-happy nervous soldiers, and I had no intention of having innocent women and children killed by indiscriminant firing” (“Guard Defied,” 1967). Throckmorton’s deputy, Maj. Gen. Charles Stone, backed up the claim, indicating that rather than following normal procedure for a sniper, such as taking cover and rooting out the sniper, he saw Michigan National Guard members fire wildly at streetlights and over passing cars (“Guard Defied,” 1967). Subsequent inquiries revealed that 90 percent of members of the Michigan National Guard ignored orders to unload their weapons.

The Algiers Motel Incident

One such incident became a symbol of brutality by authorities during the uprising and was covered extensively by the *Free Press* and *The Detroit News*. The Algiers Motel incident became one of the most pronounced instances of brutality, and ultimately became a symbol of the uprising. Three fatalities were initially reported as snipers who had died during a gunfight with authorities. According to an initial report, “Three unidentified Negro youths were killed by police in the Manor House Annex, behind the Algiers Motel, Woodward and Virginia Park. The police were responding to a report of sniper fire coming from the building” (“Tanks, Troops,” 1967). Aubrey Pollard, a 19-year-old black male; Carl

Cooper, a 17-year-old black teen; and Fred Temple, an 18-year-old black male had been found dead inside the Manor House Annex, a three-story converted house adjacent to the Algiers Motel.

A rumor campaign began within the black residents of the victim's neighborhood. The newspapers began to take notice, and soon the Algiers event would become synonymous with overzealous action on the part of authorities. "A reporter's first inclination was to distrust it, dismiss it as little more than one of the hundreds of rumors born of the riot's confusion" (Stanton, 1967); however, the papers noted that no weapons had been found with the bodies, thus calling into question the official report that the deceased were snipers, and raising additional questions about the incident.

The *Detroit Free Press* began an independent investigation of the Algiers Motel incident. In a lengthy article, which appeared on July 31, 1967, the *Free Press* reported its conclusions, which included the fact that the three were killed at close range and were most likely lying down or kneeling at the time (Stanton, 1967). In addition, the paper delved into the lives of the three youths, choosing to include their employment status and whether they had any history with the justice system.

On Monday, July 31, the *Free Press* included three diagrams depicting the scene ("Riot's Newest Mystery," 1967). The first diagram showed the layout of the Manor House Annex, a three-story house that was an annex to the Algiers Motel. The diagram showed the bodies of Pollard and Temple in apartment 3A, and blood stains between the beds. Cooper's body was shown lying in apartment 2, with a bullet hole above the closet. The second diagram was a hand drawing of the room in which Cooper's body was found. The drawing included a lifelike figure of a male body lying face-down on the floor between the

bed and door. A chair was found near the body, and a bullet hole was shown in the wall above the closet door. The bathroom door was also shown hanging off its hinges, with the words “bathroom door off hinge” written on the door.

The third drawing was similar to the previous depiction, showing the bodies of Pollard and Temple. Each body was shown lying face-down on the floor. One body was at the foot of the bed, and the second was found between the bed and the wall. There were also bloodstains between the room’s two beds. Finally, bullet holes were shown low on the wall, right above one of the bodies.

The *Free Press* also located witnesses who were in the Algiers Motel annex on that fateful evening. These witnesses claimed that men in uniform beat them and threatened them with death. One such witness was Karen Malloy, an 18-year-old white female who said that she and a friend were staying at the hotel to visit friends. Malloy said that Cooper had been firing a starter’s pistol filled with blanks in the annex, and apparently the police mistook it for sniper fire. According to Malloy’s statement to the *Free Press*, when witnesses told the uniformed officers about the starter’s pistol, they replied, “Why didn’t you tell us that before we killed the other guy?” (“Witness Story in Motel Case,” 1967). The statement continues with one officer reportedly saying, “Some of our guys are dying and we’re going to kill a nigger” (“Witness Story in Motel Case,” 1967). Similarly, Robert Greene, a witness located by *The Detroit News*, said in a sworn statement that an officer told him, “I’ve been wanting to kill me a nigger for a long time” (Strickland, 1967a). Greene said the black officers in the “raiding party” did not attempt to prevent “cold blooded murder.” At the same time, white members of the group “screamed racial oaths at us” (Strickland, 1967a).

The Detroit papers quickly began to report the incident as a homicide. On July 31, *The Detroit News* also included a story of the Algiers Motel event, with the headline, "Guardman Murdered 2 Youths During Riot, Witness Charges" (Strickland, 1967a). By August 1, the *Free Press* was referring to the incident as an "apparent execution" (Luedtke, 1967). In another article, the *Free Press* reported, "It was apparent from the first report of the Algiers affair that this was not just another death of a sniper or two" ("Key Witness Located," 1967).

The *Free Press* reported that three Detroit policemen were being questioned in the deaths. Robert Greene, a former paratrooper and Vietnam veteran, was in the motel on that fateful night, and told homicide detectives that he saw a warrant officer take two of the victims to a room in the motel followed by shots fired (Strickland, 1967b). Greene was tracked down by Joseph Strickland, a black reporter with *The Detroit News*. After several conversations with Greene, *The Detroit News* decided to charter a plane, and flew Assistant Prosecutor Jesse Eggleton and Detective Charles Schlachter, along with Strickland, to Kentucky to interview Greene ("Key Witness Located," 1967).

According to the Detroit papers, prosecutors eventually brought conspiracy charges against two Detroit policemen and added conspiracy charges against Melvin Dismukes, a 24-year-old private guard. Wayne County Prosecutor William Cahalan said, "The evidence is strong that a pattern of criminality was pursued" ("2 Policemen, Guard Named," 1967). One of the officers, patrolman Avid Senak, was also being investigated for two additional "riot shootings." The other, Robert Paille, was facing murder charges in the death of Temple, but was freed after a court examination showed "no evidence" linking him to the crime. Patrolman Ronald August, who faced first-degree murder charges for the slaying of

Pollard, was free on a \$5,000 bond. Senak and Dismukes were released on personal bonds, a stark contrast to the heavy bonds set for alleged rioters. No one was charged with the murder of Cooper (“2 Policemen, Guard Named,” 1967).

What began as a rumor among the black community quickly turned into a prominent example of police brutality. Based on the conflicting evidence and questions related to the manner of death of three young men, the Algiers Motel incident became emblematic of a larger social condition faced by many of the city’s black residents. However, this did not translate into blame assignment.

Blame Assignment

Even though the coverage demonstrated recognition of social problems, society itself did not receive the “blame” for the uprising. Consistent with the “riot frame,” the majority of the blame was placed on individuals rather than a group. In addition, regardless of the recognition of social inequities and police brutality, the “looters,” “snipers,” and “arsonists” received the largest blame. Because it was generally accepted that these actors were black, the ultimate blame for the uprising rested with blacks. Blame was assigned to whites, but only for their lack of recognition of societal conditions. In fact, whites in general, and white business owners specifically, were considered the victims of the uprising.

Despite the recognition of their prior status in society, blacks received, by far, the largest share of “blame” for the uprising. This was true not just of coverage by the two daily papers, but of the *Chronicle’s* coverage as well. In general, the uprising was described as a “negro outbreak” (Blonston, 1967), perpetuated by “negro snipers” (“Tanks, Troops,” 1967) who may have been operating under the direction of militant blacks. Street-level

photos of the uprising often showed mobs of black faces amid a backdrop of burning buildings. Coverage of those who died during the uprising often included descriptions of their race alongside descriptors of their actions. Media consumers were bombarded with articles questioning the actions and mentality of the black community, as portrayed by whites. Ultimately, the papers included a portrayal of “us” versus “them.”

In addition, political leaders were often quoted as describing the uprising in terms of black violence. Daniel P. Moynihan, a former federal official and reputed expert on city slums, testified before a Senate government operations subcommittee. He was quoted as stating that a large, disorganized, and frustrated Negro lower class meant that violence was possible. Further, he went on to say that federal responses were inadequate, if not irresponsible, in that they rewarded violence. “That’s so stupid,” Moynihan said, “thinking that the government is dealing with a rational, orderly people. These (rioters) are different people and we made them that way” (Feldkamp, 1967).

The *Michigan Chronicle* also indicated that the black community should look internally for some of the blame. In an editorial that ran on the front-page days following the uprising, the *Chronicle* noted, “A crowd gathered around what would have been a routine roundup. The rumors began spreading. Hoodlums, irresponsible people looking for an excuse, let go. Suddenly, this great, model city of ours became one of chaos and confusion. Many of us thought we were in a dream. Looking around us for someone to blame, we fail to blame ourselves” (“Don’t Look Past Yourself,” 1967). The editorial cited feelings of discontent and despair among those in the community and the lack of action among leaders. “There are the fiddlers among us who knew that all of this was happening. And yet we fiddled. Now we have to dance to a tune which has been jointly composed by

most of us” (“Don’t Look Past Yourself,” 1967). The article laid the blame on blacks who were in a position to make changes, yet were too busy looking out for their own interests. “Here is where our leadership failed. They just were too busy taking care of themselves. They failed to reach back and help that little fellow” (“Don’t Look Past Yourself,” 1967). Ultimately, the community was “diseased” by deep-seated discontent and “pent up lawlessness,” which led to “the eruption of a cancerous sore, a sore that has diseased the innards of our town” (“Don’t Look Past Yourself,” 1967).

Do Whites Share in the Responsibility?

Whites, in general, did not receive blame assignment during the 1967 coverage. In fact, the only time that whites were even remotely questioned was in their blindness to the societal conditions that bred hostility and resentment. This was primarily focused in Governor Romney’s address. “Romney did say that white society had ‘failed’ both to recognize the urgency of ending social injustice and to support ‘responsible’ Negro leadership” (Pannill, 1967a). In his speech to Michigan, Romney mentioned extremists on both ends of the racial spectrum (“Text of Romney Speech,” 1967).

The *Michigan Chronicle* indicated that whites were oblivious to the conditions of the inner-city blacks. Yet, the white community was clearly asking “Why?” in the hours and days following the uprising. One non-black writer for the *Chronicle* outlined the smug responses she encountered from her white neighbors. One white neighbor gloated, “Let them have the goddam city. I hear they’re burning down Woodward now. Those stores won’t rebuild, a lot of them will be glad to get their insurance and move to Northland, if they can collect” (Schmidt, 1967).

While the *Chronicle* didn't specifically blame whites for the uprising, the paper did mention recent instances that might have contributed to the overall feeling of discontent among blacks. Fueled by "rumors," the black community had been speculating for weeks about the shooting death of Vivian Williams. According to police, Williams, a prostitute, had been shot by two black youths, but rumors indicated that she had actually been shot by a plain-clothes white police officer. This, coupled with the community outcry over the murder of a black man and the beating of his pregnant wife at a local park, meant the situation was ripe for action (Gilliam, 1967).

Who Is Responsible for Fixing the Problem?

Generally, a "riot" frame would indicate that those who took part in the uprising would be the ones responsible for overcoming its aftermath. However, coverage related to assignment of responsibility for overcoming the event was not focused on the participants, per se. Instead, this coverage can be described as a combination of two separate elements. One called for "everyone" to come together and work to overcome social ills. The other focused on specific public policy aimed at doing the same.

According to the Detroit papers, national leaders suggested that the remedy lay with all individuals' taking responsibility. For example, *The Detroit News* agreed with President Johnson's assessment that "it is the responsible Negro citizens who hope most fervently—and need most urgently—to share in America's growth and in America's prosperity. This is no time to turn away from that goal. To reach it will require more than laws and much more than dollars. It will take dedication and better understanding in the heart of every citizen" ("LBJ on Urban Riots," 1967). The media also repeated the idea that all hands were needed on deck: "The social problem is so big, broad and demanding that it must be

attacked on many fronts. Perhaps the first requirement is that all of us make a commitment to do our part to see that the necessary programs get under way” (“Mayor, Governor Warn,” 1967).

In addition, Vice President Hubert Humphrey told a Detroit audience that it was every American’s responsibility to improve the situation. “Now is the time when every American—black, white, rich, poor, North, South—must stand up and be counted for the kind of country he believes in” (Morgenthaler, 1967). This included restoring law and order, rooting out the conditions that had led to slums in America, and helping communities take advantage of programs designed to improve the conditions of the impoverished. Humphrey likened the establishment of safe communities to that of previous occurrences of Americans coming together. “Our commitment to the building of free, safe and just communities must be no less than the commitment we have made in the past to the military defense of our country, to the exploration of outer space, to the rebuilding of a devastated Western Europe after World War II” (Morgenthaler, 1967). A few weeks following the uprising, Romney concurred that it was individuals, not government, who needed to overcome the uprising. “Only the concerted effort of aroused people can provide the program we need. . . . It won’t be done by government. It means working person-to-person to establish communication with the hopeless” (Muller, 1967b).

While officials indicated that individuals were needed to restore peace, these same officials were quoted as tying social programs to the plan. Humphrey said present government programs were building blocks to eliminate slums, but they required full funding. He called on Congress to enact additional legislation aimed at crime control and eliminating slums. “But even all these programs—given full funding—will be only

shovelfull of sand on a forest fire if they are not carried through and administered with energy and imagination. . . . The problems of American today are so big—so complex—that all our governmental and private resources must be brought to bear upon them, in the most efficient way possible,” said Humphrey (Morgenthauer, 1967).

In a letter to the House Speaker that was described in *The Detroit News*, State Rep. David S. Holmes called on the legislature to enact a number of measures to improve “Negro-police relations” financed by the state, if necessary. Holmes called for educational improvements, including smaller class sizes, additional vocational programs, and enhanced Head Start. He also called for fair housing laws and employment opportunities for residents of the “riot-torn” areas, so that they could help in the rebuilding (O’Leary, 1967). But, perhaps most controversial, Holmes called on Detroit police to stop carrying firearms and, at the same time, said the city should contract with residents to create a citizen-led auxiliary police force: “All it would take now is a trigger-happy white policeman shooting a Negro, even in self defense, and you would have a tiger by the tail. With auxiliary police people would be a part of their own law enforcement. This would be citizens controlling citizens and you would not need firearms. You don’t want to enforce law at the butt of a gun,” wrote Holmes (O’Leary, 1967). In essence, enhanced social programs were tied to principals, including equality, full employment, a commitment to urban cities, and respect for law and order.

In addition to a major attitude change, social programs were requested to help those who wanted a job to get one. Mayor Cavanagh declared that the federal government should provide full employment for its citizens. While the government should not guarantee a job, it should at least offer the opportunity for one. In essence, the U.S. government should be

the “employer of last resort” (“Cavanagh Text,” 1967). At the same time, highlighting the declining financial situation in both the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan, the *Detroit Free Press* called on the nation to make America’s cities a top priority: “There must be a new national commitment to save the nation’s cities for what Detroit shows is that they are in jeopardy.”

In the opinion pages, the *Free Press* opined that blacks were to blame for the event, but indicated that the causes were greater than greed (“As We See It: Detroit’s Riot Demands,” 1967). “That so many Negroes could participate in so destructive a riot in Detroit exposes what the nation realized to be a problem but exposes it in a wholly new dimension. The problem is far greater than Detroit realized. It is far greater than the nation realized. The programs which Detroit and the nation have adopted to aid the Negroes and the less fortunate appear now only to have scratched the surface of ground which needs to be ploughed deep” (“As We See It: Detroit’s Riot Demands,” 1967). A story about Martin Luther King Jr. urged more jobs to quell riots: “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., his fading nonviolent movement overshadowed by Negro violence and the black power movement, urges creation of a national full employment agency as a means of preventing riots” (Nelson, 1967).

Conclusion

It can be argued that the 1967 Detroit uprising was triggered by the simple purchase of a 50-cent glass of beer. But it ended with the destruction of a city, the deaths of 43 people, and \$500 million in damage. News coverage of the uprising was nonexistent for the first day. However, when the Detroit papers began to cover the event, their coverage helped create a master frame, labeling the event as a “riot,” assigning blame to elements of

the city's black community and outside agitators, and calling for a unified approach to overcome the uprising's aftermath.

However, there were two exceptions to the use of the word "riot." The word "rebellion" was used by *The News* or the *Free Press* twice in describing the events related to Detroit. In one instance, the word was used as a metaphor of national infighting. Quinn Tamm, executive director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, compared massive rioting to a "rebellion against the country" (Oberdorfer, 1967). The other reference was made by Rep. David S. Holmes, a Detroit Democrat, who said, "Rather than calling the recent trouble a 'civil disturbance,' it should be called a 'rebellion against the established power structure'" (O'Leary, 1967). Tamm and Holmes may not have realized it at the time, but their transition of the dominant frame would become much more prevalent 40 years after the event.

At times, Detroit was labeled as the last place that an uprising of this magnitude should have taken place, while others were quick to point fingers. Blame assignment was primarily laid at the feet of blacks, but other groups, such as the police and National Guard, were also accused of wrongdoing. However, while causes of the uprising included social inequities, this did not necessarily translate into societal blame assignment. The event was framed as a riot, as reflected in the language of the media coverage. However, it is evident that even in 1967, the frame was unstable and open to a reframing of the event.

CHAPTER 3 “THE ROAD FROM RIOT TO REBELLION”

The 2007 coverage of the 40th anniversary often referred to the uprising as a “riot”; descriptions of cause and effect, however, more closely reflected a “rebellion” frame. Much of the coverage focused on racial issues and the role that such tensions played in the uprising and its lingering effects. In addition, two competing elements of the frame were found in the coverage. The first difference was in the description of the event itself, the causes of the event, and the actors. The second element identified the current-day impact of the uprising on the region and its people.

The use of the word “riot” continued 40 years after the uprising. For example, Dzwonkowski (2007) called it the “riot to end all riots,” while others called it “the most deadly and costly riot in modern U.S. history” (“The Story Behind the Riot,” 2007). However, others referred to the event in terms of civil unrest (Lee & Nichols, 2007; Rodriguez, 2007c), civil disturbance (Rodriguez, 2007a), or “America’s bloodiest civil disturbance of the 1960s (Rodriguez, 2007b). At times, it was as though the reporters did not know how to describe the event. McGraw (2007) used the following words: “1967 riot/rebellion/insurrection/civil disturbance.” Ultimately, it was “the darkest moment in Detroit history” (Henderson, 2007).

While the use of the word “riot” continued to be prevalent in 2007, the coverage reflected an active metamorphosis of the frame. At times, the media reports of the incident seemed to be torn between riot and rebellion. For example, Frank Joyce’s commentary “Rise High Above Riot” began with the following statement: “Can we ever get past the trauma that the 1967 riot—or rebellion—still inflicts?” (Joyce, 2007). For others, their perceptions of the event evolved over the years. In an editorial, Alicia Nails indicated that she was 10 years old at the time of the uprising. At the time, she knew the event as a “riot.” She wrote, however, that she

had since come to see the event as a rebellion, where masses of people took to the street in a sort of protest, risking all to claim a voice: “I know it was part riot, without reason. But I’ve since learned that, at its core, it was rebellion. That word gives context. It tells on the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Unless you believe in lawless, urban hordes that are also suicidal, then the way people risked bullets to vent in the streets proves there was more at stake than loot” (Nails, 2007).

The Detroit newspapers acknowledged the dichotomy that existed between the two words, and the significance of each. One 2007 article stressed the importance of these two little words: “The terms are cognitive shorthand, framing the issues connected with a pivotal time in Detroit’s history—an event that fueled the continuation of white flight and corporate disinvestment, and helped create the most segregated region in the nation” (Rodriguez, 2007a). In essence, each word packs tremendous meaning, which affects how one may see the event, who is to blame, and who or what is ultimately responsible for overcoming the aftermath.

Coverage of the 40th anniversary indicated that, for those who saw the event as a rebellion, the cause was often related to the 1960s environment of racial injustice in which many had lived. The rebellion frame thus placed blame on society. “There is a common myth among whites that Detroit was a great city but then the riots happened,” said Thomas Sugrue, a Detroit native and author of the book *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Rodriguez, 2007a). However, Sugrue was quoted as stating that while the situation may have been ideal for whites in the city, blacks were “barred from federal mortgage programs, barred from buying homes in white neighborhoods and toiled in menial jobs as whites got promoted” (Rodriguez, 2007a). McGraw (2007) demonstrated that conditions (including suburban flight, unemployment, loss of retail, abandoned homes, and negative race relations)

leading up to the uprising were one of the prime reasons why some in 2007 called it a “rebellion” and not a “riot.”

Examples of the rebellion frame are found throughout the 2007 coverage. For example, one article indicated that feelings of pent-up anger at discrimination exploded into “what many at the time—and today—call the rebellion, not the riot” (“The Story Behind the Riot,” 2007). Wilkinson, Nichols & Lee (2007) concurred, stating, “Black frustrations erupted in violence.” In its timeline of race relations, *The Detroit News* included the 1967 recording of Aretha Franklin’s song “Respect.” According to the paper, some said this song became a central theme of the “rebellion” (“Highs, Lows,” 2007).

Of course, not everyone agreed with the transitioning of the frame. While some in 2007 saw the event as a “rebellion,” there were others who refused to look at the incident as anything but a “riot,” suggesting that to do otherwise would diminish the event. For example, *The Detroit News* quoted L. Brooks Patterson, the current Oakland County executive, as saying that calling the uprising a rebellion would “glorify it” (Rodriguez, 2007a). According to Patterson, as reflected in media coverage, “It was a lash-out at the establishment, but in Detroit (under then-Mayor Jerome Cavanagh), you had a pretty thoughtful, liberal Democratic mayor. . . . It wasn’t like people were suffering under tyrannical rule,” said Patterson (Rodriguez, 2007a).

Similarly, responding to the rebellion frame, *The Detroit News* seemed to diminish the frame by reporting survey results indicating that race could play a part in whether one deemed the event to be a riot or a rebellion. According to the paper, nearly half of blacks in 2007 believed that *rebellion* was a better description of the event, while at the same time, most whites thought *riot* was a better description. In an article titled “Riot or Rebellion? Detroiters don’t

agree,” *The News* stated, “Whites call ‘riots’ focal point of Detroit’s decline, but blacks see ‘rebellion’ against rooted inequities” (Rodriguez, 2007a).

Even so, *The News* was less likely to label the uprising a “riot.” It tended to use words such as “civil unrest.” The *Detroit Free Press*, on the other hand, repeatedly referred to the uprising as the “Detroit riot” (e.g., “Education: As History,” 2007). Similarly, the *Michigan Chronicle* most often referred to the event as a “riot”; at times, however, the term was also followed with language depicting the event differently. For example, in an editorial, Thompson (2007b) stated, “It’s been 40 years since the 1967 riot widely referred to as a rightful rebellion against the racist status quo.”

Social Inequities

The 2007 coverage, like its counterpart 40 years earlier, tried to identify the causes for the uprising. Social inequities, including the power structure at the time and police brutality, were often reflected on as causes of the uprising. The coverage highlighted 1967 disparities in employment, housing, and poverty, all of which led to a growing dissatisfaction among many of Detroit’s residents. “The kindling for the fires had been piling up in declining and inequitable job opportunities, increasing pessimism among poor people and rampant police brutality” (Spratling, 2007b). Kevin Boyle, an author and history professor at Ohio State University, grew up in Detroit. He underscored the notion that societal inequities led to the uprising. “The riot’s roots lay in unemployment, poverty and powerlessness—all caused by an urban system that couldn’t provide people with jobs, opportunity and hope,” said Boyle (McGraw, 2007).

In addition, the *Free Press* mentioned that a progressive young mayor led Detroit in 1967, and African Americans were included in the administration. However, at the same time, “Blacks were systematically discriminated against in housing and jobs in Detroit. They were

subject to humiliation where they worked and shopped. They were overcharged in some stores and were victims of police harassment. Those feelings, pent-up for years, exploded in what many at the time—and today—call the rebellion, not the riot” (“The Story Behind the Riot,” 2007).

Detroit’s Mayor in 2007, Kwame Kilpatrick, was quoted as saying that “anger” was the reason behind the uprising. Even though the uprising occurred before Kilpatrick was born, he stated that the cause of the uprising centered on “anger over the conditions that led to 1967, the deep poverty and isolation, the destruction of black neighborhoods in the name of urban development, the brutality that blacks endured from the police” (Henderson, 2007). Kilpatrick called the uprising a “crescendo” that was the result of things that had been taking place since the 1950s (Henderson, 2007). On the other hand, the mayor indicated that the actions of the uprising were a stupid way of venting frustration.

For some, “societal blame” centered on the 1967 power structure. According to McGraw (2007), the system of government in place during and before the 1960s led to much of Detroit’s decline: “Some white suburbanites like to poke fun at the way Detroit is run today. But they ignore the facts: Postwar Detroit, run by whites from top to bottom, clearly was foundering long before the first looter busted the first window on 12th Street. And the system that whites had created over the decades was discriminatory and at times brutal for the more than one-third of the city’s residents who were African American in 1967” (McGraw, 2007).

Could Causes of the 1967 Uprising Lead to Another Uprising?

Coverage of the climate in Detroit in 2007 raised the question, “Could this happen again?” Of course, to ask the question implied that the social conditions believed to have led to the uprising might still have existed 40 years later. In addition, asking the question also led to an

assumption that societal issues were a leading cause of the riot. *The Detroit News* led an article with this question, and the responses from community leaders were mixed, with some believing that frustrations over a similar lack of equitable social and economic resources could lead to another uprising (Nichols, 2007). Those frustrations centered on housing, joblessness, and inequities in education. Others observed that problems existed, but noted that there were many who were working on “the problems that threaten to rip the city apart” (Nichols, 2007). For example, *The News* stated that the business community and black leaders were working together to address many issues and make investments to enhance the quality of life for those in southeast Michigan.

The Detroit News did indicate that the economic climate in Detroit in 2007 could lead to another uprising. According to the paper, Detroit was one of the nation’s poorest cities, with 31 percent of residents living below the poverty level. In 2007, unemployment for blacks in Detroit was three percentage points higher than for those in the rest of the region, at 21 percent (Nichols, 2007). City services were also cited. Poor street lighting, police who were not quick to respond when called, disparities in grocery stores, insurance costs and taxes, and lack of reliable mass transit were all mentioned as potential indications of trouble. The paper quoted the Rev. Horace Sheffield III, Michigan chapter president of the National Action Network, as stating that young people in Detroit had never known stability, which could lead to an uprising: “You have a whole generation in their early 30s who have never known gainful employment, stability their whole lives, have violence perpetuated against them or engaged in it. . . . I don’t see that lasting on a perpetual basis. At some point, when they continue to see that contrast (with those who have more opportunities) it’s going to be a rude awakening” (Nichols, 2007).

The *Michigan Chronicle* also seemed to suggest that the conditions that had existed in 1967 continued in 2007. In fact, the paper indicated that police brutality was actually a “bigger problem” in 2007, as evidenced by the fact that the City of Detroit routinely paid out settlements to citizens because of police misconduct (Thompson, 2007a). In addition, economic injustice continued into 2007, evidenced by the number of African Americans in poverty.

Police Brutality

As in the 1967 coverage, one social ill that received a considerable amount of attention in 2007 was the treatment of blacks by police leading up to the uprising. In his article titled “1967 Riot: Lessons Never Learned,” *Michigan Chronicle* senior editor Bankole Thompson began his analysis by declaring, “I was not around in 1967 to witness the reaction to police brutality in Detroit.” In addition, the author stated, “It was triggered by squad officers from a predominantly White police department who went to raid the blind pig where two Vietnam veterans were being celebrated.” Furthermore, the article states, “Resulting, in part, from a series of humiliation acts by the Detroit Police Department’s ‘Tac Squad’ roaming the streets requesting identification from young Blacks, the riot is an important chapter in Detroit’s political history” (Thompson 2007a). Thompson likened the treatment of Detroit’s African Americans in 1967 to that of Black South Africans during apartheid. The South African apartheid, which included forced racial segregation, sparked violent protests. The comparison of apartheid to the 1967 uprising is significant in that it contains assumptions about racism and its role in the uprising. The author is implying a justification for the events in 1967.

While not going so far as to compare the uprising to apartheid, *The Detroit News* agreed that police brutality was a defining issue in the 1960s. For example, *The Detroit News* reported that in the ’60s, four-man police units, referred to as the “Big Four,” were known to many as

“instigators of brutality and harassment,” particularly in the African American neighborhoods (Nichols & Lee, 2007). “They’d hassle you for just standing there, for walking down the street, for being on a corner, anything. . . . They wanted you aggravated so they could come out and use a stick on you,” said Wayne Morrow, a Detroit resident quoted in *The Detroit News* (Nichols & Lee, 2007). It is important to note that the 1967 coverage did not include any mention of the Big Four brigades. It is also important to note that in the 1960s, only 7 percent of the police force was African American. Mack Douglas, a Detroit police officer during the uprising, said that he often saw white officers mishandle blacks, including stealing their money on a regular basis (Rodriguez, 2007a).

The *Detroit News* coverage also included the 1961 authorization by Mayor Louis Miriani of a “stop-and-frisk” police campaign in the black neighborhoods, resulting in nearly 1,000 arrests. The campaign included the previously mentioned “Big Four,” a specialized unit within the police department that consisted of four officers assigned to one unmarked car. Their responsibilities included raiding bars and arresting prostitutes (“Highs, Lows,” 2007). The *Michigan Chronicle* indicated that police brutality continued to be a problem in the city of Detroit, even 40 years later: “City government is giving out millions of dollars in settlement with citizens for police misconduct” (Thompson, 2007a).

In “The Story Behind the Riot” (2007), the *Free Press* stated that the National Guard was also a problem. Calling the Michigan National Guard “ill prepared,” the *Free Press* indicated that federal troops called in during the uprising were much more disciplined than their state counterparts. In addition, the paper referenced the fact that most of the members of the Michigan National Guard were white, while members of the U.S. Guard included African Americans. As evidence of their statement, the *Free Press* said, “Eleven people were shot and killed by Guard

soldiers; nine proved to be innocent of any crime. Federal troops shot and killed one person” (“The Story Behind the Riot,” 2007). Of course, this is very different from the 1967 coverage of deaths, in which the majority were portrayed as justified, in that most who were killed by authority figures were taking part in actions that led to their own demise. The police, and to a lesser extent, the National Guard became the “villains” of 1960’s Detroit. However, once again, the narrative still lacked a true “hero.”

What Was Missing from the Coverage?

However, the one incident that most depicted police brutality during the original coverage of the uprising received very little attention in 2007. In one of the few mentions of the Algiers Motel incident, the *Free Press* included the following in their timeline of events: “Three black youths are killed by police in the Algiers Motel at Woodward and Virginia Park” (“The Story Behind the Riot,” 2007). The incident was also mentioned again in the same article in relation to the fact that two of the three were killed by Detroit police or the military. Further coverage indicated that authorities could not prove who killed the third man in the Algiers.

In addition, the 2007 coverage did not include any mention of “the militant black.” In 1967, extensive coverage was devoted to the possible role of outside agitators, who were responsible for inciting violence. The idea of “the militant black” allowed authorities to claim that the uprising was less a statement about Detroit, and more a part of a national phenomenon orchestrated by a small minority of violent blacks. However, unlike the 1967 coverage, it is striking to note that the Detroit papers 40 years later did not blame outside agitators for the uprising. In fact, the words “militant black” were not included in any coverage related to the anniversary. Nor did the papers indicate, as they did in 1967, that “looters” were simply caught up in the excitement of the moment.

Fatalities

While the Detroit papers did not include references to “the militant black,” they did include descriptions of fatalities, similar to the 1967 coverage. The 2007 coverage included frequent references to the 43 people who died during the uprising. However, unlike the 1967 coverage, media clips in 2007 did not include detailed descriptions of those who were killed. Instead, the *Free Press* included a quote from their initial investigation, indicating that many of the deaths were needless. “Fate’s selection of those who would die followed no pattern and the riot victims do not fit easily into categories and classifications. Among them are the most innocent, a 4-year-old girl killed by a wanton bullet, and the most guilty, a drunken sniper who died trying to take another’s life” (“The Story Behind the Riot,” 2007).

The *Free Press*’s coverage of fatalities included groupings of deaths. Their investigations found that 33 victims were black and 10 were white. In addition, the paper reported the number of people who were killed by someone in a position of authority. For example, 30 people were “killed” by police or the military. In addition, “citizens” killed three “people” while “store owners” killed two “looters.”

Eyewitness “There When It Happened”

Unlike the 1967 coverage, the Detroit newspapers in 2007 included more eyewitness accounts. Rather than relying on authoritative sources, the papers asked citizens to describe their personal experiences. The *Detroit News* coverage included four independent articles highlighting four eyewitness accounts to the uprising. Each account was told from the perspective of the witness; the series included one black woman, one white woman, one white male, and one black male. In three instances, the witnesses used the word “riot,” and all four vividly remembered the “looting.” However, only one witness seemed to connect with those

who took part in the uprising. In addition, that witness, Alvin Steward Woods, a black male, was the only witness who did not use the word “riot” to describe the event.

Thirteen years old at the time, Woods said some people were drawn into the action out of necessity. “Even those who didn’t believe in stealing were lured into the idea of taking or receiving stolen goods and food, not knowing when or where they would be able to find a market or corner grocery that wouldn’t be looted when the mess was over,” said Woods (Lee, 2007a). Woods seemed to relate to those who took part in the uprising, often discussing them in terms of “we.” For example, Woods was quoted as saying, “We got real stupid then. Burning the city didn’t solve anything. Animosity toward those cops for dogging some of us in that raid turned out to be nothing more than an excuse for some to steal.” Woods watched many of his white neighbors and business owners leave the city. “Everything changed with us after that,” he said. “We lost a great part of our history, our city and our culture” (Lee, 2007a).

The *Detroit Free Press* also included articles from those who lived through the uprising; however, the focus of their articles was less about the memories of the individuals and more about their lives since. These articles tended to be significantly longer. In addition, the articles focused on the individuals’ desire either to stay in Detroit or to move out of the city. Unlike *The Detroit News*, the *Free Press* did not include an eyewitness account from the perspective of a black male.

The *Michigan Chronicle* also included an eyewitness description. In an article titled “Eyewitness Account of the 1967 Riot,” Chrystal Edwards drafted a first-person account of her experiences during the uprising. She too remembered possible looting from those who held positions of respect within the community. “What disappointed me was when firemen attempted to put out the fire at our corner drugstore, I saw Deacons from our neighborhood church taking

pictures of the firemen with cameras that had price tags on them” (Edwards, 2007). Ultimately, while Edwards understood that there were social ills at the time, she was confused by the behavior of those who took part in the uprising. “I’ve read reports that police brutality, economic and social factors contributed to the riots. I will agree that there were problems with the Detroit Police Department, but to loot and burn down your own neighborhood to get a new camera, clothing and furniture does not make any sense” (Edwards, 2007).

Impact of the Uprising on Detroit in 2007

The 2007 coverage also looked at the long-term impact that the uprising had had on current conditions. Coverage focused on current issues facing the region, including racial, economic, and social conditions that some said could be traced back to the 1967 uprising. In fact, for many, the conventional wisdom was that the uprising was the source of many of Detroit’s current ills, including urban decay and high poverty.

Of the three newspapers, the *Free Press* was more likely to report the uprising as a factor in many of Detroit’s current issues. For example, the *Detroit Free Press* ran a series of articles in the editorial section of the paper that were introduced as follows:

The physical wreckage from the July 1967 Detroit riot is mostly gone, but the damage to this region lingers—in its collective ego, its image, its relationships. The riot was an accelerant for problems that had already begun to burn. Two generations later, some still do. Racial isolation continues. Population loss drains the city’s strength. Economic opportunity is still too hard to find.

Racial Tensions Have Led to Economic Insecurity

Along the same lines, current economic issues were specifically blamed on racial tensions. In 2007, unemployment in the city of Detroit was relatively high, and the region was suffering from several years of economic decline. The coverage related to the 2007 anniversary of the uprising outlined the struggles of the region; and contrary to other articles, some went so

far as to blame the troubles on the after-effects of the uprising. Ron Dzwonkowski (2007) said that the uprising damaged the city's economy, indicating that money followed people out of the city, and fewer people felt invested in the city of Detroit.

As a result, economic insecurity was blamed on lingering racial tensions. In one article, then-Mayor Kilpatrick was quoted as saying, "People just left, so we never had racial healing. The most important lesson here is that you can . . . destroy your community if you don't seriously sit down and deal with the tension between the races. This has destroyed us economically for 40 years" (Lee & Nichols, 2007).

According to 40th anniversary reports, the result of this long-term racial distrust was a consistent and prolonged disinvestment in the city. Regional cooperation also suffered as a result of the racial tensions, causing further disinvestment in the region. "There is no white or black figure who can be considered an outspoken leader on improving race relations: If you are white and from the suburbs, appearing too sympathetic to Detroit can be career suicide. If you are a black Detroiter, appearing too sympathetic to suburbia can get you branded as an Uncle Tom" (McGraw, 2007).

Part of that disinvestment included residents leaving the city. Many in 2007 still blamed the uprising for the so-called "white flight," meaning that white families had left the city to seek housing in the suburbs. Rodriguez (2007b) highlighted the idea, saying, "The unrest that began July 23, 1967, became a symbol of Detroit as a deeply divided city and continued to fuel white flight to the suburbs."

Detroit's Decline Began Before the Uprising/White Flight

Others contested the idea that the uprising led to Detroit's current economic and social calamities. "Conventional wisdom is that July 1967 was the turning point in Detroit's recent

history, the cause of flight to the suburbs, the breeder of all things bad about the once-beloved city, the event that kicked off Detroit's transformation from the world's greatest factory town to the struggling, impoverished city of today" (McGraw, 2007).

However, in his article, McGraw (2007) asked the question, what if the events of that July had never happened? He concluded that the uprising was not the sole turning point for Detroit. According to the article, the uprising was not the cause of the above-mentioned problems, but was the result of them. Blight, crime, and white flight were prevalent for years before the uprising took place. "Postwar Detroit, run by whites from top to bottom, clearly was foundering long before the first looter busted the first window on 12th Street" (McGraw, 2007). As evidence, McGraw (2007) identified five areas of decline before the uprising: suburban flight, factory closings, retail loss, abandoned houses, and race relations. Specifically, the suburbs were booming in the 1960s, while the city of Detroit lost at least 500,000 whites between 1950 and 1967. The 1950s also saw a large loss in manufacturing jobs, which dropped by 30 percent during that decade. Twelve percent of store buildings were vacant in 1961, and the article pointed to a University of Michigan article that found 22 percent of dwelling units within three miles of downtown were empty. Finally, the 1950s also saw a large amount of racial conflict and police brutality. On the other hand, the article acknowledges that the disparity between suburbs and city that existed in 2007 might not have been so extreme without the uprising.

Along the same lines, U.S. Rep. John Conyers, who was a young member of Congress during the 1967 uprising and still represented Detroit in the U.S. House in 2007, was quoted as saying that the uprising was often blamed for many of Detroit's ills, including disinvestment, white flight, and hard feelings. He agreed, however, with McGraw's assessment, that the decline had begun long before the uprising. In addition, Rodriguez's (2007a) article included graphs

depicting the population shifts prior to the uprising. Among those was one titled “Detroit population decline began in ’50s.” The text below the graph states, “While people continue to blame the 1967 unrest for the decline in the white population, U.S. Census statistics show the decline began in 1950” (Rodriguez, 2007a). In addition, the article indicates that between 1953 and 1960, seven plants closed in Detroit’s black areas, resulting in over 73,000 job losses. Many other businesses closed as a result, devastating the area. A similar article added that the deteriorating tax base actually started in the 1950s but was exacerbated by the uprising (Rodriguez, 2007d).

In addition, *The Detroit News* ran a timeline of so-called highs and lows in race relations. The timeline, which included major events from the previous seven decades, began with the 1943 race riot in Detroit. That riot, which started with a fight on Belle Isle, led to 36 hours of violence and claimed 34 lives. While many of the items were descriptive in nature, others included photographs to highlight compelling moments in Detroit’s racial history. Included in this were the arrest of Rosa Parks, the 1963 march in Detroit led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the signing of the first Civil Rights Act in 1964, the election of Coleman A. Young as Detroit’s first black mayor, the 1992 killing of Malice Green (a black man) by two white Detroit police officers, and the election of Kwame Kilpatrick as mayor of Detroit in 2001.

However, the largest photograph depicted the heavily armed National Guard on the streets of Detroit during the 1967 uprising. The caption under the photograph stated,

1967: On July 23, a raid at an after-hours drinking establishment, or “blind pig,” on 12th and Clairmount sparks six days of violence in Detroit. In all, 43 people were killed and 342 were injured. Twenty-four of those killed were by the National Guard or Detroit Police. About 7,000 people were arrested. The estimated damage of \$50 million left Detroit with 500 businesses destroyed and more than 1,000 families homeless. Some say abuse by police, lack of affordable housing, and dismantling of the Black Bottom neighborhood and economic inequality sparked the disturbance (“Highs, Lows of Race,” 2007).

The quote above referenced many of the items that were found in the 1967 coverage, including the death rate, number of arrests, and devastation to property, as well as potential causes, including police brutality, housing, and economic disparities. The timeline also included a photo of Mayor Jerome Cavanagh with a perplexed look on his face, and destruction in the background. While it appears that the photo was taken in the days following the uprising, the caption indicated that, just days before the uprising, the Mayor's task force held a practice response at 12th and Clairmount, the very scene of the uprising.

Benefits of the Uprising 40 Years Later

Many believed that the current environment in 2007 was a positive one in many regards. For example, while the uprising may have been blamed for driving some from the city, it also received credit for instilling many young African Americans with a sense of commitment to the city. Ron Dzwonkowski, editor of the *Free Press* editorial page, wrote an article in which he claimed an entire generation of kids grew up being told not to go to Detroit. "The riot . . . diminished the city as the regional gathering place, put a major crimp in interaction between city folks and suburbanites, and further damaged the city's economy as money followed people to the east, north and west" (Dzwonkowski, 2007). However, according to the author, a new generation is beginning to find its way back to the city.

Peek (2007) also praised the "young professional whites and blacks" who were making a return to the city. In his *Michigan Chronicle* editorial, the author said, "In spite of all of our challenges, something is attracting them. Forty years later a cosmopolitan atmosphere is emerging. Detroit, I believe, is poised to become the 'comeback city' of the nation."

For some, the uprising was credited for improvements to race relations for multiple generations. For example, the uprising led to the creation of a number of groups devoted to overcoming racial disparities, which may have actually led to better relationship development. “Would the region’s troubled race relations be better today had the riot not happened? Perhaps. But the riot also led to the founding of New Detroit, Inc., Detroit Renaissance and FOCUS: Hope, which all continue to work for racial harmony and development” (McGraw, 2007). *The Detroit News*’s timeline of so-called highs and lows in race relations included several responses that occurred as a result of the uprising, including the creation of New Detroit in 1967 and the release of the Kerner Report in 1968.

The *Michigan Chronicle*, however, questioned the consistent relevance of many of these groups, such as the Detroit Urban League. The paper’s senior editor, Bankole Thompson, questioned the motives of these organizational leaders and their devotion to the black population in metro Detroit. “We have institutions that boast of longevity, but have little relevance when viewed against the backdrop of improving the dignity and living conditions of our people. They regrettably exist to boost the egos, public visibility and financial strength of their top brass, and not for the good of our people” (Thompson, 2007b).

Will the 1967 Detroit Uprising Continue to Define Detroit?

Consistent throughout the 2007 coverage was a theme to “move beyond” the uprising. Articles focusing on myth-busting were designed to redefine the role that the uprising has played in modern-day Detroit. In addition, the Detroit newspapers called on the residents of southeast Michigan to use the anniversary of the event to move forward in their thinking. According to the *Free Press*, focusing on the past had led to Detroit’s present conditions, including a lack of movement on certain issues. “The region’s collective consciousness also has to account for the

40 years that have passed since then, and everything that has not happened because of the old thinking that just won't die" ("Attitude: If You're Locked," 2007).

Frank Joyce (2007) also published an editorial in the *Free Press* calling on the region to use the anniversary of the uprising to look forward. Specifically, the editorial called on the entire region to come together and overcome the segregation that had become southeast Michigan, not only for social reasons, but for economic ones as well. "Our segregation is inseparably linked to our economic difficulties. In 2006, Michigan was the only state to experience negative economic growth" (Joyce, 2007). The author calls for the abolition of Detroit, as well as other cities in Macomb and Oakland counties, and for the creation of "a new regional government that would reroll the dice on race and pretty much everything else, too" (Joyce, 2007). The author used the exemplars of Jim Crow and the end of slavery to demonstrate how "far-fetched ideas" can become reality.

In addition, in one op-ed piece, Alicia Nails (2007) stated, "There are still race-based challenges: poverty, employment, housing, education, and disparities in justice. But the key is that these no longer operate in a white-on-black pressure vacuum" (Nails, 2007). Nails saw opportunity on the horizon in the actions of Detroiters: "We segregate, then congregate peacefully. A model United Nations, depending on the day or event. We live more side-by-side than intertwined, but we talk more about our experientially informed views, and in more conversational tones. . . . We're all in this together" (Nails, 2007).

Finally, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick agreed that the "riots" had nothing to do with the future of Detroit, and it was time to look forward (Henderson, 2007). According to the mayor, when he was growing up, the uprising was always the reason for anything bad in the city (burned homes, bullet holes), but he refused to pass that along to his own sons. "I guess it's just not part

of their Detroit,' Kilpatrick said. 'We tend to talk with them about where Detroit is going. And the riot has nothing to do with that'" (Henderson, 2007).

Conclusion

While at times referring to the event of 1967 as a "riot," the coverage of the 40th anniversary of the uprising began to transition the event's frame into that of a "rebellion." Much of the coverage focused on racial issues and the economic inequities related to them. Two competing elements of the frame focused on labeling (e.g., "riot" versus "rebellion") of the original event, as well as the nature of the impact that the uprising had had on current conditions in the region: namely, the coverage attempted to define whether the uprising was the cause of Detroit's current decline. Ultimately, the papers called on citizens to look forward, rather than backwards.

CHAPTER 4 “A FRAME IN TRANSITION”

Emphasis framing effects occur when a framer focuses on a subset of information, causing recipients to focus on the same subset when constructing their opinions. This dissertation focused on the emphasis frames employed by print media during the 1967 uprising and again for the 40th anniversary in 2007. The emphasis frames were prevalent in areas such as descriptive language used to detail the event, as well as in assigning blame and responsibility.

The 1967 Detroit “Riot”

In the 1967 coverage, the uprising was framed as a riot. The term “riot” was used extensively throughout the 30-day coverage of the uprising. However, more importantly, the language used to describe the event and its participants was consistent with the framing. In addition, blame assignment was consistent with the frame. However, coverage of the potential “causes” of the uprising was inconsistent with the riot frame. In addition, descriptions of responsibility were also inconsistent with the riot frame.

The implications of framing the uprising as a riot are numerous. A riot assumes that the actors involved, namely the “rioters,” were to blame for their own actions and therefore responsible for overcoming the conditions. It also assumes that their actions are not organized, but rather spontaneous. Generally, under this frame, society is not to blame. Instead, individuals are responsible for their own actions and are, in turn, responsible for the consequences of them. As a result, there are few remedies available for overcoming the event. In the case of the 1967 Detroit uprising, the accepted remedy was through the criminal justice system. Since individuals were assigned the blame, they were also held responsible for overcoming the event. For many, that meant adjudication through the legal process, and potentially jail.

Initial descriptions of the event drew comparisons to the Vietnam War. The streets of Detroit were transformed from a seemingly calm, respectable city to one engaged in a guerilla war-like scene, complete with military tanks and heavily armed Guardsmen hovering behind burned-out buildings. Likewise, participants were labeled as “rioters,” “looters” or “snipers,” all assuming active involvement.

Examples of the riot frame were evident in the language used to assign blame, with individuals held responsible for their own action. “Negroes” were often described as the aggressors, with the “militant black” receiving very specific consternation. Militant blacks were blamed not for taking part in the uprising per se, but rather as conspiring “agitators” who served to fan the flames of distrust and anger. These often-nameless individuals were portrayed as outsiders who lacked connections to traditional society. When the papers and those they quoted were not pointing the finger at blacks in general, or militant blacks specifically, they were covering the actions of “looters,” “rioters,” and “snipers.” In addition, most of the 43 people who died during the uprising were described in terms that suggested they caused their own deaths through their active participation.

All of these actors were portrayed as active participants in an event that by media accounts did not need to happen. The Detroit newspapers and opinion leaders indicated that Detroit was a model city in that blacks were better off in Detroit than in many other locations that had experienced similar events. According to the papers, blacks held positions of leadership and important jobs in business and labor. Therefore, the media coverage seemed to indicate that the underlying causes that could explain uprisings in other cities were, in effect, void in Detroit. Therefore, one explanation that was attributed to Detroit was that many of the looters were simply caught up in the moment.

The riot frame would suggest that individuals are to blame for the situation and thus are responsible for overcoming the event. However, the 1967 coverage diverged from this expected outcome in that it included extensive references to social issues that might explain, at least in part, the causes of the uprising. For example, high unemployment, a lack of quality education, and housing discrimination were all included as examples of the black condition. In addition, papers indicated that blacks were not fully integrated into society and lived in comparatively higher levels of poverty. One additional area that received a considerable amount of coverage was police brutality. The *Detroit Free Press*, in its coverage of a survey of blacks in Detroit, indicated that many in the community saw police brutality as a primary cause of the uprising.

However, it is important to note that the recognition of societal inequities did not equate to blaming society for the uprising. As previously indicated, it was individuals who received the blame assignment. However, inconsistent with the frame, it was not the same individuals who were held responsible for overcoming the uprising. Instead, all individuals were called upon to overcome societal ills. In addition, public policy was recommended as a means of alleviating many of the social issues that might explain the cause of the uprising. It is important to note that this call to “all” encompassed the very people who were the subjects of the injustice. This suggested a solution to addressing social inequities without addressing why they existed or for whom. These inconsistencies suggest that the frame was unstable, and opened the door for a reframing of the 1967 Detroit uprising.

The 1967 Detroit “Rebellion”

Forty years after the Detroit uprising, the event remained a source of reflection for the community. The Detroit newspapers covered the 40th anniversary of the uprising in 2007. Coverage often labeled the event in terms of a “riot”; however, the focus of the coverage opened

the door to a transition of framing. Several articles referred to the event as a “rebellion,” and others specifically questioned the implications of thinking about the event in terms other than a riot.

As with the riot frame, there are also implications to framing the uprising as a rebellion. Inherent in its meaning is the implication that those who took part in the event were reacting to historical pressures and that their actions were, at least in some way, justified. Under this frame, societal ills play a role in the event, and society itself is responsible for overcoming the underlying pressures that led to the uprising. By allowing for a social foundation as a potential cause of the uprising, the potential remedies are greatly enhanced. Instead of limiting the remedy to the justice system, this frame allows for multiple remedies, including public policy aimed at overcoming inequities.

Unlike its 1967 counterpart, coverage in 2007 did not focus extensively on those who took part in the uprising. In addition, there was no mention of the “militant black.” Instead, the papers included full-length articles detailing eyewitness accounts of their experiences during the uprising. Many of the articles also focused on lives of the witnesses following the uprising, detailing how the uprising may have impacted life decisions.

The Detroit papers often focused on identifying the causes of the uprising as well as its long-term impact. Examples of underlying societal causes were evident in several articles related to the 40th anniversary. As with the 1967 coverage, articles pointed to the fact that blacks in 1967 suffered discrimination in the form of housing, employment, and education. In addition, another article stressed the pent-up anger felt among many blacks in 1967 because of their oppressed treatment. Other articles highlighted the role that race had played in 1967, and continued to play in 2007, with blacks reporting a different reality than whites. The white power

structure that had existed in Detroit in 1967 was also considered a factor in the uprising, with few blacks in positions of leadership. This, of course, was contrary to the argument made in 1967 that blacks in Detroit were more likely to be a part of the power structure than those in other parts of the country.

In addition, the papers asked whether a similar event could happen in 2007. The implication of asking such a question demonstrates the judgment that societal ills in 1967 were real and that such social conditions still existed 40 years later. In addition, the papers indicate that there were also leaders in the city who were working to overcome these issues, again indicating that many of these issues continued to exist in 2007.

The rebellion frame suggests that society was to blame for the uprising and also responsible for overcoming the event. However, the 2007 coverage did not include any extensive portrayals of who or what shared this responsibility. Unlike in 1967, public policy was not included as a remedy for current or past conditions. Strangely, coverage suggested that the 40th anniversary was a turning point in that it was time to stop allowing the uprising to define the region. It is important to note, however, that papers did use the occasion to detail the impact the uprising had on the region over the previous 40 years. In addition, several articles attempted to dismiss what the authors saw as myths related to the uprising. For example, data suggested that “white flight” had existed prior to the uprising and was not necessarily an effect of the uprising. Authors such as McGraw (2007) argued that whites had begun leaving the city long before the uprising and would have done so even without the event.

Ultimately, the 2007 frame became a competition of two existing frames, which continues today. As indicated in chapter 1, Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) found that two competing frames related to KKK rallies had very different outcomes for support or opposition

to a rally. One frame, free speech, tended to lead the majority to support a KKK rally in their community. The other frame, public safety, led people to oppose the rally. In the case of 2007 coverage, the two competing frames could be found in responses made by individuals. The competition between the riot and rebellion frame is symbolic of the divide that exists in Southeast Michigan. This region continues to be one of the most racially segregated areas in the country. While the city of Detroit is a majority black city, the surrounding suburbs are majority white. Historically, the so-called “Eight Mile Divide” has separated the suburbs and the city both geographically, as well as mentally. Many in the region see the Detroit uprising as being a major contributor to this continued divide. Detroit’s first black Mayor, Coleman Young, was seen by many suburbanites to reflect the mentality that whites were not welcome in the city, while many blacks felt unwelcome in the suburbs.

In the 2007 coverage of the fortieth anniversary, these competing frames are exemplified by the remarks made by L. Brooks Patterson and Alicia Nails. A white, suburban male, L. Brooks Patterson served as the Oakland County Executive. He indicated that the event should be labeled a “riot.” To call it anything else, he believed, diminished the event, a view that is undoubtedly shared by many in the suburbs of Detroit. On the other hand, Alicia Nails, a black woman from the city of Detroit, came to realize the event as a “rebellion,” indicating that to see it as a riot would diminish the causes and the impact of the event. Her views represent those of many within the city who believe that those who took part in the uprising were fighting against unacceptable social conditions.

Coverage Comparisons: 1967 versus 2007

Police brutality and the Algiers Motel incident. One area that received a considerable amount of coverage in 1967 was police brutality. In fact, while the coverage focused on the riot

frame, this was one area that was arguably a “rebellion” frame. Some articles included references to police mistreatment prior to the uprising; however, most articles focused on the actions of police and Guardsmen during the event. In fact, the farther from the event, the more critical the coverage became. Eventually, city, state, and national authorities began to question the actions and training of lawmen.

The 2007 coverage also mentioned police brutality as a cause of the uprising. Individuals were quoted as remembering the harassment suffered at the hands of the police in Detroit. The papers also presented a historical analysis of a police campaign to stop blacks at will, resulting in numerous arrests. In addition, the “Big Four,” a squad car containing four police officers, remained a source of consternation 40 years after the uprising. In 2007, the issue remained a source of disgrace for the city, with Detroit under the supervision of the federal Justice Department as a result of continued issues of brutality.

One difference between the coverage in 1967 and 2007, however, focused on the Algiers Motel incident. While the Algiers Motel incident became a symbol of the brutality faced by blacks in 1967, it garnered very little attention in 2007. The incident, in which three young black men were killed by authorities and several others were assaulted, received a considerable amount of attention in 1967. Not only did newspaper reports follow the investigation into the deaths, but reporters also began to take an active role in the inquiry. The *Detroit Free Press* began an independent investigation, concluding that the three were killed at close range while lying down. Similarly, both *The Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* began locating witnesses, with *The News* actually organizing an out-of-state interview with one witness and law enforcement. However, the only coverage this event received in 2007 was a brief mention in the *Detroit Free Press*'s timeline of events.

Reliance on official sources versus reliance on citizen reports. Both 1967 and 2007 coverage relied on official sources, such as elected officials or appointed authorities, to tell the story of the uprising. However, the 1967 coverage was much more extensive in the use of official sources. Of the 146 articles analyzed from 1967, 77 percent included direct quotes from at least one source. Most of those quoted were elected officials at the local, state, or federal levels. Mayor Cavanagh, for example, was quoted in 11 articles, and Governor Romney was quoted in the same number of articles. An additional 26 articles included direct quotes from other elected officials, most of whom were members of Congress. Other official sources included the local prosecutor, police spokespeople, and representatives of the National Guard.

When the papers in 1967 were not relying on the official sources, they included citizens. However, on several occasions, these individuals were not named, but rather described. For example, in highlighting the role that police brutality may have played in the uprising, the *Detroit Free Press* quoted a “20-year-old lower West side resident” (Meyer, 1967d). At other times, the papers deliberately refused to name witnesses out of concern for their safety. For example, *The Detroit News* ran an article from a “52-year-old Negro civil service employee who has lived on Taylor in the heart of the eastside riot area, for 15 years. . . . For obvious reasons he wishes to remain anonymous” (“There Must Be,” 1967).

On very rare occasions, the Detroit papers would include quotes from individuals who identified themselves as participants in the action. For example, as described in chapter 2, the *Free Press* interviewed two men named Eddie and Frank, both of whom claimed to have played an active role in the uprising. However, in most cases, the papers relied on official sources to describe those who were involved. Most telling was a *Detroit News* article that described the “anatomy of a looter” (Gallagher 1967). The reporter used testimony involving the first of the

looting suspects, as well as information from official sources to determine who a likely “looter” was. However, rather than speaking to any of the actual defendants, the paper chose instead to talk only to court officials, including Judge Robert Colombo, Judge Samuel Olsen, Traffic Judge Richard Maher, and Judge Joseph Gillis. From these interviews, the paper deduced that most of the looters were decent citizens with jobs, who were simply caught up in the moment.

While the 1967 coverage relied extensively on official sources, the 2007 coverage relied much more on citizen or eyewitness accounts to paint the picture of the uprising. Of the 41 articles analyzed from the 2007 coverage, 36 percent did not include any direct quotes, because many were editorials. The remaining articles relied more on unofficial sources. Of the remaining 64 percent of the articles that did include a direct quote, only five, or 19 percent, included a quote from an official source, such as Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings, Macomb County Commissioner Leon Drolet, Judge Damon J. Keith, U.S. Rep. John Conyers, and Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson. In addition, in all but one of the five articles, the official source was quoted along with multiple other non-official sources. The only article that relied solely on an official source was an opinion article in which Kwame Kilpatrick, then mayor, recounted what he had been told about the uprising as a child.

The majority of articles from 2007 in which a source was quoted also included witness accounts. For example, Beverly Troy, a black female, recounted her experiences as a seven-year-old child during the uprising (“There When It Happened: Young,” 2007). Loretta Morris, on the other hand, described why she decided to stay in Detroit after the uprising (Spratling, 2007a). A few articles included academic experts offering their own commentary. For example, McGraw’s (2007) article included quotes from Reynolds Farley, a University of Michigan sociologist.

Where were the participants? While the papers included direct quotes from individuals, almost none of those interviewed admitted to taking part in the uprising. Eyewitness accounts in both eras relied on those who were portrayed as bystanders and innocent victims of the event, but rarely with those who admitted an active role. One exception in 1967 was the *Detroit Free Press* survey of the individuals in the area, some of whom admitted to playing an active role in the uprising. However, the newspaper did not talk directly to these individuals; rather, it worked with a local organization that utilized blacks to take the surveys. One additional article related a reporter's conversation with an admitted "sniper."

In 2007, no such conversations took place. While there were a number of eyewitness accounts of the uprising, none of them included individuals who stated they were part of the event. Most were accounts of their experiences as others took part. For example, *The Detroit News* relayed four separate accounts, only one of which seemed to connect with the participants. *The Detroit Free Press* also included similar accounts; however, its coverage focused more on the witnesses' lives since the uprising.

The white voice versus the diverse voice. Coverage is often a reflection of the voices behind the printed word. Much of the 1967 coverage was told from the perspective of white opinion leaders. As stated above, whites in position of authority were often the ones quoted in news stories, and the vast majority of reporters telling those stories were also white. On a few rare occasions, the black perspective came through in the coverage. These occasions included coverage of the death of four-year-old Tonya Lynn Blanding.

The 1967 coverage of the uprising included countless references to race. However, race-related coverage was almost exclusively told from the perspective of whites. At times, this perspective was subtle: for example, simply using the words "alleged" when reporting on

potential police misdeeds. Blacks were rarely given the benefit of the doubt when it came to guilty actions. However, when covering the actions of authorities, the newspapers were clearly much more respectful in their coverage by using such qualifying words. At other times, the perspective was blatant. The vast majority of direct quotes were attributed to whites, particularly whites in positions of authority.

In one of the few instances where the black perspective could be expressed, the *Detroit Free Press* worked with a local organization to survey blacks in Detroit. However, even the coverage of the survey was filtered through a white lens. For example, in reporting on the survey results, the *Free Press* reported that blacks overwhelmingly blamed the uprising on mistreatment by police. However, the paper included a description of police brutality that included a policeman waving to a white man and not a black man. In addition, the paper chose to report that most respondents did not admit to being victims of police brutality themselves. The inclusion of such qualifiers seemed to diminish the impact of what many saw as serious violations of human rights and raised the question of how those who did not experience the mistreatment themselves could account for it.

The 2007 coverage was much more balanced, allowing for both a white and a black perspective. Direct quotes included black and white leaders and members of the community. In fact, at times it seemed as though the papers went out of their way to ensure a balanced approach. For example, *The Detroit News*'s coverage included eyewitness accounts.

Much of the coverage related to the 40th anniversary of the Detroit uprising centered on race and its lingering effects on the region. However, unlike the 1967 coverage, the 2007 coverage included the black perspective. The Detroit papers took the issue head on, including references to race not only in articles, but consistently throughout the headlines as well. For

example, *The Detroit News* ran a series of articles under the headline “Detroit’s Racial Divide: 40 Years Later.” On the front page of the paper, the series kicked off with a lengthy two-page article titled “Together, Yet Still Apart” and subtitled “Attitudes soften, but blacks, whites see bias differently” (Rodriguez, 2007b). The article, which was the beginning of *The Detroit News*’s “two-day look at progress in racial perceptions and quality of life,” was based on results of the same survey conducted 20 years apart. The first was conducted for the 20th anniversary of the Detroit uprising in 1987; the second was conducted for the 40th anniversary in 2007.

The article includes a large graphic depicting a double silhouette: one, white on a black background; the other, black on a white background. Superimposed over the graphic are four bar graphs showing that more whites preferred to live in an evenly mixed neighborhood in 2007 than in 1987. However, the number was still below 50 percent. Meanwhile, the number of blacks who reported that they preferred to live in a mixed neighborhood remained relatively unchanged, and was still high. Eighty-one percent of blacks answered affirmatively in 2007, compared with 80 percent in 1987. On the other hand, when asked whether job opportunities were equal for blacks and whites, 72 percent of whites answered affirmatively in both 1987 and 2007. Twenty-nine percent of blacks agreed with the statement in 1987, but that number dropped to 23 percent in 2007 (Rodriguez, 2007b). The analysis demonstrated that “blacks see stubborn or worsening discrimination where most whites don’t believe it exists—in jobs, housing and justice” (Rodriguez, 2007b).

Additional survey results in *The Detroit News* demonstrated that blacks reported a very different reality from whites. Not only did blacks believe that discrimination still existed, but they said their treatment by police and the court system had actually worsened in the previous 20 years. In addition, the paper’s survey results indicated that whites preferred to live in white

neighborhoods. Forty-three percent of whites polled said they would prefer to live in an all-white or mostly white neighborhood (Rodriguez, 2007b). At the same time, the paper noted that upper-income black families were moving out of traditional black neighborhoods in search of better amenities and schools for their children.

The article also included five maps, showing the changing face of metro Detroit. The maps were divided by decade and demonstrated “white flight” beginning with the 1950s. By the 1970s, the city of Detroit had become a majority-black city, with 1.1 million fewer white residents than just two decades earlier. However, the following decade showed a moving trend for blacks as well. The 1980s were the last decade in which the black population in Detroit grew. Ten years later, the demographics in Detroit were backsliding. The Detroit population in the 1990s fell below 1 million for the first time since the Great Depression (Rodriguez, 2007b).

The article also included 11 graphs depicting various questions and results from the 1987 and 2007 surveys. The graphs showed more tolerance and social acceptance between blacks and whites, but clearly divided views on equality in housing, jobs, and education. Ultimately, the coverage demonstrated some changing attitudes, but the amount of change depended on the question and the race of the respondent. While strides had been made in racial relations, the poll showed that there was still work to do, as demonstrated by one quote contained within the article. A white respondent said, “I work out in the suburbs. . . . There is a thin veneer of acceptability (toward blacks) and that’s it. People don’t use the N-word like they used to. They are cordial, but that’s it” (Rodriguez, 2007b).

The newspapers reported that the disparity of information offered to young people of both races accounted for differing perceptions. For example, in one article, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick indicated that blacks and whites may have been told different things about the

uprising: “I’m sure kids in Macomb County who are 35 now heard about it in a different way,” Kilpatrick said. ‘How the neighborhood used to be good, then black folks came in and tore everything up. How the riots drove them away’” (Henderson, 2007). However, the Detroit papers indicated that with each passing generation, a new reality sets in. In 2007, young whites were venturing into the city to engage in fun. They were creating their own reality of Detroit.

Coverage of uprising-related deaths. Both 1967 and 2007 coverage included references to those who died during the uprising. The 1967 coverage included several articles related to deaths. Most of the dead were described by their reported actions, such as looting or sniping, during the uprising. It was implied that those individuals died as a result of their own actions. At the same time, with few exceptions, the authorities involved in the deaths were seemingly absolved of any responsibility in those deaths.

However, the 2007 coverage was not as kind to the authorities. The *Free Press* reported that of the 11 people shot and killed by the Guard, nine were innocent of committing any crimes. In addition, instead of listing each fatality separately, the 2007 coverage grouped fatalities by the manner in which they died. For example, the *Free Press* also indicated that 30 people were “killed” by police or the military, while “citizens” killed three people.

Episodic versus Thematic Framing

In addition to shifts in the demographic makeup of newsrooms and the community as a whole, another explanation for the framing transition lies in the manner in which the uprising was covered. There are two news frames that affect issues related to causality: episodic and thematic.

1967: Episodic framing. One of the major differences in coverage between 1967 and 2007 was the framing focus utilized. The coverage in 1967 was more episodic, meaning that it

focused on individuals or individual events. In addition, because it was detailing a specific event, it rarely included historical data or a detailed description of historical significance. The majority of articles did not include photographs, and when they did, it was often simply a headshot of a character in the text. However, in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, the papers did include visually dynamic photographs. Many of the photos were street-level pictures, depicting either masses of people, smoke-filled streets, and police or National Guardsmen with large, imposing weapons or the tanks in which they were riding. A few photos focused on the clean-up efforts.

The Detroit articles in 1967 never included pie charts or graphs, but they did on occasion rely on maps depicting crime scenes or locations of incidents related to the uprising. The one instance where the papers relied heavily on diagrams used to recreate a crime scene was in the case of the Algiers Motel incident. Numerous diagrams were used to describe where bodies were found and where bullet holes appeared.

Another example of episodic framing was the papers' use of death reports. Many of the deaths related to the uprising were treated as individual occurrences. While the newspapers kept a running tally of the deaths, they often reported on each one as a separate, almost isolated occurrence. This was particularly true of those deaths that were reported as victims of the event. For example, Krikor Messerlian, Helen Hall and four-year-old Tanya Lynn Blanding received individualized focus by the newspapers. Consistent with an episodic frame, specific articles were written, devoted only to the individuals in question.

Furthermore, the coverage of the Algiers Motel incident is another example of an episodic frame. The Algiers event became a story within a story and was covered as its own incident. Aubrey Pollard, Carl Cooper and Fred Temple were first reported as snipers who had

been killed by police. However, rumors began to circulate among the African American community, and reporters began to question the official report of the deaths. Articles regarding the incident began to describe in detail the events of that evening using witness reports and computer generated visuals. The papers also became involved in the investigation by tracking down witnesses and linking them with investigators. For example, *The Detroit News's* Joseph Strickland, a black reporter, tracked down Robert Greene, a witness in the Algiers Motel. After speaking with Greene, the *Detroit News* chartered a plane, and flew Assistant Prosecutor Jesse Eggleton and Detective Charles Schlachter to Kentucky to interview Greene.

Episodic frames tend to hold individuals responsible for overcoming the circumstance, rather than society or government. Language used by the newspapers in covering the 1967 uprising suggested that the “looters,” “rioters,” and “snipers” were responsible for their actions. Blame assignment was attributed to blacks in general, and the “militant black” specifically. The inclusion of the militant black was a method of negating local responsibility for the uprising by suggesting that outside forces were responsible for inciting local actors. The militant black was considered agitators engaged in a national conspiracy to subvert laws and instigate racial instability. Like the “looters,” “rioters” and “snipers,” the militant black was considered outside of society.

In addition to reporting that the uprising may be instigated by outside factors, the Detroit newspapers also focused on the Detroit event as part of a national trend. Considered a “model city” when it came to race relations, the City of Detroit was said to be the last place that a “riot” should take place. Blacks in Detroit were reportedly serving in city leadership, earned more money than their counterparts in the south, and held important jobs. The Detroit uprising was

painted as a piece of a national movement. Essentially, the event was simply a condition of a larger, national phenomenon.

As days turned into weeks, the focus turned from the militant black to individuals who were “caught in the moment.” Again, consistent with the episodic frame, the newspapers chose to focus on describing individuals and their specific actions. *The Detroit News* described three such individuals, all of whom were by all accounts considered upstanding members of society before the uprising.

2007: Thematic framing. As one would expect of retrospective reporting, the coverage in 2007 was thematic in nature. Utilizing the benefit of 40 years of history, the 40th anniversary coverage framed the event in a larger context, which included references to a number of social significant themes. Rather than detail a specific event, this coverage included descriptive analysis of historically relevant information, evidenced by the use of graphs, charts and timelines. The 2007 coverage, particularly in *The Detroit News*, was filled with these items, depicting historical references. For example, *The Detroit News* coverage included 12 pie charts, 21 graphs, five maps and one historical timeline.

However, it is important to note that the detailed history tended to focus on events from 1967 to 2007. Rarely did these depictions include information that preceded the 1967 uprising. One exception to this was the inclusion of a timeline of race relations. *The Detroit News*' timeline began with the 1943 race riot in Detroit and spanned seven decades.

Two of the pie charts were devoted to the educational gap (Rodriguez, 2007c). In an article about the educational inequities between suburban and city schools, these visuals were used to demonstrate the district racial breakdown between suburban Birmingham, which is 87 percent white, and Detroit, which is 90 percent black.

Four pie charts were devoted to leadership roles of African Americans, which demonstrated how blacks and whites view black leaders, including Kwame Kilpatrick (Lee & Nichols, 2007). In another article, two pie charts demonstrated the responses between blacks and whites regarding perceived economic progress for African Americans (Wilkinson et al., 2007). Four additional pie graphs demonstrated the difference in perceptions of the justice system between blacks and whites in both 1987 and 2007. The graphs demonstrate “blacks are increasingly suspicious of the justice system, with more believing they are treated worse than whites by police” (Nichols & Lee, 2007).

In addition to the pie charts, there were 21 separate graphs. Most of them highlighted results from a survey that was taken in 1987 and then again in 2007. The graphs show the changing perceptions, particularly among black and white respondents. According to *The Detroit News*, most of the graphs show “signs of more tolerance and social acceptance and less distrust between blacks and whites in Metro Detroit today. But views on inequality in housing, jobs, justice and the quality of education are as starkly divided today as they were 20 years ago” (Rodriguez, 2007b).

Another significant graph identified the percentages of whites and blacks’ perceptions of the words “riot” versus “rebellion.” Forty-nine percent of whites said, “the use of the word riot affects how people see events in a negative way” while the same percentage of blacks said “rebellion is a better word and affects how people see events in a positive way” (Rodriguez, 2007a).

The Detroit News also used maps to depict changing demographics in the City of Detroit. Five separate maps were used to show population shifts each decade, starting with 1950 – 1960 and ending with 1990 – 2000. Using color-coding, each map reflects the movement of whites

out of the city, and the eventual loss of over one million people from the city. Finally, *The Detroit News* used a timeline of “Highs, lows of race relations” in Metro Detroit (2007). The vertical timeline begins with the 1940s and ends with the 2000s. Included in the timeline are a number of major events, as well as eight photos.

While the *Free Press* did not use graphs and pie charts, it did utilize a map to show the “locations of the disturbance.” In addition, it utilized a timeline of events of the Detroit uprising and a section titled “the riot by the numbers,” which included the number of people who died, those injured, arrested, and damages.

Thematic framing means that blame is more likely to be attributed to government or official sources, as opposed to individuals. The 2007 coverage suggested that societal inequities and a white dominated power structure in 1967 led to the uprising. The newspapers highlighted discriminations against blacks in housing and jobs, as well as police harassment.

In addition, the 2007 coverage included historical references to social inequities that continued forty years later. For example, both the newspapers highlighted educational disparities between majority-white areas and majority-black areas. According to the newspapers, children in the city of Detroit are subjected to sub-standard schools, and often lack basic classroom necessities. For example, students are forced to share books and class sizes are much larger in urban schools. Consistent with the thematic frame, the articles look at historical trends in educational attainment. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, educational attainment has increased for blacks, however, they still lag behind their white counterparts. In addition, the coverage includes statistics related to demographic differences between urban and suburban schools.

Why We See the Difference

While there have been a number of scholarly articles and books written on framing and framing effects, very few have engaged in a longitudinal study of framing. This dissertation is unique in that it identifies a frame from the 1967 uprising, and then follows the transition of that frame 40 years later. The following explains the transition from a riot frame to a rebellion frame.

Detroit: A community of change. Detroit in 2007 looked very different than it had 40 years earlier. In 2007, the population of Detroit had decreased significantly, and the demographics had changed, with the city becoming predominantly black. In 2007, Detroit was one of the poorest cities in America, with high levels of unemployment. The landscape of the city was lined with abandoned homes and burned-out buildings. The leadership of the city was vastly different as well. The city was served under the leadership of its third black mayor, a young man in his early 30s by the name of Kwame Kilpatrick. Yet, southeast Michigan was routinely rated as one of the most segregated regions in the country (Rodriguez, 2007b).

The language used to describe the people and places in Detroit had changed considerably from 1967 to 2007, as well. The word “negro” was all but retired, replaced with the label “African American.” In addition, the makeup of those reporting on the uprising also changed. In 1967, diversity in the newsroom was almost nonexistent, with few black or female reporters. In the 1960s, there were virtually no blacks working in newsrooms (Nacos & Hritzuk, 2000). In fact, the Kerner Commission indicated that the media portrayed blacks as if they “do not read the newspapers or watch television, give birth, marry, die, go to PTA meetings” (p. 383). The commission recommended integrating newsrooms to present a more balanced view of America. In the coverage of the 1967 Detroit uprising, there was only one black reporter whose work was highlighted in the Detroit dailies.

By 2007, the demographics of the newsroom had changed, and reporters had become more representative of the population on which they were reporting. Many of the reporters and commentators reporting on the 40th anniversary were African American. In 2007, the American Society of News Editors found that nationally, the percentage of journalists in newsrooms who were members of minorities was 13.62 percent, a slight decline from the previous year. However, while the percentage of minorities in the newsroom had decreased, the total number of minority journalists had increased by about 200. In addition, minorities in 2007 accounted for nearly 11 percent of all newsroom supervisors. The two daily newspapers in Detroit, however, fared much better. Thirty percent of journalists in the *Detroit Free Press* were minorities (19.8 percent were black), and 27.7 percent of journalists in *The Detroit News* were minorities, with 17 percent of those being black (American Society of News Editors, 2007).

Perhaps the increased numbers in Detroit reflected the focus on Detroit newsroom leaders. In 2008, Ceasar Andrews, executive editor of the *Detroit Free Press*, served as the Diversity Chair of the American Society of News Editors. The ASNE's goal at that time was to have the percentage of minorities working in the newsroom equal the nation's minority population by 2025 (Huang, 2008). However, there was still room for improvement. Kelley and Mills (2003) found that minority reporters often reported feeling discriminated against by the newsroom leaders.

While the makeup of the newsroom changed, so did the readership of the newspapers. In 1967, newspaper readers were actively living the event. Many of them were in a position to witness the event, and those who were not were able to speak with others in that position. In 2007, many of the readers were either born after 1967 or were not from the Detroit area originally. Therefore, their perspective of the event was being shaped, in part, by the coverage.

In addition, there was a vast change in social attitudes in 2007. Following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, previously acceptable belief systems and behaviors became intolerable. Blatant racism was considered unacceptable, although some would argue that racism still existed, only in a form much more hidden from daily existence. As a result of these conditions, the manner of coverage makes the emergence of the “rebellion” frame more understandable.

Blacks in leadership positions. At the same time, the political leadership in Detroit also changed dramatically. In 1967, the relatively young mayor of Detroit, while considered progressive, was white, as all the mayors before him had been. The governor of Michigan was also a white male. In 2007, however, the mayor of Detroit was a young African American male named Kwame Kilpatrick, who served as the third consecutive black mayor of Detroit. The governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm, was the first woman to hold this position. In addition, many blacks now held positions of power in and around the city of Detroit, including members of city council, the police chief, and administrative appointees.

In fact, the demographic makeup of leadership was highlighted in coverage of the 40th anniversary; thus, the coverage itself contributed to an explanation of the transition in frames. During the 40 years since the uprising, the political power structure in Detroit had changed from white-led to a majority black power structure. The 1967 coverage showed just a few examples of blacks in leadership roles (e.g., Arthur Johnson and John Conyers), but the 2007 coverage demonstrated that African Americans had gained vastly expanding leadership roles in a number of realms, including law and government. “Six years after the 1967 Detroit disturbance, Detroiters for the first time elected an African American mayor in Coleman Young, triggering the city’s shift to a majority black power structure from one that had been reserved for whites” (Lee & Nichols, 2007). The *Michigan Chronicle* praised Coleman Young for his work on behalf

of the region's African American population. "If he is remembered as a legend, it is because of his strong Black identity and how he conveyed that message throughout his 20-year tenure as Mayor" (Thompson, 2007a). In addition, Young appointed blacks to positions previously held only by whites, a "testament to his tenacity" (Thompson 2007a). That trend continued, and in 2007, eight of nine Detroit City Council members were black, the mayor was black, and most top city aides were black.

The inclusion of African Americans in the newsroom and positions of power meant that the voices of black citizens were much better represented in the media in 2007. Nichols (2007) indicated that a significant difference between 2007 and 1967 was the fact that there were "established black statesmen who can readily respond and effect change." Some of the leaders the paper pointed to were, surprisingly, the same leaders who were trying to quell the violence during the 1967 uprising, including Judge Damon J. Keith and U.S. Rep. John Conyers.

CHAPTER 5 “CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH”

This dissertation is unique in that it utilizes framing analysis through a longitudinal study. As outlined in chapter 1, a number of framing-related scholarly articles have been published over the past 20 years. However, this author has not been able to identify any that look at transitions in frames over time, particularly over a four-decade period. Therefore, this dissertation adds a new and relatively uncharted dimension to framing research.

This dissertation has attempted to answer three primary research questions:

- What are the dominant frames and subframes related to the 1967 uprising as they were presented in 1967 media texts?
- What are the frames associated with the 1967 uprising as they were presented in 2007 media texts?
- What are some possible explanations for the changes, or lack thereof, of dominant media frames as they were presented in 1967 and in 2007?

The dominant frames and subframes related to the 1967 uprising as they were presented in contemporary media texts were addressed in the second chapter. Descriptions related to those who took part in the uprising, the targets, and even those who perished indicated that the uprising followed a master “riot” frame. Blacks were clearly described as the aggressors, and white business owners were depicted as the targets or victims of the aggressors. Language pertaining to those who died as a result of the uprising also tended to follow the notion that blacks were the aggressors and that many who died did so as a result of their own actions.

In addition, this dissertation outlined how the 1967 coverage attempted to introduce the causes of the uprising. First, the idea of Detroit as a model city was introduced, leading to the conclusion that the causes that might explain uprisings in other cities were not relevant in

Detroit. For example, it was widely accepted by many whites that blacks in Detroit were more affluent than those in the South, had access to better jobs, and played a part in the city's power structure. Therefore, the Detroit uprising was painted as part of a national phenomenon, as opposed to a local issue; and many expressed the idea that it was led by outside organizers, who became known as "the militant black." Many of the participants in the uprising were described as ordinary citizens who were simply caught up in the moment. At the same time, the newspaper coverage acknowledged that there were social issues that might also explain some of the anger expressed during the uprising. These social issues included racial inequities in housing, employment, and education, which left many blacks feeling alienated from society. Perhaps the most pronounced social ill was related to issues of police brutality, examples of which were evident before and during the uprising. Even so, the social causes were not enough to overcome the blame assigned to the participants themselves.

Ultimately, analysis of the 1967 coverage concluded that the 1967 uprising was framed as a "riot." The language used to ascribe blame and responsibility followed the frame. Surprisingly, however, the inclusion of social causes indicated that the frame was unstable and opened the door for a reframing of the event.

This leads to the second research question: What are the frames associated with the 1967 uprising as they were presented in 2007 media texts? Analysis of the 2007 coverage of the 40th anniversary of the Detroit uprising indicated that the word "riot" was far from retired; however, the language used to describe blame assignment and causes more closely matched a "rebellion" master frame. As in the 1967 coverage, causes were attributed to social inequities, including housing, education, and police brutality. In addition, media coverage indicated that the white

power structure that had existed in 1967 was blamed for much of the systematic discrimination that took place during that era.

The 2007 coverage also included mentions of fatalities; however, in contrast to the 1967 coverage, those who died were not necessarily blamed for their own deaths. Instead, the papers indicated that many of the deaths were needless. In addition, the coverage focused on the current impact of the uprising on Detroit, which included economic insecurity. At the same time, the coverage was used to debunk what the papers saw as myths related to the 1967 uprising, such as the impact on white flight. The coverage included benefits associated with the uprising, such as the founding of groups devoted to strengthening race relations. A review of the 2007 coverage concluded that the frame was in the process of transitioning from “riot” to “rebellion,” with an additional element related to defining the impact of the uprising on modern-day Detroit.

Possible explanations for the changes, or lack thereof, in dominant media frames as they were presented in 1967 and in 2007 can be found in the coverage itself. Coverage in both 1967 and 2007 included police brutality as a major influence in the uprising; however, the coverage differed in a number of areas. For example, the 1967 coverage relied primarily on official sources, such as elected officials. The 2007 coverage, on the other hand, focused primarily on non-official sources. Therefore, the perspective behind the explanations for individual actions changed dramatically.

Perhaps this explains why the 1967 coverage primarily reflected a white voice, while the 2007 coverage included diverse voices. One example of this shift is reflected in the coverage of uprising-related deaths. In 1967, fatalities were often described as justified. Most of the dead were described by their reported actions, with the implication that they had caused their own demise. In 2007, however, many of the deaths were reported very differently. Many of the dead

were described as having been “killed” by authorities and as having been innocent of any crimes, as reported by the newspapers.

A Frame in Transition

The analysis conducted as a result of this dissertation confirmed that the 1967 Detroit uprising is in the process of a frame transition. By engaging in a longitudinal study of frame analysis, this dissertation has demonstrated the means by which a frame may transition over time, including highlighting the unstable structure of the original frame. The 1967 coverage included depictions of social inequities, which served as the base for introducing an evolution of the frame. Without the use of a longitudinal study, this base might have been missed or disregarded as part of the original frame. It was only by reviewing the original “riot” frame in the process of analyzing longer-term outcomes that the author was able to identify the original instability.

Furthermore, the transition of the frame may be explained by demographic changes in newsrooms and among positions of power. In 1967, African Americans were almost nonexistent in American newsrooms. By 2007, nationally, the number of black journalists had increased significantly, although it was still not representative of the population as a whole. In Detroit, the numbers were higher than the national figures, but still far below the Detroit population. Along the same lines, blacks were now represented in positions of political leadership. In 1967, very few blacks held positions of leadership in the so-called white power structure. Forty years later, black leadership was predominant in the city of Detroit. The city’s mayor was black, as was the majority of the city council.

The transition of the “riot” frame to the “rebellion” frame may be explained by the differences in coverage, including movement from episodic framing to thematic framing. The

1967 coverage followed an episodic frame in that coverage was focused on individual events and actors. In 2007, the coverage followed a thematic frame by including historical references, timelines, and recollections. It is not surprising that the 40th anniversary coverage included a more thematic focus, because this coverage had the benefit of hindsight and 40 years of data collection. It may be the case that retrospective coverage is naturally inclined toward the thematic, and that the coverage would therefore follow this pattern regardless of demographic changes. Future research may reveal whether this is indeed a natural pattern.

Limitations of This Project

This dissertation presents a new focus for framing analysis. It serves as an initial pilot project, aimed at identifying long-term transitioning of frames. Therefore, it serves as a basis for further research. This project is not without its limitations.

First, because of the volume of articles involved, it was decided to limit the research to local print media. This allowed for an in-depth analysis of the content. However, this should be seen as a first step. A comparison of these results to national coverage or additional media would add significantly to the outcomes. An analysis that included national media, as well as television coverage, would add to the depth of the conclusions and bring a visual dynamic to the frames.

In addition, data collection for this dissertation involved two steps. First, the author traveled to the Johnson Presidential Library. Contained within the archives of the library were a number of files that included actual media clips from the 1967 Detroit uprising. The author took digital photos of each clip that fell within the guidelines of the study. In addition, the author collected and stored actual newspapers that included coverage of the 40th anniversary. The reason for both of these actions was to ensure that the author was using hard copies of articles.

This allowed the author to view photographs as they originally appeared, as well as captions and any other information that may have appeared in the newspapers.

With that being said, the data collection relied on articles collected more than 40 years ago by what appeared to be a media clipping service and stored in the depths of the Johnson Presidential Library. It is possible that this collection may not contain some printed materials that appeared at the time. However, the frames described in this study emerged from the content of the numerous articles that were present. It is unlikely that additional materials would change the basic contours of these findings.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that this is a textual study. Druckman and Nelson (2003) found that interpersonal communication can have a mitigating effect on framing effects. This dissertation analyzed media texts and makes conclusions based on those media frames. However, it is impossible to quantify what effect interpersonal communications may have had in altering or reinforcing media frames in both 1967 and 2007. Absent personal interviews, which could only be retrospective now in any case, this possible mediating effect cannot be usefully discussed.

Most importantly, as is often the case with rhetorical analysis, this body of work is as much a reflection of the author as it is the text. I was born after the 1967 Detroit uprising, and grew up in a rural town in Southeast Michigan, where I was exposed to stories of the uprising that always reflected a “riot frame.” Years later, I worked in the city and began to question the view with which I was exposed regarding Detroit and the origins of its problems. In addition to my perspective, Southeast Michigan continues to be one of the most racially segregated areas in the country. Views are often expressed differently dependent on the region in which one lives,

and thus one's experiences and sources of information. I am a product of this environment, and have watched it closely.

Others, with a separate perspective, may approach the topic differently. The question is to what extent these perspectives alter the outcome of this analysis. For those that choose to make use of the Protocol, their experiences, viewpoints and values may still lead them to an alternate conclusion. Further, a difference in perspective may lead a researcher to approach the study utilizing a different method altogether. Some may choose a content analysis, others a metaphoric study. By structuring this analysis with such methods, additional authors may be able to delve deeper into specific issues related to the uprising. Similar to any analysis, the chosen method is, therefore, a potential limitation to the study.

A further limitation of a frame analysis is that it does not allow the study to analyze the symbolic importance of the event. The 1967 Detroit uprising continues to be a defining moment for the Southeast Michigan region. The event carries very significant symbolism for many Detroiters and Suburbanites. For many, it is still seen as the deciding event that forced many to leave the city. Similar events in other cities may not carry the same symbolic weight. As structured, this analysis did not allow for an in-depth examination of those underlying emotions.

Future Research

Future research on shifts in frames could also usefully focus on similar historical events. Could similar results be found from other regions that also experienced racially emotive events in the 1960s? For example, Watts, Newark, and Buffalo all experienced uprisings prior to Detroit. Have they commemorated the anniversaries? And, if so, has the frame altered in those locations as well? Similar activities from the 1960s could also provide insightful comparisons. For example, the 1968 Democratic National Convention has been richly documented and

continues to be framed today. The Chicago event included a series of demonstrations, which some label “riots,” between activists, the Chicago police, and the Illinois National Guard. Has the framing related to this event altered as well?

Similarly, a future research topic could include a comparison of coverage related to the 1943 Detroit riot and the 1967 Detroit uprising. In 1943, Detroit was home to a deadly “race riot.” Like the 1967 Detroit uprising, this event included the militarization of the National Guard to quell the violence. A comparison of coverage would allow the researcher to follow the same newspapers at completely different times in history.

A guide for future research. While the overall priority of this dissertation is to study the 1967 uprising in the context of framing over time, it is the desire of the author that this work may also serve as a guide for future research in this area. To this end, the protocol developed during this research is provided here (see Appendix). The protocol was used as a guide to identify emerging themes through the text. For this dissertation, the author captured information from each article, and segmented each based on similar themes. While a quantitative coding scheme was not used per se, the protocol allowed for the identification and grouping of multiple framing devices. By including the protocol, it is intended for future researchers to update and refine the tool. Creating an instrument that can be applied in other studies and further developed will, I hope, strengthen future qualitative research related to framing. In this way, this dissertation reveals the benefits of fuller descriptions of methodology and encourages future researchers to utilize this framing protocol and build on its findings.

APPENDIX**Protocol**

Newspaper ID number:

Author:

Newspaper:

Date of newspaper report:

Year:

Page and Section:

Headline:

Type of Article:

- a. Straight
- b. Commentary/opinion
- c. Unknown

Short Description of the article:

Location of frame:

- a. Headline/subheadline/opening sentence
- b. Body
- c. Other
- d. N/a

Source/agency cited:

Subject matter(s) of article:

- a. Race
- b. Economic factors
- c. Crime/Police
- d. Legal
- e. Justice
- f. War
- g. Other

Who or what is considered the aggressor?

- a. Rioters
- b. Blacks
- c. Whites
- d. Society
- e. Other

Definition of the problem?

Descriptions of blame?

Key phrases present:

How is the word “riot” used?

How is the word “rebellion” used?

Framing Devices

Metaphor

Exemplar

Catch-phrases

Depictions

Visual images

Roots

Consequences

Appeals to principles

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ABSTRACT**RIOT OR REBELLION: MEDIA FRAMING AND THE 1967 DETROIT UPRISING**

by

CASANDRA E. ULBRICH**August 2011****Advisor:** Dr. Mary Garrett**Major:** Communication**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

Frames make sense of complex issues and events, including identifying who is to blame and who or what is responsible for overcoming the problem. This research builds on the growing list of framing research, but takes the focus in a new direction, focusing on the longevity of frames and how they may transition over time. This dissertation offers an in-depth case study of framing effects by analyzing media coverage from the 30 days following the 1967 Detroit uprising and comparing that coverage with the 40th anniversary coverage of the same event. By analyzing the uprising through a 40-year lens, this dissertation embarks on an area that has not been addressed in framing research: the long-term implications of framing and reframing a significant event. In addition, the research offers an instrument for future framing research.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I am the first in my family to earn a college degree, a fact that has made a tremendous difference in my life. As such, I have devoted my career to ensuring that the next generation has the same access and opportunity. After earning a Bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Michigan, I worked for U.S. House Democratic Whip David Bonior, including serving as press secretary. However, a desire to earn an advanced degree brought me to seek employment at Wayne State University (WSU) in Detroit, Michigan.

In 2001, I joined WSU as an assistant director of development, working for Dean Linda Moore in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts. With Dean Moore's support, I began studying for a Master's degree in communication. Little did I know at the time that 10 years later I would be completing a Ph.D. while still working a full-time job at Wayne State University, promoted to serve as the university's director of corporate and foundation relations. In this position, I was responsible for raising funds for university priorities, including student scholarships and research.

At the same time, in 2006, I sought and was elected statewide to a position on the State Board of Education. I am currently serving an eight-year term on the State Board, and was recently elected by my colleagues as the vice president. The State Board of Education is responsible for overseeing all public K-12 education in Michigan, ensuring that the next generation of students is prepared for life and studies after high school.

In 2011, I left Wayne State University to accept a position as vice president of college advancement and community relations at Macomb Community College.