

Framing the French Riots: A Comparative Study of Frame Variation

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In an attempt to advance understanding of frame variation and the factors that account for it, we conduct a comparative study of how the Fall 2005 French “riots” were framed diagnostically and prognostically. We examine these framing activities across a diverse set of actors and assess the role of ideological, contextual, attributional and temporal factors hypothesized to account for the observed variation. The data come from a content analysis of articles on the French riots that appeared in newspapers from a half dozen countries during the period in which the riots occurred. Our findings, based primarily on variance and regression analyses, reveal varied support for our hypotheses, suggest the theoretical and analytical utility of examining frame variation beyond the French riots, and raise questions that call for further empirical inquiry regarding framing processes.

The frame concept was introduced into the social sciences by Gregory Bateson in 1955 and elaborated nearly 20 years later by Erving Goffman in *Frame Analysis* (1974). But the concept stimulated little theorizing or research until the mid-1980s when it formed the cornerstone for a framing perspective on social movements (Gamson et al. 1982; Snow et al. 1986) and was found to be of conceptual utility in research on political communication (Entman 1993). Within both contexts, research has focused primarily on the identification of movement- or event-relevant frames and their effects.¹ While both lines of research have contributed significantly to understanding the dynamics of social movements (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow 2004) and political communication, particularly in the context of the print media (Scheufele 1999), we know little about the factors that account for variation in frames, particularly with respect to the same event, object or issue. Additionally, there has been relatively little comparative research on framing.

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In this paper, we address both lacunae by conducting a comparative study of how different actors framed the Fall 2005 French riots in 12 newspapers in six countries over a three-week period, Oct. 27 through Nov. 18.² An overview of the riots is followed by a discussion of the relevant framing issues and theoretical considerations and hypotheses. Data base and sampling considerations are discussed along with coding procedures, the operationalization of variables and analytic procedures. We then review our findings and their implications for a more general understanding of framing processes.

The French Riots of 2005

In the early evening of Oct. 27, 2005, three teenagers climbed the wall of a high-voltage electrical substation in a rundown section of the northern Paris banlieue (suburb) called Clichy-sous-Bois, populated mainly by first- and second-generation immigrants from Northern Africa. The youths reportedly jumped the substation wall in order to take refuge from the police, who they thought were chasing them for fleeing a police identity inspection. Whatever the precise motivation for trying to hide in the substation, two of the teenagers were electrocuted and the third was injured. They were discovered shortly afterwards when the police noticed, while interrogating other youth they had brought back to a station house for suspected burglary of a nearby construction site, that the station computer screens had blacked out and that there were nearby power failures.

News of the deaths was quickly disseminated, prompting some Clichy-sous-Bois youth to take to the streets to burn cars and engage in various acts of vandalism. This reportedly set in motion what *Time* described as "a rolling wave of nightly clashes between young Arabs and French riot police that leapfrogged across the suburbs of Paris," eventually reaching "as far east as Dijon and south to Marseilles." (Graff 2005:37) The rioting unfolded over the course of 20 nights, ending on Nov. 17 when the police "declared a return to a normal situation throughout France," saying that the 98 vehicles torched the previous night corresponded to the usual average." (Wikipedia 2005:1) All told, the rioting resulted in 2,888 arrests, 126 injured police and 8,973 burned vehicles (Wikipedia 2005:1).

Not only did the riots attract world-wide media attention, but that attention went well beyond descriptive reportage to consideration of questions about causes and solutions, such as: What prompted this wave of civil unrest in France? On whom or what can it be blamed? What can be done to prevent its reoccurrence? And who is responsible for remedying the underlying problems? In short, much of the discussion, particularly in the print media, involved framing the riots, with particular emphasis

on what is referred to as diagnostic and prognostic framing within the framing perspective on social movements.

Theoretical Issues and Orientation

Framing refers to interpretive, signifying work that renders events and occurrences subjectively meaningful. This conceptualization, borrowed from Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), is rooted in the symbolic interactionist principle that meanings do not automatically attach themselves to the objects, events or experiences we encounter. They arise, instead, through interpretive processes mediated by various contextual factors. Applied to all varieties of social phenomena, the idea of framing problematizes the meanings associated with relevant events, activities, places and actors, suggesting that those meanings are variably contestable and negotiable and thus open to debate and differential interpretation. The product of framing processes are interpretive frames, which function, like picture frames, to focus attention by bracketing and punctuating what in our sensual field is relevant and irrelevant, what is "in-frame" and "out-of-frame." They also function as articulation mechanisms by linking together the highlighted elements of the event or setting such that one set of meanings rather than another is conveyed. And they sometimes perform a transformative function by reconstituting the way in which some objects of attention are understood as relating to each other, as in the transformation of everyday misfortunes into injustices in the context of social movements. By suggesting that our action towards things is partly contingent on how they are framed, these functions also highlight the importance of understanding the determinants of frame variation: what is done in relation to events like riots depends in part on the various ways they are framed and the relative salience of one framing vis-à-vis others.

Frames that define events as problematic and in need of control or repair, as in the context of social movements and events such as the riots, have been characterized in terms of the core framing tasks of "diagnostic," "prognostic" and "motivational" framing (Snow and Benford 1988). The former entails a diagnosis of some event or aspect of life as troublesome and in need of change, and the attribution of blame for the problem. Prognostic framing involves the articulation of a solution to the problem, including a plan of attack and frame-consistent tactics for carrying it out. Research has shown that both diagnostic and prognostic framing can generate considerable debate resulting in "frame disputes." (Benford 1993) The final core framing task, motivational framing, addresses the "free-rider" problem by articulating a rationale(s) for engaging in corrective activity (Snow and Benford 1988).

As we suggested earlier, the newspapers examined engaged principally in framing the French riots diagnostically and prognostically. Consequently, we focus on these two core framing activities with the descriptive objective of identifying the range of diagnostic and prognostic frames elaborated by different actors in the newspapers examined, and the analytic objective of accounting for variation in these frames.

To date, systematic examination of the factors that account for frame variations is rare among framing studies in the two substantive areas in which they are most prominent: the study of social movements and political communication. Within the former, there has been a plethora of framing research (for a summary, see Benford and Snow 2000, and Snow 2004), but the research has generally focused on the identification of mobilizing frames, on the factors that affect the development or production of frames (Cadena-Roa 2002; McCaffrey and Keys 2000; Rohlinger 2002), and on framing effects or outcomes (Cress and Snow 2000, Ferree et al. 2002; McCammon 2001). The scant research on frame variation has generally focused on changes in the way an issue or movement is framed from one point in time to another (Berbrier 1998; Ellingson 1995; Ferree et al. 2002), with even less attention devoted to variation in framing the same event across different actors. This research void is partly due to the dearth of comparative framing research. There are a few exceptions, but generally the comparisons have been across states, cities or movement organizations within the same country (Cress and Snow 2000; McCammon 2001), or, if cross-national, across only a couple of countries (Dimitrova and Stromback 2005; Ferree et al. 2002).

There is a good deal of research that examines the link between movements and the media, a relationship that Gamson and Wolfsfield (1993) call "transactional." Much of this research bears directly on framing, dating back to Gitlin's (1980) examination of the consequences of media coverage of the New Left. But like many framing studies, Gitlin's focus was on the framing effects of media coverage. Other research has examined how ideologically opposed movement organizations have strategically constructed media frames to garner coverage during critical moments in the abortion debate, and how those framing efforts are affected by factors such as organizational structure, organizational identity, media discursive opportunity structures and the standing of an SMO (Ferree et al. 2002; Koopmans 2004; Rohlinger 2002). But none of the studies working at the intersection of social movements and the media directly examine the factors that account for frame variation among more than two different actors.

The same lacunae also hold for research in political communication. For example, in a widely cited review article, Scheufele (1999:109) states that

"no evidence has yet been systematically collected about how various factors impact the structural qualities in news in terms of framing." Various scholars have called for more (cross-national) comparative research to fill this gap (Benson 2004; Esser and Pfetsch 2004). Probably the most noteworthy systematic cross-national research has focused on selected European Union related issues (De Vreese et al. 2001; De Vreese and Semetko 2004; Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). However, this work takes a very broad approach using generic frames at the level of the newspaper article, but does not look at divergent framing by different actors within the news item. Furthermore, there is more interest in the effects of news framing on public attitudes and perceptions than on the factors underlying cross-national or cross-time differences.

Our analytic objective in this paper, then, is to begin to fill the void in the framing literature regarding the conditions that account for frame variation. Four sets of theoretical considerations guide our investigation. The first set is ideological. The importance of ideology in relation to political orientation and action has long been accented by students of culture, political processes and social movements, ranging from Marx and Engels (1970) and Mannheim (1936) to Geertz (1973) and Zald (2000). In relation to media framing, the importance of government ideological position for newspaper framing is suggested by findings showing journalists' reliance on institutional, political resources, of which the government is generally the most important, a phenomenon that is labeled "indexing." (Bennett 1990) This selection bias is also found in protest event research that finds newspaper description bias favoring information from institutional resources (Smith et al. 2001). We thus expect the political ideology of both country and newspaper to shape the framing processes. At the micro level, it has been shown that individuals who are politically right are more deferential to authority and that such deference is a key feature of rightist ideology (Altemeyer 1988). For this reason, we hypothesize that in countries that are under rightist governments or in newspapers that are politically right, there will be a propensity to use state actors as sources and invoke non-structural/group-based attributions (blaming groups such as immigrants or youth). Furthermore, Budge et al. (2001) show that a rightist political ideology is associated with a greater tendency to focus on law-and-order solutions. Accordingly, we hypothesize that in countries and newspapers skewed to the right there will be more focus on short-term solutions, such as law and order.

The second set of theoretical considerations concern relevant contextual factors that can affect framing outcomes. Contextual trends such as unemployment and migration rates have long been posited as correlates of riots (Feagin and Hahn 1973) and have been speculatively

associated with the French riots. We examine these connections along with another set of contextual factors deriving from observations regarding the relationship between event proximity and the relative salience of the event or issue to different sets of actors. Media research suggests that event proximity is an important news value and is likely to increase the chance that the event will be covered and discussed in the media (Galtung and Ruge 1965). We thus hypothesize that as distance from the riots increases, the salience of the issue will decrease. In addition, we hypothesize that countries economically and politically more distant from the riots are more likely to engage in diagnostic framing (as opposed to prognostic framing) because such distance decreases the likelihood of being affected by the event and therefore reduces interest in the search for solutions.

The third orienting theoretical consideration is suggested by the attribution perspective in social psychology (Jones et al. 1972; Ross et al. 1977). Of particular relevance is the general proposition that the attribution of responsibility for events varies by, among other things, the actor's relationship to the event. Although attribution theory was developed with individuals in mind, we examine this proposition and the extent to which it applies to collective actors. Specifically, we hypothesize that countries less politically and economically proximate to the riots will be more likely to blame the state for the event. This hypothesis is consistent with the fundamental attribution error, which posits that individuals confronted with negative events are more likely to blame contextual factors; whereas those seeking to understand negative events happening to others are more likely to blame the affected individuals (Ross 1977). Extrapolating to the collective level, we hypothesize that the French should blame contextual factors for the riots and other countries should blame the French government itself. Yet, attribution theory would suggest that French state officials would be selective about the contextual factors targeted for blame. Accordingly, we hypothesize that state actors will be more likely to blame the riots on affected groups, such as immigrants and youth, and less likely to see themselves or their policies as responsible. Alternatively, other actors, such as opposition leaders, riot participants and international officials, will be more likely to blame the state.

The final orienting theoretical consideration is temporality. That "time matters," as Abbot (2001) argues, holds for the analysis of any social process or sequence, including framing processes, particularly when the focal event extends over time, as with the riots. Assuming that frames change over time with changes in the focal events or the competition of other events, we hypothesize that early in the career of an event the frame repertoire will be limited due to the novelty of the issue. However, we hypothesize that during the escalation of the event there will be a

proliferation of frames as the field of actors expands, with each actor attempting to make sense of the riots. Finally, as the event becomes less novel or begins to dissipate, we posit a crystallization of frames, with some level of consensus being reached. In addition, we hypothesize that the percentage of framing devoted to diagnosis will shift over time, with less diagnostic framing in the later weeks of the riot as the identification of solutions becomes the focal concern. Finally, earlier in the riots, there should be more short-term solutions offered which will be replaced by long term solutions in later weeks.

Data, Procedures and Methods

Data Source and Sample Selection

The data are derived from a content analysis of 418 articles on the French riots that appeared in 12 newspapers in six countries over a three-week period. We focus our analysis on this period because it covers the duration of the rioting, from its inception on Oct. 27 to official police declaration of its cessation on Nov. 17, 10 days after the rioting had peaked on Nov. 7. Figure 1 graphs the evolution and decline of the rioting, as measured in terms of the numbers of burned vehicles and arrests, and the total event framings in the 12 newspapers.

We chose to examine Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States based on three considerations. First, in addition to France we wanted several of the countries to be within the European Union. Additionally, we wanted several of the countries to be outside of the European Union but with sufficient longstanding historical and political ties to France to ensure more than passing reportage. And third, since our database contained foreign language newspapers, we were constrained by our language repertoire of Dutch, English, French and German. These three considerations mandated that we select our newspapers from the six countries listed above.

The selection of the two newspapers from each country was guided by three considerations. First, we wanted one of the papers to be national in scope and one more proximate and oriented to the national capital. We thought that capital-oriented newspapers might be more inclined to frame events in accord with state interests. Second, we were interested in selecting papers skewed in opposite directions on the Left/Right political continuum. And third, the selection of newspapers was constrained by their availability for inspection. LexisNexis was our newspaper search engine, and thus limited selection to those newspapers indexed by LexisNexis that also satisfied the two preceding criteria.

Article Selection and Coding

The data used for the construction of our dependent variables (framing characteristics) come from a content analysis of relevant articles in each of the 12 newspapers. Articles containing both the words "riot" or "riots" and "France" or "French," or the equivalents for each respective language, during the research period were selected from LexisNexis. Each of these articles was coded when 1.) the article mentioned the riots and 2.) contained at least one diagnostic or prognostic framing element.

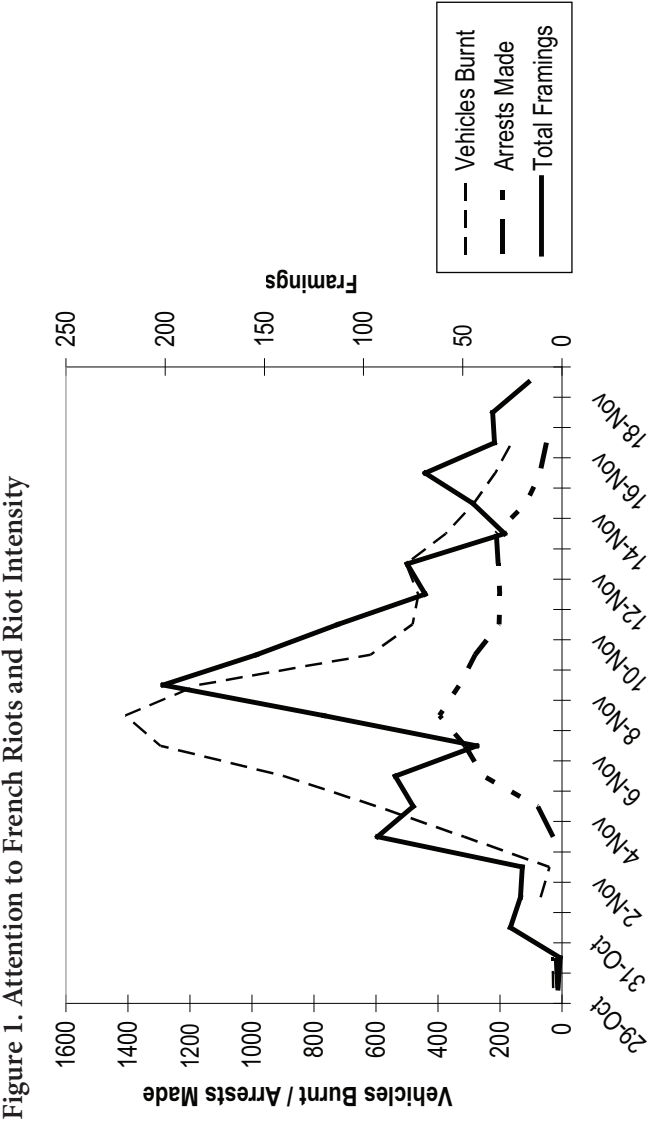


Table 1: Sample Newspapers and Number of Articles

Newspaper	Country	Political position	Orientation	Number of articles
Ottawa Citizen	Canada	left	Capital	25
National Post	Canada	right	National	19
Libération	France	left	National	37
Figaro	France	right	Capital	82
Süddeutsche Zeitung	Germany	left	National	55
Berliner Morgenpost	Germany	right	Capital	24
Parool	Netherlands	left	Capital	28
Telegraaf	Netherlands	right	National	22
Guardian	UK	left	National	33
London Times	UK	right	Capital	40
New York Times	US	left	National	27
Washington Times	US	right	Capital	26
Total				418

In order to ensure intercoder reliability among the three authors, who did all the coding, a number of procedures were followed. First, we coded a small sample of the same-language newspaper articles in order to reach consensus on an initial set of possible diagnostic and prognostic framing categories. We then refined those categories through group discussion. After establishing the final coding scheme, we each coded a small sample of the English newspaper articles for the purpose of calculating the degree of intercoder-reliability using Holsti's Intercoder Reliability Formula (1969).³ Overall reliability between each of the coders was more than .75.

A source was coded for each framing element. The source could be the journalist who wrote the article or any other actor who directly or indirectly addressed the riots in diagnostic or prognostic terms. We clustered sources into seven categories: media; members of French government except Nicolas Sarkozy, the French Minister of Internal Affairs;⁴ Sarkozy; French opposition; international actors; residents/participants; and other miscellaneous actors. The presence of a diagnostic framing element was indicated when one of the above sources made a statement that addressed the character of the problem. For the presentation of our results, we cluster the diagnostic elements into six major categories, the first three being non-structural categories or social groupings, and the second three being structural:

- *Riff-raff*: riots are senseless, criminal acts of violence rather than rooted in substantial structural problems or politics.⁵

- *Ethnic and religious minority groups*: riots are rooted in the character or culture of the ethnic or religious minorities that inhabit the suburbs.
- *Over-reaction of authorities*: riots are associated with the behavior of the police and government officials, especially Sarkozy, who referred to the rioters as "scum." (*New York Times*, Nov. 10, 2005)
- *Failure of minority incorporation*: riots are attributed to a perceived failure of the incorporation of minorities into French society.
- *Economy/education*: riots are attributed to economic conditions and associated high levels of unemployment and/or limited educational opportunities among suburban residents.
- *Housing*: riots are an outgrowth of the "miserable condition" of suburban housing.

A total of 825 diagnostic framing elements were coded. Additionally, we coded for the attribution of responsibility for the event to a certain actor (problem attribution). The following actors were distinguished: the French state in general, the current government, youth/criminals, police, immigrants, terrorists, religious groups, parents, and others. A total of 628 problem attributions were coded.

For coding of prognostic framing elements, which deal with the question of what needs to be done, we differentiate among six major prognostic frames:

- *Law and order*: restore order by suppressing the riots, if necessary with tough action by the police or military.
- *Action program*: address underlying social and economic problems, especially by targeting minority unemployment and discrimination in the labor market.
- *Better housing*: improve poor housing conditions in the French suburbs.
- *Limit immigration*: decrease the number of immigrants and close the border to certain groups of foreigners.
- *Raising children*: raise and educate children in the suburbs to be more responsible citizens.
- *Dialogue*: calls for talk among residents, participants, government officials, and the police to facilitate mutual understanding.

We coded 504 prognostic framing elements. We also coded, when mentioned, the actor that is, according to the source, responsible for the solution. We distinguished seven different responsible actors: government, police, parents, immigrants in general, participants in the riots, social welfare agencies, and others. A responsible actor was mentioned in 446 cases.

Dependent Variables

We are interested in 1.) differences in the *salience of the issue*, 2.) the *use of various sources* across contexts and time, and 3.) differences in *the way the issue is framed* across contexts (newspapers and countries), sources and time.

For cross-context and cross-time comparisons, the research period is divided into three separate weeks. The unit of analysis is every combination of newspaper and week. *Salience of the riots* is operationalized in line with the operationalization of visibility of social movement organizations by Vliegenthart et al. (2005). They introduce a formula, where the visibility-score is sub-linearly dependent upon the number of times the organization is mentioned in the article, whether this is in the headline or body of the text, the placement of the article within the newspaper (front page or not), and the circulation of the newspaper. We adjusted this formula slightly to make it suitable for our data and interest in making cross-newspaper comparisons. Instead of looking at the number of times the issue is mentioned, we used the number of framing elements (both diagnostic and prognostic) within a certain article and did not distinguish between headline and body of article, as it was extremely rare that the headline included a separate framing element. Furthermore, when making a comparison between the *content* of newspapers, circulation is not relevant. However, the size of the newspaper in terms of the total article content was taken into account in order to make a comparison between the relative attention given to the issues by the newspapers. Also included in the formula is a coefficient that controlled for the total number of articles in each newspaper during a random day halfway through the research period (Tuesday, November 8). These considerations result in the following operationalization:

$$(\text{Eq. 1}) \text{ visibility}_{\text{riots}} = \chi^2 \log(2 f(\text{framings})) * n_{\text{paper}} * fp$$

where $f(\text{framings})$ is the total framing elements in an article, n_{paper} is the coefficient controlling for newspaper size, and fp the place of the article in the newspaper (front page is weighed as 2; other pages as 1).

To determine the relative *use of the various sources*, we calculated the percentage of each source used in every week/newspaper-combination.

For the framing differences across contexts (newspapers and countries), sources, and time, the unit of analysis is each present combination of newspaper (that indirectly also encompasses country), time and source.

- *Percentage non-structural/group-related diagnosis of total diagnostic framing*: Diagnostic framing elements are divided into two categories: one encompassing non-structural/group-related diagnoses that include riff-raff frames, the over-reaction of authorities and ethnic or religious minority and/or immigrant groups; the other encompassing structural diagnostic framing pointing to deeper problems within society, including the perceived failure of the society's incorporation policies, economy/education problems, and housing problems attributed to the state or current government. For the "other" category, each separate framing element is classified into one of the two categories.
- *Percentage state-attribution of total attribution*: Actor-based attributions are sorted into two categories: one encompassing the authorities (the state, the current French government and police); the other including all other actors.
- *Percentage short term prognosis of total prognosis*: Prognostic framing elements fall into two categories: one encompassing short term solutions aimed at ending the rioting, captured by law and order framing; the other including all other framings with a long term prognosis.
- *Percentage state-responsibility of total responsibility*: This category differentiates between authorities, such as government, police and social welfare agencies, and all other actors.
- *Percentage diagnostic crystallization*: We look at the convergence of framing towards short-term/group-based diagnostic or structural framing. For each unit of analysis the difference between the relative uses of the two categories is calculated.
- *Percentage prognostic crystallization*: We look at the convergence of framing towards short-term or long-term prognostic framing. For each unit of analysis the difference between the relative uses of the two categories is calculated.
- *Percentage of diagnostic framing of total framing*: The percentage of the total framing that is diagnostic.

Independent Variables

Through analysis of the newspaper articles on the riots, we identify the range of frames elaborated and seek to account for frame variation by examining, in accordance with the previously discussed theoretical considerations and hypotheses, the relative influence of country/contextual variables, newspaper characteristics, temporal variation and framing source.

The contextual/country level variables included in this analysis are rates of unemployment and immigration, treated as control variables,⁶ and political and economic proximity to the event. An index of political and economic proximity was created by combining three separate measures. First, the voting behavior of the each of the countries during the United Nation's 60th General Assembly was examined. A correlation between each country's votes and France's votes was then calculated to assess the level of political congruence. Second, trade relations were examined, looking at the percentage of total imports from France by each of the sample countries. This was a proxy for economic proximity. Finally, European Union membership was coded: members of the EU and part of the euro-zone (1), EU members but not part of the euro-zone (0.5) and neither (0).

Finally, the political orientation of the actors examined (nations, newspapers and sources) and how it affects the way in which they frame the French riots is considered. Political ideology is coded according to the self-proclaimed political positioning of the political party or parties currently in government as left (-1), center (0) or right (1).

Analysis

The analyses are conducted in several steps, primarily using variance and regression analyses.⁷ For each of the independent variables, a univariate general linear model is conducted for the various clusters of independent variables (newspapers/countries⁸ and time for visibility and source selection; newspapers/countries, sources and time for framing variation). For the latter, two-way interaction terms between the three clusters are included. These analyses show between what clusters and interaction of clusters the values of the dependent variable differ significantly. Those clusters and interaction of clusters that showed a significant difference are included in the following ordinary least square regression. For the newspaper/country cluster, newspaper characteristics (left-right positioning and capital-national orientation) and country characteristics (political and cultural proximity to France, unemployment and immigration rates) were included. For

time, dummy variables are employed for Week 1 and Week 2 (Week 3 is the reference category). In addition, dummy variables for all different sources were included (except "other," which is the reference category). When there were significant differences in the interaction between clusters, additional GLM analyses established which specific variables interact and these are included in the OLS regression.

After conducting the regression analysis, another GLM analysis with the residuals of the regression as dependent variable established whether the significant differences within categories were indeed captured by the independent variables.

Results

The findings are presented in two sets of tables. The first set, tables 2 through 5, are descriptive, showing the results by country, framing source and week for diagnostic framing, problem attribution, proposed solution and the designated responsible agent actor. In Table 2, greater use of the riff-raff frame by the French government and Sarkozy is found, consistent with our hypotheses that state actors are more likely to associate the riots with non-structural factors. Equally interesting is the finding that international actors see the problem as being associated primarily with the failure of minority incorporation (53.3 percent), while the French opposition actors see the reaction of French authorities, including the police, as being too strident and harsh (45.9 percent). In addition, the suburban residents and riot participants are more likely to identify overreactive police as the most serious problem associated with the rioting (38.8 percent). Finally, over the three-week period there is a progressive decline in connecting the underlying problem to specific categories of actors, such as riff-raff (from 20.9 percent to 13.9 percent) and authorities (from 37.3 percent to 11.1 percent) and a corresponding increase in identifying structural factors, such as the economy and education (from 7.2 percent to 16.1 percent), and the failure of minority incorporation (from 17.6 percent to 24.4 percent). In sum, Table 2 shows noteworthy variation in diagnostic framing, particularly across the various framing sources and over the three-week time period.

Table 3 displays the results concerning attribution of blame. First, we see that the French attribute less blame to their government (12.2 percent) than the other countries, except for Canada, but attribute more blame to the youth and criminals. It is also noteworthy that the United States attributes more blame to the police than any of the other countries. We also see that actors outside of France are much more likely to blame the French state (54.5 percent) than the various categories of

Table 2: Diagnostic Framing by Various Countries, Sources and Time Periods

Diagnostic framing							
Non-structural				Structural			Total
	Riff-raff (n = 138)	Over-reaction of authorities (n = 185)	Ethnic and Religious Groups (n = 89)	Failure of Incorporation (n = 208)	Housing (n = 59)	Economy/ Education (n = 104)	Other (n = 42)
Total	16.7	22.4	10.8	25.2	7.2	12.6	5.1
Country							(n = 825)
Canada	17.3	18.2	15.5	26.4	5.5	14.5	2.7
France	27.1	10.0	12.9	23.6	7.9	12.9	5.7
Germany	15.8	28.8	9.4	22.3	4.3	10.1	9.4
Netherlands	15.0	20.8	9.2	25.8	14.2	13.3	1.7
United Kingdom	16.3	26.6	5.4	30.4	5.4	12.0	3.8
United States	8.3	28.0	15.2	21.2	6.8	13.6	6.8
Source							
Media	7.2	30.1	8.8	25.5	6.9	14.1	7.5
French government	22.6	8.9	12.9	27.4	10.5	13.7	4.0
Sarkozy	76.8	2.4	13.4	6.1	1.2		
French opposition		45.9	29.7	13.5	5.4		5.4
International actors	3.3	3.3	10.0	53.3	10.0	16.7	3.3
Residents/participants	13.6	38.8	3.9	18.4	6.8	15.5	2.9
Other	7.0	15.5	12.0	35.9	8.5	15.5	5.6
Week							
1	20.9	37.3	3.3	17.6	7.2	7.2	6.5
2	16.5	22.0	8.7	27.8	7.7	13.0	4.3
3	13.9	11.1	22.8	24.4	5.6	16.1	6.1
							21.8

Table 3: Problem Attribution by Various Countries, Sources and Time Period

Problem Attribution										
State attribution				Non-state attribution						Total
State (n = 164)	Current Gov't (n = 140)	Police (n = 58)	Youth/ Criminals (n = 140)	Immigrants (n = 72)	Terrorists (n = 1)	Religious Groups (n = 25)	Parents (n = 3)	Other (n = 25)		
Total	26.1	22.3	9.2	22.3	11.5	.2	4.0	.5	4.0	100.0
Country										
Canada	36.6	5.4	11.8	20.4	15.1	1.1	9.7			14.8
France	24.4	12.2	4.1	32.5	14.6		4.1		8.1	19.6
Germany	23.0	37.2	6.2	21.2	10.6				1.8	18.0
Netherlands	21.3	25.0	7.5	20.0	17.5		1.3	1.3	6.3	12.7
United Kingdom	27.7	26.8	9.8	23.2	6.3		.9	.9	4.5	17.8
United States	24.3	26.2	16.8	14.0	6.5		8.4	.9	2.8	17.0
Source										
Media	32.6	20.2	13.5	14.5	6.2	.5	6.2		6.2	30.8
French government	24.0	15.0	2.0	37.0	8.0		6.0	3.0	5.0	15.9
Sarkozy	6.4	5.1		55.1	32.1		1.3			12.4
French opposition	11.1	58.3			30.6					5.7
International actors	54.5	22.7	9.1	4.5	9.1					3.5
Residents/participants	22.4	29.4	23.5	18.8	1.2		3.5		1.2	13.6
Other	32.7	26.5	7.1	13.3	11.5		2.7		6.2	18.0
Week										
1	22.2	26.9	14.8	25.0	7.4		.9		2.8	17.2
2	28.0	23.7	9.1	23.2	8.8		4.0		3.2	59.7
3	24.1	15.2	5.5	17.9	21.4	.7	6.2	2.1	6.9	23.1

internal actors, even including the opposition. But when we consider the current French government as a source of blame, we find that the French opposition in particular (58.3 percent) and local residents and riot participants (29.4 percent) are most likely to blame the government. The youth and “criminals” are also targeted as a major source of blame, but not uniformly by the various actors. Instead, consistent with the riff-raff problem designation, the French government and Sarkozy point to the criminal elements among suburban youth as being a significant source of blame (37 percent and 55.1 percent respectively). Speaking for the French government, de Villepin pointed to “organized criminal networks backing the unrest” and to “gangs of youths, in a mindset of thugs, but also of playing a game and wanting to raise the stakes” (*National Post*, Nov. 8, 2005). Sarkozy and the French opposition, on the other hand, point to the immigrants themselves as being the root cause of rioting (32.1 percent and 30.6 percent respectively). Finally, only the local residents and participants target the police as major source of blame, which is consistent with their problem designation. Throughout this section of the table, the findings are consistent with the source/actor diagnostic problem designation in Table 2, which is what we would anticipate given that that problematization and attribution are both component features of diagnostic framing.

In the last section of the table, shifts in attribution over time are evident along with a decline in blaming the government, youth and criminals, and the police, coupled with a particularly noteworthy increase in immigrant attribution. While it is unclear what is driving these changes, they do suggest some degree of frame crystallization in that there now appears to be waning competition among the alternative sources of blame.

Table 4 speaks to prognostic framing by specifying the relationship between proffered solutions and country, source and time. We see that France places less emphasis on a law and order solution (38 percent) than the other countries, but this appears to be compensated for by its emphasis on parental control of children (17 percent). This is consistent with some media calls for more parental intervention. As noted in Paris’s *Le Figaro*: “Parents are the first educators. In areas where families are involved and supported things are better [there is less violence].” (*Le Figaro*, Nov. 17, 2005). Consistent with the previous findings, the French government and Sarkozy call for a law-and-order response (48.4 percent and 79.8 percent respectively). As Sarkozy exclaimed during the second week of rioting, he would wage “a war without mercy” against the rioting immigrants, including immediate “deportation” for those involved (*New York Times*, Nov. 10, 2005). In contrast, media journalists, local residents and riot participants accent the importance of an action program that spells out steps to remedy the situation over time. A fifth of the residents also

Table 4: Prognostic Framing by Countries, Sources and Time Periods

Short term		Solution						Total
Law and order (n = 228)		Action Program (n = 176)	Better Housing (n = 18)	Limit Immigration (n = 11)	Raising children (n = 32)	Dialogue (n = 18)	Other (n = 21)	(n = 504)
Total	45.2	34.9	3.6	2.2	6.3	3.6	4.2	100.0
Country								
Canada	44.8	39.7	3.4		8.6	3.4		11.5
France	38.0	36.0	5.0	4.0	17.0			19.8
Germany	46.1	33.3	2.9	1.0	1.0	3.9	11.8	20.2
Netherlands	52.9	25.7		4.3	7.1	4.3	5.7	13.9
United Kingdom	47.1	39.2	2.9	1.0	2.0	4.9	2.9	20.2
United States	44.4	34.7	6.9	2.8	2.8	5.6	2.8	14.3
Source								
Media	26.3	50.0	7.5	2.5	5.0	1.3	7.5	15.9
French government	48.4	32.4	3.8	.5	6.6	6.0	2.2	36.1
Sarkozy	79.8	16.7			1.8	.9	.9	22.6
French opposition	31.8	31.8	4.5	27.3	4.5			4.4
International actors	27.3	31.8	4.5	9.1		9.1	18.2	4.4
Residents/participant	17.5	50.0	5.0		22.5	2.5	2.5	7.9
Other	18.2	54.5	2.3		9.1	4.5	11.4	8.7
Week								
1	45.9	34.1	3.5			9.4	7.1	16.9
2	45.2	34.2	3.8	1.7	6.8	3.4	4.8	57.9
3	44.9	37.0	3.1	4.7	9.4		.8	25.2

call for greater parental control. It is important to note the strong French opposition call to curtail immigration (27.3 percent), which we suspect can be attributed largely to the voice of Jean-Marie Le Pen, President of the anti-immigrant National Front Party. According to his youngest daughter and political heir, Marine Le Pen:

"The National Front predicted and warned this violence would happen 20 years ago.... It has been political madness for 30 years since we allowed immigrants to come here as cheap labor at the behest of French bosses. It has been impossible to assimilate these people, simply because there are too many of them." (*Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 13, 2005).

Table 5 speaks to the second component of prognostic framing by directing attention to the actor designated as responsible for the proposed solution. Here we find agreement across the countries that the government shares much of the burden for solving the problem. There is less agreement, however, about the role of the police, with the Netherlands and United Kingdom having contrasting views. In addition, France assigns much importance to parents as responsible agents, twice the level of other countries, which is consistent with previously discussed results.

Looking at the framing source section of Table 5, it is evident that Sarkozy and the French opposition are even more vocal than other framing sources about the government's responsibility. Also, residents/participants target parents as responsible for carrying out the proposed solutions, which is consistent with their framing of the problem diagnostically and their framing of a solution. In the table's last section, there are slight temporal changes, especially in the call for less police responsibility and increased parental responsibility.

Considering together the results in tables 2 through 5, there is noteworthy variation in framing across country, source and time. To get a better handle on what factors account for these framing differences, the second set of tables analyzes issue salience, framing sources and framing characteristics by looking at contextual, newspaper, temporal and actor differences via regression analysis.

The variables included in the regression analyses, presented in tables 6 and 7, were selected based on the outcomes of the GLM models. In general, considerable amounts of variation in the dependent variables are explained by the clusters of independent variables.

In several respects, the context in which framing takes place matters. Table 6 shows that a decrease in proximity leads to a decrease in issue

Table 5: Responsible Actor for Solution by Countries, Sources and Time Periods

Responsible Actor								
State responsibility				Non-state responsibility				
	Government (n = 325)	Police (n = 66)	Social welfare agencies (n = 5)	Parents (n = 31)	Immigrants (n = 7)	Participants (n = 1)	Other (n = 11)	Total (n = 446)
Total	71.8	16.4	1.2	6.5	1.6	.2	2.3	100.0
Country								
Canada	67.3	23.1		9.6				11.7
France	63.0	17.4		18.5			1.1	20.6
Germany	79.8	9.6	1.1		5.3		4.3	21.1
Netherlands	58.2	25.5	5.5	9.1			1.8	12.3
United Kingdom	80.9	8.5	1.1	3.2	2.1		4.3	21.1
United States	83.1	11.9		1.7		1.7	1.7	13.2
Source								
Media	76.5	10.3	1.5	5.9	2.9		2.9	15.2
French government	72.8	15.4	.6	7.4			3.7	36.3
Sarkozy	86.1	12.9		1.0				22.6
French opposition	95.5			4.5				4.9
International actors	61.9	19.0			14.3		4.8	4.7
Residents/participants	45.7	22.9		25.7		2.9	2.9	7.8
Other	48.6	24.3	8.1	10.8	5.4		2.7	8.3
Week								
1	75.0	22.1					2.9	15.2
2	72.0	13.8	1.5	7.3	2.3	.4	2.7	58.5
3	73.5	12.8	.9	10.3	.9		1.7	26.2

Table 6: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Time, Paper and Country on Issue Salience

Independent variables	Dependent variable Salience of issue
Right newspaper	-.272***
National oriented newspaper	-.243***
Canada	-.232***
Germany	-.080
Netherlands	.018
United Kingdom	-.273**
United States	-.144
Week 1	-.136
Week 2	.705***
F-value total model	10.622 ***
Adjusted R-squared	.712
N	36

Note: * $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$ (one tailed); reported coefficients are standardized regression coefficients (betas).

salience. Newspapers in the most proximate countries (Netherlands and Germany) pay almost as much attention to the issue as the French newspapers. Attention to the issue is slightly lower in the United States, but still not significantly different from France, while in both the United Kingdom and Canada there is significantly less coverage of the riots.

Our expectation about the positive relationship between diagnostic framing and geographical distance is also confirmed, though the coefficient only approaches significance. In countries further away from France the need for problem-definition is somewhat higher. However, there is no increase in state attribution when geographical distance decreases (see Table 7).

The political orientation of newspapers and incumbent governments also make a difference, but only to a limited extent. Findings indicate, for example, that right-leaning newspapers report less about the riots than left-leaning newspapers (see Table 6) and that left incumbent governments have a positive influence on the use of state attributions (see Table 7). But there is no evidence for other differences caused by political orientations or ideology, except for a greater reliance on the media as a framing source in the case of both a left-wing government and less proximity (results not presented in tables). While we refrained from formulating expectations

Table 7: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Explanatory Variables on Framing of French Riots

Independent variables	Dependent variables					
	Non-structural diagnosis	State attribution	Short term prognosis	State responsibility	Diagnostic Crystallization	Prognostic Crystallization
Right newspaper		-.024	.049			
Position government		-.187***	.21			
Political economic proximity		-.203**	.041			
Source media	.094	-.03	.066	.195**	-.281***	-.199**
Source state	.068	-.232***	-.016	.126	-.109	-.423***
Source Sarkozy	.492***	-.475***	.663***	.332***	.076	-.180*
Source opposition	.038	-.049	.083	.196**	.157**	-.099
Source international	-.117**	.140**	.048	.164*	.125*	-.133*
Source residents/ participants	.169**	.130*	-.009	-.075	-.125*	-.056
Week 1	.480***	.216	.001		-.073	
Week 2	.314***	.048	.082		-.263***	
EU * State			.372***			
Germany * international actor						-.225***
Left * UK * opposition						-.182***
Week 1* opposition						-.142***
Week 2* opposition						.254***
Week 2* international actor						.250***
France * Right newspaper						.255***
						-.206***
National oriented newspaper		.135*	-.044			.07
Unemployment		.035	-.095			-.031
Migration rate		-.136	.212***			-.078

F-value total model	15.466***	7.081***	7.270***	2.645***	5.596***	2.750***	14.018***
Adjusted R-square	.394	.338	.39	.065	.17	.067	.571
N	179	168	148	143	179	148	187

Note: *p < .10 **p < .05 ***p < .01 (one tailed); reported coefficients are standardized regression coefficients (betas).

about concrete differences between capital- and national-oriented newspapers and used this distinction only to select an appropriate sample of newspapers for each country, there are some interesting and meaningful differences: national newspapers report less about the issue, possibly due to the fact that capital-oriented newspapers pay more attention to the question of whether riots can also occur in their cities. The Dutch newspaper *Parool* (Nov. 10, 2005), for example, asks the question whether "the French riots will diffuse to the Netherlands." (see also *Berliner Morgenpost*, Nov. 6, 2005). Furthermore national newspapers engage in more state-centered attributions.

While our expectations about context-dependency are only partly confirmed, the findings presented in Table 7 support most of our expectations about differences in framing by different actors or sources. Especially noteworthy is the difference between state actors and other actors. State actors are more inclined to invoke non-structural diagnoses compared to other actors, especially international actors.⁹ Here Sarkozy stands out, speaking about the riots unambiguously and stridently, as when calling the rioters "thugs" and "scum" (*New York Times*, Nov. 5 and 10, 2005). This also leads state actors, and again Sarkozy, to blame non-state actors for the existing situation, while international actors and residents/participants attribute the problems to the current government or the French state in general. For the short-term prognosis, there is a pattern similar to the non-structural diagnosis, with Sarkozy calling for law and order, as reflected in his threat to "clean out the city with a power hose." (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Nov. 7, 2005), while other actors seek more structural solutions. This short-term prognosis by Sarkozy (and other state actors) is more pronounced in Europe than in Canada and the United States. Finally, there is an interesting difference in the range of diagnostic frames used by different actors (diagnostic crystallization): while opposition and international actors consistently invoke the same frames, media sources and residents/participants present a wider variety of diagnoses.

Expectations about frame crystallization are only confirmed for diagnostic framing. Crystallization during the second week is lowest when frames are most diffuse. However, there is no evidence of prognostic crystallization over time. Finally, there is some evidence for a shift from diagnostic to prognostic framing over the course of the event, but only for a limited set of actors: the French opposition uses more diagnostic framing in the first two weeks compared to the last week, and international actors use more diagnostic framing in the first week compared to the second and third week.

Temporality is the final factor posited to account for frame variation. Expectations about differences in framing during different stages of the riots are largely confirmed. First, the issue is more salient during the week with the highest intensity of rioting (see Figure 1 and Table 6). Second, the use of various sources differs over time. In the first week of the event, newspapers provide accounts of what is going on, drawing on and incorporating residents/participants and international actors as sources. Furthermore, with the exception of Sarkozy, state sources enter the debate late. This is due in part to the hesitant performance of Chirac, which prompted the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Nov. 10, 2005) to raise the following question: "Where is the President?" Additionally, we see that the use of residents and participants as a source increases from week 1 to 2, but then decreases when the intensity of the riots subsides.

Discussion

In an attempt to further understand the factors that account for variation in interpretive frames, particularly with respect to the same event or issue, two sets of findings are presented. These analyses were guided by ideological, contextual, attributional and temporal theoretical considerations from which a number of hypotheses were derived. The first set of findings revealed descriptively significant variation in the framing of the riots diagnostically and prognostically, and suggested which of the hypothesized factors appeared to account for the observed variation. The second set of findings established which of the hypothesized and descriptively apparent associations were significant across several models.

Overall, the findings reveal mixed to weak support for hypotheses rooted in ideological considerations; mixed to strong support for both contextually-based hypotheses and those derived from attribution theory; and strong support for hypotheses positing temporal variation in the character of the framing. In the case of ideological considerations, where newspapers and government fall on a right/left spectrum is of some influence in affecting the character of framing, but ideological position

ideology/
political
orientation
does not
explain all of
framing
activities (or
any for that
matter)

is not determinative. This muted effect cautions against the frequent tendency in the social sciences to invoke ideology as a blunt hammer to account for much unexplained variance in explanations of political action and framing.¹⁰

state actors
more likely
to blame
riots on neg
eval'd
groups
(fundament
al
attribution
error)
rather than
the
structural
conditions
these
groups use
as their
mobilizing
grievances
Fewer
frames
take up
the
discursive
space
over time

Turning to contextual factors, social and political proximity to France was only of limited importance in relation to framing. Apparently, relative proximity to, or distance from, noteworthy events makes little difference in how they are framed. Perhaps that is because we live in a global, wired world in which social and political proximity is of less influence than in the past. Of far greater influence in understanding frame variation are the different actors in the field responding to and commenting upon the event. Here there are interesting differences in how the riots were framed by state, oppositional and international actors and by residents and participants. Moreover, framing by the various sets of actors was partly predicted by tenets of attribution theory, such as the fundamental attribution error, as reflected in state actors tendency to blame the riots on negatively evaluated groups rather than on structural factors.

Finally, and perhaps most noteworthy, we found considerable temporal variation in aspects of framing. For example, the news salience of the event, the prominence of different framing voices, and the proportion of diagnostic to prognostic frames all varied temporally. Some evidence of frame crystallization was evident – the tendency for fewer frames to consume proportionately more of the available discursive space over time. What makes these findings particularly interesting is that the time span was relatively brief – only three weeks. This underscores, among other things, the dynamic character of framing.

Do frames
crystallize?
do some
of them
become
more
credible?

do actors/
framers
with more
institution
al power
get more
“airtime”
in news
media so
their
frames
are
covered
more?

Taken together, the foregoing findings not only suggest the conceptual and analytic utility of pursuing the issue of frame variation beyond the French riots, but they also raise a number of questions that call for further empirical inquiry and theorization. For example, what factors account for the crystallization of or around some diagnostic frames and the corresponding decline of others over time? Is it essentially a matter of resonance (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988), such that some frames become more credible empirically as more information about the event becomes available? Or is it due to differences in the relative power of the various actors or framing sources within the discursive field (Snow, forthcoming), such that the framings proffered by those with more institutional power, and thus situated higher in the field's “hierarchy of credibility,” (Becker 1970) are more durable in the sense of having greater staying power. In other words, are some framing sources or voices being privileged, and why?¹¹ Clearly the media – newspapers in this case – play a critical role in not only selecting some framing sources over others and privileging

some frames over others, but also in generating their own framings. But caution needs to be exercised so as not to attribute hegemonic power to the media in terms of the framing of events and issues. Not only does framing occur in other contexts, but the media also operates within a set of organizational and cultural constraints (Bunis et al. 1996; Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). It is also arguable that there is variation in the potency of the various events (e.g., civil disturbances, hurricanes, earthquakes) streaming through the media (Snow, forthcoming), even though we know relatively little about the range and variation of events.

Pursuing these and related questions should enhance understanding of the factors that account for frame variation both within the media and more generally, especially with respect to specific events or topics. The analysis reported herein is but a step in that direction.

Notes

1. In political communication, there has been considerable debate regarding the use of issue/event-specific news frames versus generic news frames (De Vreese 2005).
2. We place riots in quotation marks because the term is sometimes used as a political label that focuses attention on one segment of the participants and implies something demeaning about them. Such concerns have been noted in relation to the "ghetto riots" of the 1960s in the United States (see Feagin and Hahn 1973: fn 4, Pp. vi-vii). We thus use the term riot advisedly, but we use it because it was the predominant descriptor of the disturbances that gripped France for nearly three weeks.
3. The formal equation is as follows: $IR = \frac{\sum M}{\sum (N1 + N2)}$. Where M signifies the total number of agreements between the two coders, N1 the total of the coding decisions made by the first coder and N2 the total of the coding decisions made by the second coder.
4. We treat Sarkozy, who was elected President, as a separate source because of his dominant and exclusive position during the evolution of the riots (see results section).
5. We refer to this framing as "riff raff" because it focuses on the personal characteristics of the rioters and because of its application to rioters in other places and eras. See, for example Feagin and Hahn's summary of earlier explanations of U.S. urban "riots." (1973:6-28)
6. These data were collected by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (2002). Unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of the population that is currently unemployed. Net migration rate is operationalized as the difference

between the number of persons entering and leaving a country during the year per 1,000 persons (based on midyear population). A positive number indicates that there are more people entering than leaving a country.

7. At a first glance our research design might appear to call for a multilevel approach, with inclusion of several hierarchical ordered units (e.g. newspapers within countries within time-periods). However, multilevel analyses are only appropriate when the samples at the different levels are of sufficient size (15-20), which is not the case here. Furthermore, we do not have a random sample of countries and newspapers, but we chose them purposively. Nor are we interested in generalizing statistically our results to all time periods, countries, or newspapers; rather, we seek to establish the relative impact of various independent variables on our dependent variables, for which variance and regression analyses are appropriate.
8. Because a division in newspapers also encompasses a division in countries, it is statistically not possible to examine them separately in the analyses.
9. Note that the framing of other state actors is significantly different from framing by the "other" category. However, if we include Sarkozy with the other state actors, this coefficient would be highly significant. This difference suggests the presentation of more nuanced diagnoses by the state, for example by the Minister for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, Azouz Begag.
10. For further discussion of the relationship between ideology and framing, see Oliver and Johnston (2000), Snow (2004:386-404), Snow and Byrd (2007), Westby (2002).
11. See Carrage and Roefs (2004) for discussion of the neglect of power in media framing research.

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