

An Investigation of Police Brutality in News Media

Media Narratives and Narrative Icons as Argumentation and
Communal Identity

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways in which narratives about decisive events coalesce in news media discourse, and how they function rhetorically. Specifically, this study examines how journalists frame stories about police brutality, how those frames construct versions of public narratives, and how those narrative versions can be used in discourse about issues of civic concern such as support for new community policing policies or opposition to Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. I show how journalists' choice of semantic frames (e.g., racism, police-community relations, or criminal justice) helps to shape readers' understanding of the events and contributes to the formation of a *narrative icon*, a word, name, or short phrase that, absent narrative detail, indexes particular versions of a broader cultural narrative.

This research is motivated by questions about the reciprocity between prior knowledge, audience expectations, and public discourse, and how those combine to shape or reinforce cultural values and communal identities. To explore these questions, I draw on scholarship in narrative theory, frame semantics, intertextual analysis, and argument. I analyze over 1,700 newspaper articles published in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and *New Pittsburgh Courier* between 1991 and 2013 concerning incidents of police brutality, including Rodney King and Jonny Gammage, a Black man who died following a traffic stop in Pittsburgh, PA. My findings suggest three primary functions of narratives in news media discourse: as background information, as examples used to establish or illustrate a rule, or as points of comparison.

For each of these functions, I consider how journalists' micro-linguistic choices frame the events in line with the values, concerns, and fears of readers. In that way, journalists suggest the most important story elements and thus perpetuate specific ways of thinking about incidents of police brutality. Moreover, as consistent references to specific story elements, these frames contribute to the formation of a narrative icon, which becomes rhetorically available for use in public arguments. In other words, journalists can interpolate the narrative versions indexed by the icon into unrelated stories using discursive constructions such as "the Rodney King incident." When this happens, readers are expected to fill in the missing narrative details by drawing on their background knowledge.

The findings of this project have important implications for the study of media discourse, but their broader value lies in what they can tell us about how background knowledge takes shape and is used as a resource in public argument. In particular, critical appraisal of narrative icons suggests that readers are expected to access a trove of cultural knowledge to fully understand news stories and the sociocultural implications of the events described. In doing so, journalists and readers jointly construct and reinforce communal identities and establish credibility.

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Chapter 1

Narrative Icons: Stories, Frames, and Dramatic Events

Introduction

In February 2012, crime-watch volunteer George Zimmerman called Sanford (FL) Police to report suspicious behavior in his gated community. By the time police arrived, Zimmerman had confronted and fatally shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Although Zimmerman claimed he was acting in self-defense, allegations of racism soon surfaced as Martin, who is black, was unarmed and Zimmerman, variably described as white, Hispanic, or multi-racial, was not immediately arrested.¹

The incident received national media attention, much of which attempted to piece together the events that transpired between Zimmerman's call and when the police arrived. News media quickly raised the topic of race, often comparing the incident to other racially-charged incidents, notably the Rodney King beating and the L.A. riots. We see one way of introducing race into the Zimmerman story in the following excerpt from *The Daily Beast*, the online arm of *Newsweek*:

- (1) *Trial of George Zimmerman Could Trigger **Another Rodney King***
 As George Zimmerman faces murder charges for shooting Trayvon Martin, it's worth asking if America is in danger of facing **Rodney King, Part II?**
 (Frazier, 18 Apr. 2012, par. 1)

The bolded passages from the article's headline and lead represent what I call a *narrative icon*, a word or short phrase that references a broader cultural narrative that readers are

expected to know and that helps to frame the recent event while avoiding detailed description of the earlier events. Presumably readers familiar with the King story—the beating, trial, and L.A. riots—would be able to follow the comparison and fill in the missing details.

Journalists can invoke identical or similar narrative icons to stand in for different narratives or different aspects of a narrative. Here are a few more examples from the editorial page of the *Los Angeles Times*:

(2) *Red Moon Rising*

Strange things transpire when the planets and stars are aligned. Consider a chilly night in late October when the moon was full and goblins had started to take wing. Red, the favored color of Boston and St. Louis, for a Camelot moment was freed from its sentence as enemy of blue. And for nearly four hours, a deeply divided nation enjoyed **a Rodney King get-along moment**.

We're talking, of course, about Wednesday night's total eclipse of the moon, which, like the final World Series game, was visible from the mountains to the prairies. Democrats, Republicans and the shrinking circle of undecided voters watched as the shining moon slipped behind the Earth's shadow, transforming into a dark, red orb. (29 Oct. 2004, pars. 1-2)

(3) *The blue fog; If lifting the LAPD's veil of secrecy means changing the City Charter and passing new state laws, then do it.*

AN OPEN, accountable and trustworthy Los Angeles Police Department seems perpetually just around the corner. Reforms are instituted, promises and progress made, but with every positive step forward, the pull of secrecy keeps yanking the LAPD ceaselessly backward.

And so, **after Rodney King, Rampart and now Devin Brown**, we are here: Hearings on officer-involved shootings that once were open are now conducted in secret. Reports that used to name the cop who pulled the trigger now do not. And a community that was finally learning to trust the LAPD is now clouded with suspicion. (12 Jan. 2007, pars. 1-2)

These two examples highlight different meanings of the Rodney King narrative icon. In

excerpt (2), “a Rodney King get-along moment” refers to his famous televised plea

following the L.A. riots: “Can we all get along?” In excerpt (3), “after Rodney King, Rampart

and now Devin Brown” suggests that *something* happened involving King or Brown, or at Rampart, that reflects a closed, unaccountable, or dishonest police department. While readers familiar with the King story might expect that his name be used to discuss the LAPD’s culture of secrecy, it seems less likely that his name would be used to describe a lunar eclipse. Also, the two examples appear in editorials more than a decade after the initial event, which attests to the staying power and cultural resonance of certain events and the narratives that define them. In either case, readers are expected to know how the King beating or L.A. riots are relevant to the current context.

This project investigates how narrative icons are formed and how they are used. The above examples draw on national discourses, yet similar examples are used to discuss events that are less well known nationally. For instance, in the following editorial “conversation” from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading U.S. Black newspaper, Louis Kendrick responds to a local talk radio segment in which a caller defended Pittsburgh police officers against charges of brutality and racial profiling in the beating of Jordan Miles, a Black teenager.

(4) Let’s analyze some of the weak arguments.

He should have known it was a plain police car with undercover police. If it is a plain car it could be three White boys who frequent the ‘hood making a drug buy. The boy should have been home. He was home—that is the street he lives on. The mother just wants some money. The truth of the matter is that the mother wants justice. These people ask for police protection and then complain when they do their job. We want and demand professionalism so our family members don’t have **the same fate as Jonny Gammage**. (3 Feb. 2010)

Like the passages that invoke Rodney King, “The same fate as Jonny Gammage” stands in for a narrative that readers of the editorial are assumed to know.²

To better understand how readers develop the assumed background knowledge necessary to follow the iconic reference, and to discover the strategic rhetorical value these references bring to the discourse, I examine articles published in four newspapers: the *Los Angeles Times* and *Los Angeles Sentinel*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and *New Pittsburgh Courier*. These newspapers were selected because (a) they are produced for either a mainstream metropolitan audience or a specifically Black audience, and (b) Los Angeles and Pittsburgh have significant histories of racial tensions and police brutality and are thus veritable sites for discourses that thematize these issues. As I approach these texts, I ask the following questions:

- (1) How do news media narratives move from “complete” narratives to iconic representations of events like “the same fate as Jonny Gammage” or “Another Rodney King”? (Labov & Waletzky 1997[1967]: 4)
- (2) What conditions are necessary for readers to reconstruct the implied narrative such that they can follow the analogy and understand its relevance? When can this be said to have happened?
- (3) How do narrative icons differ from “complete” narratives?
- (4) What rhetorical purposes can narrative icons be said to fulfill? That is, how do rhetors use narrative icons?
- (5) How might the same narrative icon be used differently, and what conditions allow this or are necessary for this to happen?

Using a thematic macrostructural approach to news media (van Dijk 1985), I identify what could be considered the core attributes of a narrative icon, and by extension the narrative versions to which it refers. For each article, I code the primary framework based on keyword analysis of the headline and lead and for embedded frames based on when the article shifts from being ‘about’ the primary framework to another theme, issue, or event.³ Identifying these features suggests the narrative versions implicated by the narrative icon. In other words, references to Rodney King and Jonny Gammage variably appear in articles that instantiate a *police brutality* or *criminal injustice* frame—primary frameworks that frequently appear as embedded frames in other articles—which suggest that King and Gammage narrative icons can be used to reference either frame.

This study draws on scholarship from diverse traditions, including narrative theory, media criticism, frame theory, and rhetorical iconicity. First, I explore the key elements that comprise a narrative: discourse and event-descriptions. I also consider the relevance of narrative to knowledge about the world as well as its persuasive value. Second, because the King and Gammage incidents generated significant press coverage, I review scholarship on news media. Newspaper discourse represents a fruitful site for rhetorical study in general, and this project in particular, for many reasons: (a) newspapers offer a static record of *discourse*, or language-in-use, (b) news media help individuals understand the world beyond their immediate lives, (c) press discourse helps to shape and is shaped by social relations and producer and audience values or beliefs, (d) press discourse mixes both elite and non-elite voices—albeit disproportionately—and as such functions as a marker of official and popular discourse, and (e) news media narratives about decisive events evolve

over significant periods of time. In that way, a single article can be said to be a narrative (news story), yet so, too, can the corpus of texts that discuss an event.

The dual view of “news story” (i.e., a singular text v. many texts about the same event or issue) allows for a complex view of narrative wherein certain elements become more or less salient according to the day’s events. Thus, to track the multiple versions of a story, I draw on work in frame theory, particularly the cognitive tradition. Frame analysis of press discourse reveals the attributes present or conspicuously absent in the texts. Over time, attribute patterns emerge that indicate which elements form the backbone of the story. Identifying core elements of the story and the multiple versions that they index may suggest intended meanings evoked by the narrative icon. Finally, to better understand the narrative icon’s rhetorical value, I turn to work on iconicity. Like narratives and frames, icons are complex constructs whose meaning is more than the sum of their parts.

In addition to advancing our understanding of news media, this project contributes to rhetorical scholarship and argumentation studies by identifying and examining a common, strategic use of language. As rhetorical tropes or (implicitly) persuasive devices, narrative icons can help explain what Jill Edy (2001: 53) calls “the presence of the past in public discourse.” In other words, part of living in a culture is remembering its past and recognizing how those memories contextualize the present and inform the future. Narratives, of course, help shape those memories.

Narrative: Definition and Overview

Because this project investigates news media narratives, I begin with an overview of narrative itself before considering how news media variably construct them. *Narrative* has

been called “the most ubiquitous of human activities” (Mink 2001: 214) such that “a life as led is inseparable from a life as told” (Bruner 2004: 708). Yet what qualifies as a narrative remains ill-defined even if we generally recognize a story when we hear it.⁴ Nevertheless, most scholars agree that narrative consists, at a minimum, of a sequence of events told by a narrator to an audience (Bal 2009; Jacobs and Sobieraj 2007; Scholes, Phelan, & Kellogg 2006; Labov & Waletzky 1997[1967]; Nelson 2001; Somers 1994; Fisher 1987).

In this project, I follow the definition provided by H. Porter Abbott (2008: 13): “narrative is *the representation of an event or a series of events*,” which attains its *narrativity*—the sense of being a narrative—through continuity and coherence [emphasis in original]. Though the audience ultimately decides which representations achieve narrativity, and thus what counts as a narrative, I assume that readers of news media texts accept them as narratives (hence, ‘news story’) or at least accept standard news reports as narratives and editorials, opinion pieces, or letters-to-the-editor as commentary on those narratives.⁵

Abbott’s definition attends to the social, constructed, and contextual aspects of narration. As a *representation*, narrative is mediated through discourse, or language-in-use “accented with its history of domination, subordination, and resistance; [...] marked by the social conditions of its use and users” (Fiske 1996: 3);⁶ as *the representation of events*, narrative suggests an act of emplotment, or the “selective appropriation” of parts in “constellations of *relationships*” (Somers 1994: 616 [emphasis in original]). This constructivist perspective allows Abbott to distinguish *story* from *narrative discourse*—the events themselves over against their specific representation. In this view, things that happen become *events* through discursive instantiation, what Louis Mink (2001: 219)

refers to as “events *under a description*,” where the act of describing is unique to each discursive context such that it is impossible to construct the same narrative twice [emphasis in original]. This is not to say, for example, it’s not raining if someone doesn’t *say* that it’s raining, but rather to suggest that what makes the act of water falling from the sky an event are the cognitive-discursive boundaries we put around it. As Paul Hopper (1995: 149) explains, the “actual acts of narration are the *source* of abstract, mentalistic eventhood” [emphasis in original]. In other words, an event becomes an event when we interpret an action or occurrence in that way. Thus we can speak of ‘war’ as a singular event (e.g., the French Revolution) or as a procession of battles, troop movements, and so on (Mink 2001).

Audience interpretation explains Abbott’s willingness to accept the representation of a *single* event as a narrative (to use his example: “I fell down”). However to do so the audience must supply another event, prior or subsequent, to create a sequence, or draw on their culturally-influenced “emotional understanding” (Velleman 2003) of why the act of falling down is significant for both narrator and narratee—an understanding that can only develop in relation to context or background knowledge—neither of which are present in the narrative discourse. Therefore, I reserve *narrative* for the discursive representation of at least two events in order to distinguish it from what I am calling a *narrative icon*, which, though it may serve a similar rhetorical function, is not a narrative proper. Of course, a series of events could be emplotted in any number of ways such that their significance would vary greatly according to the narrative in which they are embedded.⁷

This event/narrative duality is particularly significant in news media because event emplotments betray “how speakers rhetorically construct their memories of the past for

their own ends” (Hopper 1995: 146). Thus, the “form and features of any ‘version’ of a narrative will be a function of, among other things, the particular motives that elicited it and the particular interests and functions it was designed to serve” (Smith 1981: 217). In that sense, event emplotment is relative yet reflects the narrator’s imposition of moral authority such that “[t]he events that are actually recorded in the narrative appear ‘real’ precisely insofar as they belong to an order of moral existence, just as they derive their meaning from their placement in this order” (White 1981: 22; 2001). Contextualized reciprocity between appearance and meaning within an order of existence thus allows John Passmore (1987) to argue that some event descriptions are more accurate than others. Like the question of narrativity, the question of accuracy is not one that I attend to in the following chapters, though I am mindful that different emplotments would draw on and reinforce different moral perspectives, particularly as those emplotments concern ‘real’ events (White 1978).⁸

In spite of its formal elasticity, or perhaps because of it, narrative fulfills myriad rhetorical functions from which it derives its “cognitive relevance” (Ryan 2007: 33). It has been shown to help construct and resist individual, social, or communal identities (Ritivoi 2009; Bucholtz & Hall 2005; Nelson 2001; Eakin 1999; Schiffrin 1996; Somers 1994; Johnstone 1990), define and reinforce sociocultural values (Abbott 2008; Lyotard 1979; Crites 1971), and impose moral order (Carr 1986; White 1981). Further, it has been discussed as a mode of reasoning (Carroll 2001; Fisher 1987; McGee and Nelson 1985), explanation (Duranti 2006; Velleman 2003; Lemon 2001), and political or institutional legitimation (Roundy 2010; Jacobs and Sobieraj 2007; Linde 2003; Stone 2002; Kaplan

1986). Of course, these functions overlap in many ways; however, two key aspects of narrative support these and other rhetorical functions: continuity and coherence.

Continuity refers to the internal links within a narrative. Emplotted events work together because we seek or impose, often erroneously, a causal connection between them. This “narrative connection” occurs when one event conditionally allows a later event, though the occurrence of the earlier event does not ensure or determine the later event (Carroll 2001: 28). *Coherence* expands the scope of continuity beyond causally-necessary conditions to include thematic levels of narrative discourse. At this level narrative connections can be built from “[a]ny sequence of events, no matter how improbable” that “complete[] an emotional cadence” (Velleman 2003: 6). But be it through causal entailment or an emotional cadence, continuity and coherence normalize events and therefore support the cognitive, moralizing, and persuasive value of narrative.

Arguably the most powerful rhetorical device through which narrators achieve these ends is the *masterplot*, or the “stories that we tell over and over in myriad forms and that connect vitally with our deepest values, wishes, and fears” (Abbott 2008: 46).⁹ Whether we refer to them as “culture’s canonical forms” (Bruner 2004), “sacred stories” (Crites 1971), or “master narratives” (Nelson 2001)—terms whose nuance is less important than their functions—masterplots establish continuity and coherence by framing events within a culturally-accepted story structure and thus, because of their iterability, endow stories with credibility, normalcy, and legitimacy. Further, as these stories are told and retold, they bring with them traces of prior tellings such that their “actual meaning [must be] understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and

value judgments” (Bakhtin 1981: 281). In other words, when narrators tell stories based on culturally-specific masterplots, they add new layers which allow the masterplots to extend to new contexts while implicating the voices or themes of previous contexts.

News Media Narratives: Shaping Public Discourse

The role of news media in shaping and responding to public discourse has been well documented (Richardson 2007; Hodges 2007; Gans 1998; van Dijk 1988; Fiske 1996; Fairclough 1995; Fowler 1991; Bell 1991). In *The Language of News Media*, Allan Bell (1991: 1) writes, “Media are dominating presenters of language in our society at large” and news its chief genre. More than simply presenters of language, though, media contributors tell stories that represent particular points of view and thus “influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, [and] social identities” (Fairclough 1995: 2). In short, news media significantly contribute to our understanding of the world and our positions within it.

Broadly, scholars have examined news media discourse as both process and product.¹⁰ Scholars interested news media as a process have examined how institutional structures affect news production; how journalists’ privileged access to public officials sets news media apart from other discourse genres and often means that the interests of an elite few are represented; how conceptions of audience and capitalist market conditions reflected in ratings and circulation data influence what gets reported; and how competition between media outlets, particularly in relation to the 24-hour news cycle, affects what gets covered. Scholars who focus on news media as a product have examined micro- and macro-structures of news discourse including headline and lead syntax and thematic organization; representations of sources, particularly in regard to direct or indirect quotations;

intertextual relations between media texts (i.e., how the same language, from phrases to paragraphs, moves from one outlet to another); and representations of race or class, particularly as they serve white, dominant class ideologies. Together, the complementary views of news as process and product highlight the dialectical relationship between news producers, consumers, and texts.

While the following chapters touch on much of this research, I focus on four aspects of newspaper discourse that allow journalists to use narrative icons: (1) news as a site of value construction and reflection, (2) the imprecise distinction between constituent and supplementary events, (3) the ways in which semantic frames shape readers' understanding of news narratives, and (4) the intertextual links within articles.

News is a discourse genre that both helps to shape and is shaped by the values, beliefs, attitudes, and background knowledge of its producers and consumers. News producers frequently rely on audience stereotypes to make editorial decisions about content coverage and the language with which it is delivered (Bell 1991: 82-103; Fowler 1991: 12-19). For instance, the British press' "creative" choice to represent the Chernobyl disaster as a nuclear accident corresponds to producers' "news values" of infrequency and intensity (Fowler). Further, the macro-category *nuclear accident* plays into audience fears and thus extends conversations about nuclear power to other issues, such as the correlation between pediatric cancer rates and residential proximity to nuclear power plants. Richardson (2007) adds that market economics drive news production, wherein consumers influence content by virtue of collective buying power.

In addition to news producers' topical selections in line with audience values, studies have shown how subtle yet systematic linguistic choices respond to and help to

shape cultural attitudes. Teun van Dijk (2000) and Otto Santa Ana (1999), for example, show how the British tabloid *The Sun* and the *Los Angeles Times*, respectively, frame discourses about illegal immigrants according to an Us/Them binary that perpetuates racist ideologies about ‘the Other.’ These studies show that press discourse is constructed and operates dialectically with public understanding of events and political agendas. From a rhetorical perspective, they also suggest that press discourse is constitutive and ideological (Charland 1987). That is, by playing on public fears of nuclear accidents or by dehumanizing and out-group through metaphor, the press advances an image of the audience in which readers are expected to recognize themselves. Such recognition, then, could drive social action, be it through coordinated efforts at resisting new nuclear power plant construction or voting in favor of an anti-immigrant referendum. This social action, in turn, drives press coverage by sustaining discourses about events or issues in the public consciousness.

While these studies examine press discourse at a micro-linguistic level, media scholar Regina Lawrence (1996: 438, 452) shows how dramatic events such as the Rodney King beating “suggest new definitions of public problems” like police brutality and “license news organizations...to develop challenging framings of those problems, while setting in motion political dynamics—elite debate, political struggle, scandal, reform—that engage further news media attention.” In other words, unexpected events do not follow a pre-established story structure in the same way as, say, routine events such as political speeches and thus open space for marginalized voices to shape news discourse and political agendas.

In distinguishing between dramatic and routine news events, Lawrence hints at the second aspect of news discourse that helps to explain narrative icons: constituent and supplementary events. Abbott (2008: 22) claims that *constituent* events are those that “drive the story forward”—reminiscent of Carroll’s causally-necessary conditions—whereas *supplementary* events are non-necessary. Though Abbott admits that this distinction is really a matter of interpretation, it seems like a line more easily demarcated in fiction writing, which requires some semblance of continuity and completion to achieve narrativity (i.e., a novel ends somewhere). Certainly this is true within a single media text as well, yet what counts as necessary in relation to a cultural story complicates the constituent/supplementary divide. As Fowler notes, any event that implicates other issues may become relevant to the public through topical cohesion. So, a single news article about an incident of police brutality might give rise to other articles that only briefly mention it as motivation for, say, public protests or criminal trials. In these latter articles, the earlier event could variably be described as necessary (i.e., motivated the protest) or supplementary (i.e., helps contextualize the protest, but is non-necessary for the protest to have occurred). This accords with David Velleman’s (2003) claim that narrative connections are formed through emotional cadence as much as logical progression but complicates John Passmore’s (1987) suggestion that some event descriptions are more correct than others. As much as the reciprocity between routine and dramatic events parallels the reciprocity between constituent and supplementary events, their relationship to press coverage is of greater interest because dramatic and supplementary events often point to the interests and concerns of non-official sources. Nonetheless, at times in the

following chapters I refer to constituent or supplementary events with the understanding that the distinction is imprecise.

Whether journalists write about dramatic or routine events, they must frame events in a way that readers understand. Van Dijk (1985: 69) suggests that journalists use broad categories to define a news event, and that these *thematic* or *semantic macrostructures* organize the “global ‘topics’ a news item is about.” A semantic macrostructure, he claims, moves beyond topics or themes and informs “how the [whole] text is understood, what is found important, and how relevancies are stored in memory” (76). In strategically producing texts according to episodes defined in terms of actors, causes/consequences, background information, prior events, or commentary, journalists construct a hierarchy of importance that reinforces reader understanding. One thematic macrostructural device that journalists use to organize topics is the *event category*, which “help[s] create *coverage* by reiterating a category term for the event across multiple texts” (Cramer 2008: 287, emphasis in original). Event categories signal and prioritize relevant aspects of an article, and thus suggest a particular interpretation of events or issues. Further, reiteration of event categories across articles creates a “topical reference chain” that helps to crystalize a single event within an ongoing story (286). Because of their abstraction, event categories and thematic macrostructures offer easily accessible frames through which readers categorize and contextualize recent events.

The primary features of press discourse that pertain to a text’s thematic structure, according to van Dijk, are the headline and lead (cf. Richardson 2007; Pan and Kosicki 1993; Fairclough 1992). Bell (1991: 149-151) notes that the headline and lead correspond to what Labov & Waletzky (1967) identify as a narrative’s abstract and orientation,

respectively, and thus offer “the basic facts which concentrate at the beginning of a story”—the who, what, when, and where. Thus, the headline and lead present the primary story elements through which readers begin to interpret events.

Extending their role in shaping reader interpretation, news media frames have been discussed as discernable argumentative devices. Stewart (2005), for example, shows how the headline and lead in articles concerning the reparative therapy debate demarcate good from bad science. When journalists choose a human interest, conflict, or responsibility frame, they privilege certain story elements and perspectives, which are then reinforced through the text’s micro-linguistic choices. Moving beyond the headline and lead, Greco Morasso (2012: 198) shows how a contextual frame, or “the background scenario,” of a news event can advance argumentative positions in line with a newspaper’s ideological orientation. The choice of frame, she argues, allows journalists “to respect the limits of [objectivity], at the same time hinting at a certain interpretation of the facts that may also be used to support precise standpoints in more direct forms of argumentation” such as editorials (201). For example, Italian press reports of the shooting death of an intelligence officer by American forces in Iraq following the release of a kidnapped Italian journalist used different contextual frames: the *life of an intelligence officer* frame implied that the event was a tragic consequence of a risky profession, whereas the *American attitude toward preemptive war* frame suggested that it was the result of a willfully aggressive American ethos.

These studies highlight the rhetorical impact of news media frames on reader interpretation. Largely, though, they consider frames as static within the article structure. That is, they assume that an established frame adheres for the duration of the text.

Although semantic frames instantiated by the headline and lead provide an interpretive schema for a story, they may be replaced or supplemented with other frames. These embedded frames, which often index supplementary events, emerge through words or phrases in the body paragraphs that connect texts with other texts. Drawing on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva (1980: 66) explains this process of *intertextuality*: “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” As they absorb and transform prior discourse, texts “recycle meanings” while augmenting those meanings by virtue of recontextualization (Blommaert 2005: 46). In other words, texts import words, phrases, or thematic elements of prior texts and thus help to frame their new (con)text. Further, importing meaning into a new text suggests “every utterance has a history of (ab)use, interpretation, and evaluation, and this history sticks to the utterance” (46). “Stickiness” aptly characterizes the traces of prior utterances carried in and through discourse, especially in terms of iconization: as narratives shed detail, their macrostructural themes adhere in the icon.

Scholars have identified many ways that news media texts transform and embed other texts. In *Media Discourse*, Fairclough (1995) finds three ways this happens: discourse types (e.g., genres or styles [*interdiscursivity*]), representation of voices (i.e., direct or indirect quotations), and textual discourse itself (i.e., paraphrases or repeated words or phrases). Hodges (2008) shows how specific chunks of discourse—statements made by a U.S. general about Iranian involvement in the September 11 terror attacks—moved through the press and a series of press conferences, thus creating an intertextual web wherein political representation of the issue was contested. In addition to quotes or paraphrases, Richardson (2007) finds intertextuality in the journalistic practice of using, in

full or in part, press agency copy (cf. Bell 1991: 56-65). Like Cramer, Richardson suggests that micro-linguistic repetition contributes to macrostructural intertextuality: “When we read the latest installment of a running story, we do so in the knowledge that this *is* the latest installment—in other words, we are aware that the text is a link in a chain” (101, emphasis in original). Oddo (2013: 26) even asks us to consider how intertextuality frames future events: *precontextualization*, he claims, positions audiences “to regard [journalists’] projections of the future as ‘based on real events’; that is, as plausible reports of what may well—and should—happen” (47).

Critical media scholars Brian Ott & Cameron Walter (2000) provide another approach to media intertextuality. They argue that too often scholars conflate intertextuality as an interpretive practice, wherein audiences “bring a lifetime of unconscious textual baggage...to their reading of mediated texts,” and intertextuality as a strategic stylistic device employed by media producers (442). As an interpretive practice, they claim, intertextuality influences reader interpretation significantly more than repeated quotes or phrases. Thus, they conclude that dissociating these two modes of intertextuality is crucial for developing a stronger theoretical understanding of the complex relationships between media producers, consumers, and texts, particularly as readers interpret and internalize textual ideologies.

Together these studies show how meaning moves across texts at various levels. However, the function of intertextuality as a framing device or a mode of argumentation remains under studied. Though Fairclough admits that journalists’ choices to borrow or interpret chunks of text “are likely to be ideologically significant,” he hedges that any ideological effects are only “potential” effects (102). As I use *intertextuality* in the following

chapters I mean both repeated thematic elements and traces of prior discourse. As the next two sections show, one way to understand intertextual relations between news stories is by tracking primary and embedded frames; another is by iconic reference to other narratives. To better understand these modes of intertextuality, I turn to frame theory.

Frame Theory: Recursivity Between Cognition and Experience

Journalists use frames to categorize events and organize major topics in an article. A *frame* is a cognitive construct that helps people make sense of a text and the world around it. Van Dijk (1985) claims that frames signal what is most important in a text by relating it to what readers already consider important based on their prior experience or knowledge about the world. The concept has also been used to explain how individuals make sense of what is going on in human experience (Goffman 1986[1974]) or interaction (Tannen & Wallat 1987). Recently, framing has been discussed as an act of Burkean identification that persuades audiences by advancing connections in line with identity claims, democratic ideals, and collective memory (Ballif [ed.] 2014). My use of the term follows the cognitive approach, though as news media frequently discuss human events (i.e., human experience), I briefly review the experiential and interactive perspectives.

For Erving Goffman (1986[1974]) frames act as interpretive schemata through which individuals organize experience and make sense of the world. These processes of organization and sense-making occur when people assess the contextualized or situational elements of human interaction via visual or verbal cues and adjust their activity accordingly. In addition to influencing interaction as it unfolds, frames create “structures of expectation”:

[P]eople approach the world not as naïve, blank-slate receptacles who take in stimuli as they exist in some independent and objective way, but rather as experienced and sophisticated veterans of perception who have stored their prior experiences as ‘an organized mass,’ and who see events and objects in the world in relation to each other and in relation to their prior experience. This prior experience or organized knowledge then takes the form of expectations about the world, and in the vast majority of cases, the world, being a systematic place, confirms these expectations, saving the individual the trouble of figuring things out anew all the time. (Tannen 1979: 144)

In other words, prior experience shapes expectations about the world, guides action, and influences how we talk about it. Doctors’ and patients’ mismatched expectations about medical examinations, for instance, differently influence how they approach and interpret the situation, and thus how they interact, which at times leads to communication breakdown and conflict (Tannen & Wallat 1987).¹¹

In the following chapters I use *frame* primarily in the sense of interpretive schemata, which I assume have developed and are developing in relation to individual experiences and interactions. That is, readers approach newspaper discourse viz. articles, editorials, and so on, in certain ways that have developed and are developing according to their experiences with those genres. In this sense, reading is a type of interaction, wherein meaning does not precede the discourse but rather “is a product of an interface between the properties of the text and the interpretive resources and practices which the interpreter brings to bear upon the text” (Fairclough 1995: 16). This interpretive approach, however, does not tell us how frames form or how readers come to understand their particular attributes.

One answer to this question comes from work in cognitive psychology, which considers frames not as they unfold in situated interaction but as “dynamic relational structures” that “provide the fundamental representation of knowledge in human

cognition” (Barsalou 1992: 21). These dynamic structures, according to Barsalou, are comprised of attribute-value sets, structural invariants, and constraints. In brief, each frame *attribute* can be assigned a specific *value*; some attributes, or *structural invariants*, co-occur across contexts and thus construct “normative truths about relations between attributes” (37). For example, the *car* frame comprises attributes of *fuel* and *engine*, which take on specific values (e.g., diesel and four-cylinder, respectively) depending on the type of car. Because engines typically run on fuel these attributes almost always co-occur. Though Barsalou identifies more frame components than I discuss here, the important point is that each attribute or value could be regarded as a frame in its own right (e.g., attributes for the *engine* frame include *cylinder*, *piston*, and *spark plug*, each of which take on specific values depending on the engine type). In other words, frames are embedded within other frames.

Recursivity among frame attributes helps to explain how we come to understand frame components. Another answer to this question stems from what Barsalou labels *exemplars* and *prototypes* of a given frame. An exemplar is an instance or example of a frame that exhibits values for each attribute. For example, “cardinal” and “robin” are exemplars for the *bird* frame because each exhibits specific values for attributes such as size, color, and beak. Prototypes, on the other hand, represent the most frequent values across attributes (Barsalou 1992: 47). If most birds are small, red, and have a straight beak, then we may say that those attributes represent the prototypical bird. Understanding prototypes also means that when new exemplars are introduced, we can supply missing information according to the cognitive frame. Further, when values for attributes misalign across exemplars, we can integrate or detach prototypical frame attributes. In sum, frames help readers to contextualize new information, often in novel ways, by aligning it with

previously understood information. Integrating new information, then, augments (however slightly) the existing cognitive frame.

Van Dijk (1985: 81) explains these processes in news media discourse in terms of *memory models* that an individual develops based on previous press reports. These models help readers fill in gaps in coverage, while also updating previously existing models, and thus “readily support the creative combination of information” (Barsalou 1992: 66). This connection with press reports suggests that cognitive frames develop, in part, through grammatical use. As such, frame semantics “makes it possible to separate the notion of the conceptual underpinnings of a concept from the precise way in which the words anchored in them get used” (Fillmore & Atkins 1992: 101; cf. Fillmore 1976). That is, to fully understand the possible relations indexed by a frame, we have to consider how the word or phrase is used in discourse, rather than as part of an abstract system. In that way, frame semantics better accounts for polysemy than do cognitive approaches: *risk* has a slightly different connotation in the phrase “risk losing my job” than in “he risked his life taking that job.”¹² Understanding frames in this way provides the foundation for understanding the translation process that narratives undergo to become narrative icons.

Icons: Reductive Associations

Thus far I have discussed narratives, news media narratives, and frames, which I have suggested underlie the concept at the heart of this project: the narrative icon. These nuanced terms have prompted significant scholarly debate; *icon* is no different. However, in what follows, I take a cue from cultural critic David Shumway (2014) and use *icon* in its common, popular usage: “a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol, esp. of a

culture or movement,” which frequently appears with a modifying word, e.g., *gay* icon, *national* icon, *American* icon, etc. (*Oxford English Dictionary*). For Shumway, some rock stars are *music* icons because their personae are/were “defined by the embodiment of cultural controversies” (xiii). Thus, if we accept, as I argued at the beginning of this chapter, that narrative is the discursive instantiation of a story, then it follows that this “thing” (in the *OED* sense) could represent a culture, movement, or cultural controversy every bit as much as Elvis Presley or the Rolling Stones. In other words, a narrative could iconically represent a cultural controversy, and its symbol—*another Rodney King*—could index that representation: hence, narrative icon.

Although I follow its common usage, given the term’s centrality to this project, it’s worthwhile to review other definitions. Predictably, scholars in visual rhetoric have applied the term to visual artifacts, or things that we commonly think of as resembling the objects they represent, such as editorial cartoons and political engravings (Palczewski 2005; Edwards & Winkler 1997; Olson 1987); advertising campaigns (Jenkins 2008; Stein 2002; Shields 2001); statues (Campbell et al. 2015); postage stamps (Haskins 2003); and, of course, photographs (Butterfield 2012; Hariman & Lucaites 2007; Cloud 2004). In these studies, though, resemblance is only one aspect of iconicity; of greater consequence are those aspects that resonate with audiences. That is, an object achieves iconicity only when audiences view it as “more of an abstraction, an available site for the attachment of multiple connotations serviceable in multiple contexts” (Edwards & Winkler 1997: 120). With respect to news media, Hariman & Lucaites suggest that certain photojournalistic images share particular qualities that allow this to happen: they are easily recognizable and

emotionally evocative, representative of historical events, and reproduced in spheres of public and private life through which they build a history of their own (2007: 27).

Communication scholars Lance Bennett & Regina Lawrence (1995) provide an extended look at the appended history of one particular photojournalistic icon: the image of a garbage barge floating from port to port in the late 1980s. This “powerful condensational image,” they argue, allowed journalists to discuss thematically-related yet otherwise distinct issues such as recycling, consumerism, or population growth (23). As part of “nonbarge stories,” the barge *news icon* was used “to evoke larger cultural themes, symbolizing values, contradictions, or changes that [had] begun to surface in society” (23). In other words, reproducing the evocative image created a news icon that functioned intertextually to import sociocultural discourses to new contexts. Building on this work, Lee, Li, and Lee (2011) analyze the symbolic import and thematic framing of the *discursive* news icon ‘Tiananmen’ in *New York Times* and *Washington Post* editorials over a twenty-year period. They find that the icon has been used to index discourses concerning communist repression, human rights violations, and ritualistic public memory, which reflect changing social attitudes toward China and thus help to frame other topics discussed in the editorials. Still, like their predecessors, Lee, Li, and Lee attribute the icon’s survival and indexical polysemy to its visual referent—the image of a defiant man blocking Chinese tanks from advancing through Tiananmen Square.

These studies show that an icon’s persuasive value is not intrinsic to the object but rather manifests in the discourses we build up around it. Therefore, to understand an icon’s rhetorical impact we must examine how it is used, or as Hariman & Lucaites explain, an icon’s “meaning and effect are likely to be established slowly, shift with changes in context

and use, and be fully evident only in a history of both official and vernacular appropriations” (38). Indeed, Edwards & Winkler point out that those few persons who remember Joe Rosenthal’s Iwo Jima photograph are quickly being “replaced” by those who recognize it only through collective memory, or a history of appropriations.¹³ Though I disagree that the meaning and effect of an icon can ever be “fully evident,” I agree that its rhetorical value should be assessed against its history of use.

This scholarly focus the visual artifact as icon recalls the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce (1955), who suggests that icons are a distinct class of signs that signify through resemblance, similarity, or shared characteristics (102: 2.ii; 104: 3.a, 3.b; 107: 3.c). Unlike *indices* that focus attention purely through “contiguity” (108: 3.c) or *symbols*, whose relationship to their objects are entirely conventional (112: 3.d), icons are constrained by the objects they signify. In other words, icons such as photographs and algebraic equations convey information about their objects (Atkin 2005). Change the radius of a circle, for example, and you change and its area, just as the symbols in the equation would change to match the new shape. Given this taxonomy it would seem as if the narrative icon might be more appropriately labeled a symbol, much like the title *Cinderella*, a learned abstraction that directs attention to “the underlying plot of the fairy tale or what all the [narrative] versions have in common” (Smith 1981: 97). However, the distinction between the three types of signs is not as neat as these examples would suggest (Merrell 2001). A photograph, for example, shares “properties” with its object (icon), is “influenced by” its object (index), and “requires a learned process of ‘reading’ to understand it” (symbol) (Huening 2006; cf. Hariman & Lucaites 2007: 324n59).¹⁴ Iconic signification, then, is not determined by its object, but rather by the person interpreting it (Burks 1949).

Since iconicity is an interpretive act, it follows that objects classified as iconic could be other than the typical, physical objects identified by visual rhetoricians. Indeed, scholars in discourse studies have shown how language itself can be iconic. Still, much of this work is rooted in Peircean semiotics (Mannheim 2000) and identifies iconicity at the morphological, syntactical, and textual levels of discourse (Noth 1999; Wescott 1971).¹⁵ Hopper & Thompson (1984), for example, argue that the closer a noun or verb approximates its prototypical discourse function, the more likely it is to be labeled with morpho-syntactic markers—a clear instance of diagrammatic iconicity where form correlates to function. Elsewhere, Roman Jakobson (1965) finds diagrammatic iconicity in patterns such as “*Veni, vidi, vici*,” wherein the verb chain mirrors the order of occurrences; morphological variation in adjectives that mark an increase in degree (e.g., *high, higher, highest*); or sound similarity in words that mark a group of related concepts (e.g., *bash, mash, smash*). In addition diagrammatic iconicity, Jakobson notes that metaphorical iconicity is evident in polysemy: *star*, when referring to a person, represents the transference of some quality of the source domain (celestial body) to the target domain (person) (33). Leff & Sachs (1990: 258) go so far as to locate iconicity at the level of the entire text: “above the level of the word, discursive form often enacts representational content.” That is, through the interaction of content, style, and arrangement at the levels of the sentence, paragraph, and entire discourse, a text achieves a particular meaning or ideology.

The notion that discursive form betrays linguistic ideology has been revived in recent work in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, which has moved away from the aspect of resemblance and identified iconicity according to its social function. In

particular, iconic elements of discourse have been shown to emerge in interaction. Kathryn Woolard (2008) reviews much of this work, including the use of *be* in African American Vernacular English; phonological variation (e.g., *these/dese, those/dem*) in American English; and raised vowels in Latina girls' English. For Woolard, these repeated or stylized discursive elements perform complex, contextualized social and ideological work: within and among groups, icons define, signal, and reproduce social relations.

Consistent in all of these works is the idea that iconicity relies on an audience's interpretation of a repeated form. Be they visual artifacts, grammatical forms, or elements of spoken discourse, icons only achieve iconicity through their repeated and varied use. That repetition, in turn, adds layers of meaning to the icon and thus allows speakers, writers, or image producers to perform complex social functions. Earlier, I briefly defined *narrative icon*. Next, I offer a more complete definition and distinguish the narrative icon from related concepts in rhetorical theory.

Narrative Icons: Grounding Abstract Commitments

Icons are powerful symbols. Like narratives and news media narratives, icons can evoke powerful emotional responses. Though their formation and resonance may be enhanced by images, neither process depends on the visual. This project examines press discourse because it offers a record of language in society (and as I hope to show, iconic language use in society) and significantly contributes to how people understand the world beyond their immediate lives. However, as work on frame theory suggests, such understanding develops in line with knowledge schemata or experiences that connect new events or issues with what people already understand or have experienced. As events and the issues they

implicate depend on narrative emplotment to achieve cognitive or emotional relevance—emplotments that frequently draw on culturally-specific masterplots—and as iconicity, like masterplots, depends on *retelling*, I prefer the term *narrative icon*, which draws attention to the broader public discourses that give rise to or extend the visual (news) icon and that distinguish the cases discussed in the following chapters from grammatical forms and spoken discourse.

A narrative icon is a word or short phrase that combines the abstraction of a cognitive frame with reference to a specific event. However, as an abstraction, the icon lacks narrative detail yet can similarly evoke powerful associations, ideological commitments, values, beliefs, and emotions. To put it differently, a narrative icon can achieve the same cognitive or emotional relevance as a complete narrative insofar as the reader supplies the missing details. Additionally, it may index multiple versions or aspects of a story, often ambiguously. Like all icons, the narrative icon gains its rhetorical force through recontextualization, implicating the voices and themes of previous contexts with each new use. Each recontextualization, in turn, expands its potential import into new contexts or discourses. In news media, narrative icons index persons or events and thus advance a thematic or conceptual intertextuality; again, though, as readers must supply the missing details, such intertextuality depends on reader interpretation. In that way, narrative icons may help frame the discourse in which they are embedded.

In many ways, this definition aligns with definitions of iconicity from visual rhetoric and linguistics. One key difference, though, is that the iconicity discussed in the following chapters is not predicated on resemblance with an object in the world. Although the video taped beating of Rodney King could certainly qualify as a visual icon, no such artifact exists

in the Jonny Gammage case. Certainly the King beating video contributed significantly to the formation of the King narrative icon, but to hold up the video as the defining factor in iconicity ignores the complex rhetorical work of media narratives. Another defining difference of the narrative icon is that it does not signify diagrammatically nor at the representational-enactment level of discourse. That is, the form of the discourse does not map on conceptually to its meaning. Perhaps most similar to the narrative icon is the news icon, particularly the discursive news icons discussed by Lee, Li, and Lee (2011). As this project considers news media discourse it would make sense to follow an established term; yet as I stated previously *narrative* icon better attends to the public discourses that both shape and are shaped by news media.

In spite of these differences, narrative icons share the same ideological value as each of the icons discussed above, and though they do not fit neatly into any of the established (metaphoric) boxes, it is my hope that the following analyses can help provide, as Woolard (2008: 447) calls for, “a needed account for why very particular linguistic elements get picked out, ideologized, mobilized, and iconized for social purposes by specific speakers, and for how these elements become not just socially productive but linguistically (re)productive, while other linguistic elements escape notice as the worker bees in the everyday world of ‘just talk.’”

Narrative icons should not only be understood as distinct from other types of icons but also as distinct from other concepts in rhetoric used to describe emotionally evocative and ideologically significant discursive elements. Tracing the use of emotional proofs (*pathos*) from Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* through the Roman oratories of Cicero and Quintilian, Sharon Crowley (1999) shows that emotions have been discussed as both ways of knowing

and means of reasoning. To create such proofs, students of rhetoric have been instructed in the technique of *enargeia*, whereby rhetors “picture events so vividly that they seem actually to be taking place before the eyes of the audience” (126). More than just presenting a vivid scene, though, Quintilian suggests such descriptions “can produce a response in the audience similar to that prompted by an actual prop” (Walzer 2003: 67). Here the oft-cited example is Marc Antony holding aloft Julius Caesar’s bloody toga during his funeral oration—the iconic embodiment of his emotional appeal. In that sense, the technique draws too close to the physical object to apply neatly to narrative icons. In another sense, even absent a physical referent, the technique fails without sufficient detail to paint a word-picture. In other words, as a way of knowing *enargeia* relies on resemblance, which might better describe the news articles that discuss the King or Gammage incidents in detail than those that rely on iconic invocations.

As I’ve argued numerous times, though, iconicity is defined less by form than by function. In that regard, it might seem appropriate to follow the Enlightenment rhetoric of George Campbell and consider *enargeia* not from its formal properties but from its rhetorical impact. Over the course of 25 years, Campbell explained this impact in a series of essays, his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, which in part reconsider the relationship between style, attention, and cognition (Walzer 2003). For Campbell, *enargeia* focuses too much on the means of imaginative response, rather than its ends; for that reason he prefers *vivacity*, the “forceful, moving, memorable” impact of language (70). Ultimately Campbell decides, according to Walzer, “It is not that ‘resemblance’ produces vivacity but that vivacity produces resemblance” (72). That is, formal properties of discourse are not what appeal to imagination or direct attention, but rather the “impact” of the discourse that prompts an

audience to create (imaginative) correlations. Although the strength in Campbell's updated concept of vivacity is its focus on function, it still relies on detailed description: form and function are two sides of the same coin. In that regard, the effect (vivacity) would not exist without the cause (resemblance), though detailed description does not always produce vividness. Given this perspective, it seems too that that the vital component of iconicity, repetition, would counteract vivacity. The value of an icon is in its abstraction—it has the potential for recontextualization precisely because it lacks the detailed description of its object—whereas repeated detailed descriptions risk dilution.

As abstractions that evoke values, beliefs, or emotions, and that gain their persuasive potential through a history of use, narrative icons have much in common with what Michael McGee (1980) calls *ideographs*: certain words or phrases that link rhetoric and ideology and thus represent a society's key commitments. Everyone can agree, for example, that <liberty> or <equality> are sociocultural ideals, even as we disagree on how those terms are defined or enacted (cf. Stone 2002 on "policy goals"). Though many scholars have convincingly shown how ideographs can stand in for larger, implicit discourses in public argument (Cloud 1998; Moore 1997; Martin 1983), they do not address how or why shorthand reference to *particular* events can be used in this way. Further, because the narrative icon refers to specific events—at least initially—its use in subsequent discourses can be contested in ways that abstract commitments cannot be.

Previously, I stated that I reserve *narrative* for the representation of at least two events, against Abbott's suggestion that a narrative could be the representation of a single event. I do so because the narrative icon itself frequently appears as the representation of a single event. To return to an example from the beginning of this chapter, "a Rodney King

get-along moment” suggests a singular event: King in front of a television camera, pleading for calm amid the L.A. riots, “Can we all get along?” To reconstruct this singular event a reader must rely on his or her background knowledge, but to understand its *significance* he or she must supply other events—the L.A. riots, the not guilty verdicts, the trial, or the beating itself—none of which are present in the discourse. In that way, a singular event is not a narrative, nor is a narrative icon a narrative; rather, a narrative icon condenses a narrative into a potent symbol from which readers are expected to extract relevant information. This quality of condensation distinguishes the narrative icon from concepts traditionally used in rhetorical theory to describe the type of indexical, emotional, and evocative work that the narrative icon supports.

Methodology & Overview of Chapters

So far I have discussed a number of theoretical approaches to the study of narrative, news media discourse, cognition, and rhetorical iconicity. I hope that the path I have drawn through each of these fields suggests how I combine them in the following chapters. In what follows I offer a brief description of my methodology as it applies to the goals of each chapter.

Chapter 2: “This is Gammage All Over”: The formation of a narrative icon

Chapter 2 examines the process whereby narrative versions condense into narrative icons. To explore this process, I use the case of Jonny Gammage, a Black motorist who was pulled over by Pittsburgh police officers and who died at the scene following a brief altercation. Locally, the incident generated significant news coverage, particularly about the ensuing

criminal and civil trials against the officers involved. To identify the core elements of the Gammage narrative, I complete a frame analysis of articles, editorials, letters-to-the-editor, and commentaries published in the *New Pittsburgh Courier* from 12 Oct. 1995 to 5 Feb. 2013. I complement this frame analysis with an intertextual analysis of the persons or cases to which the Gammage incident is compared. Together, these analyses suggest possible uses and interpretations of the Gammage narrative icon. I end by examining a few of these uses and discussing how the core elements of a narrative contribute to iconization.

Chapter 3: "Look What Happened to Rodney King": The rhetorical functions of a narrative icon

Chapter 3 expands on the rhetorical implications of a narrative icon. Using the case of Rodney King, perhaps the most recognized instance of police brutality in the last half-century, I seek to explore the relationship between iconization and the narrative icon's use in press discourse. To begin, I identify the primary frameworks that have been used to discuss the King incident by examining a selection of articles and editorials published in the *Los Angeles Times* from the date of the videotaped beating through the L.A. riots immediately following the conclusion of the initial criminal trial. The primary frames should suggest narrative versions of the King incident and predict the ways it can be used iconically. To better examine the rhetorical use of the King narrative icon, I next examine editorials published in the *Los Angeles Times* subsequent to the riots. As editorials allow for a more explicit argumentative stance than do standard news reports, it follows that narrative icons would be likely to appear in this section.

Chapter 4: From Los Angeles to Pittsburgh: A comparative analysis of narrative icons in the Los Angeles Sentinel and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

In this chapter, I compare the Gammage narrative from the *New Pittsburgh Courier* to the Gammage narrative from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the city's leading daily newspaper. Because the *Courier* positions itself as a "vehicle for Black expression," there may be significant differences between the newspapers as to the core elements of the narrative and the narrative icon's usage. Comparing these newspapers should also help illuminate the persuasive value of a narrative icon: if narrative icons draw on culturally-specific masterplots, then it seems that the audience that most identifies with the original narrative would be most likely to use the narrative icon.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

To conclude, I return to the theoretical underpinnings of this study to reconsider how narrative icons could help us understand news media discourse and language use in general. In particular, I am interested in the icon's argumentative potential.

Chapter 2

“This Is Gammage All Over”: The formation of a narrative icon

Introduction

On 12 October 1995, Black motorist Jonny Gammage was pulled over for allegedly driving erratically on Route 51 in the Overbrook neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA. The officer who initiated the stop, Brentwood Lt. Milton Mulholland, called for back up and was soon joined by officers from surrounding boroughs including Brentwood Officer John Vojtas, Baldwin Officer Michael Albert, Whitehall Officer Shawn Patterson, and Whitehall Sgt. Keith Henderson, all of whom are white. After the officers ordered Gammage to exit the vehicle there was a scuffle during which the officers forcefully restrained Gammage who, in fighting back, severely bit Vojtas’s thumb.¹⁶ When paramedics arrived, they tied Gammage’s legs at Mulholland’s request, began treating Vojtas, and noticed that Gammage has stopped breathing; they were unable to revive him. An autopsy determined the cause of death to be asphyxiation due to compression of the neck and chest.

The incident touched off a firestorm of media attention and public outrage in Pittsburgh and across the country. Some argued that it was another example of a Black man being targeted by police because of his race; others suggested that it was the tragic result of police officers following proper procedures to subdue and apprehend an uncooperative suspect. Like many major cities, Pittsburgh has experienced a strained history between its minority citizens and the police. Just six months prior to Gammage’s death, Pittsburgh

Housing Authority police officers pursued stolen-vehicle operator Jerry Jackson; after cornering Jackson in the Armstrong Tunnel, the officers fired more than 50 shots, killing him. In another incident two years prior 23-year-old Maneia Bey was fatally shot 16 times—14 in the back—while running from police; the officers were never charged. Jackson and Bey were both Black.¹⁷ Following these incidents as well as federal scrutiny by the U.S. Department of Justice, on 12 May 1997 the city established a Citizen Police Review Board, “an independent agency...set up to investigate citizen complaints about improper conduct by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police” (<http://cprbpgh.org/>).

Against a backdrop of these events, the officers’ conflicting testimony during an open inquest about what happened during Gammage’s traffic stop fueled a growing sense of distrust of law enforcement, particularly among Pittsburgh’s Black community.¹⁸ Within days, local community leaders organized protest marches and rallies calling for justice—pleas that were echoed by prominent Black leaders like Rev. Jesse Jackson who referred to the incident as a “lynching” indicative of “a national disease” of police brutality, racism, and injustice.¹⁹

Over several years, community activism persisted in the form of protest marches, rallies, hearings, and economic boycotts, often motivated by progress or perceived injustice in the officers’ criminal trials. Between 1996 and 1998, three of the five officers—Vojtas, Mulholland, and Albert—were tried on charges of involuntary manslaughter; Patterson and Henderson were never charged. In October 1996, Judge David Cashman declared a mistrial in the case against Mulholland and Albert; one month later, in a separate criminal trial, Vojtas was acquitted. A second trial of Mulholland and Albert was declared a mistrial in December 1997. Though the officers were never criminally convicted of any wrongdoing,

in June 1998 Gammage's parents accepted a \$1.5 million settlement in a civil suit against the boroughs of Brentwood, Baldwin, and Whitehall and the Brentwood Emergency Medical Service. See Appendix B for a timeline of events.

At a time in which race relations were front and center in Pittsburgh and nationally, the Jonny Gammage incident became a local rallying point for a larger conversation. Comparisons to other racially-charged incidents, such as the Rodney King beating and O.J. Simpson murder trials, quickly surfaced and contemporaneous events like the Million Man March (a grassroots movement to highlight African-American civil rights issues held in Washington, D.C., on 16 Oct. 1995) provided a backdrop against which protesters, community organizers, and concerned citizens could situate their outrage in the context of a national conversation.

Besides discussions of police brutality, the Gammage story has also been used to discuss, at least locally, issues such as racism, racial profiling, and criminal or social injustice. Within those discourses Gammage's name and related phrases such as "the Jonny Gammage incident" or "the Gammage case" have been used iconically as evidence of the need for greater police accountability procedures or community activism, and ongoing racial inequality or racial tensions. These discourses often overlap—that is, discussions of stronger police accountability procedures may arise from community activism, or talk of economic inequalities along racial lines may heighten racial tensions as communities become segregated—yet they all point to the rhetorical significance of culturally-specific narratives and they narrative icons that index them.

The process whereby narrative icons such as "the Gammage incident," "the Gammage case," or simply the name "Jonny Gammage" have become available to index

multiple social issues has not been sufficiently explored. On the one hand, such rhetorical availability seems obvious or intuitive: the racial undertones of the incident and criminal trials, as well as the extensive media coverage, suggest that “Gammage” functions as a *news icon* whose “symbolic weaponry” could “direct journalistic and public attention to a cluster of issues...in order to make those issues into recognized public problems” (Bennett & Lawrence 1995: 35). Although Bennett & Lawrence examine visual icons, as I discussed in Chapter 1, they concede that “‘word pictures,’” too, can be “freed from their original contexts...[and] enter the narrative streams of subsequent, disparate, and often unconnected events” (23). “Gammage,” in that sense, “enter[s] the narrative streams” of numerous other events or issues and thus functions as a *narrative icon*.

In this chapter, I argue that sustained media coverage of the Gammage traffic stop and subsequent criminal and civil trials facilitate the process of iconization by variably focusing on both constituent and supplementary events. Besides reporting on legal developments, news media frequently connected other events (e.g., protest marches) or issues (e.g., conversations about police accountability measures) to the Gammage incident. Those connections rely on semantic frames that promote conceptual correlations between what could otherwise be understood as disparate or unconnected events. As a result, “Gammage” rises to the level of iconicity such his name can import narrative discourses cemented in readers’ background knowledge without relying on specific details.

The purpose of this chapter is not to set the record straight, as it were, about what transpired during the traffic stop. Rather, this chapter aims to advance our understanding of how cultural narratives shift over time and help to form narrative icons. In addition to discourses about police brutality and racism, the Jonny Gammage incident renewed

conversations about criminal justice, police accountability, police/community relations, appropriate police procedures, and community activism. Within those conversations “Gammage” is used as a stand-in for a narrative that readers are expected to know. How we move from fully formed narratives to abbreviated narratives to narrative icons is the focus of this chapter.

Corpus

Data for this chapter include articles, editorials, and letters-to-the-editor published in the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading Black newspaper published in Pittsburgh, PA. The texts were published between 12 Oct. 1995 (the date of the traffic stop) and 5 Feb. 2013. This end date was selected because it roughly coincided with two other incidents—the police beating of Jordan Miles in Pittsburgh and the shooting death of Trayvon Martin by Florida neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman—which again focused attention on issues of police brutality, racism, and criminal injustice. That is, both incidents offered a context in which references to Jonny Gammage could and did frame interpretations of the subsequent events.

New Pittsburgh Courier articles are archived in two databases: ProQuest Ethnic Newswatch and ProQuest Historical Newspapers. ProQuest Ethnic Newswatch indexes articles that appeared in the *Courier* City Edition (local) from 28 Aug. 1991 to the present; ProQuest Historical Newspapers indexes articles that appeared the *Courier* National Edition from 4 July 1981 to 28 Dec. 2002. Although there is significant overlap between the two databases, some articles are unique to their respective database.²⁰ Since the focus of this chapter concerns the discursive impact of the Gammage name locally, I have tried as

much as possible to use articles from the Ethnic Newswatch database. Some examples, however, are culled from the Historical Newspapers database, and are identified as such in the text. In total the corpus contains 315 articles; see Appendix C.²¹

Because of its stated goal to “continue[] to serve as a public vehicle for Black expression,” the *New Pittsburgh Courier* represents a valuable site for inquiry into the mediated construction and distillation of culturally-specific public narratives.²² Insofar as the *Courier* can be said to reflect the values and concerns of its local audience, positioning itself as a “vehicle for Black expression” suggests that those values and concerns extend beyond geographic boundaries. In that way, the *Courier* challenges traditional notions of journalistic objectivity—which scholars have argued are problematic at best (e.g., Cunningham 2003)—by promoting perspectives that it suggests are central to a racialized identity. While the newspaper here functions as a site of origination for public discourses, it should also be understood as responding to the concerns of its audience. In other words, the medium at once reflects and constructs its audience.

Methodology

This chapter employs semantic macrostructural analysis to news articles (van Dijk 1985) to identify the primary framework through which the Gammage story is told. I complement this thematic analysis using frame semantics as developed by Lawrence Barsalou (1992). As I discussed in Chapter 1, Barsalou’s approach to frame analysis suggests that cognitive frames are dynamic relational structures that help readers organize information based on prior experience and exposure to discourse genres. In that way, frames rely on readers’ knowledge schemata and experience in interaction (Goffman 1974; Tannen & Wallat 1987)

to account for “contextual variability in conceptual representations” (Barsalou 1992: 29). In other words, readers approach news media texts, viz. the headline and lead, based on knowledge schemata that both shape and are shaped by recurring encounters with the genre. Similarly, readers identify what’s significant about a text based on their knowledge about the world.

I coded each article according to three criteria: (1) the primary frame, (2) embedded or secondary frames, and (3) whether the article is about the Gammage incident or the Gammage case trials. To determine the primary frame, I analyzed the article headline and lead. Keyword analysis in the headline and lead was primarily used to determine the topic of the article. However, articles may just as easily be said to be about more than one topic or event, particularly when considering that different readers may understand the same article in different ways. Secondary or embedded frames were also determined based on close reading and keyword analysis. Together, the primary and secondary frames were used to determine if the article is “about” the Gammage incident or the Gammage case.

In addition, I traced intertextual links, again identified through close reading. As I discussed in Chapter 1, intertextual links refer to narratives that readers are expected to know, which conceptually link the story to other stories. Moreover, analysis of intertextual links supports the frame analysis approach by providing concrete values for the attribute-value sets of a particular frame. For example, in articles coded within the primary frame of *community activism*, the Million Man March is frequently mentioned, that is, it becomes a specific value for the “participant” attribute of *community activism*. Further, the more often this occurs, the more likely it is to occur in the future. Table 1 lists the primary frames identified.

Table 1: Number and percentage of total articles per primary framework.

<i>Primary frame</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Legal proceedings	78	24.7
Community activism	61	19.3
Police brutality/misconduct	25	7.9
Criminal or social justice	22	6.9
Community events	35	11.1
Police procedures	18	5.7
Racism	28	8.8
Other	48	15.2
<i>Total</i>	315	100

Findings

Legal Proceedings

As expected, articles that discuss the Jonny Gammage case most often employ a *legal proceedings* frame. In this frame, details of the precipitating event are revealed through reported testimony and other developments in the court cases against the officers (e.g., the jury selection process, judicial rulings on prosecution or defense motions, etc.). These articles thus expand the Gammage story beyond the initial traffic stop—that is, a story of police brutality—to construct a story of criminal (in)justice, racism, and police accountability.

The first article to emerge following the traffic stop establishes the *legal proceedings* frame in the headline and the lead. It reports that family members, the FBI, and civil rights groups have demanded a “full, public disclosure of what happened” in the events leading to Gammage’s death:

- (1) ***Full Investigation Demanded in Traffic Stop Ending In Death***
- (2) Family members and the FBI began **private investigations** and civil rights groups Monday demanded **full, public disclosure** of what happened during a routine traffic stop by Brentwood police that ended with a man's death. (Hamm, 18 Oct. 1995: A1, par. 1)

Immediately, the precipitating event (i.e., traffic stop) is couched as the precursor to a criminal investigation driven by an outraged public. In that way, Gammage's death gains added significance insofar as it reflects potential criminal activity, which shifts the focus from Gammage himself to the other participants who then become principal actors in the story (i.e., values for attributes that gain or lose significance in relation to the constructed narrative). Each actor (value) in turn invokes an embedded frame that moves the story beyond the guise of an isolated incident: "family members" invokes a *community activism* frame, "the FBI" invokes a *criminal justice* frame, and "civil rights groups" invoke a *civil rights* frame. The *civil rights* frame is further reinforced in the statement that "observers" believe "the circumstances surrounding the Oct. 12 death of Jonny E. Gammage appeared to be all too routine in this country, where mistrust of Black males by white police officers has erupted into open hostility," which makes an explicit claim to broader social issues of police brutality and racial profiling ("mistrust") and in doing so supports a culturally-resonant narrative (par. 2).

Following that, the article describes the available details of the traffic stop:

- (3) [...] Gammage, a cousin and business associate of Steelers defensive lineman Ray Seals, was driving north toward Pittsburgh on Route 51 in Seals' Jaguar at 1:46 a.m. when a Brentwood officer signaled him to pull over, for allegedly lurching, braking and changing lanes. Gammage kept driving for a little more than a mile, until he was near Overbrook Elementary School just inside Pittsburgh city limits, before pulling over. Another Brentwood officer and officers from Baldwin and Whitehall and joined in the low-speed chase. [...] Brentwood police chief Wayne Babish confirmed there was a violent struggle between Gammage and the six officers involved, four of whom were injured. (pars. 9-12)

In this description, the main actors are clearly identified as Gammage, “a Brentwood officer,” and “officers from Baldwin and Whitehall.” Although Vojtas is named later in the article, the other actors are only referred to according to their vocation (i.e., “officer”). By privileging their occupational roles over individual identities, the article at once elides the officers’ individual agencies and constructs the incident as emblematic of a systematic, institutional problem.²³

As the investigation proceeds, other articles further detail individual actions as they are presented through testimony. However, the details are often contradictory, which heightens community distrust of law enforcement:

(4) *Police Versions Differ as Public Awaits the Truth*

(5) In an emotionally charged city awaiting justice—and in some quarters, fearing civil unrest—a **jury** well-balanced in race and gender began absorbing conflicting and disturbing **testimony** about the fight with police that led to Jonny Gammage’s death. (Hamm, 4 Nov. 1995: A1, par. 1)

Here again the *legal proceedings* frame is instantiated in the article lead by stating that “a jury...began absorbing conflicting and disturbing testimony” at a coroner’s inquest. As “police versions differ,” the headline suggests that the officers disagree about what exactly transpired. Thus the article continues with details leading up to the initial traffic stop, but confirms that what happened afterward is an open question:

(6) [...] A 31-year-old businessman from Syracuse, N.Y., and cousin to Steeler Ray Seals, Gammage was stopped for a traffic violation by Brentwood Lt. Milton Mulholland at about 1:50 a.m. Oct. 12 while driving Seals’ Jaguar northbound on Route 51. The registration had expired in June. Mulholland said Gammage ran three red lights and drove erratically while he followed, but did not exceed the speed limit. They pulled over about a mile inside the city of Pittsburgh limits. Mulholland radioed for backup and officers arrived from Whitehall, Brentwood and Baldwin; five officers took part periodically in the fatal struggle. [...] Key questions in the search for truth included how the fight started and just who did

what. Did race play any part in the incident? How did police and paramedics react when they discovered Gammage had stopped breathing after his arms and legs were restrained? Where did marijuana Mulholland said he found in the Jaguar come from? (pars. 15-24)

The “key questions” posed at the end of this excerpt connect the *legal proceedings* frame to embedded frames of *racism* (“Did race play any part in the incident?”) and *police misconduct* (“How did police and paramedics react...? Where did marijuana...come from?”). However, beyond a brief mention of “[t]oxicology tests [that] revealed no drugs in his [Gammage’s] system and only a small amount of alcohol,” the article does not offer any new details concerning the traffic stop (par. 19).

Yet, as the coroner’s inquest continued, more details emerged, each related to the movements of the principal actors:

(7) *Police **Testify** Gammage Struggled Violently: Officers Recount Events of Fatal Traffic Stop* (Hamm, 4 Nov. 1995: A1)

Continuing with the *legal proceedings* frame (“testify”), this article offers perhaps the first full narrative account of the traffic stop. While the details remain contested, new pieces of information include (a) Gammage “implored” Officer Henderson to help him just before he died, (b) Vojtas claimed that he hoped Gammage would die, (c) Gammage was holding “an unidentifiable dark, square object” when he stepped out of the vehicle, (d) the struggle lasted for 10-15 minutes, (e) Albert applied force to Gammage “with an 18-inch collapsible baton and then with his foot and knee” and “stood on Gammage’s neck at Vojtas’ suggestion,” (f) Henderson “struck Gammage five times in the back of his legs with a flashlight,” (g) Vojtas “punched [Gammage] in the jaw four or five times,” (h) and Mulholland “said at no time did he see Gammage strike any officer.” Through the officers’

testimony, the reader is presented with vivid details of a sustained, if unclear, beating that seems to warrant criminal charges.

The details of the traffic stop as recounted at the coroner's inquest provide the core elements of the Jonny Gammage story and thus appear in each of the subsequent articles that discuss the Gammage case. Though some details may drop out, the various iterations suggest that the key components of the story—Gammage pulled over by Pittsburgh police officers and beaten to death—form the background knowledge with which the public can contextualize new information. For example, in the article "D.A. Charges 3, Appoints Prosecutor," the reader is reminded:

- (8) Gammage, 31, a Syracuse, N.Y., native and cousin to Pittsburgh Steeler Ray Seals, died Oct. 12 during a traffic stop on Route 51, just inside Pittsburgh city limits. An autopsy showed he could not breathe, because the officers sat on his neck and chest. They testified they also beat and kicked him to subdue his struggling. Mulholland began following Gammage in Brentwood and pulled him over for alleged erratic driving. He called for backup and first Henderson, then Vojtas and later Albert and Patterson arrived. The fight began after Vojtas and Gammage argued. Albert testified he applied pressure with a baton to Gammage's back, and stood on his neck at Vojtas' suggestion. (Hamm, 29 Nov. 1995: A1, pars. 21-22)

Another article, "Gammage Case Goes To Court December 26," states:

- (9) Court proceedings will interrupt Christmas celebrations for three Pittsburgh area police officers who face criminal charges for their involvement in the death of motorist Jonny Gammage. [...] Gammage, 31, of Syracuse, N.Y., had relocated to Moon Township, where he operated a business with his cousin, Pittsburgh Steeler Ray Seals. Gammage was driving Seals' Jaguar on Oct. 12 when he was pulled over by the suburban officers and died during a struggle alongside Route 51. (Haynes, 6 Dec. 1995: A1, pars. 1-5)

Over time, though, details of the initial traffic stop are frequently reduced to concise, abbreviated descriptions:

- (10) Gammage, who was a cousin and business partner of popular Pittsburgh Steeler's defensive end Ray Seals, was killed last year after a traffic stop in

Brentwood. Three suburban police officers were charged in the death. (Rideout, 30 Oct. 1996: A1, par. 19)

- (11) Gammage, a cousin and business partner of Pittsburgh Steelers defensive lineman Ray Seals, died after a struggle with five suburban officers who stopped him along Route 51 just inside the city limits. (Haynes, 13 Nov. 1996: A1, par. 8)
- (12) Judge David Cashman's decision denying a second trial for two suburban officers charged in the roadside death of Black motorist Jonny Gammage will not bring closure to the case. (Haynes, 23 Apr. 1997: A1, par. 1)

In examples (10) – (12) details of the traffic stop that emerged during the coroner's inquest and interviews with the officers have been distilled to highlight the initiating action (i.e., the traffic stop) and the result (i.e., Gammage's death), which suggests that either the intermediary actions are less significant in terms of understanding the narrative or that, given the sustained media coverage, readers should know those details. By omitting details that construct Gammage as an aggressor, the articles imply that he has been victimized by overly aggressive law enforcement.

Though reductive descriptions are frequently embedded in articles that employ the *legal proceedings* frame, they do not entirely replace fuller narrative accounts of the precipitating event. While some articles rely exclusively on the abbreviated narratives similar to those in examples (10) – (12), other articles flesh out the background details while adding details specific to legal developments:

- (13) In November, Cashman called a mistrial in the case after a 15-second remark by Allegheny County Coroner Cyril Wecht who was in a verbal sparring match with defense attorney Patrick Thomassey. Six months later Cashman has decided that the District Attorney's office unfairly singled out officers Milton Mulholland and Michael Albert for prosecution, when **two of the five officers on the scene at the time of Gammage's death** were not charged. Cashman ruled out the defense's claim that a second trial would put their clients in double jeopardy. (Haynes, 23 Apr. 1997: A1, pars. 4-5)

- (14) First the state could not prove five suburban police officers were guilty of involuntary manslaughter in **the death of Black motorist Jonny Gammage**; now the U.S. Department of Justice says it is not capable of proving the officers violated Gammage's civil rights. Acting Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee was in Pittsburgh Feb. 19 to announce the closing of the federal investigation. **Jonny Gammage was killed Oct. 12, 1995 in a struggle with five white suburban police officers following a traffic stop in the city's Overbrook section.** [...] In November, then-District Attorney Bob Colville charged Brentwood Lt. Milton Mulholland and Officer John Vojtas with third degree murder, involuntary manslaughter and official oppression. Baldwin Officer Michael Albert was charged with involuntary manslaughter and official oppression. Judge James McGregor dismissed all but the involuntary manslaughter charges against all three. In May 1996, Vojtas was granted a separate trial. All-white juries from neighboring counties were impaneled in both trials. A week into the Mulholland/Albert trial, a mistrial was declared. One month later Vojtas was acquitted. After more than a year of legal maneuvering, the second trial for Mulholland and Albert began. On Dec. 13, 1997, a second mistrial was declared resulting from a hung jury. In June 1998, Gammage's parents accepted \$1.5 million to settle a civil rights lawsuit they filed against the boroughs of Brentwood, Baldwin and Whitehall. [...] Newly appointed Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala announced July 31, 1998 he would not appeal Commonwealth Court Senior Judge Joseph F. McCloskey's decision. There would not be a third trial. The federal civil rights investigation began right after Gammage's death and continued until last week. (Morrow, 24 Feb 1999: A1)

As the bolded passages above examples show, details relating to the precipitating event are often embedded in articles that focus on other related events. In that way, the embedded narratives index the background knowledge readers are expected to use to make sense of current events.

In all, the *legal proceedings* frame overwhelmingly adheres to the journalistic norms of objectivity in describing the facts of the Gammage case. While "what happened" at the traffic stop may be in question, legal developments in the cases against the officers are not. Official documentation of legal proceedings, in other words, provides a static record of the constituent events most relevant to public understanding of the case. Although legal developments should be seen as supplementary events in relation to the precipitating

event—that is, occurring after the traffic stop, they have no immediate bearing on the actions that unfolded therein—they nonetheless help construct the core elements of the Gammage story as a whole. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Lawrence (2001) explains this in terms of routine v. event-driven news. On the one hand, legal proceedings can be classified as “routine” news, with predefined actors and a “basic story line” (94). On the other hand, the dramatic event of police brutality creates an “interpretive gap between the objective facts of [the] event and the significance it acquires in the news,” which allows journalists expand the relevance of the precipitating event beyond its legal ramifications, discussed more fully below (94).

In addition to providing a more complete account of the Gammage incident, the *legal proceedings* frame invokes the embedded frames of *criminal injustice* in relation to minorities and *police brutality* by assigning specific values to the attributes of aggressor and victim, which in turn entail other primary frameworks such as the *community activism* frame discussed in the next section.

Community Activism

Although the *legal proceedings* frame dominates *Courier* accounts of the Gammage incident and thus helps establish the core elements of the Jonny Gammage story, the *community activism* frame shows how narrative versions expand beyond those constitutive events. In other words, instantiating a *community activism* frame foregrounds supplementary events—i.e., those events not *directly* related to either the court cases or the initial traffic stop—and backgrounds those constitutive events. In that way, the Gammage story is about more than an isolated incident; events that could be considered tangential (e.g., protest

marches) become significant in terms of public understanding of the Gammage incident as a whole.

Almost immediately, the Gammage incident was linked to larger patterns of police brutality and criminal injustice that thus warranted communal response:

(15) ***Rally For Justice Set For Tuesday: Citizens express outrage over Gammage's death in traffic stop***

(16) Community leaders are urging people to **rally for justice** before a coroner's inquest that could decide the fate of six white suburban police officers involved in the death of a Black motorist. (Hamm, 28 Oct. 1995: A1, par. 1)

The headline and lead in examples (15) and (16), respectively, instantiate the *community activism* frame by stating that “citizens” and “community leaders” are organizing a “rally for justice” in response to Gammage’s death—an action that suggests they believe that justice might not be served. Embedded within this frame is an abbreviated narrative similar to those in examples (10) – (12); however, rather than outlining legal developments (which, at the time, had only just begun) the lead in example (16) abstracts the traffic stop death by referring to the principal actors according to their race (white/Black) and relational categories (police officers/motorist). Such abstraction backgrounds the specific narrative details, thereby advancing a narrative grounded in broader concerns of social justice, civil rights, and institutionalized racism. Further, such abstraction shifts the focus from the central characters to minor characters’ reactions or interpretations, as can be seen in the following excerpts from later in the article:

(17) On talk shows and TV news broadcasts, **citizens both Black and white** continued to express anger that a man could die while in police custody—after being pulled over just because an officer alleged he was “lurching, braking and changing lanes.” (par. 7)

(18) He [Councilman Sala Udin] said **Pittsburghers** want to believe the criminal justice system will work, and encouraged **those who are awaiting the results**

of the coroner's inquest to "channel their emotions toward voter turnout at the polls and political empowerment." (par. 13)

Examples (15) – (18) show how the traffic stop and legal proceedings contextualize supplementary events. In these instances, community activism is identified as a consequence of Gammage's death, that is, it has motivated protest rallies and significant public discussion.

Other articles, however, further background the traffic stop and legal proceedings in favor of community response:

(19) *Youth on the **March**: Students **Protest** Vojtas Jury Verdict*

(20) The facts appeared to be clear to hundreds of students. Black motorist Jonny Gammage should be alive today. The reality is he is not and that one of three suburban police officers charged with his death was found not guilty. Attended by more than 800 students from Pittsburgh Public School and neighboring suburban high schools, the **trek for justice** began at 10 a.m. when students **walked out** of their respective schools last Friday. (Robertson, 27 Nov. 1996: A1, pars. 1-3)

Though the above headline instantiates both a *community activism* ("march," "protest") and a *legal proceedings* frame ("jury verdict," "charged with his death"), the article maintains the *community activism* frame by focusing on students' response to the jury verdict. Aside from the brief mention in the lead that "one of three suburban police officers charged with his [Gammage's] death was found not guilty," Robertson does not reintroduce the legal proceedings or the precipitating incident, nor does she explicitly mention a "beating" or "police brutality," except to note that one protestor was carrying a sign that read "Arrest Brutality." Rather, the remainder of the article expands on citizens' activities during the protest march, general reactions to the verdict, and school administrators' reactions to student movements. By focusing on students' actions, the article shows how Gammage's

death and the legal proceedings have affected the city and the extent to which those events have begun to function as background knowledge, effectively adding a new layer to the Gammage story: it represents an instance of significant communal concern.

Of course, other articles advance a more tenuous connection between community activism and the Gammage incident by citing it as evidence of the need for stronger civic engagement rather than civic engagement as a consequence of the incident. The following article, for example, invokes the Jonny Gammage incident to construct a narrative based on the larger social issue of police brutality, yet does so only in the sense that the incident provides a contemporaneous example of that issue:

(21) ***Activists Call for March Against Police Brutality***

(22) The anger and frustration over the lack of action in cases of alleged police brutality and misconduct **will be voiced** with a **March Against Police Brutality** on Saturday, June 29. (Wilkes, 26 June 1996: A3, par. 1)

In examples (21) and (22), the *community activism* frame is instantiated in the headline and lead based on the actors (“activists”), their actions (“march” and voice frustration), and the setting or event (“March Against Police Brutality”). Unlike examples (15)-(16) and (19)-(20), the headline and lead here eschews a causal connection between protest marches and the Gammage case, yet also suggest that the March Against Police Brutality is not the result of an isolated incident. Rather, it is “anger and frustration over the lack of action in *cases* of alleged police brutality and misconduct” that have prompted citizens to organize. In fact, Gammage’s name does not appear until much later in the article when political activist Rick Adams is quoted as saying, “The most visible [incident of police brutality] was the killing of Jonny Gammage while being detained by officers of the Brentwood police department.” Adams adds, though, that the “celebrated [Gammage] case is only the tip of the iceberg.” As

the most visible or recent incident of police brutality, the Gammage incident thus assumes an evidentiary role in relation to the perceived need for community activism.

In addition to articles that instantiate a *community activism* frame as a consequence of the Gammage case or as a reaction to the more general concern of police brutality, some articles rely on the frame to report incidents whose connection to the Gammage case is tangential at best. The community activism described in the following examples represent citizen actions regarding non-Gammage related incidents:

(23) *Raheem Threatens Suit, **Boycott** Against Dailies*

(24) **Activist** Khalid Raheem threatened to file a \$3 million lawsuit against one of Pittsburgh's white-owned daily newspapers, saying an article dubbing him "controversial" smacked of counterintelligence attempts at discouraging strong **militant Black leadership**. (Hamm, 13 Dec. 1995: A1, par. 1)

Again, in examples (23) and (24), the *community activism* frame is instantiated in the headline ("boycott") and lead ("activist" and "militant Black leadership"), along with a *legal proceedings* frame ("suit"). However, this article fits the *community activism* frame because the legal proceedings are, at the time of publication, only a "threat"—itself a type of activism. More importantly, the only connection between Raheem and the Gammage case, as noted in the article, is that the activist supported "demonstrations about the death of Jonny Gammage, a Black motorist who died during a struggle with police officers." In that way, this article shows that the Gammage incident—or, more accurately, a person's connection to it—represents a point of notoriety, which strengthens the significance of the narrative as a whole and further highlights its strategic import.

A similar example can be found in the following article:

(25) **Coalition** to KKK: 'Not In Our Town'

(26) **The Pittsburgh Coalition to Counter Hate Groups** has one thing to say to the Ku Klux Klan—"Not In Our Town." Approximately 50 representatives of the

coalition **assembled** outside of Thursday's Allegheny County commissioners' meeting to announce plans to **counter** whatever the KKK has planned for this area. (Haynes, 1 Mar. 1997: A1, pars. 1-2)

Here again community activism is not directly related to the Gammage incident. Indeed, coalition leader Jan Nefke is quoted as saying, "I think they're [the KKK] targeting here because of unemployment and vulnerability. I don't know how much it has to do with the police and the citizen's coalition and the petition drive and Jonny Gammage" (par. 7).

Although Nefke denies a causal relationship, her invocation of Gammage creates a conceptual correlation between the events. Thus, readers come to understand community activism as a salient part of the Gammage story.

Taken together, the above examples show that the Gammage story is comprised of more than reports of legal developments. On the one hand, the incident can be said to be the impetus for community activism; on the other hand, such community activism can be discussed as independent of, though perhaps parallel to, protest marches or rallies that are the direct result of the precipitating event. Either way, understanding the Gammage story means recognizing that the incident itself significantly impacted the local Pittsburgh community.

Police Brutality, Abuse, or Misconduct

Police brutality, abuse, and misconduct represent the third most-common primary framework for articles that discuss Jonny Gammage. Brutality, abuse, and misconduct have been coded together because the distinction among them is a matter of legal interpretation, that is, what counts as misconduct, brutality, or abuse is determined retrospectively within the court system. As a primary framework, *police brutality/abuse/misconduct* constructs an

image of police as aggressors who act improperly toward citizens whom they are sworn to protect. In that way, “Jonny Gammage” represents the semantic patient—the object of police aggression—and can be used as an example or paradigm of such aggression.

Within this frame are attributes of an agent or agents (police), an action (brutality, abuse, or misconduct), and a patient (Gammage). Moreover, this frame embeds secondary frames such as *civil rights* or *criminal justice* in that what defines police action as abusive, for example, is the violation of the patient’s civil rights, which suggests, too, that a crime has been committed.

In the following example, the headline and lead instantiate the *police misconduct* frame:

(27) *Police **Complaints** Prompt Legislators’ Meet with D.A.*

(28) Prompted by a growing number of citizen complaints about **apparent police misconduct**, Pittsburgh’s two Black legislators will meet with District Attorney Robert Colville sometime this month to discuss possible resolutions to **such cases**. (Hill, 3 Jan. 1996: A1, par. 1)

Like the March Against Police Brutality mentioned in example (22), “such cases” makes a broader claim to rampant police misconduct of which the Jonny Gammage incident represents one example. Furthermore, “citizen complaints” and “possible resolutions” invoke the embedded frames of *community activism* and *criminal justice*, respectively, to which are further assigned three concrete values: establishing a civilian police review board, granting the Human Rights Commission greater regulatory power in cases of suspected police brutality, and a review of official police procedures regarding justifiable use of force. Additionally, the article lead embeds a *community relations* frame given by the introductory clause “prompted by a growing number of citizen complaints.”

Within this framework matrix of *police misconduct*, *criminal justice*, and *community activism*, “Jonny Gammage” represents a salient, real-world example of the need for this type of conversation. The following excerpt from later in the article exemplifies this evidentiary role:

(29) The use of force has become a matter of controversy in western Pennsylvania **since the death of Jonny Gammage while in the custody of five suburban police officers**. Gammage had been stopped for alleged erratic driving along Route 51 just inside the Pittsburgh city limits. (par. 9)

This excerpt first reintroduces the primary framework (“the use of force”) and constructs it as a controversial topic among the western Pennsylvania public “since the death of Jonny Gammage.” The temporal marker *since* suggests that police brutality/misconduct is a concern that has arisen after Gammage’s death, though not necessarily causally related. In that way, Gammage’s death provides background information for the story while other narrative details (e.g., the officers’ names, legal developments, types of community response, etc.) are omitted. In relation to the primary frame of *police misconduct*, the parts of the narrative most salient for this discussion remain clear: Gammage died while in police custody following a traffic stop. Though the article does not mention the racial identities of Gammage or the officers, both could be inferred given other information in the article, such as the referential indices of “Pittsburgh’s two *Black* legislators” and “five *suburban* police officers,” as well as the sustained media coverage of the Gammage incident and the general knowledge that police brutality typically, though not exclusively, refers to actions against minorities by white police officers.

In addition to the evidentiary role in example (29), in which the Gammage incident is used to justify local action concerning police brutality, the Gammage story has been used

as evidence of a national pattern of police brutality. In other words, Jonny Gammage is one of the many minorities who have been unfairly targeted by police:

(30) *President Clinton Urged to Examine **Police Misconduct***

(31) Just as President Bill Clinton urged a federal investigation into the burning of dozens of southern Black churches, the National Urban League now is requesting that the nation's commander and chief take a similar stand against **police misconduct**. In light of the recent acquittals of police officers in **two separate killings of Black motorists**, Urban League heads from across the nation converged on Washington, D.C., demanding that President Clinton convene a summit meant to develop a national code of conduct for officers of the law. (Haynes, 20 Nov. 1996: A1, par. 1-2)

Similar to example (28), example (31) credits community activism (the National Urban League) with increased attention to police misconduct. Here, though, Gammage is invoked not only as evidence of the need for federal intervention but also as one example among many:

(32) Last week, the acquittal of Brentwood police officer John Vojtas in the roadside death of 31-year-old motorist Jonny Gammage sent shock waves throughout the city's Black community. Meanwhile, ripples of fear gripped the white community which seemed to expect a violent reaction along the same lines as the riot that filled the streets in St. Petersburg, Fla., following a grand jury's refusal to indict a white officer in the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old Black male. [...] **Other incidents that give credence to the need for federal intervention** include the police beating of migrant workers in Orange County, Calif., a study by the American Civil Liberties Union that found that Maryland state troopers conducting drug searches stop Black motorists disproportionately, and the grand jury investigation in Philadelphia that unearthed a pattern of wrongful arrests of Blacks. (pars. 8-14)

As this excerpt shows, Jonny Gammage represents a powerful narrative of police misconduct: Vojtas's acquittal "sent shock waves throughout the city's Black community." However, the article suggests that the indignation felt by Pittsburgh's Black community mirrors that of other (Black) communities in which police officers have been accused of misconduct and that such instances are not exclusive to the Pittsburgh region. Simply put,

the incident is emblematic of a larger pattern of police brutality or misconduct that “give[s] credence to the need for federal intervention.” Interestingly, in examples (29) and (32), Gammage’s race is not explicitly stated, though it can be inferred from the contextualization cues such as “white community,” “white officer,” “18-year-old Black male,” and “Black motorists.” Yet in addition to the scant narrative details that Gammage died following a traffic stop, we also learn that an officer involved was recently acquitted; the resulting “shock waves” suggest an embedded frame of *criminal justice*.

Examples (27) – (32) highlight two complementary rhetorical possibilities of the Jonny Gammage narrative: evidence of police misconduct/abuse/brutality at a local level and evidence of a gross pattern of police misconduct nationally. Both evidentiary roles thus become available to support arguments about police brutality, civil rights abuses, and criminal justice. The sustained media framing of the Gammage incident in that way also allows “Gammage” to be used iconically. Consider the following editorial:

(33) *Police Brutality; We must take a stand*

(34) Their names should echo through our minds: Amadou Diallo, 22, of the Bronx in New York; Tyisha Miller, 19, of Riverside, Calif.; Donta Dawson, 18, of Philadelphia, Pa.; and Deron Grimmitt, 32, Jonny Gammage, 31, and Jerry Jackson, 44, all of Pittsburgh. But as time passes, the names of these three young people, like countless others before them, are slowly fading from the headlines and in many ways from our collective conscience. That is not something that we can afford to allow to continue. Not this time. It is time to say enough is enough. Police brutality and violence are common in America, as common as is the racism that is their underpinning. And the families of those victims know police violence first-hand. (13 Mar. 1999: A6, pars. 1-3)

Though it’s clear from the headline that Jonny Gammage was a victim of police brutality, what remains unstated are the details by which that violence was enacted and the ways in which each case mentioned is unique. Moreover, listing Gammage alongside Diallo, Miller, Dawson, Grimmitt, and Jackson, creates intertextual links with otherwise unconnected

events. In that way, the author assumes that readers know those details—they are part of “our collective conscience,” even as they are “slowly fading”—or that those details are insignificant in terms of establishing an overall pattern of brutality.

Similarly, the following example relies on readers’ background knowledge of incidents of police brutality to argue that such cases “constitute an epidemic”:

(35) *Here’s A New Term Used for Killing Blacks*

(36) The selection of Nate Harper as the new police chief in Pittsburgh seems to be a good sign that incidents such as the death of Sean Bell, or Jerry Jackson, or Jonny Gammage, or Charles Dixon, or Deron Grimmitt, or Michael Ellerbe, or, ...hey, isn’t that enough names to constitute an epidemic? (Ransom, 29 Nov. 2006: A7, par. 13)

In all, articles that instantiate the *police brutality* frame construct the Gammage case as individually significant and the issue of police brutality as generally outrageous. In other words, the Gammage case is newsworthy both in terms of its unique (potential) criminal activity and its exposure of gross patterns of police misconduct. In that way, the *police brutality* frame allows iconic uses of the Gammage name in ways that the *legal proceedings* or *community activism* frames do not. Iconic uses of “Gammage” will be discussed further below.

Criminal or Social Justice

Like the primary frames of *legal proceedings*, *community activism*, and *police abuse*, the *criminal or social justice* frame is used to tell the story of Jonny Gammage. Articles that instantiate this frame question whether or not officers in the Gammage case, or in other cases of police brutality, will be punished for their actions or whether the criminal justice system will unfairly support white police officers. Just as the *police abuse* frame relies on

the Jonny Gammage narrative to support arguments about a relevant social issue, the *criminal justice* frame takes Gammage as an example of a racially skewed criminal justice system:

- (37) *Seeking **Justice** Becomes Common Tie*
- (38) Brentwood police Chief Wayne Babish has at least one thing in common with the group of Black protestors who have championed the **call for justice** in the death of Jonny Gammage – he too is calling that **justice be served**. (Haynes, 25 Nov. 1995: A1, par. 1)

Here, the search for criminal justice is clearly identified as relevant to the Gammage incident, that is, this is a “call for justice *in the death of Jonny Gammage*,” which suggests that some people at least expect that the officers involved will not be found criminally responsible. This belief seems to be confirmed by legal developments:

- (39) *Seals Urges Calm, Family **Not Satisfied***
- (40) Although they find solace in several aspects of District Attorney Robert Colville’s decision, the family of Jonny Gammage is **not satisfied** with his determination to prosecute only three of the five police officers involved in Gammage’s death during a routine traffic stop. (Haynes, 29 Nov. 1995: A1, par. 1)

By initially reporting on the Gammage family’s reaction (i.e., “not satisfied”) to D.A. Colville’s decision to not file criminal charges against Officers Patterson and Henderson, the article suggests that criminal justice, particularly in relation to minorities, is at best partial.

While examples (37) – (40) discuss criminal justice as it specifically relates to the Gammage incident, other articles instantiate the *criminal justice* frame to discuss the issue on a wider scale, often relying on the incident as evidence of a broader pattern of injustice in relation to minorities. Consider the excerpt from the following editorial titled, “The Murder of Jonny Gammage” by activist Khalid Raheem:

(41) The death of Black businessman Jonny E. Gammage at the hands of five white, suburban police officers is a tragic example of the rampant racism and brutal white supremacy which permeates police departments across the United States. [...] The killing of Jonny Gammage is symbolic of routine police interaction with the Black community. It also points to **the failure of public officials and law enforcement officials to seriously address issues of police brutality and murder of civilians, especially Black civilians at the hands of white police.** (National ed., 27 Jan 1996: 5, pars. 1-5)

Clearly, Raheem is relying on the Gammage narrative (“The death of Black businessman Jonny E. Gammage”) to comment on the lack of criminal and social justice for minorities. Though the editorial begins by instantiating a *racism* frame (“rampant racism and brutal white supremacy”), it quickly shifts to a discussion about criminal and social justice. As noted earlier, frames such as *racism* and *criminal justice* frequently overlap, and in doing so help perpetuate the masterplot of criminal injustice against minorities. According to Raheem, the Gammage incident is at once paradigmatic of police brutality and the absence of criminal justice both within and beyond Pittsburgh. Thus, he continues: “[District Attorney Colville’s] refusal...to accept the recommendation of the coroners’ jury that all five police officers be charged with criminal homicide...signaled the beginning of a carefully orchestrated scenario” to protect the police at the expense of legal equality for all citizens (pars. 6-7). He concludes by asking, “Are we, the public, to assume that it is *standard* police procedure to stop, detain, beat and occasionally kill Black people? Let us pray, mobilize and organize for justice regarding the murder of Jonny Gammage” (pars. 19-20). His juxtaposition of “Black people” to Gammage as an individual—as well as his earlier identification of “public officials and law enforcement officials,” as opposed to naming specific agents—again suggests that the criminal justice he is advocating is at once central to the Gammage case and axiomatic to minority life.

While Raheem foregrounds Gammage to construct an argument about a wider issue, other articles significantly background the case to do so. Consider the following editorial by Bernice Powell Jackson, “Justice Denied: Police Brutality and Us,” which begins by listing numerous examples of police brutality:

(42) In New York City, two Hispanic men are killed when they are shot from behind 28 times and another Hispanic man is choked to death after his football hits a police car. In Pittsburgh, an African-American businessman dies from asphyxiation after being stopped for a traffic violation. A St. Petersburg, Fla., African-American motorist is shot to death also after a traffic stop. A New Haven, Conn., African-American man suffers the same fate. In each case, the killing occurred while the men were in police custody or in the course of a police action. (National ed., 31 May 1997: 4, par. 1)

The *police brutality* frame instantiated in the lead paragraph is used to underscore the related issue of criminal justice that forms the basis of the article and that is instantiated in the headline (“Justice Denied”). As seen in other examples, Jackson does not specifically name the victims in the cases mentioned, and instead foregrounds their race (Hispanic, African-American) and certain identity categories (businessman, motorist, men) against that of the institutionally-defined identity category “police.” In that way, she positions the examples as indicative of a pattern of brutality, which often results in little or no criminal accountability for the officers involved. Thus, Jackson continues: “These are just a few of the stories which were heard at the National Emergency Conference on Police Brutality held in New York City recently. [...] Indeed, **criminal justice** is the issue which seems to show the greatest racial divide in this nation. Most people of color would characterize the system as the **criminal injustice system**...” (pars. 2-3). Here, Jackson explicitly connects the issues of police brutality and criminal justice to race to highlight the disparity felt by many, particularly minorities. And although she introduces the Gammage incident in the

lead (“In Pittsburgh, an African-American businessman dies...”), it is not until later in the article that she explicitly identifies Gammage as a victim of police brutality or the Gammage case as evidence to support her argument about criminal injustice:

(43) Not only are hundreds, perhaps thousands of people of color victims of police brutality every year, but **they seldom find justice in the courts**. Take the case of Jonny Gammage, an African-American businessman and the cousin of Pittsburgh Steeler Ray Seals. Mr. Gammage suffocated to death after a routine traffic stop outside Pittsburgh in 1995. Last month, the judge in the case dismissed charges against the police officers accused in his killing, saying that prosecutors unfairly singled them out. (par. 4)

Although Jackson offers enough narrative detail that those unfamiliar with the case could understand her argument, she does not rely exclusively on the Gammage case to support her position; she also narrates the similar case of Anthony Baez (the “Hispanic man...choked to death”). The initial abstraction of specific narrative details (i.e., the names of Gammage, Baez, and the others), followed by brief narrations of their respective interactions with police and the criminal justice system, again suggests those details are less significant than the patterns they betray.

The primary frames of *legal proceedings*, *community activism*, *police brutality*, and *criminal or social justice* comprise the bulk of the articles that discuss the Gammage case (59%). Before discussing how the Gammage case has been connected to other cases (intertextuality) and showing how the Gammage narrative has been used iconically, I offer a few brief examples of the other primary frameworks identified: *community events*, *police procedures*, and *racism*. Again, though, I should note that these frames overlap or variably appear as embedded frameworks within other articles.

Community Events

Related to the *community activism* frame, the *community events* frame focuses on events that are happening in and around Pittsburgh, if not nationally. Whereas the *community activism* frame tends to focus on events such as protest marches that are themselves the direct result of or a reaction to the Gammage case, the *community events* frame largely focuses on events such as concerts, film releases, or fundraisers. More often than not, these articles rely on brief mentions of the Gammage case, which often provide background for the event or highlight its cultural significance. Take, for example, the following article:

- (44) *Bartz Headlines Jazz Concert to Support Jonny Gammage Documentary*
- (45) NOMMO Productions and the Thomas Merton Center will present **a fund-raising jazz concert** Aug. 7, at 2:30 p.m. at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty. Proceeds will support completion of the documentary video "Enough Is ENOUGH: The Death of Jonny Gammage." "The Challenge" jazz concert will feature the renowned Gary Bartz Quartet. (20 July 2005: B6, par. 1)

Here, Gammage is mentioned insofar as his name is part of the title for a documentary released nearly a decade after his death. Though the article reminds readers that "Jonny Gammage died at the hands of five police officers during a 'routine' traffic stop in Brentwood on Oct. 12, 1995," no mention is made of the ensuing trials (par. 5). Still, the article connects that event to broader social issues and, hence, invokes embedded frames: "The documentary examines this and other cases of alleged police misuse of force and racial profiling, and related problems in criminal justice, law enforcement and police-community relations" (par. 5). Although the focus of the article is the jazz concert, it relies on the Gammage narrative to garner support for the event yet also suggests that the underlying issues of police brutality, criminal justice, and police-community relations are ongoing and thus greater than any one single instance.

Police Procedures

Unlike the *police brutality* frame discussed above, the *police procedures* frame primarily concerns law enforcement activities unrelated to the Gammage incident, and yet relies on the Gammage narrative to contextualize those activities or to suggest their broader significance. The following article, “More Minority Police Needed: Ridge commission recommends more Blacks and Latinos be hired,” reports on the findings of a commission “created by Gov. Tom Ridge in response to heightened tension between police and citizens”:

(46) The death of Black motorist Jonny Gammage during a traffic stop with five white police officers and the bombing of the MOVE headquarters in Philadelphia highlight a history of uneasiness between Blacks and whites in Pennsylvania. In response to Gammage’s death, Ridge launched the 20-member Alliance for Community and Law Enforcement Relations and charged them with exploring solutions to **a growing problem**. (Karamcheti, 24 Dec. 1997: A1, pars. 2-3)

Though the article draws a causal connection between the Gammage incident (and offers what I have been calling an abbreviated narrative) and the committee’s formation, it is actually the “growing problem” of strained police-community relations brought about by the underrepresentation of minority officers, and strained race relations more generally, that represent the article focus. As suggested by the inclusion of the similarly-abbreviated narrative “the bombing of the MOVE headquarters in Philadelphia,” the Gammage incident is only one example among many that provide evidence for increasing minority recruitment for law enforcement.

Racism

While certainly allegations of racism have emerged with relative frequency in each of the primary frameworks heretofore discussed, the *racism* frame itself indicates articles whose main focus is racism or race relations in general. Again these invoke the Gammage narrative as evidence of racial inequality or unfair treatment, yet take as their focus the wider issue itself. The following example from Bill Robinson's editorial, "Racial Profiling in Pennsylvania?," begins with a clear problem statement:

- (47) Recently, the governor of New Jersey and the state's attorney general admitted that for many years, **pulling over motorists for routine traffic stops based on the color of their skin** has been standard policy for the New Jersey State Police. Of course, that policy had been suspected for many years, and there was plenty of anecdotal evidence to prove it. (19 May 1999: A7, pars. 1-2)

As the lead suggests, racial profiling has been an ongoing problem "for many years," so much so that the practice had become "standard policy for the New Jersey State Police." The alarming admission by the New Jersey governor and the state's attorney general, unsurprisingly, caught the attention of Pennsylvania lawmakers who then decided to investigate the problem in the Commonwealth. However, as Robinson notes, there has been "plenty of anecdotal evidence" to prove that such practices occur with regularity, like, for example, the Gammage incident:

- (48) As far as I know, no study has ever shown that simply being African-American—or Hispanic or some other minority—predisposes or makes it more likely that one is involved in some kind of criminal activity. If racial profiling is taking place on Pennsylvania's highways, we need to know. Here in Pittsburgh, Jonny Gammage died at the hands of police after being pulled over for reasons that are still unclear. Similar incidents have taken place in other communities. The officially sanctioned harassment of minorities known as racial profiling must stop. (pars. 8-9)

Though Robinson hedges his claim to systematic racial profiling in Pennsylvania ("if"), his immediate invocation of the Gammage narrative suggests otherwise. Interestingly,

Robinson states that the reasons for pulling Gammage over “are still unclear,” even as prior reports stated that those reasons were that Gammage was “lurching, braking, and changing lanes.” And while those reasons may be contestable, in labeling them “unclear” Robinson implies that the “officially sanctioned harassment of minorities known as racial profiling” was indeed the primary motivating factor.

As I have shown, articles that discuss Jonny Gammage rely on a number of primary frameworks and embed secondary frameworks to make sense of the event or to comment on its significance. Taken together, these frames establish the core elements of the Jonny Gammage story. However, these core elements are neither fixed nor finite. That is, journalists are free to draw on, expand, or elide certain elements depending on the context. In that way, the specific narrative emplotment of the Gammage story contributes to the focus of the article. That is, journalists can emplot the Gammage story differently according to the day’s events.

Most often articles that invoke Jonny Gammage focus on legal developments in the court cases. Other times, journalists invoke the Gammage narrative to discuss tangential social issues. These articles, in particular, show the explanatory value of the Gammage narrative. In other words, articles that rely on the Gammage narrative, especially in abbreviated (or, as will be discussed later, iconic) forms, highlight its cultural resonance. The ability for a journalist or editorialist to employ the Gammage narrative as evidence of a broader issue suggests that the narrative itself has been told often enough that it forms part of readers’ background knowledge, possibly to the extent that it could be considered part of readers’ cultural heritage, thereby forming a masterplot. In that way, the narrative

itself becomes a powerful tool to help support arguments concerning any number of issues. In addition to the Gammage narrative, journalists or editorialists frequently employ other narratives in evidentiary roles, supporting the rhetorical work of the Gammage narrative and extending its explanatory value by aligning it with other events.

Intertextuality

While tracking the primary and embedded frameworks used to tell the story of Jonny Gammage provides an overview of the narrative at a thematic level, identifying the specific cases to which it is compared provides a more complete understanding in that readers often come to understand events in relation to other events. As I discussed in Chapter 1, such comparisons rely on intertextuality, or the interconnections that exist across texts. At a base level, intertextuality can be found in any number of ways, including the primary and embedded frameworks. That is, each usage of terms such as “police brutality” or “criminal injustice” can be said to call up each prior usage and predict each subsequent usage. In that way, the repeated use of similar terms creates a “chain of speech communication” (Bakhtin 1986: 94). And while identifying chains of speech communication at the framework or thematic level across media texts helps show the ongoing nature of media events—the running story—it does not fully account for the cultural significance of a specific event or narrative.

To further explore how readers come to understand an event or its significance, we need to trace the intertextual links within news reports that specifically refer to other events or people. On the one hand, this process is difficult and could go on at considerable length: each time that Judge Cashman is mentioned in an article, for example, calls up,

however unintentionally, each prior mention. Yet because the judge is an actor in the Gammage narrative—a concrete value within the attribute-value set that comprises the *legal proceedings* frame—we expect to reencounter him as the story unfolds, such that tracking each time his name appears offers little in terms of explaining the cultural impact of the story itself. On the other hand, identifying the persons or events with no direct relation to the Gammage case could, again, be a lengthy yet much more valuable process.

As the court cases stretched over many years, it is unsurprising that many people would have been used as points of comparison at one time or another, not all of whom contribute significantly to a fuller understanding of the story. With that in mind, however, it is useful to examine those unrelated persons or events (in the sense of no direct involvement) that appeared with relative frequency in articles that discuss Gammage. When journalists contextualize current events with prior events, they implicitly frame readers' understanding of those current events. Thus, the intertextual links provided in *Courier* accounts of the Gammage incident support the cognitive work initiated by the primary and embedded frames by grounding those frames in actual events. Again, while tracking every comparison seems unproductive, identifying and examining those that appeared more than a few times could offer significant insight into the narrative coherence.

Table 2: Intertextual links determined by direct references to other persons or events. Only those occurring more than once were included; many appear in the same article.

<i>Intertextual Links</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
O.J. Simpson	20	6.3
Rodney King	19	6.0
Ku Klux Klan	18	5.7
Jerry Jackson	17	5.3
Deron Grimmer	16	5.0
Jordan Miles	12	3.8
Other	46	14.6
Total	148	---

O.J. Simpson

In June 1994 hall-of-fame professional football player O.J. Simpson drew national attention when, following the murder of his ex-wife and her friend, he led Los Angeles police in a now-infamous low-speed chase that was broadcast live by a helicopter camera crew. Eventually he was arrested and charged with two counts of murder, thus initiating a highly publicized criminal trial. Like the Gammage case, the Simpson case brought up issues of racism and criminal justice. More significantly, Simpson was found not guilty on 3 Oct. 1995—nine days before Gammage’s death. As such, it is hardly surprising that journalists might compare the two cases. And yet, there are significant differences between them: Simpson (who is Black) was on trial in Los Angeles, not Pittsburgh, and Simpson’s acquittal in some ways neutralized claims of racial disparity in the criminal justice system, whereas the acquittals of the officers in the Gammage trials seemed only to strengthen such claims. Nevertheless, the Simpson case became a frequent point of comparison for the Gammage case.

The following excerpt appeared in the first *Courier* article to emerge following Gammage's death (see examples 1-3 above), "Full Investigation Demanded in Traffic Stop Ending in Death":

(49) To Alma Fox, a longtime activist with the NAACP and National Organization for Women, Gammage's death was particularly unsettling because the circumstances were eerily reminiscent of a remark made by detective Mark Fuhrman on tapes played during the O.J. Simpson trial. Fox said Fuhrman made reference to racist police officers who like to target "any Black guy going through a white neighborhood, driving a Jaguar, who does not have on a \$500 suit." Since Simpson's acquittal, she said, racists apparently feel they have license to express their racism. (Hamm, 18 Oct. 1995: A1, pars. 21-22)

Fox's sentiment here suggests that Gammage was the victim of racial profiling, an institutionalized problem exacerbated by Simpson's acquittal. The implicit argument in Fox's indirectly-reported statement that "racists apparently feel they have license to express their racism" is that the officers who pulled over Gammage were acting out of malice or a sense of revenge prompted by what they perceived as a Black man (Simpson) getting away with murder. In another article, Mrs. Young, whose relative had recently escaped from police custody, expressed concern for his safety during the manhunt: "The police have gone completely out of control. [...] It's all resulting from the O.J. Simpson verdict and most recently this Million Man March" (Haynes, 21 Oct. 1995: A-1, par. 11). For Fox and Young, racism and its institutionalized manifestation, racial profiling, have become issues of even greater concern for the Black community since the Simpson trial.

Similar comparisons connect racial profiling to other concerns such as criminal justice. In the following except, editorialist Kim Platt expresses outrage over the "most recent debacle of alleged judicial impartiality" following Pittsburgh Officer John Charmo's acquittal for "executing" Black motorist Jerry Jackson, which she claims is identical to

Vojtas's acquittal in the Gammage case. In fact, Platt claims that it "has become fashionable to kill a Black male" and for courts to turn the other cheek:

(50) Ever since O.J. Simpson was acquitted of murder in the death of his wife Nicole and a friend of hers, it seems as if jurors throughout the United States and Pittsburgh have been locked into some type of "let's get even at the expense of Black males" kind of mentality. Regardless of how overwhelming the evidence may be against a police officer who murders a Black male, jurors (usually 80 percent white) seem to get myopic and brain-dead when it comes to punishing criminal police officers. (Platt, 28 Mar. 2001: A7, par. 7)

In addition to noting the Gammage incident is more than an isolated case of police brutality ("fashionable") or an isolated case of criminal injustice (jurors "throughout the United States" are failing to convict officers), Platt suggests the Pittsburgh officers' acquittals were racialized payback—indicative of a national trend (jurors are "usually 80 percent white")—for Simpson's acquittal. In that way, the Gammage incident is represented as an instance of victimization by police officers and a criminal justice system whose agenda mimics that of pre-civil rights era attitudes towards minorities.

Rodney King

On 3 March 1991, Black motorist Rodney King was pulled over and badly beaten by Los Angeles police following a high-speed chase, an incident famously recorded by amateur videographer George Holliday. Most people who saw the video, particularly those in the Black community, believed that the police officers were unquestionably guilty of brutality.²⁴ However, after a lengthy trial the officers were acquitted, which sparked rioting in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles; to quell the violence, the California Army National Guard and U.S. Marines were dispatched to assist local law enforcement.

Clearly there are many similarities between the King and Gammage incidents: both men are Black and both were pulled over and beaten by white police officers. Both incidents resulted in lengthy trials that, like the Simpson case, engaged issues of police brutality and racism. In both cases, the officers involved were acquitted. Of course, though, there are significant differences, notably that King lived while Gammage did not. Still, it is hardly surprising that the King incident and the subsequent trial would be used as points of comparison for the Gammage case.

Interestingly, the first invocation of King appears in a letter to the editor rather than a standard news report or editorial. Nonetheless, the comparison shows that some people at least view the two incidents as similar. In the following example, the writer, Janet Louise Martin, responds to an earlier letter to the editor by Doug Penton, who Martin identifies as a “mouthpiece for the white race” and who, according to the title of his letter is “Fed Up with the Wrath of the Black Community” (par. 1). After expressing anger over the Gammage case (“Pardon me, I thought murder was against the law,” par. 1), Martin continues:

(51) And as for what you [Penton] and other whites are fed up with—hey let me tell you what I as a Black woman am fed up with: [...] The beating of Black motorist Rodney King by white cops who were found not guilty by a white jury. (National ed., 9 Dec. 1995: 5, pars. 4-8)

Though Martin identifies other instances of violence against Blacks, not all by the police, and cites economic disparities as reasons for indignation, she clearly aligns the King and Gammage incidents and thus suggests that a similar outcome—acquittal by an all-white jury—could occur in the Gammage case. Her statement therefore reinforces the frames of *police brutality* and *criminal injustice*.

Martin's fears of acquittal by an all-white jury seem to be confirmed when in May 1996, Judge Cercone ruled to select a jury from outside Allegheny County, which again prompted comparisons to the King trials. This time, however, the reference appears in a standard news article:

(52) Community leaders were shocked by the ruling of Criminal Court Judge David S. Cercone to select a jury from outside Allegheny County in the case of Jonny Gammage. Many felt the decision has the potential to build an "all-white" jury in presiding over the death of a Black male. [...] According to Tim Stevens, Pittsburgh Branch NAACP president, there are serious concerns about Cercone's decision. "We cannot afford, in this community, to suffer the insensitivity and short-sighted thinking that led to the Rodney King case to be tried in an all-white suburb outside of Los Angeles," said Stevens during a press conference held Wednesday. (Wilkes, 8 May 1996: A1, pars. 1-4)

Although the King reference is reported speech, it nonetheless advances a thematic correlation with the Gammage case. Further, Stevens assumes that his audience would be aware of the result of the King case. In that way, he draws a similar parallel between the cases as did Martin: the "insensitivity and short-sighted thinking" would most likely result in the officers' acquittal. Presumably, though, that short-sighted thinking could also result in civil unrest like the L.A. riots should the outcome of the Gammage case mirror that of the King trials. It further seems that the article's author assumes that readers would be able to reconstruct this line of thought without explanation.

Though examples (51) and (52) highlight ways in which reported speech has been used to contextualize the Gammage case, the following example develops a sustained and explicit comparison:

(53) There appear to be some striking similarities in the Jonny E. Gammage trial and the first Rodney King trial. Both involved white policemen, a Black suspect and charges of excessive abuse. And both cases were judged by an all-white jury. While King survived a videotaped brutal beating by Los Angeles police, Gammage died from apparent suffocation at the hands of a white officer. The all-

white jury exonerated the Los Angeles officers, and much the same could result in the Gammage trial which began yesterday. (Reeves, 16 Oct. 1996: A1, pars. 1-3)

Reeves runs seamlessly through *legal proceedings, police brutality, and criminal justice* frames to support his assertion of “striking similarities.” He thus continues:

(54) Most defense attorneys—Black and white—agree that intolerance was “evident” in the initial King verdict, according to a Los Angeles Times survey following the trial. And the absence of Black jurors and any basic historical cultural infusion to which reveals a sustained effort by white policemen to harass Black males (re: The Kerner Report, The Fuhrman tapes, and a dozen or so other studies conducted over the past three decades) leaves the feeling among Blacks that the officers charged with Gammage’s death, will never be convicted. (pars. 19-20)

Reeves’s comparison of the King and Gammage trials suggests that the push for criminal justice in the Gammage case resonates within the Black community not only as a concern in relation to that specific case, but as an opportunity to limit the “basic historical cultural infusion” that defines unequal treatment or protection under the law for Black citizens.

As the above examples show, the Gammage case is significant as both an isolated incident and as part of a pattern of police brutality and criminal injustice. Thus, it fits well within those masterplots such that writers, journalists or citizens, can draw parallels to the King beating and trials with varying levels of specificity and still expect readers to understand the comparison. More importantly, doing so frames the Gammage case in such a way that readers unfamiliar with it could understand it given their understanding of the King beating and trials.

Ku Klux Klan

Consonant with the racialized aspects of the Simpson and King cases, the Ku Klux Klan were frequently discussed in articles that mention Jonny Gammage. Labeled a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the KKK immediately evokes notions of racist attitudes and threats of physical violence toward Blacks. Many of these articles are about movements within the organization such as planned demonstrations in Pittsburgh, and the Gammage case is cited as a counterpoint to threats posed by the KKK or as evidence that their blatant racism is not restricted to their organization.

Following Vojtas’s acquittal, one obviously frustrated citizen expressed his perspective on Pittsburgh police by relying on the powerful analogy:

(55) Generally, reactions from Black and white residents of Pittsburgh, were polarized. The consensus by Blacks interviewed by the Courier was one of anger and frustration with how to channel their anger. The majority of whites questioned requested not to be photographed and stated they didn’t want to comment. Henry White, a member of the Penn Hills NAACP, gave harsh remarks after shouting to onlookers “No justice, no peace.” “I feel that this trial was a complete and total mockery,” White said angrily. [...] White said he felt the Klu Klux Klan [*sic*] was alive and well. “The KKK don’t wear sheets anymore. They’re the police with badges. This is going to send a message out...beat a Black man and get away with it,” he said. (Robertson, National ed., 30 Nov. 1996: A1, pars. 4-8)

Echoing sentiments heard following the O.J. Simpson verdict, Henry White frames the police as both actively racist and criminally inculpable.

A secondary yet perhaps more instructive example of the intertextual link between the KKK and Gammage appears in the following report concerning a planned KKK rally in downtown Pittsburgh:

(56) While one group of concerned citizens will unite behind a rallying cry of, “Not in Our Town,” to offset the April 5 Ku Klux Klan demonstration, another younger group will take a stand across the street from the hate group. Organizers of the Grant Street Anti-Klan Coalition are planning a peaceful alternative to the event organized by the Coalition to Counter Hate Groups, that will be held in Market

Square. [...] “If you can keep 2,000 youths non violent and organized and disciplined,” she [Elayne Tobin, a member of the Grant Street coalition] said in reference to a rally downtown earlier this year staged by high school students in light of the death of Black motorist Jonny Gammage at the hands of five suburban police officers, “we can do the same.” (Haynes, 26 March 1997: A1, pars. 1-13.)

Like example (55), this example relies on the readers’ background knowledge of the KKK as a hate group and the community activism following the Gammage case. Example (56), though, backgrounds the Gammage case—that is, expects that the reader will recognize it as a symbol of peaceful community activism—whereas example (55) backgrounds information concerning the KKK. In other words, the two examples flip the requisite contextualization cues, yet both rely on the readers’ understanding of the KKK as a hate group and the Gammage case as a model for peaceful demonstration. Together, then, these two brief examples reinforce the frameworks of *racism* (and by extension *police brutality*) and *community activism*.

Jerry Jackson and Deron Grimmitt

In the same way that the Gammage incident has been compared to national stories such as the O.J. Simpson murder trial and the Rodney King beating, it has also become a point of comparison for events in the Pittsburgh region. While such usage is hardly surprising given the sustained media coverage and intense community reaction, the following comparisons show how the Gammage story begins to function rhetorically. While references to O.J. Simpson and Rodney King are used to help the reader make sense of the Gammage case, the following examples highlight aspects of the Gammage story that are used to help the reader make sense of other incidents or issues.

In an opinion piece titled “Marching, Selective Buying is Wasted Energy,” Louis Kendrick argues that community activism in the wake of Officer Vojtas’s acquittal had little effect. Further, he suggests that the outrage behind the activism is inconsistent:

(57) We are upset about Jonny Gammage’s death and we should be, but what about the numerous killings by the police over the years and we remained silent? On March 6, 1995, Jerry Jackson was shot to death in the Armstrong Tunnel. Remember? About 70 shots were fired, and 15 bullets entered his body and we remained silent. (23 Nov. 1996: A7, par. 7)²⁵

Here Kendrick instantiates a *community activism* frame in the headline to argue for stronger civic engagement within the Black community in terms of voting and local politics. Kendrick employs the same comparative strategy discussed in examples (51)-(54) in which Rodney King was used to establish patterns of police brutality and criminal injustice. Kendrick implies, then, that community activism surrounding the Gammage case is in fact “wasted energy” because other incidents of police brutality (i.e., Jerry Jackson’s death) will likely continue to happen. In that way, this version of the Gammage narrative is used to establish a pattern of police brutality and to suggest a particular interpretation of the Jackson incident. In like of the Gammage’s death, then, Jackson’s “killing” takes on new meaning: the *continuation* (“over the years”) of minority victimization by police. Missing from this comparison, however, are the details that Jackson led Officer Charmo on a high-speed chase in a stolen car and that, according to Charmo, Jackson attempted to turn the car around in the Armstrong Tunnel and run him over. Although such criminal activity hardly warrants such an extreme reaction, Kendrick’s comparison suggests that the narrative details preceding confrontations with police are less significant than the result of those confrontations. By focusing on the outcome, Kendrick advances a sequence of police brutality in Pittsburgh.

Another interpretation of Kendrick's comparison between Gammage and Jackson could be that the lack of justice in the Gammage case, which was the subject of the community activism seen in examples (15)-(16), would likely mean that the officer charged in Jackson's death will not be held accountable. This implication, and the pattern it serves, is strongly implied in the following commentary:

(58) What will it take for a jury to find a police officer guilty of murder in the city of Pittsburgh? That's the question that confronts the Allegheny County Office of the District Attorney. They couldn't do it in the case of Jonny Gammage who was driving a friend and business associate's Jaguar through a white neighborhood, breaking no obvious traffic laws when he was pulled over and, eventually, had the life crushed out of him at the hands of five police officers. We did nothing wrong! They couldn't do it in the case of Deron Grimmitt who fled from officers who were making an unrelated arrested. He ended up dead. Killed by an officer who some said set up an illegal roadblock and gunned him down. Yes, he was wrong to start the chase, but did he did not deserve to die. And they couldn't do it most recently in the case of Jerry Jackson who led police on a chase in a stolen Mazda. This time the jury came back divided—9-3 in favor of finding former Pittsburgh Housing Authority police Officer John Charmo guilty—and a mistrial was called by the judge. (Toler, 21 Feb. 2001: A1, pars. 1-8)

The leading question frames the issue of criminal injustice as widespread within the Pittsburgh region. By abstracting the main characters ("jury" and "police officer"), the author advances a narrative where the perpetrators of police brutality are above the law. In this abstraction, the narrative achieves its moralizing effect: even when the public favors conviction in specific cases ("the jury came back divided—9-3 in favor of finding...John Charmo guilty"), the skewed legal system will rule in the officer's favor, as has been established given the outcomes of the Gammage and Grimmitt incidents. Although Toler gives details about the deaths of the three men and names the victims, she does not name the aggressors, with the exception of the most recent incident. Thus, the focus on the outcome of the trials advances a pattern of criminal injustice.

Jordan Miles and Trayvon Martin

The most recent incident, locally, to achieve comparable media coverage and public outrage as the Gammage incident occurred on 12 Jan. 2010 when high school student Jordan Miles ran when approached by three plain-clothes Pittsburgh police officers, apparently unaware of their official status. After a brief chase, officers caught Miles and beat him severely. Comparisons between that case and the Gammage incident emerged immediately and continued throughout the civil trials that lasted from 16 July-2 Aug. 2012:

(59) An overwhelming percentage of people from all races and genders agree that the Jordan Miles situation was an absolute example of excessive police force. This case, as tragic as it is, is a continuation of the absolute power the police possess when it involves life or death. [...] The truth of the matter is that the [community] meeting [in response to the incident] wound up being a discussion of police abuse of power, which resulted in the death of Jonny Gammage and Jerry Jackson—the miracle driver who allegedly attempted to turn his car around in the Armstrong tunnels, and justice was denied once again. (Kendrick, 17 Mar. 2010: A9, pars. 1-2)

(60) The recent Jordan Miles incident has brought to a head, not only in Pittsburgh, but urban communities throughout the country, the question of why isn't there something in place to police the police. Living in the Black community, we all know how important the police are to the protection of community and what it would be like without them to at least keep some control over the young fools roaming our streets with guns killing each other. [...] There has to be some kind of system set up to protect good police officers and law abiding citizens while punishing the bad police officers and the thugs on the streets. Many thought the Citizens Police Review Board was going to do just that after the Johnny Gammage killing, but they are a joke. They have no power. ("How Do We Police the Police?," 22 June 2011: A6, pars. 1-6)

The above examples begin by instantiating a *police brutality* frame: "the Jordan Miles situation was an absolute example of *excessive police force*" and "why isn't there something in place *to police the police*." Although the second example is less explicit in that frame, it implies that criminal activity has occurred, which the reference to Jordan Miles would situate within the framework of police brutality. Further, both examples invoke Jonny

Gammage to suggest an ongoing pattern of brutality (i.e., “the death of Jonny Gammage” and “the Jonny Gammage killing,” respectively). Example (60), however, embeds the *police brutality* frame within a *community activism* frame identified by the Citizen Police Review Board. Even the fact that the city needs a police review board suggests a pattern of police brutality.

Whereas Jordan Miles became a rallying point against police brutality locally, Trayvon Martin did so nationally. On 26 Feb. 2012, Martin, a 17-year-old visiting family in Sanford, FL, was fatally shot by neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman. Although Zimmerman is not a police officer, the semi-official status of neighborhood watch volunteer aligns with many of the discourses and fears concerning police brutality. In other words, Zimmerman’s status gives him authority to victimize minorities and avoid criminal culpability. This sentiment is clearly expressed by sports reporter Bill Neal, who begins by noting that he is wearing a black ‘hoodie’ sweatshirt similar to what Martin was wearing when he was shot, before moving into a list of reasons for outrage at the incident:

(61) No. 1. George Zimmerman you are not a policeman, you’re not a paid public official. No. 2. When our young Black men are assaulted, we at least expect the villains to be real police not rent-a-cops or in this case want-to be-cops! No. 3. Zimm, the real police told you to leave it alone. You should have left it alone. No. 4. The real hoodies to be afraid of would be those in white hoods, aka the KKK. [...] No. 10. Please just arrest the guy, for starters just arrest the guy...that’s Florida not Pittsburgh, they’re not going to let it go!!! Don’t act stupid. You remember Johnny Gammage, I am just saying!!! (Neal, 4 Apr. 2012: C5, pars. 6-15)

Neal instantiates the *police brutality* frame, stating “we at least expect the villains to be real police,” before making an explicit connection to racism by contrasting Martin’s hooded sweatshirt with “those in the white hoods, aka the KKK.” After outlining other perceived inconsistencies, Neal suggests that Florida officials will fail to prosecute Zimmerman, thus

instantiating a *criminal justice* frame, and suggests that the result of the incident will mirror that of the Gammage case. In other words, Neal suggests that readers should not be surprised by Martin's death (and thus implores his audience to not "act stupid") nor by the improbability that Zimmerman, even if prosecuted, would be found guilty ("You remember Jonny Gammage, I am just saying!!!").

Taken together, the above examples show that the Gammage narrative not only forms in relation to abstract frameworks such as *police brutality* or *criminal injustice*, but that those frameworks are supported by and elaborated through reference to concrete incidents that variably reflect different aspects of the incident and ensuing trials. By positioning the Gammage narrative in relation to other unrelated incidents (in the sense of no *direct* relation), writers both reinforce the abstract frameworks and establish patterns of brutality, racism, or criminal (in)justice. In doing so, they thus contribute to the formation of the Jonny Gammage narrative icon.

The Jonny Gammage Narrative Icon

The *narrative icon* is a word, name, or short phrase that combines both the abstraction of primary and embedded frameworks with references to specific events. As an icon, it omits narrative details of the events to which it refers, such that readers are expected to supply those details given their cultural background knowledge. Yet as the above analysis has shown, narrative icons may represent myriad aspects of the story to which they refer. Writers, however, assume that readers would understand the specific details relevant to

the article in which the icon is embedded. In other words, writers assume that readers will accept the reference and supply the correct *narrative* version.

While it would certainly seem that in most cases the comparison would stand in relation to the primary framework of the article in which the narrative icon is embedded, it also stands to reason that the myriad frames that comprise the narrative icon could affect readers' interpretation of the new context as well as perhaps change readers' understanding of the original narrative. That is, as narrative icons are contextualized in articles concerning unrelated events, they both suggest a particular interpretation of those events (typically in relation to the primary framework) and potentially absorb new dimensions based on readers' understanding of the unrelated events.

In total, I identified 40 instances (~13% of the total articles) of the Jonny Gammage narrative icon represented in the following forms: "[Jonny] Gammage," "the [Jonny] Gammage incident," and "the [Jonny] Gammage case," or "the death of Jonny Gammage." Again, each instance generally corresponds with the primary framework of the article in which it is embedded; as references to other persons or events help to frame the Gammage incident, so too the Gammage narrative icon helps frame unrelated events or contextualizes relevant social issues.

As might be expected, iconic references to "Gammage" or "the death of Jonny Gammage" appear shortly after the precipitating event:

(62) Recent headlines have served to underscore a fact many of us would prefer to disbelieve or, at least, not think about. Race is an important issue in our region. Vastly different perceptions of the O.J. Simpson verdict, controversy surrounding the meaning and appropriateness of affirmative action, confusion over the meaning of the Million Man March and, most immediate for our region, the deep sense of concern felt by the majority of our community in connection with **the death of Jonny Gammage**, bring to the surface difficulties we experience in living in a racially diverse world. (Pickett, 8 Nov. 1995: A7, par. 1)

(63) A Pittsburgh Steeler who filed a complaint that a city police officer humiliated him and held a gun on him during a recent traffic stop warned the officer, “I told you had the wrong guy; this is **Gammage** all over,” internal reports reveal. (Hamm, 25 Nov. 1995: A1, par. 1)

The above examples appeared in the *Courier* within six weeks of Gammage’s death. As indicated by the headline (“Race is an Issue”) and lead in example (62), Pickett instantiates a *racism* or *race relations* frame, which is reinforced through references to the O.J. Simpson verdict, the Million Man March, and the narrative icon, “the death of Jonny Gammage.” She thus assumes that readers will recognize and agree with her assessment of Gammage’s death as racially motivated and only offers a scant allusion to “recent allegations against law enforcement personnel” by way of narrative detail (par. 5). Yet because her commentary appears less than one month after the precipitating event and in the same *Courier* edition in which two other articles discuss Gammage—a standard news report about the legal proceedings and an editorial also concerned with race relations—it would make sense that readers would understand the reference without immediate explanation.

Similarly, in a report about a separate traffic stop (example (63)), Sandy Hamm cites an internal police report in which Pittsburgh Steeler Johnnie Barnes iconically references Gammage (“this is Gammage all over”). This reference reinforces the primary frame of *police misconduct* as indicated in the headline (“City Cop Humiliates Steeler in Traffic Stop”) and lead (“complaint”). Although the reader is reminded that Gammage “died at the hands of suburban police officers during a traffic stop,” the information does not appear until substantially later in the article (par. 14) such that the reader must first supply that background knowledge in order to follow the reference in the lead. Yet, as the article appeared in the same edition as four other standard reports (each of which appeared on

the first page), readers should understand the narrative icon as indicative of police misconduct without further explanation. Together, then, the Gammage narrative icon can be used to support claims of racism and police misconduct.

Similar uses of the Gammage icon appear with relative frequency as the trials progress, sometimes as reported speech, other times within the context of the article itself. The following example appears in an article concerning community activism in regards to police brutality and opposition to Mayor Tom Murphy. After reporting a June 1996 incident in which two men, Craig Guest and Maurice Hall, were killed by a Pittsburgh police officer, activist Kahlid Raheem is quoted as saying:

(64) I think that we need to always question the circumstances involving the police shooting of Black civilians. [...] I think that it is important that people from Pittsburgh don't allow themselves to be lulled back to sleep, especially around the recent killings in the Homewood area involving the two young men who were killed in a car. I don't think that we need to be lulled back to sleep in thinking that everything is okay. We need to continue to push real hard for justice **for brother Jonny Gammage** and for a civilian police review board. (Wilkes and Reed, 3 July 1996: A1, par. 13)

Raheem frames his concerns of police brutality specifically in relation to “police shooting of Black civilians”—a clear reference to Guest and Hall (“the recent killings in the Homewood area”). However, his statement implicitly frames Gammage as the victim of a police shooting while simultaneously suggesting that, like Gammage, Guest and Hall will not receive justice. Though it would most likely be clear to readers familiar with the Gammage case that Raheem is simply making a claim about the broader issue of police brutality, the details whereby that brutality is enacted are overlooked in his statement. Perhaps more significantly, elsewhere in the article Guest and Hall are identified as passengers in a stolen vehicle that was dragging a police officer when they were shot, that is, they were engaged

in criminal activity that represented an immediate threat to the life of a police officer. While this might not justify the officer's actions, that knowledge (like Raheem's framing of police brutality) suggests that Gammage, too, might have been involved in dangerous criminal activity—a major point of contention in the Gammage case. Nonetheless, it seems that most readers would likely not be confused by the reference or inaccurately characterize the Gammage incident in those ways; rather, Gammage is identifiable as a victim of police brutality and thus helps establish a pattern of police brutality, even absent narrative detail.

Other uses of the Gammage narrative icon are more ambiguous. Consider the following examples that instantiate the *social justice* frame:

- (65) Why is the Democratic National Platform Committee visiting Pittsburgh on their way to the convention in another city? Are they stopping because they heard about **the Jonny Gammage incident** and the ACLU lawsuits against the city of Pittsburgh Police Department? (Cain, National ed., 17 Aug. 1996: 5, par. 1)
- (66) **The case of Jonny Gammage's** as well as other publicized cases here and around the nation, underscore the importance of knowing what your rights and responsibilities are when confronted by the police. All citizens have the right to expect to be treated in a fair and courteous manner by the police at all times. In a perfect world, that is what would happen. (Robinson, 1 Jan. 1997: A7, par. 1).

Examples (65)-(66) suggest that Pittsburgh police violated Gammage's civil rights, yet, as in example (64), the details of that violation are left unstated. Thus, in addition to framing Gammage as a victim of police brutality, specifically, Cain's letter-to-the-editor and Robinson's op-ed frame Gammage as a victim of civil rights abuses, a broader category than police brutality.

The Gammage narrative icon has also been used to support arguments about the need for increased community activism. In another op-ed about the NAACP's decision to convene in Pittsburgh for the first time since 1931, Bill Robinson recognizes that although there have been significant advances in racial equality in the 66 intervening years much

work still needs to be done. Thus, in order to garner support for the convention and to motivate residents to express their concerns, Robinson concedes:

(67) Sure our city has loads of problems and our mayor sometimes doesn't seize the moment to improve conditions for African-Americans. Sure **the Jonny Gammage case** has brought to light again some of the ugly truth about our political and judicial system. May 20 would be a good time to register a significant protest. (5 Feb. 1997: A7, pars. 8-9)

Other than suggesting that the Gammage case is indicative of social or criminal injustice ("the ugly truth"), Robinson omits details that suggest how or why he labels it as such. As in the previous examples, he expects that readers will understand and agree with his assessment.

Whereas the above examples nicely show how the Gammage narrative icon has been used to reinforce the abstract primary frameworks of *police brutality/misconduct*, *criminal/social injustice*, or *racism*, its use in that way is hardly surprising. That is, each of the above examples appeared simultaneous to the criminal trials against Officers Vojtas, Mulholland, and Albert. Thus, reports of developments in the cases or editorials about related yet supplementary events (e.g., protest marches) still filled the pages of the *Courier*. To better understand the argumentative implications of the Gammage narrative icon, though, it is useful to analyze some of its instantiations after 19 Feb. 1999, when the U.S. Department of Justice announced it would not file civil rights charges against any of the five officers present at the initial traffic stop, and after each of the criminal trials had concluded. That date, then, represents what could be identified as the official end to the Gammage case.

Of course, given the significant media coverage and the local impact of Gammage's death and the court cases, references to Gammage (iconic and non-iconic) persisted after

the DOJ's announcement. The following example highlights the staying power of the Gammage narrative; more than two-and-a-half years later, local politician Valerie McDonald commented on the significance of being a Black candidate:

(68) Although she concedes the symbolism of a Black county row officer could be powerful, she said race isn't the issue for her. Nor has it been for white voters she has met on the campaign trail. "It's been very warm and cordial, surprisingly so," she said. "The police in Brentwood were very friendly. I thought there might be a little edge from **the Jonny Gammage incident**. Maybe this is a step toward healing. There comes a time to be trusting and open with someone who doesn't look like you." (Morrow, 3 Nov. 2001: A9, pars. 2-4)

The contrast between the "symbolism" of a Black candidate and what McDonald assumed would be "a little edge" suggests that the Gammage incident still functions as a sobering reminder of racial inequality and the threat of police brutality in Pittsburgh. That is, in noting that the Brentwood police "were very friendly"—even as white voters seemed to disregard her race—McDonald implies that she expected otherwise—a hostility left over from the negative attention brought to the borough because of Mulholland and Vojtas's roles in the Gammage traffic stop. Thus, the Gammage narrative icon here marks a lingering point of (perceived) racial tension in the city.

As much as the Gammage narrative icon is used to imply racial tensions, it is also used as a more direct warning of threats to the Black community. In the following editorial, Louis Kendrick expresses concerns about impunity among a racist Pittsburgh police force:

(69) The police have proven over the years how powerful they are. They have the power to arrest, incarcerate and to kill with impunity. Remember **Jonnie Gammage**, Jerry Jackson and Deron Grimmitt? [*sic*] (7 Sep. 2002: A7, par. 11)

In asking readers if they "remember" Gammage, Jackson, and Grimmitt, Kendrick at once conflates their respective encounters with Pittsburgh police and suggests that a similar fate potentially awaits anyone in the Black community who runs afoul of the law. Interestingly,

none of the three men were in fact arrested or incarcerated; rather they each died during an attempted arrest in which each victim allegedly threatened one or more police officers. This implies, then, that the events leading up to police encounters do not determine the likely outcome, which, based on the three unexplained examples, would be death. Further, Kendrick suggests that the police will not be held accountable for their actions. In that way, he reinforces both a *police brutality* frame and a *criminal injustice* frame that, when taken together, serve as a dire warning to the Black community.

While Kendrick's example concretely situates the Gammage incident within the guise of police brutality, other uses of the Gammage narrative icon are more ambiguous. In an op-ed about Black History Month, Lou Ransom takes the opportunity to invoke Gammage as evidence for the need of continued attention to racial inequality:

(70) I keep hearing from white people that we should get over it. We should stop bringing up things like the Atlantic crossing and the 1921 Tulsa race riot and Emmett Till, and **Jonny Gammage**. I'd quit bringing them up, if they would stop happening. (28 Feb 2007: A7, par. 13)

Like the other examples, Ransom does not offer any details about the Gammage or Till incidents, yet expects readers to accept them as evidence that racial inequality and violence toward Blacks persists ("if [such events] would stop happening").

As I discussed above, the Gammage story is used to also contextualize contemporary events such as Jordan Miles's beating and Trayvon Martin's death; so, too, has the Gammage narrative icon been used when discussing those cases. In an article about a town hall meeting concerning perceptions of Black men following the Miles incident, Black Political Empowerment Chairman Tim Stevens is quoted as saying:

(71) These incidents present a psychological event on the entire community. This has touched so many people. In my 40 years as an activist, I have never seen more people react to an incident, other than **Jonny Gammage**, the way they've

been reacting to Jordan Miles. Luckily he's alive to share his story. (Nuttall, 22 June 2011: A1, A4, par. 9)

More than 15 years after Gammage's traffic stop death, Stevens remarks that no other incident has sparked as much outrage, including Miles's recent beating. As he compares reactions between the events, he suggests that the events are similar; certainly others at the town hall meeting would be aware of the Miles incident—not only had it recently occurred, but Miles himself was in attendance—and would thus recognize the Gammage incident of a case of police brutality. Invoking Gammage in that way also strengthens claims to police brutality in relation to the Miles incident and suggests that recent events are every bit as troublesome as Gammage's death.

Discussion

In this chapter, I have shown three stages in the formation and use of the Jonny Gammage narrative icon: (1) details of the Gammage story are framed according to the concerns of the local Black community, (2) select details of the Gammage story are narrated in relation to other, non-related events or persons, and (3) the Gammage story itself has coalesced enough such that it can be invoked by the narrative icon. At this stage, the icon can invoke a variety of frames and events. Thus the context in which it is used helps to shape its meaning and function, though the meaning that readers assign to the icon may differ.

To the first point, as the above analysis shows, the Gammage story is multidimensional. Recall from Chapter 1 that narrative is the discursive emplotment of events in a story. The emplotments discussed above variably highlight the court cases, community response, and many related social issues. Nevertheless, the primary instantiation of the Gammage story is in a narrative of police brutality: Gammage died

following a traffic stop. Although the most common primary frames were *legal proceedings* and *community activism*, both were motivated by those core events. Given that particular emplotment, the main characters in the Gammage story can be identified as Gammage himself and the police.²⁶ In terms of the action, this emplotment suggests that Gammage's death was the result of police intervention. Even when the event of Gammage's death is not directly attributed to police (*died* vs. *killed*), readers would likely assign causality as the events then better fit within a masterplot of police brutality against minorities.

Beyond the core details that Gammage died following a traffic stop, no single emplotment of the case dominates narrative versions. Indeed, the versatility of the Gammage story is its strength: it at once calls up notions of police brutality, criminal injustice, community activism, and racism—particular concerns among the *Courier's* primary audience. As Gammage is often said to have died at the hands of *police officers* or *white police officers* rather than named characters, institutional and racial identities become salient elements in the story. As a consequence of this characterization, it is hardly surprising that the most common primary frameworks in articles that discuss Gammage either explicitly invoke race or call up the concerns of racial minorities in regard to police interaction or the legal system.

Stories of police brutality and criminal injustice have become a hallmark of Black history in America and Pittsburgh, specifically. Thus it follows that the Gammage incident can be seen as an exemplar of police brutality and criminal injustice. Recall from Chapter 1 that exemplars exhibit values for each frame attribute. Within a *police brutality* frame, the Gammage incident assigns values to *victim* (Gammage), *aggressor* (white police), or *type of force* ("violent struggle," "fight"). Within a criminal injustice frame, the Gammage incident

assigns values to *victim* (Gammage), *perpetrator* (legal system that disfavors minorities), or outcome (unfavorable outcome for minority participant). Recall, too, from Chapter 1 that frame components are neither fixed nor finite; certainly critics could take issue with the attributes and values identified here. These attributes and values, though, represent the most common topics from the articles analyzed. It follows, then, that these are the most salient elements in a given frame. As these values overlap, it stands to reason that readers will develop the same intertextual, thematic connections advanced by the article writers. Furthermore, as frame attributes are repeated across texts, prototypes develop for those frames: victims of police brutality are most frequently Black, aggressors are most frequently white, etc. As Gammage and the Gammage incident align with the values we expect to fit within that frame, he is not only an exemplar of the frame, but the *prototypical example*. Gammage is what *Courier* readers expect when they hear about police brutality, and they expect that his victimizers will not be held accountable.

Because the Gammage incident aligns with reader expectations in so many ways, it follows too that the Gammage story would come to symbolize the masterplot of police brutality. It could be argued, though, that aspects of the Gammage incident that did not align with that masterplot were left out of specific narrative versions, possibly because they were seen as insignificant precisely because they did not align with the masterplot, or that they were under-reported as a result. Without proof of either, I expect that the likely answer is that both happened. Indeed, such influence would point to the reciprocal and influential nature of cognitive frames and masterplots that instantiate them in public discourse: as we learn to emplot events, we also learn to seek specific details that as

Tannen explained (quoted in Chapter 1) saves us from having to figure things out anew all the time.

Even as the Gammage incident aligns most closely with masterplots of police brutality and criminal injustice, it indexes discourses about community activism and racism. While those topics overlap significantly, they each represent points of departure for arguments concerning practical action such as establishing a citizen's police review board, voting in greater numbers, or, whenever possible, avoiding interactions with the police. As points of departure, however, the Gammage story is supported in those arguments by references to other persons or events, thereby establishing patterns that are greater than the sum of their parts. In that way, this analysis supports earlier findings of the significance of media intertextuality at both the discursive and thematic levels.

Because the Gammage case stretched for so many months, and in doing so engaged many of the values and fears of the *Courier's* primary audience, the Gammage narrative reached a tipping point whereby iconic references at once invoked particular aspects of that narrative and supported larger arguments about relevant social issues. Of course, this progression is hardly linear: the Gammage narrative icon in no way completely replaces the narrative itself, particularly abbreviated versions such as those that comprise the core details (e.g., "the death of Black motorist Jonny Gammage"). Nonetheless, in many instances the Gammage narrative icon stands in for the details of the traffic stop, court cases, or community response. As such, it can be said to embody a masterplot, particularly within Pittsburgh's Black community, while still maintaining a plasticity that a fully formed narrative resists.

Tracing the formation and usage of a Jonny Gammage narrative icon also sheds light on the interplay between journalism and public discourse. Since iconic usages appear in standard news reports, editorials, and opinion pieces, as well as reported speech, it shows that reciprocity exists between journalistic accounts and popular usage. Not only does reported speech support that assertion, but the ability to use the icon in the first place suggests that the Gammage narrative has permeated local discussions to the point that articulating it could, at times, be redundant.

Chapter 3

“Look What Happened to Rodney King”: The rhetorical functions of a narrative icon

Introduction

Chapter 2 showed how narratives about the Jonny Gammage incident contribute to the formation of narrative icons. Analysis of the primary and embedded frameworks in articles that discuss Gammage, as well as the specific cases to which it is compared, suggested possible meanings for the Gammage narrative icon. The analysis also showed Gammage narrative icons were often used to reinforce the primary frame of the article or editorial in which it was embedded, though they could be used to index other discourses as well. In most cases, potential meanings of the narrative icon were discernible via the primary frame of the article or other context clues. In a few cases, though, the narrative icon could be understood to index multiple discourses or versions of the Gammage story. Nevertheless, their inclusion seemed to signify a particular importance for the writer and reader.

This chapter further explores the rhetorical availability of narrative icons by examining how the Rodney King narrative icon is used. In other words, this chapter seeks to answer the question: how do narrative icons function in discourse? I argue here that given its cultural resonance, and hence persuasive value, the Rodney King narrative icon

can be used in many ways. It can be used to establish rules or to illustrate rules that arguers wish to employ in support of a thesis. As rules are established, the narrative icon can also be used to compare cases or their interpretation. Each of these functions is supported by the icon's ability to index shared communal knowledge and values.

To support this claim, I first identify the primary and embedded frames of articles that discuss Rodney King between the precipitating event (i.e., the videotaped beating) and the L.A. riots immediately following the conclusion of the LAPD officers' criminal trial. This timeframe was selected to show the most important elements of different versions of the King story and to determine possible uses of the King narrative icon. I also analyze intertextual links within the same period to further identify possible meanings of the King narratives and hence develop a fuller understanding of the narrative icon's rhetorical value. Second, I analyze editorials, op-eds, commentaries, and letters to the editor published after the L.A. riots that invoke the King narrative icon. Although iconic uses appear prior to the riots, post-riot uses focus on its strategic, persuasive potential and lasting effect because, presumably, they appear in texts not directly related to the events that constitute the multiple versions of the King story.

The Rodney King Incident

On 3 March 1991, African-American motorist Rodney G. King was pulled over by California Highway Patrol and Los Angeles Police Department officers following a high-speed chase that moved from the freeway to residential streets. Within minutes, 21 officers arrived on the scene. In an attempt to subdue King after he exited his vehicle, officers Tased and repeatedly kicked and struck him with nightsticks. The incident was videotaped by George

Holliday, a resident of an adjacent apartment complex. Within 24 hours, the King beating video was broadcast on local and national television newscasts.

The apparent brutality inflicted on King by white LAPD officers sparked outrage and condemnation, including calls for the officers to be arrested and LAPD Chief Daryl Gates to resign. Although Chief Gates refused to publicly condemn the officers and urged the public not to implicate an entire department based on the actions of a few, Mayor Bradley immediately denounced the incident and Police Commissioner Melanie Lomax stated that “beatings like this tend to result in the loss of confidence of citizens in the police.”²⁷ Lomax’s words are instructive: beatings *like this* have happened before in Los Angeles.

After World War II, the city’s Black population grew significantly yet remained largely segregated. As the civil rights era of the 1960s was beginning to take shape, a number of incidents fueled tension between L.A.’s Black community and the police (Knight 1994). In May 1961, 75 policemen confronted nearly 200 Black citizens at a Memorial Day barbeque, which resulted in a “miniriot.” A year later, two Nation of Islam members were questioned by police as possible robbery suspects, during which a struggle began. Again, as many as 75 officers responded to the call for backup and summarily raided the NOI mosque; at least six NOI members were wounded and one killed during the raid. Then, in August 1965, the violent arrest of Marquette Frye for alleged drunk driving sparked protests that eventually erupted into the Watts riot. During six days of civil unrest, more than 30 people were killed and millions of dollars in property was destroyed (Hinton 2016). The rise of urban crime and street gangs in the 1970s and 1980s only exacerbated claims to racial profiling and police brutality. By 1980s, these tensions had reached a boiling point. When the seminal rap group NWA released *Straight Outta Compton* in 1988,

which included the track “F-ck tha Police,” fans and critics lauded its unapologetic depiction of life in L.A.’s South Central neighborhood, particularly Black residents’ encounters with police.

Amid this climate of racial tension and distrust of law enforcement, in March 1991, a county grand jury indicted Sgt. Stacey Koon and Officers Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind, and Theodore Briseno on charges of assault with a deadly weapon; Koon and Powell were also charged with filing a false report.²⁸ Soon thereafter, Mayor Tom Bradley created the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department—the Christopher Commission, as it came to be known, for its chair, former Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher—“to examine all aspects of the law enforcement structure in Los Angeles that might cause or contribute to the problem of excessive force” (*Report*, vii).

In April 1992, roughly one year after the beating, a jury acquitted the officers on the use of excessive force charge and remained deadlocked on the additional charges. Angered by perceived injustice, many residents began to riot and loot local businesses in the worst civil unrest since Watts. In just six days, more than 50 people were killed, hundreds of stores in South Central L.A. were looted, and numerous buildings were set on fire. Damage estimates topped \$1 billion (*The City in Crisis*, 23). After four days, the California Army National Guard was called in to restore order. On 4 May, Mayor Bradley lifted the citywide dusk-to-dawn curfew, effectively signaling an official end to the civil disorder. See Appendix D for a more complete timeline of events.

The King beating and the officers’ criminal trial have become hallmarks of police brutality and racial injustice in America. The incident also reinforced perceptions of the LAPD as an organization mired in racism and secrecy.²⁹ Many people who saw the King

beating video assumed that criminal convictions were inevitable. More importantly, it crystallized what they already believed: police brutality is serious, persistent problem within the LAPD.

Though police brutality may have been considered typical, particularly by Los Angeles' Black community, the severity of the King beating and its visual materialization focused attention on a problem in a way that prior incidents had not. In short, as I show in this chapter, Rodney King has become an icon of police brutality and criminal injustice. Further, extensive media coverage of the beating, trials, and riots, as well as other related incidents or issues, have contributed to the formation of a Rodney King narrative icon that appears in news media discourse concerning police brutality, criminal injustice, and, paradoxically, racial harmony. The King narrative icon, as I further show, acts as a marker of communal knowledge and thus becomes available to support arguments of broader social concern.

Corpora

The news media texts analyzed in this chapter constitute two corpora: pre- and post-riot texts published in the *Los Angeles Times* (Home edition), the city's leading daily newspaper. *Los Angeles Times* articles are indexed in the ProQuest Newsstand database. Both data sets we compiled from searches for "Rodney King" according to the dates below. The Pre-riot corpus includes texts published from 3 Mar. 1991 – 4 May 1992. Due to the overwhelming amount of media coverage, I limit this corpus to articles that appeared in Monday editions of the paper. Monday was chosen because the precipitating event occurred in the early morning of Sunday, 3 Mar. 1991 (i.e., I expected coverage to begin the next day, Monday³⁰)

and Mayor Bradley lifted the curfew on Monday, 4 May 1992. Though this selection may not offer a complete picture of the many versions of the King story, I assume that the systematic, weekly sampling contains the most important story elements, which would be part of sustained public discourse. The Pre-riot corpus is comprised of 109 texts, including standard news reports, editorials, opinion pieces, and letters-to-the-editor.³¹

The Post-riot corpus includes texts published from 5 May 1992 – 31 July 2013, when the events represented could be considered tangential to the King narratives.³² Thus, a King narrative icon in these texts could suggest a strategic function. The corpus end date also highlights contemporary uses of the King narrative icon, and coincides with the acquittal of neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin—an incident that was frequently compared to the King beating. The Post-riot corpus is comprised of 201 editorials, op-eds, commentaries, and letters-to-the-editor.³³ I restrict the Post-riot corpus to opinion pieces because these texts are not held to the same principle of objectivity as “hard” news and thus may “carry the writer’s personal opinions” and include more readily identifiable argumentative positions (Bell 1991: 14).³⁴ Indeed, according to its mission statement, the *Los Angeles Times* editorial page is where “the newspaper sets aside its objective news-gathering role to join its readers in a dialogue about important issues of the day—to exhort, explain, deplore, mourn, applaud or champion, as the case may be.” Together, the corpora total 310 texts. See Appendix E for a complete list of texts.

Part I: Primary Frameworks, Relevant Themes and Narrative Versions

Following the methodology presented in Chapter 2, I analyzed the headline and lead in texts from the Pre-riot corpus to determine the primary frameworks through which versions of the King story are told. Primary frameworks instantiated in the headline and lead signal what van Dijk (1985: 70) calls the “relevance structure” of news, or “information in the text [that] is most important or prominent” and which “express[es] the most ‘important’ topic of the news.” Thus, by coding each text according to its relevance structure, patterns emerge that suggest the most important elements in the King story. Table 1 lists the most frequent primary frameworks.

Table 1: The most frequent primary frameworks in *L.A. Times* texts that include the name “Rodney King” published between 3 Mar. 1991 – 4 May 1992.

<i>Primary framework</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Riots	19	17.4
Police-Community relations	12	11.0
Community reactions	9	8.2
City/state/national politics	9	8.2
Police procedures	8	7.3
Police brutality	7	6.4
Police staffing	7	6.4
Other	38	34.9
<i>Total</i>	109	99.8

In addition to a general thematic understanding of the King narratives, primary frameworks help identify main characters or events in the story. As I discussed in Chapter 1, frames are comprised of attribute-value sets, where readers’ understanding of a frame is constructed through both experience and repetition. For example, repeated encounters—

discursive, textual, or experiential—with *police brutality* suggest that the act of police brutality necessitates, at a minimum, particular categories of actors (e.g., police and a victim or victims) and a type of action (use of excessive force). To these attributes, specific values can be assigned (e.g., LAPD officers and Rodney King; striking with batons and kicking). The news story, then, elaborates and reinforces the relationship between attributes, values, and frames by grounding the thematic structure in particular actors and events.

The First Year: Versions of the Rodney King Narrative

Riots

Within hours of the not guilty verdicts for Sgt. Koon and Officers Wind, Briseno, and Powell, residents of Los Angeles began to riot. The L.A. riots rank among the deadliest and costliest incidents of civil disobedience in U.S. history and, accordingly, generated significant press coverage. On Monday, 4 May 1992 alone, the *L.A. Times* published 19 articles that instantiate a *riot* frame.

The clearest instantiations of the *riot* frame are found in articles that explicitly use the term “riot” or its synonyms, as in the following example:

- (1) *Bradley Lifts Curfew Tonight: He Won't Speculate on Departure of Troops; **Unrest**: Guardsmen kill a motorist who ran a barricade. School to resume and grocery stores slowly reopen as city moves toward stability.*
- (2) Raising the curtain on **post-riot** Los Angeles, Mayor Tom Bradley on Sunday announced that he is lifting the dusk-to-dawn curfew as of tonight and declared optimistically that the **looting, arson and violence** of last week now “appears to be under control.” (Murphy & Newton, 4 May 1992: A1, par. 1)

The headline and lead explicitly invoke the riots, while many related concepts reinforce it as the primary frame. First, the lead assigns specific values for the destructive action

attribute of “unrest”: “looting, arson and violence.” Second, readers learn that Mayor Bradley will lift the “dusk-to-dawn curfew”—a measure generally imposed on a city only in the most dire circumstances. Third, the authors mention that “troops” will remain in Los Angeles and “guardsmen” killed a motorist. That is, while the rioting “*appears* to be under control,” the mayor does not believe that it has been sufficiently stymied as to allow the assembled troops to depart. Like a citywide curfew, the continued presence of troops who have constructed barricades and are acting violently (justifiably or not) against citizens suggests a crisis. Finally, the instability evidenced by the temporary closure of two fundamental components of daily life—schools and grocery stores—underscores the severity of the L.A. riots.

While examples (1) and (2) state the immediate implications of the riots for Los Angeles, other articles that instantiate the *riot* frame connect it to larger issues. In the following example, the L.A. riots are compared to the Watts riot in 1965:

(3) ***Riots Are Violent Reruns for the Veterans of Watts; Survivors: They felt their past come full circle. But many acted far differently this time.***

(4) Lost among the roiling **crowds of rioters** who seized control of South Los Angeles over the past five days were a generation of African-Americans caught in a time warp, struggling to come to grips with last week’s **violence** even as they were overwhelmed by memories of **the fire last time**. (Braun & Russell, 4 Apr. 1992: A1, par. 1)

Like the previous example, the headline and lead here reinforce the *riot* frame through direct reference (“riots,” “crowds of rioters”), synonyms (“violent reruns,” “violence”), and analogy (“the fire last time”). The article also states that, like Watts, the 1992 L.A. riots suggest a continued need “for fundamental changes in American race relations and for vast social programs to cure the ills of the poor” (par. 7). Further, to stress the severity of the current context, the authors compare the destruction between the two events:

- (5) They [the ‘generation...caught in a time warp’] are the veterans of the Watts revolt, men and women who endured in the bloody August, 1965, uprising that until last week was considered the defining symbol of American black anger and militancy. The six days of rage that tore at Los Angeles 27 years ago—resulting in 34 deaths, 1,032 injuries and \$40 million in property damage—was vastly outstripped by last week’s carnage, which left 51 dead, injured 2,328 and cost the city at least \$717 million. (par. 2)

The statistical comparison suggests one reason that the *riot* version of the King narrative would endure: it “vastly outstripped” what until that point had been considered “the defining symbol of American black anger and militancy.” In that way, the *riot* frame implies that the King narrative is more than a narrative about police brutality or criminal injustice, but also a narrative about racial inequality and strained race relations, as the “anger and militancy” driving both incidents are particularly acute within the city’s African-American communities.

A comparable yet broader racialized implication is found in the article “Brown Says Poverty Will Spark More Riots Across U.S.”:

- (6) Democratic presidential candidate Edmund G. (Jerry) Brown Jr. predicted Sunday that other American cities will suffer the type of rioting that shook Los Angeles last week unless the federal government makes a major investment in the nation’s urban centers. (4 May 1992: A9, par. 1)

In this excerpt, the L.A. riots are extended from the immediate context of the trial verdicts to comment on racial inequality at a national level. In other words, the reported speech of a presidential candidate suggests that the federal government must help “other American cities” avoid what was otherwise discussed as a local, though ongoing and widespread, problem in examples (1)–(5).

Unexpectedly—and unlike the Gammage corpus—no articles included in the Pre-riot corpus rely on the *legal proceedings* frame as the primary framework, though a significant number use it as an embedded frame. There are two possible explanations for

this. First, trial lawyers' opening statements did not begin until Feb. 1992, near the end date of the data set. Second, articles that use the *legal proceedings* frame as the primary framework have been unintentionally excluded because they were not published on a Monday.³⁵ Nevertheless, the trial represents an embedded frame in 30 articles (27.5%) from this corpus, only four of which appeared prior to 4 May 1992. In fact, nearly all of the texts that instantiate the *riot* frame attribute the unrest to the not guilty verdicts, as in the following editorial by Linda Hirshman:

- (7) *GOP Strategists Shouldn't Be a Bit Surprised: Riots **result** from 25 years of crafting a party for white people*
- (8) The King verdict and the **ensuing** destruction of life and property in Los Angeles shows that fragile liberties like the rule of law and jury trial don't succeed on their own. Nor can they depend on the common people alone. (4 May 1992: B7, par. 7)

In both the headline and body text, Hirshman labels the riots as an immediate consequence of the verdicts ("the *ensuing* destruction") as well as an indirect consequence of historically compounded racial inequality ("Riots *result* from 25 years of crafting a party for white people"). Thus, I assume that the trial and verdicts represent significant story elements within the Rodney King narratives. If, indeed, the 1992 L.A. riots have usurped the Watts riots as the "defining symbol of American black anger and militancy," it follows that *something* must have acted as a catalyst for a reaction that until that point had been simmering anger, which presumably would have continued simmering had the officers been convicted.

In all, the *riot* frame suggests that the Rodney King narrative is a story about (a) civil unrest that (b) resulted in significant damage, brought about by (c) criminal injustice that is indicative of (d) ongoing racial inequality in America.

Police-Community Relations

The second most common primary framework used to tell the King story is *police-community relations*. Articles coded within this frame concern the strained relationship between law enforcement and the public. Certainly this strain was exacerbated by the beating, Chief Gates' refusal to accept responsibility for his officers' actions, and the video that put a public face on that tension. Though Gates' implored resignation and police-community relations could be considered tangential to the precipitating incident or the officers' criminal trials, their frequent appearance as primary frameworks in articles that discuss King suggest that they constitute significant story elements.

In the following example, Gates' resignation is labeled an "obligation" he must fulfill in order to begin to repair relations between the department and minority communities:

- (9) *For Chief Gates, the Brutal Truth: He has a final obligation to LAPD*
- (10) Over the last decade, it's possible that only smog has created more **bad publicity** for Los Angeles than Daryl Gates. Our police chief's **episodic affronts** to members of this city's minority communities—to Latinos, to African Americans, to homosexuals, to Soviet Jews, to Salvadoran immigrants—have come to be regarded as something like brush fires, **a cyclic natural disaster compounded by hubris and human folly**. There is no need to rehearse here the details of Rodney King's brutalization at the hands of more than a dozen officers from the LAPD's Foothill Division. [...] But this case of police brutality is different from those that have gone before. For one thing, African Americans and Latinos are outraged by an extreme example of the official abuse they say is a fact of life in their communities. Confronted for the first time with a firsthand view of police misconduct, even those Anglos who do not share that experience are embarrassed. (Rutten, 18 Mar. 1991: E6, pars. 1-4)

In refusing to appropriately discipline his officers, Chief Gates has created "bad publicity" for the city, reminiscent of his "episodic affronts" to its minority communities, which has outraged and embarrassed L.A. residents. Interestingly, the article identifies a number of groups not usually connected to discourses on police brutality, such as Soviet Jews and

Salvadoran immigrants, to suggest that the extant tension is felt by *all* minority groups—and, in fact, “even those Anglos who do not share that [brutality] experience”—not just the city’s African-American community.

Other articles instantiate the *police-community relations* frame to discuss how the King beating has impacted the daily lives of patrol officers. Consider the following example:

- (11) *Police on Beat—Tense Job Gets Tenser; Law enforcement: Officers encounter **cool looks** and even **video cameras**. But some residents flash **thumbs-up signs**.*
- (12) On Friday the LAPD troops saw their chief’s “I’m coming back” message, every squad room showing the videotape of Daryl F. Gates urging them to rise above the furor over the beating of Rodney G. King. [...] But, over the weekend, it was hardly business-as-usual in **police-citizen interactions** throughout Los Angeles. Cops turned each corner not knowing whether they’d be greeted by another **video camera monitoring their actions** or by a **thumbs-up show of support**. (Berger & Lieberman, 8 Apr. 1991: B1, pars. 1-3)

In the above example, the King beating again contextualizes tense police-community relations. Although some residents offer a “thumbs-up show of support,” others offer “cool looks and video cameras,” presumably motivated by either disgust at the King beating or fear of retribution for the publicity it generated.

In addition to the immediate impact that the incident has had on patrol officers, other articles discuss its lasting impact on minority youth:

- (13) *Cops and Kids: Fear Fuels **Cycle of Distrust**; The experts: Therapists and educators say that black teens who have **negative encounters with police** can develop deep anger without realizing it.*
- (14) Harvard University psychiatrist Alvin F. Poussaint is still affected by his earliest contacts with police. [...] “Until this day—and I’m in my 50s—when I get stopped by a white policeman on a highway, I’m nervous. I worry that if I say the wrong thing or make the wrong move, they might hit me or abuse me. . . .” [...] The experts said black teen-agers develop **complex, deeply engrained attitudes toward law enforcement**, especially as they react to

widely publicized incidents like the March 3 police beating of King, a 25-year-old black man from Altadena. (Libman, 22 Apr. 1991: E1, pars. 1-5)

Here, readers are again presented with minority attitudes toward law enforcement. The “deep anger” evoked by the beating in those who identify with King—i.e., minorities who, like Poussaint, have experienced police misconduct—contributes to “complex, deeply engrained attitudes” that “fuels [a] cycle of distrust.”

By remarking on the feelings (outrage, embarrassment, distrust) and actions (cool looks, videotaping) of community members, journalists who instantiate the *police-community relations* frame contextualize the King beating within the experiential frames of readers, minority and majority alike. In that way, and as I discuss further in the next section, they make salient readers’ reactions to the incident in relation to the story as a whole. In other words, the King story could be understood as a story not about an isolated incident, but rather as an incident that indicates broad tension between minorities and the police, perpetuated by insensitivity and abuse at all levels of the LAPD.

Community Reactions

Closely related to the *police-community relations* frame, a *community reactions* frame represents the third most common primary framework used to tell a version of the King story. Whereas the frames discussed above offer more easily definable attribute-value sets in terms of actors, actions, and events, the *community reactions* frame does not. It does, however, suggest that *someone* or *some group(s)* is reacting to *something*. Like the *police-community relations* frame, the *someone* is most frequently a member of a minority group and the *something* is most frequently the King beating. However, the *community reactions*

frame differs in that its focus is not on how the King incident is impacting or will impact police-community relations, but rather how community members' response to the incident is in some ways divided (i.e., condemnation of the LAPD is not uniform across Los Angeles) and how that response represents a moral or ethical stance.

Although the overwhelming response to the King incident was shock and anger, some citizens expressed support for the LAPD. A blurb in the *L.A. Times* from 8 Apr. 1991 notes that out of the "3,002 letters [the newspaper has received] so far on the videotaped police beating of Rodney King...978 supported the LAPD and Police Chief Daryl F. Gates" ("The Numbers"). Of course, voicing support for the LAPD is not the only way to offer it; just as potent, according to an op-ed by Rodolfo Acuna, is silence:

- (15) *Leadership Demeaned by **Moral Silence**; Elected Latinos have unexcusably [sic] **shied away from condemning** the King beating.*
- (16) Elected Latino officials have created a moral crisis in the Latino community by **remaining largely silent** about the police beating of Rodney King. Their **moral timidity** may have emboldened some Latino leaders to support a police chief whose department has historically mistreated and abused Chicanos. A prominent Latino organization has even joined the chorus for recall of Mayor Tom Bradley. By **refusing to judge** when judgment is clearly required, these Latino politicians have undercut their own civil-rights tradition. Calling the LAPD's brutality problem "systemic" is no excuse for **withholding moral censure** of Daryl M. Gates' record as police chief. (6 May 1991: B7, pars. 1-2)

In this example, Acuna considers potential ramifications of *not* publically commenting on the King incident. By withholding judgment and thereby implicitly supporting the LAPD rather than the Black community, he claims, Latino leaders may have harmed their community's own struggle for political and social legitimacy. In that way, reactions to the King incident betray the values of those who (do not) express them and thus imply an interpretive stance toward the precipitating event.

Just as values and morality are expressed through public comment, others see them as expressed through action. In following excerpt, published just prior to the conclusion of the officers' criminal trial, Rev. Cecil Murray exhorts his congregation to remain calm:

- (17) "Be cool," Murray implored. "Even in anger be cool. And if you're gonna burn something down, don't burn down the house of the victims, brother! Burn down the Legislature! Burn down the courtroom!" "Burn it down by voting, brother! Burn it down by standing with us at Parker Center, brother! Burn it down by saying to Daryl Gates: 'This far, and no farther!'" His words were **an appeal for calm, an attempt to keep tempers quiet** on the night that a verdict is delivered in the case of four white Los Angeles police officers charged in the beating of black motorist Rodney G. King. (Stolberg, 27 Apr. 1992: B1, pars. 2-4)

Like the moral authority expressed in examples (15)-(16), Rev. Murray suggests that his congregation's reaction to the trial verdict says as much about themselves (they are all "victims") as it does about the potential acquittals. In other words, he recognizes that his congregation's reaction to the verdicts could impact perceptions of the entire community.

As I noted above, the *community reaction* frame is closely related to the *police-community relations* frame. In many ways, reactions to the beating and trial verdicts underlie relations with law enforcement. But what distinguishes the *community reaction* frame, and what makes it particularly salient within the King narratives, is its implication of supplementary events that inform the King narrative icon. In other words, public reactions to the King beating and trials are equally important to the King story as are the events that motivated those reactions. Media coverage of public reactions suggests that the King incident is particularly important because it aligns with communal values and fears. Moreover, when community members' reactions do not align with what would be expected

given the cultural resonance of the incident—that is, how much it aligns with the masterplot of police brutality—such reactions become newsworthy in their own right.

City/State/National Politics

Because the King beating was considered by many to be emblematic of larger institutional and social problems, it often informed political debates. For example, the following article, “Police Union Changes Face of Charter Fight,” relies on the King incident to contextualize a debate concerning changes to the City Charter and LAPD oversight:

- (18) At first, the **campaign to amend the City Charter** figured to be a clash of two powerful men and the different Los Angeles each represents. On the side of change, Warren Christopher, the patrician liberal, speaks for the new, multiethnic city and its desire to have a greater say over its Police Department. On the other stands the embattled top cop, Daryl F. Gates, and a more traditional constituency comfortable with the department's semi-autonomous relationship with City Hall. But the dynamics of the **campaign** have changed. The powerful Police Protective League, armed with plenty of money and a major league political consultant, has joined **the fight against Proposition F, the ballot measure** that would grant City Hall more authority over the police force. (Clifford & Sahagun, 13 Apr. 1992: A1, pars. 1-3)

In the above example, the *city politics* frame is instantiated in the headline (“charter fight”) and lead (“the campaign to amend the City Charter”), and reinforced in the body text (“the fight against Proposition F,” “the ballot measure”). Within this political frame, the King beating is discussed both as an incentive for this type of reform as well as a political strategy. Consider how the incident is variably described in relation to the two camps:

- (19) For now, the charter change campaign is avoiding a direct confrontation with the union and the officers, letting television’s daily rebroadcast of the Rodney G. King beating **make the case against the department**. (par. 15)

- (20) [The Police Protective] League officials described the King beating as a tragedy, but one that should not lead to destroying what is best about the department—its integrity and independence. Moreover, they said that the **threat of politicization** is sounding an alarm that police officers from around the country are hearing. (par. 20)

In both examples, the beating itself seems less important than its political value. On the one hand, reformers seem to believe that the incident can stand on its own as evidence of the need for reform. On the other hand, the Police Protective League is said to be using the incident as a rallying cry to garner support from “police officers around the country.”

Although the fight to adopt or reject the amendment bears no direct relation to the outcome of the criminal trials, it is relevant to the overall story as it represents what could be considered a legacy of the beating. That is, just as the riots were motivated by the trial verdicts (in addition to long-standing inequalities), Proposition F grew out of disillusionment with the King beating.

Other articles that instantiate the *politics* frame use the King incident to support increased civic accountability in areas unrelated to the LAPD, such as Orange County’s Human Relations Commission:

- (21) *Tough Job Awaits Allies of Targeted O.C. Panels; Budget: Supporters mobilize to persuade supervisors to spare the **Human Relations** and **women's commissions**.*
- (22) Rusty Kennedy was camping with his family deep in the redwoods of Humboldt County last week with little inkling of the events brewing back home, where he directs the **Orange County Human Relations Commission**. Jean Forbath, commission chairwoman, knew the agency faced deep cuts as the county wrestled to close a \$67.7-million budget gap. But she began the week optimistic that she could keep its six-member staff intact. Neither official had much warning of the bombshell dropped Tuesday in the Hall of Administration: At a time when hate crimes and ethnic conflicts seem on the rise, county supervisors accepted **a proposal to eliminate the 20-year-old Human Relations Commission**, one of the most high-profile branches of county government. (Rivera, 29 July 1991: A1, par. 1-3)

In this example, the *politics* frame is instantiated by reference to specific governmental organizations (the HRC, the Women’s Commission, the Hall of Administration) engaged in a political struggle (“wrestl[ing] to close a \$67.7-million budget gap”) decided by a political measure (“a proposal to eliminate the 20-year-old Human Relations Commission”). Though the HRC has no direct connection to the King incident, it “has acted as a mediator in many of the county’s most sensitive and controversial ethnic and racial incidents” (par. 16). Thus, its supporters “point to such recent incidents as the beating last March by Los Angeles police of motorist Rodney G. King,” which they claim “stem from a lack of understanding of cultural diversity,” to suggest that defunding the HRC would result in increased incidents of brutality because minority concerns would be further marginalized (par. 17).

Together, articles that instantiate a *politics* frame suggest that specific changes at a governmental level could either promote or curtail similar incidents of police brutality. As I discuss next, similar arguments appear in relation to specific police procedures.

Police Procedures

Like the *politics* frame, the *police procedures* frame identifies articles that rely on the King beating to support arguments about the need for better or re-examined police procedures.

The following article best represents this primary framework:

- (23) *L.A. Police Considering **Reviving the Chokehold**; Law enforcement: Advocates say its use is safer than the baton. Opponents say it can kill, and has.*
- (24) The Los Angeles Police Department is considering **reviving a form of the chokehold**—effectively banned nine years ago—as a safer tool than the baton in subduing combative suspects in non-life-threatening situations. Advocates of the chokehold say it can render a subject unconscious but otherwise unharmed within a few seconds, but its detractors say it can kill—and has. (Rohrlich, 2 Sept. 1991: A1, par. 1-2)

In this instance, the procedural review is identified as a direct consequence of the King beating: “Reconsideration of the controversial hold is an outgrowth of the Christopher Commission report that assessed police practices in the wake of the videotaped beating of Rodney G. King by police officers wielding batons” (par. 3).

In addition to specific procedures for subduing suspects, the King incident prompted procedural changes designed to promote better community relations, as in the following example:

- (25) ***Seminar** Aims at Making Police Culturally Aware; Community relations: Improving trust between police and public is goal of **sensitivity class** for officers on the Westside.*
- (26) One by one, in the bright mustard-colored conference room, the community representatives rose and gave the newly assigned police officers a polite piece of their mind. Expect a refusal if you ask an Orthodox Jew to sign a jaywalking ticket on the Sabbath. Don’t be so sure that a young Latino is a gang member just because he dresses like one and hangs around in a park. [...] The new officers were participating in **a cultural awareness program** being promoted by the Police Department’s Westside brass. Its aim is to make officers better and to lessen distrust and friction between the police and the public. (Meyer, 14 Oct. 1991: B1, pars. 1-6)

Although this example appears to instantiate a *police-community relations* frame, the article focuses on the LAPD’s response to the King incident, which “served to launch *a process of examination and self-examination* of the Police Department that is likely to produce *significant changes* in its approach to law enforcement” (par. 7). Top among those significant changes is improved community relations, yet because the article highlights specific procedures designed to achieve that goal, it falls within the *police procedures* frame.

In sum, the *police procedures* frame suggests that a key aspect of the King story is its institutional dimension. In other words, if the beating had been recognized as rogue actions

by a few undisciplined officers, it seems unlikely that it would have prompted widespread institutional reviews, procedural changes, or department-wide cultural sensitivity classes. In that way, the *police procedures* frame implies that the King incident is indicative of a gross pattern of police brutality at an institutional level and that one way to understand the King narrative icon would be as a catalyst for change.

Police Brutality

Police brutality has been an embedded frame in each of the primary frameworks discussed thus far, but it also represents a primary framework in some articles. This, of course, is to be expected. As I mentioned above, the *police brutality* frame suggests that police act abusively toward citizens, and that specific values can be assigned to the police, victim and type of abuse attributes.

The first article published following the precipitating event instantiates the *police brutality* frame:

- (27) *Tape of L.A. Police **Beating** Suspect Stirs Public Furor; Law enforcement: Mayor says he's 'outraged.' The department, FBI and district attorney are investigating.*
- (28) A bystander's videotape that captures Los Angeles police officers **repeatedly striking** a prone, apparently defenseless man, stirred a public furor Tuesday, with Mayor Tom Bradley declaring himself "shocked and outraged" by the incident, widely broadcast on national television. [...] The homemade video, shot early Sunday morning in Lake View Terrace, depicts at least a dozen officers surrounding the man after he left his car, **kicking him and inflicting more than 40 blows with nightsticks** as he lay on the pavement. (Tobar & Berger, 6 Mar. 1991: A1, pars. 1-3)

In this example, a clear attribute-value set is constructed: aggressors ("L.A. police," "at least a dozen officers") act improperly ("repeatedly strik[e]," "kick[]," "inflict[] more than 40

blows with nightsticks”) toward a helpless victim (“suspect,” “a prone, apparently defenseless man” who “lay on the pavement”). Though this article offers perhaps the most narrative details of any in the Pre-riot corpus—a point to which I return below—those details are largely subordinated to community reactions (“stirred a public furor,” “shocked and outraged,” par. 1), implications of an institutional problem (“Civil rights and police watchdog groups said the incident was only one in a string of unprovoked beatings by officers,” par. 8), and King’s racial identity (“The man shown being beaten on the tape is black,” par. 12). In fact, King’s race is mentioned *before* his name. Notice, too, that in the headline and lead King is referred to by general identity categories: suspect and man. Together, such abstraction reinforces the perception of police brutality as an institutional problem within the LAPD, if not beyond.

Although the article in examples (27) and (28) discusses the King beating extensively, most articles that instantiate a *police brutality* frame only reference King in passing. The following article offers only scant narrative detail, and only then to contextualize the broader issue:

(29) *‘Code of Silence’ Often Shrouds **Police Misconduct***

(30) From the front passenger seat of a parked Dodge Colt, John Jenkins watched as the nightsticks of uniformed Los Angeles police officers **came crashing down** on the windshield, fracturing it into huge spider webs. The officers **smashed** the other windows, then pulled the terrified Jenkins out. They were among more than 30 officers who had been summoned to the Olympic Auditorium to control bottle-throwing youths after a 1985 punk rock concert. But in a parking lot near the facility, they were the ones **out of control**. (Rohrlich, 1 July 1991: A1, pars. 1-2)

Here, the “police misconduct” instantiated in the headline is reinforced through the first two paragraphs (“nightsticks...*came crashing down*,” “officers *smashed* the other windows,”

officers “were the ones *out of control*”). The article continues to detail an alleged assault inflicted on Jenkins and states that the officers never faced disciplinary action because other officers refused to corroborate his account and risk “ostracism” (par. 16). Risk of ostracism for breaking the code of silence, readers are told, also protected the officers involved in the King beating: “In the Rodney G. King beating, for example, none of the 21 LAPD officers on the scene apparently thought it was worth reporting to anyone beyond their sergeant, who had watched the incident himself without stopping it and therefore, implicitly, seemed to have said it was OK” (par. 17).

Like the *police procedures* frame, the *police brutality* frame constructs the issue as an institutional problem rather than the unfortunate actions of a few. The institutional view of police brutality seems reinforced by the fact, as noted in the passage above, that 21 officers were present, even though only a few physically assaulted King.

Police Staffing

Closely related to the *politics* and *police brutality* frames, the *police staffing* frame indicates articles that concern problems at the institutional level. As I noted earlier, calls for Chief Gates’ resignation arose almost immediately following the precipitating event. Thus, journalists frequently discussed his responsibility for the incident, as well as the struggle to remove him from authority, as shown in the following article:

(31) *Suit Planned to Block **Gates’ Reinstatement***

(32) Los Angeles civil rights groups made plans to file a lawsuit today to block **the reinstatement of Police Chief Daryl F. Gates** as warring factions of city government prepared Sunday for a possible showdown in court. Embattled members of the Police Commission, which **removed Gates from his job** last Thursday, said Sunday they were unsure whether they would go to court

today to defend their action. Gates is expected to file a lawsuit in Superior Court this afternoon demanding **reinstatement**. (Fritsh, 8 Apr. 1991: A1, pars. 1-2)

The consistent references to “reinstatement” in both the headline and lead suggest that, as the article notes, Gates had been “removed from his job.” Gates’ removal, the article states, was a direct consequence of the King beating: “The Police Commission had placed Gates on leave pending the outcome of a wide-ranging investigation prompted by the March 3 police beating of Rodney G. King” (par. 12). In this example, then, the *police staffing* frame is used to suggest that Gates shares culpability for the incident or, at best, failed to adequately discipline the officers involved.

In addition to discussing changes that are the result of disciplinary action, the *police staffing* frame is used to discuss changes meant to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future:

- (33) ***Rash of Transfers*** *Changes Makeup of Foothill Division Police: The jurisdiction in which the Rodney King beating took place now has **10 new minority supervisors and 15 minority officers**.*
- (34) It didn’t take long for Los Angeles Police Lt. Thomas Maeweather to feel needed in the Foothill Division. One night in April, just after his assignment to the patrol area where Rodney G. King had been clubbed by police, the trim, 43-year-old black officer was introduced at a town meeting as part of a **new team** brought in to restore public confidence. (Berger, 22 July 1991: A18, par. 1)

As part of the effort to “restore public confidence,” Maeweather and other minority officers and supervisors represent institutional changes that, like the review of the chokehold, are a direct consequence of the King beating.

Summary

The primary frameworks discussed above represent different versions of the King story. At a macro level, 34 articles (31%) focus on the LAPD as an organization, which suggests that the King beating is emblematic of a larger institutional problem. Though the primary frames overlap in many ways, each framework foregrounds particular aspects of the story and backgrounds others. In that way, these frames suggest what could be considered the core elements of the King story: civil unrest motivated by criminal injustice; tense relations between police and minority communities, which fuel hostile interactions and contribute to further distrust; widespread social problems and racial inequality that must be addressed at the political level; and gross patterns of police misconduct that must be addressed at the institutional level.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the articles included in the Pre-riot corpus is not their multiple versions of the narrative, but rather their scant narrative detail. The majority of articles only offer what I referred to in Chapter 2 as an *abbreviated narrative*. That is, most articles omit sustained discussion of the King incident in favor of short synopses. For instance, example (12) refers to “the furor over the beating of Rodney G. King,” though later the article mentions a “highspeed chase” and an “infamous videotape”; example (14) mentions “widely publicized incidents like the March 3 police beating of King, a 25-year-old black man from Altadena”; and example (34) indicates that “Rodney G. King had been clubbed by police” from the Foothill Division. In fact, numerous articles suggest that incident is so well known that discussing it further is unnecessary (e.g., example (10): “there is *no need to rehearse here* the details of Rodney King’s brutalization at the hands of more than a dozen officers from the LAPD’s Foothill Division”).³⁶

While it is possible that articles that discuss the event in more detail have been overlooked because the corpus is limited to Mondays, two other factors help explain the lack of narrative detail. First, as I explained above, the trial did not begin until February 1992, such that there was little by way of “routine news” to report that directly related to the case (Edy 2001). Second, as one article put it, for a time televisions were “wallpapered with pictures of that savage beating as a sort of macabre decoration” (Rosenberg, “Media Coverage”). Thus, readers would likely have seen the Holliday video and would have been aware of the incident, at least to the extent of the abbreviated narratives above.

Next, I briefly discuss the intertextual links that appear in the Pre-riot corpus to further identify possible versions of the King story and uses of the King narrative icon.

Intertextuality: Validation of Experience

In the previous chapter, I showed that the Jonny Gammage case was frequently compared to other high-profile cases, such as Rodney King and O.J. Simpson, to reinforce claims of police brutality or criminal injustice. Since the King incident represented an extreme instance of police brutality—and perhaps because no other before it had been videotaped—only one other incident (Eulia Love’s shooting death) functions as a point of comparison in more than one text, and even then infrequently (4 instances, 3.6%). More commonly, in the Pre-riot texts, the King incident is connected to the lived, previously unpublicized experiences of African-American victims of police brutality, racial profiling, or harassment. To illustrate this point, I offer here a few brief examples:

- (35) Right at the start of Daryl Gates’ term, Mayor Tom Bradley did have a chance to assert control [over the LAPD]. Gates’ men fired a dozen bullets at Eulia Love, the Rodney King of her time, cut down for waving a two-inch paring knife. (Cockburn, 25 Mar. 1991: B5, par. 8)

- (36) Steve Lomas, a 37-year-old black man from Hollywood, shakes a bag at helmeted officers watching [protesters] on horseback. He says it contains his dreadlocks and a corduroy jacket that police tore from him when he was stopped as a bank robbery suspect several years ago. (Berger & Lieberman, 8 Apr. 1991: B1, par. 9)
- (37) The war stories [of police brutality] often come with photographs. Sometimes the pictures are inconsequential or blurry—little help in a court case. Still, black men hold onto them, hoping that the images of gashed heads, bruised limbs and battered torsos might someday, like the Rodney King videotape, lend credence to their own tales of police abuse. [...] [Martin] Williams' pictures showed head wounds he said he suffered during a recent scuffle with police. "When I show these to my friends, it's like, 'So what?'" he said. "It's happened to them, too. Every black man has a story." (Braun, 16 Dec. 1991: A1, pars. 1-4)

In the above examples, citizen interactions with police affirm that the King beating is indicative of an ongoing, institutionalized problem. The incidents described cover a significant timeframe: Eulia Love was "cut down" in 1979, Steve Lomas had dreadlocks torn from his head "several years ago," and Martin Williams sustained head wounds "during a recent scuffle" (circa 1991). Further, this timeframe falls entirely within the tenure of Chief Gates (1978-1992), thus implicitly blaming him for failing to address the problem at an institutional level. Reinforcing this institutionalized perspective are references to the officers according to vocational categories (e.g., "Gates' men," "police") and Williams' assertion that "Every black man has a story [of police brutality]." Those stories are directly connected to the King beating in the subsequent paragraph:

- (38) The Rodney King beating has had resonance for any black man ever stopped by a cop—whether justified or not. The fears that King said he experienced as he led police in pursuit that March night could have been their own. And they, in turn, have begun to use his war-story-to-end-all-war-stories to validate their tales. (par. 5)

In addition to supporting Williams' point, Braun identifies one function of the King narrative (and by extension the King narrative icon): to validate the experiences of other black men who have been the victims of police brutality.

In all, the primary frameworks and intertextual links analyzed above suggest why the King case is amenable to iconicity: (1) the video was so widespread that almost everyone had seen it, (2) the incident seemed so egregious that it sparked widespread discussion about police reform and racial or social inequality, and (3) the incident aligned with many people's experiences with the LAPD, particularly those of minorities.

Part II: The Rodney King Narrative Icon

In Part I, I identified the primary frameworks used to tell versions of the Rodney King story, which I suggested contribute to the formation of a Rodney King narrative icon. The narrative icon, as I have discussed previously, is a word, name, or short phrase that grounds abstract, conceptual frames in specific events. Thus, a narrative icon should invoke specific values for frame attributes. The analysis above suggests that the King narrative icon could stand in for civil unrest, criminal injustice, strained police-community relations, racial inequality, and, of course, police brutality. In addition to identifying the narrative icon's implied meaning, this section considers how it is used rhetorically. That is, I ask here: what functions do a narrative icon serve?

To answer this question, I identified 35 instances of a Rodney King narrative icon in editorials, op-eds, commentaries, and letters published after the May 1992 L.A. riots. These texts were selected because I assumed they would more directly comment on the topic than does the "ideally non-argumentative" and "seemingly neutral" genre of news reporting

(Greco Morasso 2012: 198). That is, even as journalists betray argumentative positions through the choice of particular words or devices such as contextual frames in standard news reports, those positions are generally assumed to be subordinate to the facts of the reported event; editorials and the like are not subject to that same assumption. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the *Los Angeles Times* confirms this in its mission statement: the editorial page is where “the newspaper sets aside its objective news-gathering role to join its readers in a dialogue about important issues of the day—to exhort, explain, deplore, mourn, applaud or champion, as the case may be.” This suggests, then, that editorial page contributors could use narrative icons in many ways or to fulfill many rhetorical functions.

Moving away from objective news-gathering suggests, at least in part, a move toward the realm of argumentation. Fundamentally, argumentation occurs when speakers or writers state claims or propositions that are motivated by a felt need or exigence, aimed at an audience, and for which they can provide reasons or premises as support (Fahnestock & Secor 1990). Unlike demonstrative proofs that seek an audience’s “unqualified assent” based on established criteria concerning the validity of the facts (Fahnestock & Secor 12), arguments reside in the realm of the opinionable, or those “theses which are adhered to with variable intensity” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 5). As a matter of variability, it is thus the aim of the arguer “to induce or to increase the mind’s adherence to the theses presented for its assent” (4). Further, the types and degrees of support vary according to audience and thesis presented; that is, audiences predisposed to accept a thesis may require significantly less support for it than would skeptical audiences, just as they may have a very different idea of what qualifies as good or acceptable reasons. In other words,

different audiences require different reasons to accept an argument, depending on where on the adherence continuum they begin and from what sociocultural position they are entertaining it.

Of course, not every text that appears in an editorial page presents a clearly identifiable thesis statement, claim, or proposition to be supported; as not every dialogue is an argument, not every text that expresses an opinion argues. Yet, as Fahnestock & Secor write, “Whether a statement is arguable is determined by the grounds of its support, not by its wording” (18). That is, although opinions expressed might seem argumentative, if their grounds of support relate only to the preferences or tastes of the speaker or writer, then the statement does not rise to the level of argumentation. Conversely, when speakers translate their personal preferences into accepted facts or shared values in support of those preferences, they are arguing, if and when those preferences and values are used to support a position. In terms of its practical consequences, then, argumentation might compel audiences to immediate action, lessen their resistance or strengthen their adherence to certain viewpoints, or promote group solidarity (Fahnestock & Secor 6-7).

Table 2. Primary functions of the Rodney King narrative icon.

<i>Rhetorical Function</i>	<i>Number of articles</i>
Example	9
Illustration	7
Comparison	6
Mark Time/Background Information	10
Shared Value	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>37</i>

Arguments by Example and Illustration

Because the narrative icons examined here refer to a living person, Rodney King, or a set of events to which he was a part, the most intuitive use of a Rodney King narrative icon is in arguments related to the structure of reality. This is not to say that the theses being argued for enjoy universal agreement of the audience, but that the events to which the icon refers—the beating, trial, or L.A. riots—did indeed happen and are thus not up for debate. In that way, the events invoked by “the Rodney King incident” or similar narrative icons are “data [that] constitute elements on which there seems to be an agreement that is, at least provisionally and conventionally, considered to be univocal and undisputed” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 121). Thus, as the narrative icon pertains to the real, arguers can use them “to establish a solidarity between accepted judgments and others which one wishes to promote” (261).

Through its recourse to the real, the narrative icon can be used to establish a general rule or to illustrate an already accepted rule (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 350-362). The first case, argumentation by example, can be seen in the following editorial, “A Jury Policy with Some Teeth: L.A. county change should result in better-balanced panels,” in which the author first explains the newly adopted fines facing citizens who evade jury service before imploring citizens to fulfill their civic duty:

- (39) The issue of representative juries was a subject of intense public debate after the verdicts in **the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson cases**. No doubt many of the people who complained that the Simpson jury—a predominantly black panel dominated by government employees—was not representative of Los Angeles were among those who had evaded jury service. (17 Nov. 1995: B8, par. 7)

Here, the author references *the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson cases* to establish the rule that L.A. juries do not accurately reflect the city’s racial makeup. By combining that data with

the assumption that residents value racially representative juries (many people “complained”), the author concludes, “Nearly every qualified person who is called [for jury service] should serve” (par. 8). Although the statement that citizens “should serve” at first seems like a statement of probability (i.e., a generality related to the legal system, as seen in the headline), and thus not itself an argument, the deontic force of the modal *should* suggests that the author is expressing an obligation to guide the future action of Los Angeles citizens. This obligatory sense of the conclusion is reinforced in the editorial’s final sentence: “This same belief [in the common good] should prompt citizens to take on the responsibility of jury service” (par. 10) In other words, the general rule that racial disparity leads to criminal injustice is used to support the claim that L.A. residents who value the common good should serve when called.

Whereas example (39) implicates a version of the King story that reflects issues of criminal justice and race to express an obligation and thus guide future action for a particular audience, the following example invokes King to index the universal value of racial equality and thus reaffirm its status among a hierarchy of values. In an op-ed, “Racism Isn’t Just an American Issue,” columnist Tom Plate discusses Asian countries’ disinterest in a recent 1998 trip to Africa by President Bill Clinton to contextualize his claim about international policy: “The race question should be a more important part not only of America’s soul-searching but of other countries’ as well” (par. 1). Here again the modal *should* identifies an obligation, and the intensifier *more* suggests its exigence. Thus, to establish that exigence and show that racism against Asians is an ongoing problem, Plate identifies three cases, King among them:

(40) We didn’t fully own up to the idiocy and immorality of the World War II internment of Japanese Americans until a decade ago. Even in otherwise live-

and-let-live California, discrimination against Asians has been all too common. During the West Coast recession a half dozen years ago, scapegoating of Japanese erupted. During **the Rodney King verdict and aftermath**, Korean Americans all too often bore the brunt of the violence that erupted. In truth, America has many miles to go and many idealistic promises to keep. (7 Apr. 1998: B7, par. 3)

Even absent a specific proposal for addressing “the race question,” Plate’s argument aims at increasing the audience’s adherence to the universal value of racial equality. More accurately, the aim is not to persuade a specific audience to act in a certain way in a particular situation, but to convince all reasonable persons to act, or to support actions at the national and international levels, in accordance with racial equality. Yet the details of how or why violence was directed at Korean-Americans during *the Rodney King verdict and aftermath* are missing.

In addition to its utility in establishing rules related to racial equality, King narrative icons have been used to establish the rule that police brutality is a particular problem in Los Angeles. In the following example, an unnamed editorialist invokes the *police misconduct* version of the King story to support the assertion that proposed changes to the city’s term limit on the police chief are “understandable but wrong,” and thus exhorts the city council: “Leave the term limit alone” (par. 8). To establish the premise that removing the limit would ignore the city’s “troubled history” (par. 3), the author address the proposal’s most ardent proponent, then-current police chief William Bratton:

- (41) Bratton chafes under the limit and suggests that abolishing it would help move the city beyond **the legacy of Rodney King**. But the legacy it addresses is bigger than King. It’s the Watts riots and the 1992 riots. It’s the vacillations of Williams’ tenure and the rigidity of Parks’. It’s Rampart, Margaret Mitchell and May Day—the recurring reminders that although the LAPD is an essential and admirable institution, it has periodically tested the city’s confidence and endangered civic stability. Los Angeles’ Police Department functions best when civilians most closely control it. The term limit has reinforced that relationship. (31 Mar. 2009: A24, par. 5)

Here again in this argument by example, the author supports a debatable position by identifying the shared values of his particular audience: L.A. residents want to feel safe and trust that the police department will do all it can to protect them. To show that these values are not merely abstract commitments but situated in the lived experiences of citizens, the author relies on some of the city's most notorious cases of police misconduct. In this use, it is not only *the legacy of Rodney King*, but the Watts and 1992 riots, Rampart, Margaret Mitchell, and May Day that establish the rule that, when unchecked, the LAPD "test[s] the city's confidence and endanger[s] civic stability," i.e. that the city has a troubled history.

Shaken confidence, as the list of icons in the previous example suggests, is not a new problem for the LAPD. In a 2002 submission, commentator James Ellroy likewise suggests that the relationship between the police department and the city has been strained. The solution, he suggests, is to appoint Cmdr. Jim McDonnell as the new chief: "He's smart; he's experienced; he's dedicated" (par. 4). McDonnell, according to Ellroy, is the best choice because he does not follow the tradition of previous "hardline chiefs" whose personalities have led to "40 years of divisive bad juju" (par. 2). Thus, to establish the rule that hardline chiefs cannot develop desirable police-community relations, he takes the reader through a brief history of examples:

- (42) It just isn't working. The old ways are moribund. The new ways are yet to be defined. L.A.'s overpopulated. The LAPD is understaffed. It's been 40 years of divisive bad juju. The '60s to the '90s constituted no police-citizen love fest. **Rodney King**, the '92 riots, the repugnant and racially ratified O.J. verdict and Rampart—what a bring-down! Many people are vying for the new chief's position. They know that old-type hardline chiefs won't survive. They know that the last two chiefs blundered and floundered and wobbled behind the assumed wishes of L.A.'s '92 post-riot citizenry—and withered behind scores of civilian complaints, many genuinely proffered, most cheap attempts to pick the pocketbooks of that long-term blue boogeyman. (15 Sept. 2002: M5, par. 2)

Implicating the *police-community relations* version of the King story (“no police-citizen love fest”), Ellroy shows his readers how the LAPD has at best mishandled its relationship with the public, how it has too long “suffered a self-imposed isolation” (par. 3). However, the details whereby *Rodney King*, the O.J Simpson verdict, or Rampart can be said to establish that rule are presumably common knowledge among readers. Although the rule established is not a reason to support Cmdr. McDonnell, it does indicate that previous “hardline” chiefs—qualities that are stated to contradict McDonnell’s personality—could not adequately serve the city in times of distress.

Examples (39)-(42) each reference King among a list of other notable examples. This type of conjunction establishes significance through amplification (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 351). That is, when only a single case is used as an example to establish a rule, audiences could challenge its applicability and thus deny the supportive value of the rule-as-reason. However, when arguers use multiple cases together, they strengthen the validity of their rule by focusing on the common denominators among cases and eliding differences. So, for instance, example (39) ignores the fact that the King jury, unlike the Simpson jury, was almost entirely white; that both juries were racially imbalanced only seems relevant. Example (40) does not explain what the King verdict was or why the resulting violence was directed at Korean Americans, though presumably the perpetrators belonged to another racial group. Examples (41) and (42) present even more ambiguous references. Although it’s clear that the authors are using the narrative icons to index *police misconduct* and *police-community relations* versions of the King story, respectively, it’s unclear what exactly is *the legacy of Rodney King*, or what happened to King that would have endowed him or the police department with a legacy, or how those events are similar

to the Watts riots, Rampart, or the O.J. verdict or would lead to “divisive bad juju.” How or why those events do so is assumed to be either irrelevant or commonly understood. I return to this point in the Discussion section below.

Multiple cases can be used to establish a rule yet so, too, can a single case. In the following examples, the same narrative icon, *the Rodney King video*, is used to establish two separate rules in support of two distinct theses. First, *Los Angeles Times* commentator Jonah Goldberg rejects “the more utopian claims of Internet boosters and the dystopian fears of its critics” (par. 1) and argues that actually the Internet allows space for “serious, professional news-gathering organizations” as well as for “the [partisan] politically committed to form their own communities,” both of which are needed for American democracy (par. 11). In order to refute dystopian claims to flagrant partisanship, Goldberg establishes the rule that technological advances do not threaten the journalistic standard of objectivity because that standard is a myth:

- (43) Instantaneous technology—photography, radio, television—allowed people to feel like “you are there.” Of course, the reality is that such technology does not communicate objective truth so much as give the viewer the visceral sensation that it does. **The Rodney King video** is a good example of how misleading “reality” can be, in that a snippet of video caused riots. When the video was shown at trial, the jury saw something very different. (22 Jun. 2006: B11, par. 6)

Compare that, though, to letter writer Ray McKown’s use of the narrative icon. McKown challenges Goldberg’s leap from case to rule and seeks instead to establish a new rule: Los Angeles juries are unjust. He writes:

- (44) Jonah Goldberg argues that **the Rodney King video** shows that reality isn’t captured by objective media, as the jury saw something different than the media-fed rioters. Instead of pinpointing a problem with objective media, Goldberg’s example highlights a shortcoming of our justice system: a suspect jury made up of something other than one’s peers agreed to ignore the obvious, probably because of their fears and prejudice. It wasn’t the first time

the jury system produced an unjust and incorrect verdict, and sadly, it won't be the last. (29 Jun. 2006: B10)

In terms of its iconicity, neither author explains what "reality" is depicted in *the Rodney King video*, why that might be misleading, or how it was misinterpreted by a jury. However, it is precisely that variability that supports its status as an icon.

In challenging the rule put forth by Goldberg, McKown more accurately produces what Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to as argumentation by illustration (357). Unlike argumentation by example, where a case is used to establish a rule, in argumentation by illustration a case is used to make an abstract rule concrete and thereby promote understanding of it (360). That is, Goldberg selects a particular case (*the Rodney King video*) that he thinks is appropriate to establish a rule (objective reality is a myth), whereas McKown assumes that readers already accept the rule (juries are unjust), and the case only underscores that point. Indeed, McKown writes that "Goldberg's example *highlights*" his rule—not establishes or supports, but showcases what is already there, which he reiterates in the final sentence: "It wasn't the first time...and sadly, it won't be the last."

Another interesting use of argument by illustration appears in an opinion piece urging Los Angeles County residents to vote. Titled "A Right Not to Be Frittered Away: Often the outcomes of major issues hang on a handful of voters," the unnamed author explains, "In a nation that has come to take voting for granted, few ever think that his or her vote may really make the difference." (par. 2). To show that this is in fact a commonly held view, the author cites an anonymous source:

- (45) "The people who are really upset are so disillusioned—they don't even want to take the time to vote," said one African-American 22-year-old who did not vote. "The system never works for us. Look **what happened to Rodney King...**" (7 Jun. 1992: M4, par. 4)

Here, the 22-year-old invokes a rule, “The system never works for us,” and then illustrates that rule with the narrative icon, *what happened to Rodney King*. Clearly, what happened to Rodney King is assumed to be understood by both the immediate audience of the speaker and the wider readership of the newspaper, as is how those events reflect a broken system. The opinion ends, however, with the author challenging that very rule: “If you vote, there’s no guarantee that the issue or person you vote for will win. But if you don’t vote, you’ll lose for sure” (par. 5).

Whereas examples (44) and (45) invoke a Rodney King narrative icon to corroborate the rules that L.A. juries are unjust and that the political systems is racially biased, others have used the King case to challenge rules concerning police brutality or misconduct, like those established in examples (41)-(42). Consider the following examples:

- (46) Certainly police behavior in this city and elsewhere can be seriously deficient, as **the Rodney King case** showed. But to suggest widespread flouting of the law does a great disservice to the blue ranks we depend on daily. (23 Mar. 1995: B12, par. 4)
- (47) Erwin Chemerinsky and his ACLU backup do some typical distorting of history to support their opinion that the Los Angeles Police Department needs strict outside policing. The Watts riots were because of “misconduct by LAPD officers.” Really? Eulia Love was a tragic incident that is still debated to this day—misconduct or tragedy? **Rodney King?** Sure, I’ll give them that one. Rampart? Exactly how many officers actually were convicted of anything in that overblown media event? (4 May 2006: B12, par. 1)

In examples (45) and (46), both writers begin by stating the rule that police brutality is a real problem, yet suggest that the King case is an anomaly rather than the norm. The excerpt in example (45), from the *Times*’ editorial board, begins with the adverb *certainly*, which removes doubt about the statement that follows; the force of statement identifies it as an accepted fact, illustrated by *the Rodney King case*, and thus a starting point for argumentation. However, according to the editorial board, the rule is not true in all cases

and to suggest otherwise mischaracterizes the LAPD and other police departments. Letter writer and retired LAPD officer Terry Schauer reaches a similar conclusion in example (46). First, he identifies the rule before questioning the examples that Chemerinsky and the ACLU used to support their generalization; however, by admitting *Rodney King* (“Sure, I’ll give them that one”), he is not contesting the problem of police brutality itself but rather the extent to which it is a problem.

The concessions offered in examples (46) and (47) are important. On the one hand, they position both writers as sharing the values and concerns of the audience. That is, to outright deny that *the Rodney King case* marked an instance of police brutality would represent a view so egregious that readers would not likely be able to accept anything that followed. On the other hand, the concessions allow the writers to redefine the rule that is purportedly established: yes, police brutality is a problem *in general*, but one rare instance need not tarnish the daily good work of the LAPD.

In sum, the above examples show that King narrative icons can be used to either establish a generalization or to corroborate or challenge its validity. This analysis also confirms that the generalizations indexed by the narrative icons accord with the primary frames used to tell versions of the King story as identified in the previous section. Although, in establishing a rule or corroborating its validity, authors state the rule, i.e., divulge to the reader how the icon should be interpreted, that does not invalidate the icon’s status as an icon. Indeed, readers must still assess its appropriateness as an example or illustration given their background knowledge of the events that would lead an author to its given interpretation—the values they assign to frame attributes—as could be seen in McKown’s

challenge to Goldberg (examples 43-44) or in the challenges advanced by the *Los Angeles Times* editorial board and Terry Schauer (examples 45-46).

In cases where multiple examples are used iconically, readers judge the appropriateness of the common denominator toward a particular rule. However, the success of the argument may not rely on readers' ability to supply those missing details; that is, when writers state rules that icons are intended to establish, readers can assess the appropriateness of that ground or reason to the claim it supports independent of their recognition of the icon's appropriateness as an example. Nevertheless, the icon's inclusion as an example or illustration from among many possible examples suggests a strategic value in the argument as a whole, which I discuss further below.

Comparisons

In addition to its utility in establishing a rule or illustrating an accepted rule, the narrative icon is frequently used as a point of comparison. Like the examples discussed above, comparative uses of the narrative icon index a particular version or interpretation of the King story, typically supplied by the author. However, unlike argument by example or illustration, comparisons are used to mark evaluations of one thing by way of another. As narrative icons relate to the real—in the sense of events and persons, not rules—arguments by comparison that invoke them mark interpretations that the authors take as fact, as indexing a shared point of reference that will not be challenged. Thus, they seem to advance an objective standard of judgment similar to comparisons by weight or measurement. However, such comparisons may rest on a standard of measurement that is “nothing more than a claim of the speaker” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 242).

Nevertheless, the comparative process increases or decreases the value of its object: if *Rodney King* is important, so too must be the other thing.

The following example shows a comparative use of *the Rodney King video* to advocate for improved services for the mentally ill. Pediatrician and guest commentator Neal Halfon writes:

- (48) Here's what I hope: that just as **the Rodney King video** led to an important national conversation about race, the horrific video of Thomas calling out to his father for help will lead to a national conversation about mental illness. (12 Jun. 2012: A13, par. 3)

In this case, Halfon is not comparing the King and Thomas cases, so much as suggesting that the outcome of the current event could mimic an outcome of the earlier event. Though the narrative icon is used to express a preference, it is not itself a reason to support the op-ed's main claim that "Not only do we need to improve services for the homeless and mentally ill, but also to teach parents, educators, and healthcare professionals to recognize signs of trouble so they can intervene earlier and perhaps help prevent more young people from ending up on the streets the way Thomas did" (par. 4). Rather, this comparative use lends credibility to the implication that the Thomas video could spark a national conversation; the national conversation about race, in this context, is taken as a point of fact, not as a reason that we *should* have a similar conversation about mental illness (other reasons in the article support that assertion), but as a statement that it is possible.

This privileged status of the fact that the King incident led to national conversations is confirmed by other comparative uses of the King narrative icon. Consider the following examples:

- (49) The Zimmerman verdict, like the acquittals in **the Rodney King case** and the fatal police shooting of Amadou Diallo [...], has focused national attention on fundamental questions of criminal justice. (22 Jul. 2013: A17, par. 2)

- (50) The video of the June 23 LAPD incident involving officers from the Southeast Division captured a few moments of their daily work. Similar to **the Rodney King arrest**, these scenes are imprinting a nation's consciousness with an image of how police officers in the area respond to a situation. (17 July 2004: B19, par. 1)

In the first example, Joelle Moreno confirms that *the Rodney King case*, like *the Rodney King video*, has led to a national conversation about criminal justice. Beyond that surface-level comparison, though the narrative icon adds little information to the commentary; she does not draw a conclusion based on her statement. However, in the second example, guest commentator Leigh Henderson invokes *the Rodney King arrest* to explain that a 2004 incident is incorrectly informing national discourses on “how police officers...respond to a situation.” For Henderson, the comparison isn’t simply *that* people are now discussing police brutality, but rather that they are discussing what, in her estimation, is only “a few moments of their daily work,” which misrepresents typical police-community interactions. Although the first interpretation—that, like before, these conversations are happening—seems rather obvious, the deeper meaning of how those conversations are misguided only follows when readers supply the missing narrative details. Thus, she concludes: “In a moment, people can judge the entire station on the actions of a few. Or, in a moment, people can widen their perspectives and see the ongoing work of dedicated civilians and police officers working together to improve the quality of life” (par. 12-13).

Henderson’s comparative use of a King narrative icon to challenge an established rule in many ways aligns with the challenges put forth in examples (46) and (47), where writers redefined the scope of a rule based on the validity of the cases used to illustrate it. While the goals of the arguments put forth in examples (46)-(47) and (50) might be the same, the techniques that the authors used to reach those goals differ. Unlike the earlier

examples, Henderson does not state the rule, though it can certainly be inferred from her concluding statements. Even so, she expects her readers to do a lot of interpretive work, like supplying the perspective of King's arrest as an anomaly to accept that the more recent incident, too, is atypical.

In another comparison by illustration, Jack Dunphy cites the rule that news coverage is often liberally biased, which he claims has "nowhere...been more evident in *The Times* over the years that in its coverage of the Los Angeles Police Department" (par. 2). Beyond simply strengthening the validity of the rule by enumerating cases, Dunphy uses the cases to evaluate the newspaper's ongoing coverage of a more recent event:

- (51) As an LAPD officer, I'm certainly aware that, when incidents such as the Devin Brown shooting occur, there is a great demand for large-scale coverage from the city's only major newspaper. But too often that coverage is misguided, muddying the truth and causing much more societal harm than good. Like its reportage on **the Rodney King trial**, the Margaret Mitchell shooting and other police-related controversies over the years, *The Times'* coverage of the Brown shooting seems designed to raise expectations that the involved officer, Steve Garcia, will be punished or even imprisoned for his actions that morning. (20 Feb. 2005: M6, par. 4)

Here, readers are expected to accept that liberal bias skews newspaper coverage against police officers. As above, readers can clearly follow the comparison between King, Mitchell, and Brown without any further background knowledge because the author provides this interpretation. However, the narrative version implied by the icon suggests that the consequences of not meeting readers' expectations and punishing or imprisoning Officer Garcia could follow the outcome of *the Rodney King trial*. Thus, Dunphy ends by posing the question: "If the city again goes up in flames, will *The Times* shoulder any of the burden?" (par. 13).

Examples (48)-(49) show two relatively straightforward uses of a King narrative icon to compare one thing with another. Examples (50)-(51), though, ask the reader to perform more sophisticated interpretive work to fully follow the relevance of the narrative icon to its object. Whereas each of the examples provides a clearly identifiable interpretation of the narrative icon, the details of how or why that interpretation is valid remain unstated. In the first two examples, the appropriateness of the King comparison seem irrelevant to the point of the text; in the latter two examples, the appropriateness of icon indexes another level of communion between the King story and its object. That is, the comparisons by illustration show how narrative icons can be used in reference to multiple aspects of an event or issue beyond its primary application.

Background Information: Time & Values

Just as not every text that expresses an opinion argues, neither can every instance of a narrative icon be said to function evidentially, as part of a proposition in support of a conclusion, or used to establish or illustrate a rule. However, as an event referent the narrative icon can always be said to function as background information that the audience is expected to fill in. In that way, the narrative icon fulfills parallel functions of indexing shared cultural knowledge or values. Although readers are expected to be able to fill in the missing details and thus follow the referent, often the particular interpretation can be easily deduced from the discursive context. For example, in the following editorial, “The Police Reform that Must Not Die,” references to police reform, the LAPD, and the 1992 riots contextualize the icon:

- (52) One nagging fear about Richard Riordan when he was running for mayor last summer was that he was not in truth deeply committed to thorough reform

of the Los Angeles Police Department. But now, at least on the evidence of his first few months in office, that would be a hard case to make. After all, he couldn't be more visible in his support of Police Chief Willie L. Williams, who was the nearly unanimous selection to take over the department amid the ashes of **the Rodney King controversy** and the inept police response to the 1992 riots. And the mayor has hunted anywhere and everywhere to find funds for more police officers—absolutely vital in themselves because the city is shockingly underpoliced [sic] but also vitally necessary for the proposed reforms, which emphasize the labor-intensive philosophy of community policing. (9 Jan. 1994: M4, par. 1)

In this excerpt, the King narrative icon appears as part of the prepositional phrase “amid the ashes of the Rodney King controversy and the inept police response to the 1992 riots,” which indicates the time that Williams took over the LAPD. Embedded in this way, the details of the “controversy” are less significant than the fact that the mayor is supporting Williams, who took over the department at a difficult time. Although that statement is being used as evidence to dispel the proposition that Mayor Riordan is not committed to reforming the LAPD (“that would be a hard case to make”), it does little more than contextualize that support in a particular time.

Given its cultural significance, the Rodney King incident is frequently used as a marker of time. In the following letter, Howard Ekerling attempts to demonstrate that LAPD Chief Williams is ineffective in his leadership: “[T]he rank-and-file officers are the best measure of his leadership. And in this area, the chief continues to fail” (par. 1). To establish this point, Ekerling provides the example of the chief's selection of Melanie Lomax, former head of the Police Commission, as his attorney:

- (53) And his selection of Melanie Lomax as his attorney in his current difficulties with the commission shows his lack of concern for the officers under his command. After all, most of those officers do remember that it was Lomax who led the ill-fated effort to fire Chief Daryl Gates, without any hearing or any charges, just after **the Rodney King incident**. Her handling of that matter was so outrageous that the Christopher Commission called for her resignation, and was supported by Mayor Tom Bradley.

Here, *the Rodney King incident* is not itself presented as evidence of Chief Williams' lack of leadership, but rather of the ineptitude of the people he leads or works with. In other words, it strengthens the force of the reason because readers are expected to understand why Lomax's inability to remove the former police chief at that particular time would be outrageous. To reach that conclusion, readers would need to fill in what happened to King and why that would be considered particularly detrimental to the police force, as if it would clearly justify the ouster of the then-current chief.

Similarly, in opinion piece touting his accomplishments as a means to garner public support for his reappointment as police chief, Bernard Parks writes:

- (54) When I became chief in August 1997, the Los Angeles Police Department had come through a decade of turmoil, including **the Rodney King incident**; a riot; the Christopher Commission on police reform; the O.J. Simpson case, which included the Mark Fuhrman incident and a U.S. Department of Justice civil rights investigation; the highest crime levels in city history; a peak in violence related to crack cocaine; unprecedented growth in the LAPD; and significant growth in L.A.'s population. (7 Apr. 2002: M5, par. 2)

Again, the narrative icon is used to mark a shared point of reference. Further, it could be understood as an example to establish the rule that, indeed, the LAPD had experienced a "decade of turmoil"; that rule, in turn, provides the standard of measurement against which to judge the changes he implemented (as enumerated in subsequent paragraphs), which presumably readers would view favorably. In other words, readers would be expected to agree with Parks' assessment of his own success based on the severity of challenges facing him at the time of his initial appointment, which, absent narrative detail, they would need to recall from their cultural knowledge. As an argument, then, Parks' accomplishments provide the "facts and merit" with which to conclude that his "record and accomplishments offer compelling support for [his] reappointment" (par. 9).

Examples (52)-(54) use Rodney King narrative icons to represent relatively restricted moments in time, that is, when Williams was appointed chief and in the months that Lomax tried to have Gates removed. Other instances, however, use King to refer to broader timeframes. Consider the following example in which retired LAPD captain Paul Coble memorializes Chief Gates:

- (55) On the night before the Police Commission relieved [Chief Gates] from duty during **the Rodney King era**—an action later overturned in court—I was the last of his staff to conduct business with him. He saw how tightly wound I was, and his first thought was to put me at ease. By rights he ought to have felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. (17 Apr. 2010: A26, par. 3)

Here, Coble assigns King to an entire “era,” which suggests that whichever events would have caused Gates to shoulder “the weight of the world” were ongoing and significant—something with which readers should be familiar. Although Gates’ relief from duty happened on a specific day, *the Rodney King era* during which that took place lacks a definitive endpoint.

In addition to serving as markers of historical time, *the Rodney King era* has been used to mark time more in the sense of a cultural shift. For example, the following excerpt appears in the editorial, “Really, How Different Are We? Needed: A middle ground approach to commonalities too,” that advocates a new approach to multiculturalism. Placing the onus on “educators, some of whom unintentionally helped foster this my-group-over-your-group thinking,” the editorial cites UC Berkeley professor Ronald Takaki:

- (56) I think many people, especially in **the post-Rodney King era**, are beginning to realize that we can’t just study ourselves as separate groups. [...] We’ve gone beyond the need to recover identity and roots, and now we’re realizing that our paths as members of different groups are crisscrossing each other. (3 Dec.1992: B6, par. 4)

Rather than marking a more restricted, if still undefined, set of events, Takaki’s reference to *the post-Rodney King era* suggests a much broader timeframe. More importantly, that

timeframe applies to all Americans, not just those concerned with specific events related to the King incident, as in the uses in examples (52)-(54).

The final major function of a Rodney King narrative icon seems to transcend time by ironically invoking a specific moment in the King story: his famous plea to Los Angeles residents to all “get along” during the 1992 riots. This particular use indexes the shared value of racial or ethnic harmony. In these instances, the details of the Rodney King incident, even those that informed his televised plea, seem irrelevant or even superfluous. First, a commentary from the *L.A. Times* discusses a 2007 survey about race relations in California:

- (57) FOR CALIFORNIA'S teenagers and young adults, the answer to **Rodney King's question** is a definite yes: We can all get along. Race and ethnicity, according to a new survey of Californians ages 16 to 22, are far less significant to this generation than to any in the past. (30 Apr. 2007: A18, par. 1)

Discussing a separate study only a few months later, guest contributor Gregory Rodriguez suggests that the push for “diversity” might actually be undermining the creation of an “overarching identity called American” (par. 9):

- (58) I've always suspected that what's beneath all that celebrating is a deep fear and an article of faith. Armed with hate crime statistics and gang stories, the media love to keep us informed of all types of racial and ethnic conflict. But through it all, assorted do-gooders, foundation program officers and government functionaries still promote the belief that the best solution to the conflicts created by social diversity is diversity itself. That's why they arrange those cheesy multiculti [*sic*] community events and tiresome inter-ethnic “dialogues” in which the African American activist meets the Korean American activist, white kids go to day camp with kids of color, etc., etc. The idea is that more contact breaks down barriers and helps us achieve **Rodney King's dream** that we'll all just get along. (13 Aug. 2007: A17, par. 2)

Finally, in an even more ambiguous use, an unnamed editorialist suggests that at times, we've already achieved that dream:

- (59) Strange things transpire when the planets and stars are aligned. Consider a chilly night in late October when the moon was full and goblins had started to take wing. Red, the favored color of Boston and St. Louis, for a Camelot moment was freed from its sentence as enemy of blue. And for nearly four hours, a deeply divided nation enjoyed a **Rodney King get-along moment**. (29 Oct. 2004: B12, par. 1)

These final three examples mark a particularly interesting use of a Rodney King narrative icon. The abstract value indexed by *Rodney King's question*, *Rodney King's dream*, and *Rodney King's get-along moment* is that of racial, ethnic, or communal harmony. Although attributed to King, and thus seemingly a concrete value, it is not a quality of the speaker that is being referenced; rather the narrative icon indexes the speakers appeal to an abstract value, King's attempt to "seemingly manifest a revolutionary spirit" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 79). As abstract values transcend any single manifestation, the ongoing attachment of King's name to that value mark the King incident as a point of communal significance: understanding the King story means recognizing the value of racial equality, particularly for Los Angeles. More importantly, the events that led up to King's famous plea continue to serve as a reminder that enacting that value is an ongoing struggle.

Discussion

In the above analysis, I have shown that "Rodney King" can be used to index criminal injustice, police-community relations, racial inequality, police brutality, and racial harmony. At the beginning of the section, I stated that the icon would presumably align with the primary frame of the editorial or opinion in which it was embedded. According to my analysis, this is not the case. Nevertheless, the narrative icons discussed here aligned with the primary frames from the articles used to tell the King story. In other words, the versions of the King story inform its iconic use. This finding confirms the preliminary

analysis from Chapter 2 concerning Jonny Gammage narrative icons. The final analysis presented here has also shown that in addition to indexing these narrative versions, narrative icons fulfill many rhetorical functions. Authors have used them as examples to establish or illustrate a rule, as well as to challenge those rules. They have also been used to compare cases and thus advance theses, or to mark significant historical periods and index communal values. In some instances, these functions overlap. Example (40), for instance, uses on a King narrative icon as part of the adverbial phrase *during the Rodney King verdict and aftermath* (i.e., to mark time), but also uses that time as an example of racial violence to establish the rule that “racism isn’t just an American issue.”

I also began this analysis with the assumption that texts published in the editorial pages would betray clear argumentative positions. In many cases, this was accurate. In other cases, however, discernable argumentative positions were more difficult to identify or even entirely absent. Thus, the extent to which narrative icons can be said to function argumentatively is in part a function of the discourse and in part a function of the interpretive resources readers bring to the text and that are constructed through the text. What some readers may consider debatable positions might be considered by others as statements of fact. In that way, what counts as argumentative support is not clearly demarcated but lies more on a continuum wherein the strength of the support correlates to the leap the reader needs to make, which itself may depend on the extent to which a writer’s and reader’s worldviews align.

In nearly all of the instances discussed, the authors or speakers provide an interpretation of the narrative icon. At first, this would seem to call into question the icon’s status as an icon. However, I would argue that in fact it is precisely its utility or variability

to support multiple interpretations that signify its iconic status. In other words, because the King story reflects so many issues and values of both the particular audience of Los Angeles citizens and the universal audience of all reasonable persons, it can be used to call up some of the most common masterplots that help to define communal identities. The iconic status of the King story, and hence the narrative icons used to index versions of it, is defined by its reach.

Moreover, it is not the absence of an interpretation that indicates iconicity, but the perceived agreement on the grounds whereby that interpretation is justified that promotes iconicity. Editorialists, commentators, or letter writers need not explain how or why they arrived at a particular perspective concerning the King incident, case, trial, etc., because the incident “marks sites of community knowledge so assured as not to permit expression” (Giltrow 1994: 174). In fact, to narrate the details of that knowledge would undermine the story’s privileged status. In that way, the King narrative icon at once reflects and constitutes a community. That is, being a part of the community of Los Angeles citizens means knowing what happened to Rodney King and sharing in the values that the story demonstrates.

In addition to acting as markers of communal identity for readers, narrative icons perform similar social work for the writers who use them. On the one hand, constructing readers as in the know is one way that journalists signal allegiance with that community. On the other hand, importing narrative versions into a text is one way that journalists build their credibility as writers. By drawing on masterplots of police brutality or criminal injustice—that is, by connecting current events to the values and fears of readers—journalists build good will with their readers; they signal that they, too, share the same

values and concerns. Cheng (2008: 223) explains this process in relation to students' narrative contributions in an online education chat: "Through strategic positioning, evaluations, and stylistic choices, speakers portrayed their positive behavior, revealed personal values, and demonstrated individuality...Yet the narratives clearly helped participants strengthen their ethos by demonstrating qualities such as knowledge, competence, and authority appropriate to their profession." In other words, the "authority" appropriate to journalism, marked by gaps in expression, emerges in part from the implied narrative versions indexed by the icon. Further, in using narrative icons, journalists impart *gravitas* on the story in which it is embedded. Comparing, say, the Trayvon Martin killing to the Rodney King beating strengthens its cultural significance.

Throughout this chapter I have noted that one reason that the King beating resonates so deeply with readers is because of the near-ubiquity of the Holliday video. Indeed, I do not wish to downplay its visual impact, but to focus exclusively on the video as a measure of the cultural impact of the event overlooks the important role that newspaper discourse plays in shaping and responding to audience values. Even as the Holliday video played on television, a tremendous amount of press coverage was devoted to the incident and trial long after the video has disappeared from nightly newscasts.

Chapter 4

From Los Angeles to Pittsburgh: A comparative analysis of narrative icons in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I examined how narrative icons are formed and are used. My findings suggest that readers develop the background knowledge necessary to interpret a narrative icon in part through the ways that journalists frame news stories. In Chapter 2, I found that the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, a regional newspaper published specifically for a Black audience, most frequently discussed Gammage's death as an instance of police brutality. However, *Courier* accounts also relied on semantic frames such as *community activism*, *criminal justice*, *police procedures*, or *racism* to narrate versions of the Gammage story. Those frames, then, represent core elements of the Gammage story, one or more of which may be highlighted in a given text. I also found that articles frequently shifted frames: those that instantiate a *legal proceedings* frame in the headline or lead, for example, might shift to a *criminal justice* frame later in the text to comment on specific developments in the case. Finally, I showed that Gammage narrative icons such as "the Gammage case" or "the Jonny Gammage incident" have been used to evoke those aspects, but may be used ambiguously.

In Chapter 3, I expanded on the rhetorical functions of narrative icons by examining newspaper texts about the Rodney King beating, the officers' criminal and civil trials, and the L.A. riots. Following the methodology from Chapter 2, I analyzed articles published in the *Los Angeles Times*, the city's leading daily newspaper. The analysis showed similar results: the King beating and trials were often framed in terms of police brutality or its impact on police-community relations, local politics, and LAPD procedures (e.g., appropriate use of the baton). In addition to the frames used to tell the King story, I analyzed editorials and opinion pieces that used King narrative icons. Specifically, I found that narrative icons can function as examples used to illustrate a rule; that rule, in turn, can be used as a reason to support a thesis or main claim. Conversely, narrative icons can be used as illustrations of a previously established rule. In addition, King case can be used to compare and hence evaluate later cases. Finally, I showed that narrative icons are often used as markers of time—when something happened. In that sense, they index presumed shared cultural knowledge: being a part of a community means understanding its history. That shared background knowledge also allows the narrative icon to be used as a stand in for shared values, which further help to create and reinforce cultural identities.

The previous chapters separately examined news media texts in a large, daily newspaper and a specialized, weekly newspaper to determine how narrative icons are formed and how they are used. Although I expected that the formation process would be largely the same between the different newspapers, I also expected to find more appreciable differences in the possible meanings indexed by the icon. To test this hypothesis further, this chapter compares uses of Rodney King and Jonny Gammage narrative icons in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, respectively.

Specifically, the goal of this chapter is to determine not only how narrative icons are used but also when and by whom. That is, because both incidents reflect masterplots of police brutality, criminal injustice, or racism, I expect that King and Gammage icons to be used to index those discourses, appearing as examples, illustrations, or markers of time and shared values. This chapter also considers if or how those techniques appear differently in different types of news media texts—standard news reports, editorials, commentaries, or letters.

Corpora

Texts analyzed in this chapter were gathered from the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Both newspapers are indexed in the ProQuest Newsstand database, and the corpora were compiled using the search terms “Rodney King” and “Jonny Gammage,” respectively. The privately-held *Sentinel*, “an African American owned and operated newspaper that puts emphasis on issues concerning the African-American community and it’s [sic] readers,” boasts a weekly circulation over 125,000, making it the “largest paid African American newspaper in the West” (lasentinel.net). Articles compiled from the *Sentinel* were published between October 1991 and April 2014. The Rodney King beating occurred on 3 March 1991, and ProQuest Newsstand unfortunately does not provide full access to texts published from 1991-2014. The search for “Rodney King” returned 616 texts; I excluded 42 texts that did not mention King or were otherwise inappropriate (e.g., book reviews). The remaining 574 texts were analyzed.

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, owned by Block Communications, Inc., is “Western Pennsylvania’s largest newspaper,” with a print and online readership of nearly 1 million

people each week (post-gazette.com/about). Articles compiled from the *Post-Gazette* were published between November 1996 and April 2014. Though Gammage died on 15 Oct. 1995, I selected 14 Nov. 1996 as the start date for this corpus because (a) the first criminal trials of Officers Mulholland and Albert and, separately, Officer Vojtas had just concluded, and (b) the *Post-Gazette* is a daily, rather than weekly, publication. Limiting the corpus to texts published after the conclusion of the first criminal trials offered a comparably-sized corpus with the *Sentinel*: in total, I gathered 645 texts, 40 of which were excluded, thus resulting in 605 texts for analysis. Together, the corpora contain 1,179 texts; for a complete list, see Appendix F.

Primary Frames

In this section, I identify the primary frameworks used to narrate versions of the Rodney King and Jonny Gammage stories. Following the methodology from the previous chapters, texts were analyzed according to key words in the headline and lead that signal an article's *thematic macrostructure* (van Dijk 1985), or what the text is about. Since I previously demonstrated how primary frames construct different narrative versions (Chapter 2), I forgo examples of each frame below. Table 1 lists the most common primary frames identified in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Table 1: Number of articles per primary frameworks according to place of publication.

<i>Primary Framework</i>	<i>Los Angeles Sentinel</i>	<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i>
Legal proceedings	111	80
Riots/Protests	56	43
Police brutality/misconduct	48	33
Local or national politics	38	49
Racism/racial equality	35	25
Criminal justice	32	54
Police procedures	27	16
Race relations	27	19
Community events	26	19
Police staffing	21	15
Arts/entertainment	18	23
Civil rights	12	6
Police-community relations	10	5
Other	113	218
<i>Total</i>	574	605

Table 1 shows that both newspapers most often instantiate the *legal proceedings* frame to report or comment on the King and Gammage incidents. In both cases, criminal and civil trials stretched for months, thus creating a running story in which either Gammage or King were among the central characters. However, not all of the articles coded within the *legal proceedings* frame are ‘about’ criminal conduct or civil liability in relation to the precipitating incidents. For example, Brentwood (Pittsburgh) Officer Vojtas was sued by the family of his ex-fiancée, who claimed that his emotional abuse led to her suicide; articles about that civil suit included in this corpus state that Vojtas was involved in the Gammage incident. After the *legal proceedings* frame, the second most common frame used

to discuss King or Gammage was *riots/protests*. This is not surprising given that both incidents and court cases motivated community protests or its extreme form of rioting. Of course, as the events were commonly understood as instances of police brutality or misconduct, articles that discuss King and Gammage frequently instantiated a *brutality/misconduct* frame. Consequently, the incidents informed sustained public debates concerning appropriate use of force by police officers, race relations or racial inequality in general, criminal justice and so on.

According to my analysis, the primary frameworks identified in Table 1 were relatively consistent across the *Sentinel* and *Post-Gazette*, and consistent with those from the *Pittsburgh Courier* (Chapter 2) and *Los Angeles Times* (Chapter 3). Of the top six primary frames, four concern events or actions. That is, incidents of police brutality or misconduct led to criminal or civil charges, to which citizens responded publically in the form of protests or rioting and which informed elections or voting. This finding supports Regina Lawrence's (1996: 437) contention that "[e]stablished news beats correspond with institutional boundaries," which thus "routinize" news production by creating or promoting pre-defined characters and events. More commonly, Bell (1991: 175) identifies this tendency as "the journalist's own short-list of what should go in a story, the 'five W's and an H': who, when, where, what, how, and why." The *legal proceedings* frame nicely fits that schema: lawyers, defendants, and judges (who) convene on a given day (when) at a specific place (where) to assess an aspect of a particular case (what) by making certain arguments or calling particular witnesses (how). Even dramatic news events like rioting or incidents of police brutality provide clearly identifiable characters acting in predetermined

ways: protestors march or organize in public spaces; police officers harm subjects whom they pull over.

Dramatic news events, however, may shift the journalist's focus from actors and events to their broader implications (why), such as criminal justice, race relations, and so on (Lawrence 2001: 94-5). Thus, the finding that frames such as *racial equality* and *criminal justice* are among the top primary frames confirms Abbott's (2008: 46) contention that certain stories resonate so deeply with audiences because "we seem to connect our thinking about life, and particularly about our own lives" to their plot. In other words, these stories ground our abstract commitments in specific actions or events: the "unique realities" reflected in the King and Gammage incidents or court cases attach abstract values to the victims and the public that they symbolize (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 78). In this sense I understand "unique" parallel to Louis Mink's view of "events under a description" and in line with Abbott's distinction between a story and narrative discourse (see Chapter 1), which is to say that although the basic stories of King or Gammage coalesce around relatively few emplotments (masterplots), each telling is its own and draws on and reinforces the abstract values of its audience.

Table 1 also shows that the values of racial equality and criminal justice are instantiated differently in the *Sentinel* and *Post-Gazette*. Whereas the *Sentinel* indexes those values relatively equally (racial equality, $n=35$; criminal justice, $n=32$), the *Post-Gazette* indexes the value of criminal justice ($n=54$) more than twice as often as racial equality ($n=25$). This is not to say that residents of Pittsburgh are less concerned with racial equality than criminal justice, or that residents of Los Angeles are more concerned with racial equality than are residents in Pittsburgh. Rather, this suggests that for the

specifically Black audience of the *Sentinel*, racial inequality manifests as criminal injustice in equal measure as criminal injustice reflects racial inequality. Conversely, for the metropolitan, mainstream audience of the *Post-Gazette*, criminal injustice may represent one instantiation of racial inequality, though issues of justice may be more a matter of other shortcomings in the legal system or prosecutorial ineptitude. Another way to understand that discrepancy might be through the distinction between examples and illustrations: for the *Sentinel* audience, the King case corroborates what is widely accepted, whereas for the *Post-Gazette* audience, the Gammage case helps to establish that issue. Although media contributors for either publication may adopt either perspective in a given text, the composite view helps to distinguish the concerns of their particular audiences, even when the audience is as broad as a metropolis.

Instances of Rodney King and Jonny Gammage Narrative Icons

As I discussed in previous chapters, a narrative icon is a word, name, or short phrase that indexes specific events yet omits significant narrative details. In addition to their use as a type of discursive shorthand for supplying background information, journalists use narrative icons to comment on events or issues in the news. In that way, narrative icons could be considered among the various techniques of argumentation. The distinction between these functions is not always clear and may be a matter of reader interpretation. In total, I identified 79 uses of narrative icons in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* (13.7% of total texts) and 59 uses in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (9.7% of total texts). Table 2 lists the text type for each text that includes a narrative icon.

Table 2. Text type according to place of publication. Each text includes a narrative icon.

<i>Article Type</i>	<i>Los Angeles Sentinel</i>	<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i>
News report	48	18
Commentary	22	--
Letters	--	18
Editorial	2	9
Other (feature, sports, obituary, entertainment, lifestyle, interview)	7	14
<i>Total</i>	79	59

Table 2 shows three main trends according to the article type. First, narrative icons appear with greater frequency in the *Sentinel* (13.7% of texts) compared to the *Post-Gazette* (9.7%). The frequency of icon use in the *Sentinel* compares favorably with that of the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, discussed in Chapter 2 ($n=40$, 12.7%), although usage in the *Post-Gazette* compares less favorably to the *Los Angeles Times*, as discussed in Chapter 3 ($n=37$, 18.4%). One explanation of this difference may be the L.A. riots, which likely generated more press coverage in Los Angeles than anywhere else. Although both the King and Gammage incidents were and continue to be emotional and cultural touchstones for their cities, and both have informed debates about many different issues, as one Pittsburgh commentator put it, “We have all been so busy agonizing over the Jonny Gammage verdict that we failed to notice the riot that didn’t follow it. There have been peaceful protests, certainly. But no angry mobs” (Martin, 19 Nov. 1997: A19, par. 7). Still, the slight difference in frequency might not be statistically significant.

Although contributors to both newspapers used narrative icons with comparable frequency, the types of articles in which they appeared differed slightly. In standard news reports, narrative icons appeared more frequently in the *Sentinel* ($n=48$) compared to the *Post-Gazette* ($n=18$). This discrepancy may be due in part to the indexing function of the newspapers per database. In other words, texts indexed as “lifestyle” ($n=3$) or “entertainment” ($n=5$) in the *Post-Gazette* could belong to the “news” document type in the *Sentinel*. For example, a lifestyle column by Diana Jones, “Pittsburgh ’97 Memorabilia Honors that King Pack-Rat Andy Warhol,” reports on end-of-the-year event at the Andy Warhol Museum that asked people in the community to contribute small items to a time capsule. Jones writes that some people brought items that “played on racism,” including a local artist who brought a key chain splattered with red paint: “A Jonny Gammage memorial key chain” (1 Jan. 1998: C1, par. 8). Again, this may also be due to the amount of reporting devoted to the L.A. riots; it stands to reason that not every standard news report during that time would provide significant details of the event. For example, one article reports on the beating inflicted on a truck driver during the riots, and states, “[Reginald] Denny, who is White, was dispatched from a quarry in Azusa just as the Rodney King trial verdicts were announced” (“Truck Driver’s Beating Shows Mob Cruelty,” 13 May 1992: A2). At that time *the Rodney King trial verdicts* were the subject of intense media scrutiny and often suggested to be the motivating factor behind the riots (although some writers later challenged that cause-effect interpretation).

The third significant finding is that the *Sentinel* corpus did not include letters-to-the-editor; conversely, the *Post-Gazette* corpus did not include texts labeled as commentary. However, this too may be a function of the database rather than a major difference between

publications. I chose to identify these article types separately for two reasons. First, this choice maintains consistency with the metadata from the ProQuest database. Second, letters identified in the *Post-Gazette* are comparatively shorter than commentaries identified in the *Sentinel*. Also, the *Post-Gazette* attributes letters to local residents, as indicated by their name and neighborhood; commentaries in the *Sentinel* are not labeled as such. For those reasons, though, a direct comparison between article types is impossible.

Even with the differences outlined here, the *Sentinel* and *Post-Gazette* show significant overlap in regard where and how often narrative icons are used. I believe that this finding confirms theories of intertextuality discussed in Chapter 1. Specifically, this suggests that journalists or other media contributors rely on prior chunks of discourse to help contextualize new information while also assuming that readers will be able to read those stylized chunks given their history of encounters with similar discourse types, prior encounters with those same discourses, or personal experiences.

Uses of Rodney King and Jonny Gammage Narrative Icons

Frequency of use and location provide interesting insights into the role of narrative icons in news media discourse. However, a final question posed in the Introduction to the project remains: how might the same narrative icon be used differently, and what conditions allow this or are necessary for this to happen? Chapter 3 provided a partial answer to this question: the Rodney King narrative icon was used as an example, illustration, and point of comparison; underlying those uses was its function as an index of shared cultural knowledge or communal values. This section explores the question of condition—what

allows narrative icons to be used differently? Table 3 lists the primary rhetorical function of Rodney King and Jonny Gammage narrative icons according to text type.

Table 3. Rhetorical function of Rodney King and Jonny Gammage narrative icons according to text type.

<i>L.A. Sentinel</i>	News report	Commentary	Letter	Editorial	Other	Total
Background information	34	8	x	1	6	49
Example	8	10	x	1	-	19
Illustration	3	3	x	-	1	7
Comparison	3	1	x	-	-	4
<i>Pgh. Post-Gazette</i>	News report	Commentary	Letter	Editorial	Other	Total
Background information	13	x	8	1	11	33
Example	3	x	5	3	3	14
Illustration	2	x	4	5	-	11
Comparison	-	x	1	-	-	1
<i>Total</i>	66	22	18	11	21	-

Narrative Icons as Background Information

As I've argued previously, narrative icons can always be said to index background information that the reader is expected to fill in. Because the icon references people and events, they are frequently used to contextualize new information. Table 3 confirms this perspective. In both *Los Angeles Sentinel* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the narrative icon is most commonly used as a shared point of reference for the community of readers. Consider the following examples from the *Sentinel*. The first example is drawn from a report on a panel discussion at a community center in the predominantly Black neighborhood of South

Central Los Angeles. Sponsored by the Cosmopolitan Brotherhood Association, the speakers included noted Anti-Semites and white supremacists. According to the report, 100-150 protestors blocked the entrance to the auditorium until police arrived:

- (1) That was the atmosphere until building security guards called for police backup. Two vans of LAPD officers wearing riot gear came on the scene to maintain order. They were met with jeers of “Klan members,” and “No more **Rodney King s--t** here” from a separate set of protestors, led by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. (12 Feb. 1992: A1, par. 16).

Although part of the reported speech of protestors, this iconic invocation of *Rodney King* suggests a shared interpretation of what happened, presumably related to the *racism* or *police brutality* versions of the story. In this sense, *Rodney King* stands for a set of events related to the concerns the Black community, namely that white officers (“Klan members”) would assault the protestors. However, beyond this possible meaning, Rodney King is not used to comment on the event itself.

Other references to the King story are less clear in their implication of a narrative version. In an article concerning developments in the O.J. Simpson murder trial, Dennis Schatzman reports on the D.A.’s decision to display crime scene photos to the media, allegations of racism toward the LAPD, and attorney Milton Grimes’ refusal to allow deposed jurors, whom he represents, available to the newspaper:

- (2) Also, two jurors represented by black Orange County lawyer Milton Grimes have sidestepped the Sentinel in favor of television talk shows. Once Grimes promised that the Sentinel could interview Jeanette Harris after a reporter had been to her Inglewood home several times. [...] But when it came to honoring a commitment to the Sentinel, Grimes couldn't be found. [...] Grimes also did that with **Rodney King**. Once Grimes took on his case, the Sentinel was the only publication that couldn't get an interview with King. (21 Jun. 1995: A1, pars. 19-22).

Here, King is invoked to help establish the rule that Milton Grimes is untrustworthy or will not keep his promises. However, unlike arguments by example, King is not central to the

rule being established. That is, aside from the fact that Grimes represented him, what happened to King is irrelevant to the rule. Readers, though, are expected to understand why King would be used as a reference point or why the newspaper would want to interview him. Understanding that does not help establish the rule, but it does index a point of community knowledge.

Finally, in another type of background role, the King story is used to contextualize and evaluate the timing of a judge's ruling in a separate case. The article, which reports that the L.A. County Bar Association has added late local attorney Charles Lloyd to its Criminal Justice Wall of Fame, explains some of Lloyd's accomplishments:

- (3) One of his famous cases was when he defended a Korean woman who shot and killed a Black girl over a quart of orange juice. Lloyd convinced the judge to give his client probation. Unfortunately, this ruling came **in the midst of Rodney King**, which caused many to become enraged. The ire of the public was directed towards the judge who ruled on the case. (Carter, 2 Jun. 2011: A2, par. 6)

As part of the adverbial phrase *in the midst of Rodney King*, the narrative icon could imply either the *criminal justice* or *riot* version of the King story. Presumably, Lloyd's ability to convince the judge to rule favorably for his client indicates his legal prowess; had the event *not* happened *in the midst of Rodney King*, it might not have been an unfortunate ruling. However, Carter is not invoking King to evaluate the ruling itself. Nevertheless, the timing of the ruling allows it to stand as a point of notoriety in a career that spanned decades as well as a historical reference point for L.A. residents.

Like Rodney King icons, Jonny Gammage narrative icons are also used as markers of time and shared background knowledge. Reminiscent of example (1), Gammage is used to contextualize events related to the Ku Klux Klan in Pittsburgh. Reporting on a recruiting

trip to downtown ahead of a planned April 1997 rally, Jan Ackerman and Ann Belser explain the recent history of Klan activities in the city:

- (4) It was the Klan's second appearance in Pittsburgh since Jan. 29, when members gathered in front of the City-County Building on the same day as a **"Justice for Jonny Gammage" march** was being held at the courthouse. (8 Feb. 1997: C2, par. 10)

In this instance, '*Justice for Jonny Gammage*' march is used as a counterpoint to white supremacist activities. In that sense, the narrative icon could at once call up versions of the Gammage story related to *racism* or *criminal injustice* as well as *community activism*. Aside from the contrast between the protest march and Klan activities, though, the two events are unrelated; neither rally is reported to be an answer to the other. Yet its inclusion as an event worth contrasting suggests that whatever happened to Gammage indexes a shared point of concern for the community. One possible implication of this, then, would be that residents who disagree with the Klan's views should advocate for justice in the Gammage case, though that interpretation is not explicitly advanced by the writers.

An earlier use of a Gammage narrative icon likewise indexes a *criminal injustice* version of the narrative, while also implicating a *civil unrest* version. In their article, "Deputies: 'We were getting the flag back'", John Parker and Ralph Barry report on how police officers responded to protests about the Gammage case:

- (5) As Allegheny County sheriff's deputies John Parker and Ralph Barry raced down the steps of the county courthouse and out to Grant Street Wednesday afternoon, they didn't speak to one another. They didn't need to. They both knew their mission was to stop the protesters who were upset about **the verdict in the Jonny E. Gammage case** from pulling the American flag from its pole. (15 Nov. 1996: A31, pars. 1-2).

Again, the authors are using the *Gammage case* to refer to a set of known events, but do not comment on or evaluate those events. That is, in line with the objective reporting function

of standard news reports, the verdicts are taken as a point of fact that helps to make sense of subsequent events. Of course, readers are expected to understand why the ruling could prompt that type of response.

The uses of King and Gammage narrative icons discussed here are to be expected. Without any particular interpretation of the events referenced, readers should still recognize the reference as something that they should understand. Independent of form, i.e., as an adverbial marker of time, label of a group, or as simply shorthand for a set of events, these icons serve a similar function: they help to construct a sense of communal identity based on a shared history. The fact that events related to King and Gammage were reported suggests that they are or should be important to residents of their respective cities.

Narrative Icons as Examples to Establish a Rule or Illustrations to Corroborate a Rule

Perhaps more interesting than their background role are the ways that the Rodney King or Gammage incidents are used to establish rules or facts in standard news reports. Chapter 3 showed how the King icon is used in this way in editorials, commentaries, or letters; again, as the *Sentinel* corpus does contain letter and the *Post-Gazette* corpus does not contain commentaries, comparing those texts is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, as news reports are considered or perhaps intended to be (more) objective, reporters' uses of narrative icons demonstrate an interesting method of introducing otherwise non-objective views into a story.

The following article, "NAACP Proposes Criminal Justice Reform Program," introduces the King story as an example of a skewed justice system, yet attributes those views to the NAACP:

- (6) In an effort to prevent the recurrence of tragedies like **the Rodney King verdict**, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) has proposed a series of six major legal reforms designed to restore America's faith in its criminal justice system. Responding not only to **the King verdict**, but to numerous other egregious cases, Legal Defense Fund Director-Counsel Julius L. Chambers pointed to a recent poll showing that 81 percent of African-Americans believe the judicial system is racially biased, and said: "Armed with an understanding of this astonishing verdict and the judicial system that made it possible, America must take concrete steps to remove race discrimination from our legal system." (21 May 1992: A1, pars. 1-2)

Here, the author relies on references to the King case and the actions of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund to help establish the rule that "the judicial system is racially biased." Notice, though, that the article lead labels the King verdict as a "tragedy" and an "egregious case" *before* introducing the stated view of LDF Director-Counsel Julius Chambers, who corroborates that assessment by calling the verdict "astonishing." The rest of the article enumerates the six steps in the proposal but does not evaluate, support, or criticize it. Nevertheless, the choice of topic for the article reinforces the fact that these are concerns for the newspaper's primary audience, and the omission of alternate voices, i.e., people who may disagree with the rule or even the specific reforms, suggests that the author or publication tacitly support that view.

In a similar example, Dennis Schatzman reports on a protest staged by Black tow truck drivers concerning police harassment following a funeral of another tow truck driver killed by an LAPD officer and his partner. To begin, Schatzman writes that the protest was designed to "accentuate the point that they [tow truck drivers] have long been targets of police harassment" (par. 1). Labeling the protest as a way to "accentuate the point," rather than establish the point, or even that the protestors *claim* to be victims, is one way that the author can introduce the rule. To help establish that rule, Schatzman later relies on the perspective of others:

- (7) Shelly Shellmire, a spokesman for the African-American Towing Association, says that Daniels' shooting was only one example of years of LAPD harassment. "Again, we, the African-American people, are shown that black life does not count," Shellmire said. "We did not look at John Daniels as the 'poor tow truck driver,' but as a human being. There was no justice for Latasha Harlins, **Rodney King** or for Lee Arthur Mitchell. We want justice for John Daniels Jr."

This particular invocation of King at once helps to establish "years of LAPD harassment" and to suggest that, like the officers in the King case, the officers in the Daniels case will not be held accountable for their actions. As in example (6), Schatzman seems to tacitly support this perspective, made even more concrete by adding details of the officers' histories, including twice mentioning that they had been disciplined for misconduct, suspended from duty, or accused of excessive use of force.

Whereas examples (6) and (7) rely on the voices of sources who invoke Rodney King to either establish or corroborate rules related to police misconduct and criminal injustice, *Sentinel* writer Ronald Bonner blurs the lines between commentary and reporting in his article about a recent Supreme Court decision to allow police officers greater latitude in ordering passengers to exit a vehicle during a traffic stop. Before introducing the ruling itself, Bonner invokes King to illustrate the rule that Black citizens are often the victims of police brutality or other civil rights abuses:

- (8) Black History Month would not be complete without looking at one of the most poignant thorns in the side of the Africa American—police encounters, "traffic stops." These "encounters" and many violations of civil rights by officers under the color of authority, in the past, have changed the annals of history and brought chaos, destruction, more open division between the races, destroyed parts of cities and drawn international attention to the problems of police brutality. **The Rodney King case**, in point. Well if you blinked you missed it. Another one of our freedoms has just "gone south." Sent south by our nearsighted Supreme Court Justices. (5 Mar. 1997: A15, pars. 1-2).

For Bonner and his readers, *the Rodney King case* reflects more than the issue of police brutality; it shows that civil rights abuses can have far reaching implications, including racial division or citywide destruction. Aligning himself with his readership, Bonner notes that Supreme Court decision is a direct affront to his community: “Another one of *our* freedoms has just ‘gone south’.”

Unlike the arguments by example or illustration discussed in Chapter 3, the rules established in the examples above are not being used as a reason to support a thesis that the author is advancing. Although they can be said to function argumentatively—using King as an illustration of civil rights violations, for example, could be understood to strengthen the intensity or adherence with which *Sentinel* readers view traffic stops as a “thorn in the side”—the articles that establish these rules seem do not use them as support for a claim in the same way. That is, readers are not being told to support the NAACP’s proposed criminal justice reforms, to advocate for justice on behalf of John Daniels, or to lobby for action in relation to the recent Supreme Court ruling. Rather, those interpretations are implied as shared perspectives among the *Sentinel* readership. In that way, using narrative icons as examples or illustrations of established rules again marks the shared values of a particular audience that informs their understanding of the world around them.

Compared to these uses, writers at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* use Jonny Gammage narrative icons to both establish or illustrate rules in relation to the broader Pittsburgh community or a specific subset, its Black residents. In other words, whereas the *Sentinel* seems to conflate their readership of Los Angeles residents, its Black community, and the Black community writ large—which makes sense given its target audience—the *Post-Gazette* maintains a slightly more defined division. In the following example, we see one

way in which the Gammage story is discussed as an event relevant to the city as a whole.

Reporting on a recently televised special by Geraldo Rivera concerning “‘the racial divide’ at the heart of Pittsburgh, and presumably, America’s, law enforcement nightmare” (par. 4),

Tony Norman explains:

- (9) When **the Jonny Gammage case** is dismissed as having no relevance to the situation in Pittsburgh because it happened outside the city proper, you realize that this is exactly the sort of legalism that got Clinton in trouble. Missing from this discussion are the voices of grass-roots organizations, the journalists who cover the problems here everyday, and folks in neighborhoods other than poor, black ones. (23 Oct. 1998: B1, par. 23-4)

While *the Rodney King case* is given as an example of Pittsburgh’s law enforcement nightmare, Norman seems more concerned that the national discussion is excluding voices, presumably white, outside the Black community. In other words, this perspective positions police brutality not as a uniquely Black problem but rather as a plague on the city to which its Black residents are particularly vulnerable. Though this perspective is entirely viable, it diverges from the specifically Black concern advanced by Bonner in example (8). In that way, Norman maintains a subtle, yet important, distinction between his readership and those most affected by the problem of police brutality.

Similarly, in an article concerning a newly-established radio program by the NAACP designed to “reach a wider portion of the black community” (par. 1), Torsten Ove cites Pittsburgh chapter President Tim Stevens:

- (10) Stevens said issues affecting the black community will be discussed on each show, and eventually guest hosts might be invited to talk about events in the news and take calls. He expected today’s inaugural show to feature plenty of talk about **the Jonny Gammage case**.

Unlike example (6), where the NAACP’s actions were discussed as an attempt to address “America’s faith in its criminal justice system” by remedying injustices experienced by its

Black citizens, here NAACP actions are discussed as particularly addressed at the Black community. Again, the distinction is subtle: Ove does not suggest that the “issues affecting the black community,” of which *the Jonny Gammage case* is a contemporary example, don’t also concern other communities, like Pittsburgh residents or Americans. But in maintaining the distinction advanced by Stevens, Ove implies that those issues do not affect readers of the *Post-Gazette* equally. Nevertheless, all readers are expected to understand what those issues are or how they might be relevant to the Black community, as shown by the Gammage case.

In a final interesting example that supports the subtle demarcation of audiences that the *Post-Gazette* is designed to reach, Laura Pace invokes both Rodney King and Jonny Gammage to illustrate rules related to police brutality. As part of a series, “Behind the Badge,” in which Pace embedded herself with the suburban Mt. Lebanon police department, she reported on a Citizen Police Academy class designed to orient volunteers to daily routine of police work. She writes:

- (11) In his welcome speech at the first class, police Chief Tom Ogden Jr. promptly brought up the names that won’t leave my head: **Rodney King. Jonny Gammage.** He said what I’d expect him to say—that most police are not evil. That they are just men and women who do a job. And that the media often gets it all wrong. (13 Jan. 1999: S5, pars. 6-7)

Certainly the statement that “the media often gets it all wrong” implies a *police brutality* version of the King and Gammage stories. Just as the names “won’t leave [Pace’s] head,” they surely resonate with readers. However, rather than challenging Ogden’s interpretation of the rule, Pace considers its implication for her own reporting: “As a reporter, I try my absolute best to make sure I get it right every time. I don’t want to be compared to others in my field who are corrupt, who do their jobs half-way or break the rules. Wait a minute.

Maybe Ogden doesn't either..." (pars. 8-9). Although Pace's consideration here does not invalidate the rule implied by Ogden's invocation of King or Gammage, it again clearly departs from the Schatzman's use of the same rule in example (7).

The slights divisions, hedges, or qualifications implied by *Post-Gazette* writers that I have identified here are not meant to suggest that those writers, or the publication they represent, are not attuned to the concerns of the Pittsburgh's Black community. Indeed, the fact that these stories or others like them appear on the pages of the *Post-Gazette* indicates that the paper is, at the very least, attempting to reach this audience. This analysis is not meant to suggest, either, that *Sentinel* writers accept those rules as ground truth or that they may not at times advance their own hedges or qualifications. Rather, what the above examples are meant to demonstrate is that subtle lexical or semantic differences, particularly in aggregate, help to show how different publications target different audiences. That is, as the *Post-Gazette* targets a metropolitan audience comprised of many types of readers, the concerns they identify reflect the diversity of audiences. Conversely, as the *Sentinel* is published as a counterpoint to Los Angeles' major daily press, its contributors can more explicitly invoke the concerns of its particular audience.

Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter has further explored three primary functions of narrative icons. I began by asking how, if at all, narrative icons are used differently between a newspaper published for a specific audience and a newspaper published for a wider public. First, the analysis presented here shows only subtle differences between how journalists used the King icons in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and Gammage icons in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Consistent

with the findings from Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, I find that journalists use narrative icons as shorthand reference for background information or as examples or illustrations of an event or issue. As I discussed in Chapter 3, these functions may be better thought of as a continuum rather than distinct rhetorical moves.

Second, this analysis only shows a small difference in the frequency of uses of narrative icons between the *Los Angeles Sentinel* (13.7%) and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (9.7%). On the one hand, the difference suggests that the King story particularly resonates with the *Sentinel's* audience. That is, as much as the King story fulfills the masterplot of police brutality, it aligns with the specific concerns of Black citizens in Los Angeles. On the other hand, Gammage narrative icons also appeared with significant frequency. Insofar as the Gammage story aligns with the same masterplot, it suggests that police brutality is also a concern among a broader community, though perhaps for different reasons. Finally, the overlapping frequency of uses of narrative icons suggests that readers at once belong to or navigate different communities and identities. Although data for this chapter were taken from newspapers published in different cities, it stands to reason that many readers of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* also read the *Los Angeles Times* (Chapter 3) and that readers of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* also read the *New Pittsburgh Courier* (Chapter 2). One interesting difference that I did not explore here, but that might warrant further investigation, might be to consider these differences in light of the differences between a weekly and daily publication. I suspect that the frequency of publication would influence which stories get covered and from what perspectives.

I also asked at the beginning of this chapter what narrative icons can tell us about newspaper discourse or public argument. To answer that question, I return to the narrative

icon's function as background information that the audience is expected to fill in. As I've argued before, even when the icon asks readers to import narrative detail that may not be particularly important for the context of the article, it still performs important rhetorical work. Again, it at once constructs and reflects a communal identity.

In relation to newspaper discourse specifically, this background role may speak more to the practice of journalism than explain how or why narrative icons are significant discursive phenomena. To return to Regina Lawrence's (1996) distinction between routine news and dramatic or event-driven news, narrative icons can help explain how dramatic events can become routinized in media language. That is, as dramatic events unfold, journalists provide significant details. As the previous analyses have shown, when journalists connect one day's events with another day's events, only certain details or story elements are relevant. It follows then that some details will drop out in subsequent narrations. Sometimes journalists may use abbreviated narrative versions, as discussed in Chapter 2; other times they expect readers to provide those details, as in the case of narrative icons. In both cases, journalists begin to establish patterns, that is, to move away from the dramatic to the routine. Once this routine or pattern has been established, journalists have at their disposal premade story structures such that when dramatic events happen they can emplot the events in ways that readers expect and understand.

As some of the examples discussed in this chapter show, narrative icons are not only a function of media language. That is, some of the icons examined here and in the previous chapters have appeared in the form of reported or quoted speech. The fact that journalists use narrative icons in their own articles as well as report instances when others use them shows the reciprocal relationship between media language and public discourse. In relation

to the question of what the icon can tell us about public argument, it seems that by relying on readers' background knowledge journalists are able to help develop a shared frame of reference, a starting point from which arguers can begin to make an inferential leap. I have suggested above that filling in the narrative details indexed by the icon supports that inferential reasoning. This is not to claim that the narrative icons carry an argument in a text, or that they are always used argumentatively, but they are not insignificant in supporting that work.

The comparative analysis presented here raises a number of questions for future research. When might narrative icons be said to become cliché or empty and thus lose their rhetorical force? Might the fact that these icons appear in newspaper articles published during a certain time frame undermine their status as icons? In other words, does it matter that the articles in which an icon appears might be published alongside other articles that more fully develop one or more narrative version? How might different identities indexed by the icon—communal, civic, racial, or otherwise—influence reader interpretation or better contribute to identification as a process? For now, it seems that the answer might be: it depends.

Chapter 5

General Themes, Discussion, and Directions for Future Research

In the preceding chapters, I have considered many questions concerning the style and function of news media narratives. Bridging work in narrative studies, media criticism, and rhetorical theory, this dissertation examined a particular type of media language, what I have termed the *narrative icon*. The narrative icon, I argued, is a word, name, or short phrase used as a stand in for a shared cultural story, or a version or aspect of that story. Like complete narratives, narrative icons can be used to argue or signal allegiance with a community. Yet the narrative icon is unique in that readers are expected to fill in the appropriate, missing detail based on their background knowledge or prior encounters with versions of that story. Given the news media's practice of connecting recent events to prior events, the narrative icon represents an interesting site of inquiry for parsing out unstated assumptions or shared cultural knowledge.

Chapter Summary

In order to better understand how narrative icons are used in news media, Chapter 1 began with an overview of the functions of narrative discourse, in general, and news media narratives, specifically. Briefly, scholars have posited that narrative lies at the heart of human sense making. At once a site of identity construction or resistance, institutional or political legitimation, and morality, as well as a mode of reasoning, narrative is among the

primary channels through which people understand the world. News media narratives likewise help readers to understand the world: journalists often contextualize contemporary events in relation to prior events and suggest, either implicitly or explicitly, particular interpretations of those events. In other words, journalists report what happened as well as explain its significance in terms of prior or expected events and in line with communal or social values.

The explanatory and interpretative power of news media rests in part on how journalists frame the events under description. Media scholars have shown that the ways in which an event is framed contribute significantly to reader understanding, be it through the journalist's selection of specific terms, names, or topics, or through thematic relations to other events; keyword repetition and thematic cohesion have elsewhere been described as *intertextuality*. To further explore intertextuality in the news, I also reviewed rhetorical scholarship in iconicity to explain how certain terms can index entire narratives, or parts or versions of narratives, without expressing those events fully in discourse.

The knack with which news media contributors express propositions iconically raises a number of questions that this project has attempted to answer. First, in order for readers to follow propositions that are not fully expressed suggests that readers must draw on a their own background knowledge about relationships between persons and events in the world or prior discourses about the same or similar topics. The formation of this background knowledge was the focus on Chapter 2, wherein I attempted to explain how readers come to understand possible meanings of narrative icons such as “the Jonny Gammage incident.” The chapter began by identifying the primary and embedded frameworks in articles from the *New Pittsburgh Courier* that discussed Jonny Gammage's

traffic stop death and the subsequent criminal and civil cases against the officers involved. Next, I considered the cases to which journalists, editorialists, or citizens compared the Gammage incident, i.e., the intertextual relations between events. I found that a relatively small number of frames were used to shape the narratives that referenced Gammage and that few other instances of police brutality or criminal injustice were used as points of comparison.

Adhering to the same methodology, Chapter 3 presented a frame analysis of texts from the *Los Angeles Times* that discussed or referenced Rodney King. The *Los Angeles Times* was selected in part as a counterpoint to the *New Pittsburgh Courier*; that is, I expected to find significant differences between the mainstream, daily press and the weekly, specialty press produced specifically for a Black audience. Contrarily, my findings were consistent with the analysis from Chapter 2: articles that discussed King adhered to a relatively small number of primary frames, such as *legal proceedings*, *police misconduct*, or *community activism*, and at almost the same frequency. Together the primary frames suggested possible meanings indexed by narrative icons like “the King incident” or “another Rodney King.” This chapter also expanded on rhetorical functions of those iconic constructions: as markers of shared background knowledge, as examples used to establish or illustrate rules, or as points of comparison.

Chapter 4 presented a comparative analysis of Jonny Gammage and Rodney King narrative icons as they appeared in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and *Los Angeles Sentinel*, respectively. Again, and somewhat surprisingly, I only found subtle differences between the newspapers in terms of either the frequency or function of narrative icons. In other

words, neither publication seemed to rely on grossly narrative icons more than the other, nor did either publication use them in markedly different ways than the other.

To review, this dissertation has been guided by the following questions, which I address in the next section:

- (1) How do news media narratives move from “complete” narratives to iconic representations of events like “the Rodney King incident”? Or, how do cultural stories shift over time and become narrative icons?
- (2) How do narrative icons differ from “complete” narratives?
- (3) What rhetorical purposes can narrative icons be said to fulfill?
- (4) How might the same narrative icons be used differently, and what conditions allow for this to happen?
- (5) Are narrative icons used different in specialty vs. mainstream press, and, if so, how?
- (6) Ultimately, what can narrative icons tell us about the relationship between media language and public argument?

Contributions & Directions for Future Research

This dissertation contributes mainly to three areas of scholarship: media criticism, narrative studies, and rhetorical criticism. As I noted above, and discussed in Chapter 1, news media play an important role in society. Indeed, Richardson (2007: 7) claims that journalism “exists to enable citizens to better understand their lives and their position(s) in the world.” Constructing, reinforcing, or challenging audience positions, Richardson notes, is an undeniably rhetorical act in that *how* journalists shape the discourses that fill

newspaper columns represents a number of choices, from the selection of events or voices to their presentation. The preceding analyses, then, contribute to a more complete understanding of news media discourse, in terms of both its constitutive social function and its argumentative function.

Media Criticism

Among the primary contributions of this project is the application of methods from discourse analysis and frame semantics to news media. In order to better understand the rhetorical work of news media, I complemented van Dijk's macrostructural thematic approach to newspaper discourse (1985) with frame semantics (Barsalou 1992), which itself has roots in sociology (Goffman 1986[1974]) and sociolinguistics (Tannen 1979). To put it differently, I first analyzed each text according to the primary framework as expressed in the article headline or lead, where journalists signal the most important article information and which act as organizational devices through which readers assign meaning to a text. Macrostructural analysis, however, requires more than keyword identification: the main point must be understood in relation to the various subpoints or sub-themes that congregate around it.

In order to identify these themes, I turned to work in frame theory as identified above. According to Barsalou, cognitive frames are semantic relational networks (attribute-value sets, to use his term); that is, each frame evokes certain attributes to which specific values can be assigned. For a concrete noun like *car*, for example, analysis of attribute-value sets is rather straightforward: attributes of *fuel* and *transmission* (to name a couple) can be assigned specific values such as *diesel* or *5-speed manual*. However, for abstract

noun phrases like *police brutality*, or iconic phrases like “a Rodney King incident,” frame analysis is more complicated. Thus, applying discourse analytic methods to account for things like representations of an agent or patient (i.e., who is being said to have performed an action or who is being said to be the recipient of that action), or whether the officers discussed in the two cases are referred to by name or vocational category, provides a systematic heuristic for understanding those dynamic relational structures that make up a frame.

Moreover, as the narrative icon rests in good measure on readers’ background knowledge, which develops over time, and their ability to instantly assign that knowledge to a word or short phrase, it was necessary for this project to unpack references to the cases under analysis at both specific points in time and over a significant period of time. Michael McGee (1980) suggests that this synchronic-diachronic approach is necessary for the critic to achieve a comprehensive (if never complete) understanding of loaded terms that evoke purportedly shared ideological commitments (*ideographs*, to use his term). However, unlike ideographs, which McGee admits could be any discursive term, the narrative icon refers to specific, though at times ambiguous, events. The methodology presented here offers a useful way to disambiguate possible meanings of those references. In that way, we can begin to understand the story elements that represent the core components of a shared cultural story and the elements that can be indexed by the narrative icon.

The methodological contribution of this project has also allowed for a more complete understanding of news media language in general. Narrative icons are, if not frequent, at least recurring aspects of news media discourse and, as the examples of

reported speech have shown, popular discourse. Simply put, narrative icons are a part of media language. Thus, the analyses from the preceding chapters enable media scholars to better account for how media contributors help readers make sense of their world.

Narrative Studies

In addition to offering a more complete understanding of media language, the analyses presented above have important implications for scholars interested in narrative discourse. In Chapter 1, I introduced the imprecise distinction between *constituent* and *supplementary events*. Constituent events directly relate to the unfolding story, often in terms of causality. Supplementary events, on the other hand, bear no direct relation to the plot or action. Narrative icons further complicate that distinction. The dialectical relationship between reported events (e.g., developments in a day's legal proceedings) and the prior events used to contextualize those events (i.e., potential criminal activity that prompted the legal proceedings) suggests that what can be defined as constituent or supplementary is not always clear. Certainly it would be difficult to convincingly argue that some of the uses of narrative icons analyzed earlier contribute significantly to readers' understanding of the events under description. And, yet, their inclusion suggests that they do, in some measure, deepen that understanding. By adding layers of meaning, then, the narrative icon helps to shape a more fluid narrative as it develops over time.

In media studies, the progressive development of a narrative is referred to as a *running story*, where each text represents the latest installment in the story. The L.A. riots, for example, developed from the officers' acquittals in the Rodney King trial; the riots and trial, though distinct episodes, nonetheless become part of an unfolding narrative, which

when taken together underlie the Rodney King narrative icon. Again, though, as narrative icons are often found in texts that do not seem to be causally related, what counts as an installment in the story becomes more diffuse. Part of the answer to this is in the thematic relations indexed by the icon. The shooting Trayvon Martin, for instance, was separated from the Rodney King incident by more than two decades and over 2,500 miles, yet use of the Rodney King narrative icon to discuss the Martin incident suggests a thematic correlation between the events. This thematic correlation, in turn, points to the cultural significance of either event, as well as the broader issues that help people make sense of those events.

By advancing thematic relations between disparate events, narrative icons also help to better define the concept of the *masterplot*. Introduced by Porter Abbott (2008: 46), the masterplot refers to the “stories that we tell over and over in myriad forms and that connect vitally with our deepest values, wishes, and fears.” Although Abbott argues that all cultures have their own masterplots—and, in fact, names the Rodney King beating among American culture’s stockpile—he stops short of defining what, specifically, counts as a masterplot or how we come to recognize one. On the one hand, the you-know-it-when-you-hear-it approach is quite attractive, and perhaps necessary; the surfeit of subcultures that contribute to American culture writ large certainly make the task of comprehensively inventorying cultural values and the masterplots that index them impossible. Further, as these are stories whose “moral force” rests on their iterability, it seems counterproductive to attempt to isolate the *first* narration. On the other hand, we speak of cultural values or American values, which suggests that we should at least be able to identify discursive instantiations of those values. This project offers one way to do that. Further, the Rodney

King beating itself is not a masterplot—it's a *version* of a masterplot, or, more accurately, narrated versions of that beating are variations on a culturally-specific masterplot. That is, for Black citizens, narrated versions of the King beating (in the news media or elsewhere) express “a feature of life in America that goes further and deeper” than that one event (48).

In addition to offering a method for grounding the abstraction inherent in a masterplot, this project confirms what many scholars before me have argued: narrative is a social, rhetorical act. Not only do the versions of the King or Gammage stories *connect* with our values, wishes, or fears, they help to construct and perpetuate them. Each narrative telling deepens our cultural investment in those masterplots and thus further helps to define what it means to be a part of a community. In that way, this project offers insight into how these stories move from repeated, fuller narrations to icon expressions that mark “gaps” or “sites of community knowledge so assured as not to permit expression” (Giltrow 1994: 174). I might break with Giltrow here slightly to suggest that even as background knowledge, these narrative versions at times necessitate expression. Indeed, the analyses showed that more detailed narrative versions are never entirely replaced by the iconic phrases that they give rise to. For Giltrow, the gaps represent “a sense of the world, a sense of the flow of authority, the position of individuals and institutions *vis-à-vis* authority, and the quality of their contribution to the situation” (175). While the institutional relationship between judges and juries, to follow her example, might be unnecessary to explain to readers, how that relationship is enacted at specific points in time and in specific cases is not always as obvious.

The background role of the narrative icon, or the narrative version of a story that the icon indexes, is particularly important for argumentation studies for it allows the icon to be used in other ways. This can best be explained by recourse to Kenneth Burke's notion of *identification* as a means of mundane persuasion. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969: 20-21), Burke explains that

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so. [...] In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a direct substance and consubstantial with another.

This consubstantiality, according to Burke, implies "at every turn, its ironic counterpart: division" (23). In other words, identification, the bringing together of individual interests, is at the heart of persuasion for it creates what Brockriede (1974: 7) refers to as "a frame of reference shared optimally." Importantly, Burke includes the routine among a number of ways in which speakers promote identification: "And often we must think of rhetoric not in terms of some one particular address but as a general *body of identifications* that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill" (26). That is, while the exceptional orator—or news media writer—might win over an audience through a particularly rousing speech, she may also bridge the inherent division between herself and audience by repeated projections of particular images or, in this cases presented in this project, narrative versions. For narrative icons to be used persuasively in other ways, readers must first develop that identification.

Directions for Future Work

The logical next step for this project would be to update it with more recent events of police brutality that have come to be indexed by narrative icons, specifically the Michael Brown shooting death in Ferguson, MO. As these incidents unfortunately continue to occur it is likely that newer icons will emerge. If that is the case—and the frequent iconic references to “Ferguson” in contemporary news media imply that it is—further analysis might be able to better address the questions as to the limits of a narrative icon. What causes narrative icons to lose their rhetorical force or indexical ability? Is it as simple as waiting for another icon to come along and supplant it? Why do some incidents or events lend themselves more, or coalesce into, iconic form than others?

Another important direction would be to develop a reader-reception study to determine if indeed the icons function as I have suggested, or if the frames and narrative versions identified in the previous chapters align with the textual experiences of readers. Throughout this project I assumed that journalists’ use of narrative icons rely on readers’ ability to supply the missing details. In part I could support this position by simply pointing to their unexplained use; phrases or references would only be unexplained when such explanations are unnecessary. This would have been particularly true at the time when the majority of articles analyzed here were published, before online journalism, when print real estate was measured in column inches. Although media language has not changed significantly with the rise of online publication, the internet allows journalists or publishers to now link to other articles in a seemingly endless intertextual web. This affordance was not available for much of the timeframe covered in this project.

Appendix A: Newspaper Articles Cited in Chapter 1

Frazier, Mansfield. "Trial of George Zimmerman Could Trigger Another Rodney King." *The Daily Beast* 18 Apr. 2012.

Kendrick, Louis 'Hop'. "Racism: An excellent boost for ratings." *New Pittsburgh Courier* 3 Feb. 2010: A9.

"Red Moon Rising." *Los Angeles Times* 29 Oct. 2004: B12.

Stutzman, Rene. "Dad: Arrest crime watch volunteer who killed my son." *Orlando Sentinel* 8 Mar. 2012.

---. "George Zimmerman's Father: My son is not racist, did not confront Trayvon Martin." *Orlando Sentinel* 15 Mar. 2012.

"The Blue Fog; If lifting the LAPD's veil of secrecy means changing the City Charter and passing new state laws, then do it." Editorial. *Los Angeles Times* 12 Jan. 2007: A22.

Appendix B: Timeline of Events in the Jonny Gammage Case

The timeline of events has been reconstructed using information from articles indexed in the ProQuest Ethnic Newswatch database. A few dates are indeterminate. However, the dates listed are accurate according to the articles. In addition to specific developments in the legal cases, I have included relevant events in Pittsburgh to provide context.

1995

- Oct. 12 Traffic stop (precipitating event); Gammage is pulled over and dies as a result of injuries sustained during an altercation with police.
- Oct. 31 Rally for Justice held downtown.
- Nov. 3 Six-member coroner's jury recommends that homicide charges be filed against Lt. Mulholland, Officer Albert, Officer Vojtas, Sgt. Henderson, and Officer Patterson.
- Nov. 12-13 Protest marches held in Brentwood and outside of the courthouse offices of D.A. Colville.
- Nov. 27 D.A. Colville recommends charges against Mulholland and Vojtas of third-degree murder, involuntary manslaughter and official oppression; Albert of involuntary manslaughter; does not pursue charges against Patterson or Henderson.
- Dec. 26 – 28 Preliminary hearing to determine whether criminal charges should be filed against Officers Vojtas, Mulholland, and Albert.
- Dec. 28 Citing inadequate proof of malice, Judge McGregor throws out third-degree murder and official oppression charges, allows charges of involuntary manslaughter against the officers.

1996

- Jan. 16 Brentwood borough council moves to fire Police Chief Wayne Babish, who failed to publically support Mulholland and Vojtas.
- May Criminal Court Judge David Cerccone rules to select jury from outside of Allegheny County.
- May Attorney for Vojtas requests separate trial.
- June 26 Craig Guest and Maurice Hall shot to death by Pittsburgh Police Officer John Wilbur; no charges filed.
- June 29 Activists hold March Against Police Brutality from Hill District to downtown; 300 people attend, call for citizen police review board.

- Oct. 18 Judge David Cashman declares mistrial in case against Mulholland and Albert after Allegheny County Coroner Cyril Wecht gives improper testimony.
- Nov. 13 Vojtas acquitted on charges of involuntary manslaughter by an all-white jury.
- Nov. 18 Mayor Tom Murphy requests U.S. Department of Justice investigate Gammage's death.
- Nov. 22 Roughly 800 local high school students walk out of school in 'trek for justice.'
- Dec. Community organizations promote 'selective buying campaign,' asking supporters to shop exclusively at Black-owned businesses.

1997

- Jan. 29 Hearing to determine whether to hold second trial for Mulholland and Albert.
- Feb. 14 Attorney's file motion to stop retrial of Mulholland and Albert.
- Feb. U.S. Department of Justice releases report on 'pattern of police abuse' in Pittsburgh dating back to 1980s.
- Feb. Grassroots organization Journey for Justice meets with U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.
- Apr. 5 Ku Klux Klan holds rally in downtown Pittsburgh; community groups hold counter-demonstration.
- Apr. 22 Judge Cashman rules against second trial for Mulholland and Albert on the grounds that 2 of 5 officers present at the traffic stop were not charged.
- Apr. 28 Urban League of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County jury commissioners announce plan to widen jury pool and increase racial diversity.
- May 6 Brentwood council promotes John Vojtas to sergeant.
- May 16 "Funeral to Bury Blind Justice" protest held downtown.
- May 20 Pittsburghers vote overwhelmingly in favor of establishing a Civilian Police Review Board.
- May 27 Protesters hold rally outside Brentwood Municipal Building.
- July 11-17 NAACP holds national convention in Pittsburgh for the first time since 1931.
- July 31 PA Supreme Court rules to review Cashman's decision to dismiss manslaughter charges against Mulholland and Albert.
- Aug. 18 NAACP files brief with PA Supreme Court to consider retrying Mulholland and Albert; cite racial motives.
- Oct. 10 PA Supreme Court rules in favor of retrial for Mulholland and Albert, removes Judge Cashman from the case.

- Nov. 1 Pittsburgh City Council votes 8-1 in favor of an independent civilian police review board.
- Dec. 1 Jury selection begins in Mulholland and Albert retrial; one Black juror selected.
- Dec. 13 Mistrial declared in second Mulholland and Albert trial after jurors fail to reach a decision; 11 white juror vote for acquittal, one Black juror votes for conviction on manslaughter charge.

1998

- Jan. 8 Newly appointed D.A. Stephen Zappala announces he will seek third trial against Mulholland and Albert.
- Jan. 19 Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP announces Jonny Gammage Memorial Scholarship Fund to be awarded annually to a Black student pursuing a degree in law or a related field.
- Feb. 20 'Journey for Justice' marchers rally in Washington, D.C.
- June 11 Gammage family accepts \$1.5 million settlement in civil suit against Baldwin and Whitehall boroughs and Brentwood Emergency Medical Service.
- July 22 Senior Commonwealth Judge Joseph McCloskey refuses to allow third trial against Mulholland and Albert, stating it would constitute 'double jeopardy.'
- Oct. 22 Citizens for Police Accountability hold community forum to discuss use of force.
- Dec. 21 Black motorist Deron Grimmitt fatally shot by Pittsburgh police.

1999

- Feb. 19 U.S. Department of Justice closes federal investigation concerning violation of Gammage's civil rights, cites insufficient evidence.

Appendix C: Corpus of Texts from the *New Pittsburgh Courier*

ProQuest Ethnic Newswatch. Web. 25 March 2013.

"4 Robin Dwayne Dolphin; Dolphin's second CD Showcases Versatility." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 21 July 2004: B4.

Alsbrook, James E. "Minority Report: Do Black men die because of jealousy?" Commentary. *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 11 June 1997: A6.

"Bartz Headlines Jazz Concert to Support Jonny Gammage Documentary." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 20 July 2005: B6.

Baxter, Herman G. "We Weren't on Trial, O.J. Was." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 12 Feb. 1997: A4.

Brown, Charles N. "Black & White Reunion Slates Summit Against Racism." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 29 Dec. 2001: A1.

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Bruce, Aubrey. "Field Hands." Commentary. *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 20 July 2011: C4.

Burgess, Shawna. "High Court Decision Gets Local Approval." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 29 Apr. 1998: A1.

Carter, Ulish. "School Course to Teach Students How to Deal with Police." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 2 Nov. 1996: A1.

Coffee, Nikki. "Farrakhan Shares Vision for Healing America: NOI leader calls for Day of Atonement." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 23 Aug. 1997: A1.

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"Decision on Key Witness Delayed in Police Trial." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 29 Nov. 1997: A1.

Dunniehigh, Ralph. "FOP Cancels Police Rally." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 27 Jan 1999: A1.

Doss, Rod. "Community Rallies Support Behind Pamela Lawton." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 18 Oct. 2006: A8.

"Edwards Named Rivers Club Chair." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 4 Feb. 1998: A1.

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Farrish, Jean S. "Freedom Corner Benefit Given by Club 21." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 18 Sept. 1999: B2.

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- . "Council Postpones Vote on Police Reform Bill." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 4 Nov. 1995: A1.
- . "D.A. Charges 3, Appoints Prosecutor." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 29 Nov. 1995: A1."
- . "Full Investigation Demanded in Traffic Stop Ending in Death." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 18 Oct. 1995: A1.
- . "Gammage Case Judge Grants Request for Future Motions." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 20 Dec. 1995: A1.
- . "'Good Ol' Boys' or 'Good Guys': Who Drives Jonny Gammage Case?" *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 25 Nov. 1995: A1.
- . "Inside White World, Racism A Way of Life." Commentary. *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 8 Nov. 1995: A1.
- . "Jackson, Local Leaders Call for Justice, Calm, in Gammage Case." *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 25 Oct. 1995: A1.
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Appendix D: Timeline of Events in the Rodney King Case

The timeline of events has been reconstructed using information from *Los Angeles Times* articles. In addition to specific developments in the legal cases, I have included relevant events in Los Angeles to provide context.

1991

- 3 Mar. Rodney G. King is pulled over for speeding after leading police on a high-speed chase, moving from freeways to residential surface streets. During the arrest, LAPD officers kick and strike him with batons more than 50 times; King suffers severe injuries. Bystander and resident of a nearby apartment complex George Holliday captures the beating on videotape
- 9 Mar. Civil rights groups begin weekly protests against LAPD Chief Daryl F. Gates
- 15 Mar. Los Angeles county grand jury indicts LAPD Sgt. Stacey Koon and Officers Timothy Wind, Theodore Briseno, and Laurence Powell on charges of excessive use of force; Koon is also indicted on charges of assault and filing a false police report
- 1 Apr. L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley, who called for Gates to resign in the wake of the King beating, appoints former Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher to chair the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department (Christopher Commission)
- 4 Apr. L.A. Police Commission votes to place Gates on 60-day paid leave
- 5 Apr. L.A. City Council reinstates Gates
- 9 July Christopher Commission issues 228-page report that details problems within the LAPD and recommends a series of changes
- 23 July California Court of Appeals grants change of venue motion for trial that was originally denied by Judge Kamins; removes Kamins from trial

1992

- 26 Jan. Five LAPD division formally adopt community-based policing, as recommended by the Christopher Commission
- 5 Mar. King beating trial opens in Simi Valley; prosecution and defense lawyers present opening arguments
- 29 Apr. Jury acquits Officers Koon, Wind, Briseno, and Powell on charges of use of excessive force
Chief Gates attends fundraiser
Riots begin. 51 people are killed over a four-day period; millions of dollars in damage reported
- 4 May Mayor Bradley lifts dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed during riots
- 2 June Voters approve Charter Amendment F, a police reform amendment that

- limits the tenure of L.A. police chiefs and increases accountability measures
- 28 June LAPD Chief Daryl Gates resigns
Philadelphia Police Commissioner Willie L. Williams assumes position.
Williams is the first African-American Chief in department history

1993

- 16 Apr. Federal jury convicts Koon and Powell on civil rights abuse charges; each sentenced to 30 months in prison. Wind and Briseno found not guilty
King awarded \$3.8 million in civil trial against City of Los Angeles for violation of civil rights
- 20 Apr. Richard Riordan elected mayor of Los Angeles

1994

- 30-31 May 200+ LAPD officers call in sick to work to protest the lack of a labor contract
- 29 July Compton police officer Michael Jackson captured on videotape "violently subdue[ing] 17-year-old- Felipe Soltero" ("Candid Camera," 8/4/94)

1995

- 29 July LAPD officers fatally shoot 14-year-old Antonio Gutierrez, whom they claimed had a gun; community members riot
- 29 Aug. During the O.J. Simpson murder trial, taped excerpts of LAPD Det. Mark Fuhrman using racial epithets and discussing police brutality are played in court

1996

- 1 Apr. Riverside County (CA) officers videotaped using batons on two suspected illegal immigrants following a freeway chase
- 13 June U.S. Supreme Court rules unanimously to uphold sentencing by trial judge on Koon and Powell on federal civil rights abuse charges

1997

- 18 Mar. Officer Frank Lyga shoots and kills Officer Kevin Gaines. The ensuing investigation uncovers widespread misconduct and illegal behavior within the Rampart anti-gang division
- 17 May LAPD Chief Willie L. Williams steps down amid criticism of failure to enact meaningful reform in the department
- 24 June L.A. Police Commission approves new disciplinary procedures for problem officers
- Aug. Mayor Bradley nominates Bernard C. Parks as new LAPD chief
-

2000

Rampart Division scandal continues. US DoJ finds “pervasive pattern” of constitutional rights violations by LAPD, negotiates consent decree with city mandating reform (“The LAPD Still Needs Policing,” 5/3/06)

2001

10 Apr. James K. Hahn elected new mayor

2002

- 6 July White Inglewood police officer Jeremy Morse is videotaped slamming developmentally handicapped 16-year-old Donovan Jackson, who is black, onto a squad car
- Oct. Mayor Hahn selects former NY Police Commissioner William Bratton as new LAPD police chief

2003

29 July Jury deadlocks in use of excessive force case against Morse

2004

23 June White LAPD Officer John Hatfield captured on videotape “thrashing” black car-thief suspect Stanley Miller (“All Eyes Are on the LAPD,” 6/25/04)

2005

- 6 Feb. LAPD Officer Steve Garcia shoots and kills 13-year-old Devin Brown, who is black. Brown stole a car and led police on a brief chase
- 1 July Antonio Villaraigosa becomes new mayor of Los Angeles
- 10 July LAPD officers shoot and kill 19-month-old Suzie Marie Pena and her father Jose Raul Pena, who was holding the toddler hostage

2006

11 Aug. Two LAPD officers captured on cellphone video punching suspect William Cardenas in the face as he lay on the ground

2007

1 May LAPD officers open fire on pro-immigrant demonstrators at MacArthur Park

2009

- Feb. City begins settle lawsuits from MacArthur Park riots for \$13 million
- 8 June District Court judge lifts consent decree imposed on city following Rampart scandal
- 31 Oct. Chief Bratton leaves LAPD for private security firm
- 1 Nov. LAPD Deputy Chief Charlie Beck succeeds Bratton as Chief

2010

- 16 Apr. Former LAPD Chief Daryl Gates, 83, dies

2012

- 26 Feb. 17-year-old Trayvon Martin is shot and killed by neighborhood crimewatch volunteer George Zimmerman
- 17 June King, 47, dies

2013

- 13 July Zimmerman is acquitted of charges of second-degree murder and manslaughter in Martin's death

Appendix E: Corpora of Texts from the *Los Angeles Times* (Chapter 3)

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Corpus II: Post-riot Texts

Texts marked with an asterisk () indicate inclusion of a King narrative icon*

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Appendix F: Corpora of Texts from the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Chapter 4)

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Notes

Chapter 1

¹ Stutzman, “Dad” (8 Mar. 2012) and “George Zimmerman’s Father” (15 Mar. 2012). In April 2012, Zimmerman was charged with second-degree murder.

² In October 1995, Gammage, also Black, was pulled over by police while driving through Brentwood, PA, a suburb of Pittsburgh. The five officers who responded were all white. Subsequent events are contested, but what is known is that following a brief altercation Gammage was subdued and handcuffed. When paramedics arrived and were tending to one of the officers, Gammage asphyxiated.

³ I frequently use the term *article* as generic shorthand for news media text. However, the corpora are comprised of standard articles/reports, editorials, and letters to the editor.

⁴ For an overview of competing definitions see Ryan (2007: 33), who ultimately argues that defining *narrative* is useful only insofar as it “enables narratologists to delimit the object of their discipline, to isolate the features relevant to their inquiry, and to stem the recent inflation of the term narrative.” For Ryan, the “cognitive relevance” of narrative is what it enables us to do, not what defines it. Similarly, Peter Brooks (1984:4) suggests that defining narrative is an “impossibly speculative task,” though “it may be useful and valuable to think about the kind of ordering it uses and creates, about the figures of design it makes.”

⁵ Austin Kearns (1999) complicates this determination of narrativity. He “grant[s] to *context* the determination of what will count as a narrative text and the basic expectations governing how an audience will process such a text” (2). For Kearns, audience expectations are closely related to formal, structuralist properties of narrative discourse yet their presence does not guarantee that the audience will accept the discourse as a narrative. The value in this perspective is that it privileges audience interpretation over formal elements in relation to narrativity and situates narrative within a sociocultural framework. That is, discourse becomes a narrative in interaction between narrator and narratee, so long as the narratee interprets it as such. Here I assume that readers approach newspapers with the expectation that the stories are a type of narrative and thus expect certain things, like continuity and coherence, from the discourse.

⁶ Though I agree with Jan Blommaert’s (2005: 3) stance that discourse “comprises *all* forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use” [emphasis mine], I follow Fiske’s (1996) more narrow sense of discourse as this project takes as its unit of analysis press discourse and ignores accompanying photographs or other visual cues. Fairclough (1992: 62-4) likewise uses this narrower sense of ‘discourse’ to refer to “spoken or written language use” that is at once a mode of action and representation that exists in a dialectical relationship with social structure. Consistent in these approaches is the view that discourse is “a mode of political and ideological practice” (67).

⁷ Paul Ricoeur (1984: 39) explains this point in his reading of Aristotle’s *Poetics*: “It is only in the plot that action has a contour, a limit (*horos*) and, as a consequence, a magnitude.”

⁸ In *Tropics of Discourse*, White (1978: 82) famously claims that historical narratives are “verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented as found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences” [emphasis in original]. To the extent that news media narratives can be considered historical narratives, so too would they be considered fictitious in this view. While this presents an interesting theoretical perspective, I am drawn to the common use and understanding of news stories as representing the ‘real,’ even if that reality is a journalist’s interpretation, construction, or mediation.

⁹ I choose *masterplot* over related concepts such as master narrative, which suggests a singular, overarching way of telling the story (events + narrative discourse), whereas what I’m showing is that the skeletal structure (i.e., the plot) is what is ‘master’ – that is, the same plot about police brutality can serve discourses about both Rodney King and Jonny Gammage.

¹⁰ Cotter (2003) and Wodak & Busch (2004) provide insightful reviews of these approaches, particularly from the perspectives of critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and sociolinguistics.

¹¹ Tannen (1979), Tannen & Wallat (1987), and Ainsworth-Vaughn (2003) offer more thorough analyses of *frame* as it has been used to describe interaction and experience than has been discussed here.

¹² The *cardinal* example also points to the significance of frame semantics (Fillmore 1976): by *cardinal* do we mean the bird, something of extreme importance, or a church official? Other advantages of frame semantics include understanding metaphors or idioms—anything whose connotational meaning differs from its denotational meaning.

¹³ This focus on visual representations in support of an argument, particularly as a complement to verbal rhetoric, is echoed in W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Iconology* (1986). Mitchell, though, is far less concerned with the iconic image itself than with *imagery*, the mediating force between words and images, which leads him to consider the “split between words and images” (44) as a theoretical reflection of “the complexities and conflicts that plague the relations of individuals, groups, nations, classes, genders, and cultures” (157).

¹⁴ The view that audiences must learn to “read” an image echoes David Fleming’s (1996) seminal article in a special issue of *Argumentation & Advocacy* dedicated to visual rhetoric and argument. In brief, Fleming contends that pictures can’t argue because an image cannot at once produce a claim and its support, nor refute counterarguments, without first being “translated” into discourse, “in which case either the visual is irrelevant (since now duplicated by language), or the verbal is such a reduction of the visual as to be an entirely new thought altogether” (19).

¹⁵ In addition to the three sign types, Peirce identifies three types of icons: images, diagrams, and metaphors. Images, like the more general class of icons discussed above, signify through concrete resemblance. Diagrams exhibit structural similarity (e.g., a map and city streets it represents). Metaphors signify through parallelism (e.g., the rise and fall of mercury in a thermometer parallels the rise and fall in temperature).

Chapter 2

¹⁶ Hamm, Sandy. "Police Testify Gammage Struggled Violently: Officers Recount Events of Fatal Traffic Stop," *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 4 Nov. 1995: A1.

¹⁷ "Police Cleared in Shooting Deaths Over the Years," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. 08 Jan. 1999.

¹⁸ Hamm, Sandy and Sonya M. Hayes. "Police Version Fuels Fear of a Cover-Up," *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 21 Oct. 1995: A1.

¹⁹ Haynes, Sonya M. "Jackson Urges Ministers to Speak Out Against 'Lynching' of Gammage," *New Pittsburgh Courier, City ed.* 18 Nov. 1995: A1.

²⁰ The ProQuest Historical Newspapers database does not list the section in which an article appears, only the page number. The ProQuest Ethnic Newswatch database lists both the section and page number.

²¹ To compile the data, I searched for articles that contained the name "Gammage" or "Jonny Gammage" from October 1995 to January 2013. In total, I compiled 332 articles, including news reports, editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor. Seventeen articles were removed from the corpus because they were year-in-review pieces; although they mentioned Gammage, they complicate analysis of the formation of narrative icons, particularly in discerning core elements of the narrative, intertextual links, or embedded frames that might index masterplots. Generally, year-in-review articles highlight significant events or developments from the prior or concluding calendar year and present them in a list-like manner. The result, then, is the appearance of intertextuality based on proximal placement within the article itself. However, a conceptual link between events is often missing (although, perhaps, constructed by readers based on that proximal positioning). In other words, readers may infer an unintended conceptual correlation between events because they are referenced in brief, when, as the year-in-review designation suggests the correlation is temporal, i.e., the events happened during the same calendar year.

²² <http://www.newpittsburghcourieronline.com/index.php/home/history>

²³ It should be noted that only the names of Officers Vojtas and Mulholland had been released at the time of publication. Nonetheless, not naming the officers suggests that the incident is representative of a larger problem, as opposed to an isolated incident between actors.

²⁴ For an excellent analysis of how defense attorneys in the King trials were able to convince a jury to acquit their clients in the face of what otherwise appeared to be undeniable evidence of guilt, see Goodwin (1994), "Professional Vision."

²⁵ In fact, Jackson was shot to death on 6 April 1995 and subsequent reports placed the number of shots fired around 50.

²⁶ This determination of the main character may also be a function of the search terms used to construct the corpus.

Chapter 3

²⁷ Tobar, Hector & Leslie Berger. "Tape of L.A. Police Beating Suspect Stirs Public Furor; Law enforcement: Mayor says he's 'outraged.' The department, FBI and district attorney are investigating." *Los Angeles Times, Home ed.* 6 Mar. 1991: A1.

²⁸ The 17 other officers present were not charged criminally.

²⁹ Numerous reports, including the Christopher Commission report, suggested that the LAPD attempted to cover up or downplay the King incident and other incidents of police

brutality (*Report*, 9-11, 38, 154-171). The report also criticized the pervasive “Code of Silence” in the LAPD—the unwritten rule that an officer “does not provide adverse information against a fellow officer” (168).

³⁰ Though I expected to find articles about the incident published on Monday, 4 Mar. 1991, the first mention of Rodney King did not appear until Wednesday, 6 Mar. 1991. I have included this outlier as the first article in the Pre-riot corpus for that reason. All other articles included were published on Mondays

³¹ The original search returned 125 texts. Sixteen texts were removed from the corpus because they were year-in-review articles or otherwise irrelevant (e.g., the article “Award for ‘Roots’ Author” states that Alex Haley discussed several topics during a reception, “including the Rodney King affair” [par. 9]; alternately, a sports column mentions the L.A. *Kings* [professional hockey] and a University of Southern California football player, *Rodney Peete*). I should note, also, that although I am calling this corpus the Pre-Riot corpus, it includes articles published up through the L.A. riots; I have labeled it *pre-riot* to draw attention to events that occurred prior to or immediately after the verdicts and to contrast with the post-riot texts.

³² Of course, events subsequent to the L.A. riots could be seen as part of the “running story,” particularly the officers’ federal trials on charges of violating King’s civil rights (Richardson 2007: 100).

³³ In total, I gathered 235 texts; 34 were removed from the corpus because they were from the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, offered only decontextualized excerpts (e.g., “Reactions to Violence in Los Angeles, Beamed Across the Globe” listed passages from newspapers worldwide without the accompanying text), or were otherwise irrelevant (e.g., a book review noted that the novel was set against the backdrop of the L.A. riots).

³⁴ Bell (1991: 70) identifies three ways in which commentary may be inserted into a news story: contextual observation, explicit evaluation, and expression of future expectations. Of course, many scholars, including Bell, have pointed out that even “hard” news is value-laden and driven by audience or producer interests, and thus never completely ‘objective.’

³⁵ E.g., “*Grand Jury to Probe Beating of Motorist*,” (Saturday, 9 Mar. 1991); “*L.A. Officers Indicted in Beating*,” (Friday, 15 Mar. 1991). The italicized terms instantiate a *legal proceedings* frame.

³⁶ Of course, in stating that “King’s brutalization” came “at the hands of more than a dozen officers from the LAPD’s Foothill Division,” the article in fact rehearses the details by identifying two values for the actor and aggressor attributes in the *police brutality* frame; the excessive force attribute remains unspecified.