

“It was like a swarm of hornets attacking a bunch of butterflies”: Newspaper representations of the rioters involved in the Stonewall riots in 1969

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Introduction

The 1960s were a turbulent time in the United States. The decade saw, for example, resistance against the Vietnam War and the successes of the civil rights movement,¹ as well as many protests.² Like African Americans, many other minority groups struggled for basic rights and fought against discrimination. Sexual minorities were one of these groups. Their activism got more attention when the Stonewall riots took place in New York City between 28th of June and 2nd of July in 1969. These riots are often considered one of the most important parts of LGBTQ+ history and the start of modern activism for LGBTQ+ rights in the United States, even though activism existed prior to the rioting in the form of the homophile movement, and other similar events had taken place before around the United States, as well.³ Armstrong and Cragge suggest that the significance of the Stonewall Riots is mostly based on the way it has been remembered and celebrated, for example in the form of Pride parades. Yet, the riots are a major part of the community's history, and 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, which caused a lot of media coverage and made the riots a "current" issue, again. The fight for the rights of LGBTQ+ people is still going on, around the globe, and it makes the research of the movement's history significant because in attempts to undermine the need for LGBTQ+ people's basic human rights, the opposers have, for example, dismissed LGBTQ+ people and their fight as a modern times phenomenon and as something that would not have existed previously or would not have roots in history. In addition, it is important to understand the backgrounds of the movement. Duberman says that "Stonewall has become an empowering symbol of global proportions."⁴ LGBTQ+ history's existence already states that LGBTQ+ people's lives and history are worth of research.⁵

THESIS' FOCUS

The goal of this thesis is to analyse what kind of language was used in presenting the rioters to the public in a selection of different publications. The focus will be on what sort of image of the LGBTQ+ community was conveyed through the articles. Therefore,

¹ Kuklick 2009, 277-282, 286-289.

² Duberman 1993, 120.

³ Armstrong & Cragge 2006, 729.

⁴ Duberman 1993, xix.

⁵ Stone & Cantrell 2015, 7.

my research question is how were the rioters of Stonewall riots presented in major newspapers and underground newspapers. An additional research question is did major newspapers differ from the way underground newspapers presented the rioters, and if so, how?

The timeline of the thesis is not long. The focus is mostly on the few weeks of 1969, but also the sixties in general, as the aspects leading to the riots will be taken into brief consideration as well. The United States was not the only place in the world where the LGBTQ+ people fought for their rights at the time, but for the sake of simplicity, and because Stonewall was inherently an American phenomenon, this thesis focus is only in the Stonewall riots. The thesis is strongly in the area of queer history, but it is also social history because of its focus on the gay liberation movement, the society and the way it viewed certain minority groups. Because of the geographical focus on the United States, and more specifically New York City, it is also history of the United States.

As the focus of this thesis will be heavily in the language use, the analysis heavily relies on the ideas of the use of language having power and a purpose, as Richardson suggests⁶. Closely related to the idea of language's power are the terms involved in the primary sources. Some of the sources include terms referring to the LGBTQ+ people that are offensive by current standards. Therefore, the offensive language will not be used in the thesis, apart from citations of the primary sources, and the community will be referred as LGBTQ+⁷. It is worth noticing that the language evolves over time and some of the terms used today, were not used in 1960s, and vice versa. In addition, important terms for the thesis are *major* newspapers and *underground* newspapers. In the context of this thesis major newspapers means the most important daily newspapers at the time in 1969⁸, and underground newspapers can be defined as smaller publications that "shared an opposition to the American "system" politically, culturally, and economically and because they provide a new kind of journalism".⁹ Therefore, it could be said that underground press was the opposite of major newspapers that operated in the mainstream media. Yet, not all of the underground newspapers were on the side of the minorities, for example *Village Voice* had a troubled relationship with

⁶ Richardson 2007, 12.

⁷ meaning lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others, it is quite a recent term (Bronski, 2011, 14) all references to Bronski (2011) refer to the e-book format.

⁸ according to Stein (2019): *New York Times*, *New York Post* and *New York Daily News*.

⁹ Lloyd Ellis 1971, 102.

LGBTQ+ community.¹⁰ In the primary sources the rioters are not referred as rioters because even the event itself was not referred as “Stonewall riots” in press as they occurred. For example, Carter refers to them as the crowd, protestors, demonstrators and rioters in his research. For the sake of simplicity, the term “rioters” is used in this thesis.

The primary sources include 12 articles that were published in late June and early July (between 28th of June and 10th of July) 1969 in New York based major and underground newspapers. Three of them featured in *The New York Times*, two in *New York Post* and two in *New York Daily News*. In underground newspapers, three of them were published in *Village Voice*¹¹, one in *East Village Other* and one in *Rat*. Availability of the articles influenced greatly the choosing process and relies heavily on the primary source collection of the riots.¹² Therefore it is worth noticing that as I do not have access to all of these newspapers archives that it is impossible to state that these 12 articles were the only articles about the riots published in these newspapers, however that is not the goal of this thesis, as it does not focus on individual newspapers as much as it does on the general reporting of the riots. It is also important to remember that the newspaper articles were not the only pieces of media about the riots, as TV and radio pieces existed, too.¹³

The articles vary in their length and style, which should be taken into consideration, especially when comparing the articles from major and underground newspapers. Newspaper articles as primary sources can sometimes contradict each other, as the authors of the articles may have experienced the events differently. Articles published first can also affect the articles that were published later. In addition, newspapers always have bias, which may affect the reporting more or less. Not all of the articles chosen for this thesis gave voice to the rioters themselves. The number of articles that a newspaper published about the riots, compared to the other newspapers, does not necessarily reveal anything about how important the newspaper considered the riots as not all of the newspapers chosen for this thesis were published on a daily basis. In addition, it should be taken into consideration that all of the three major newspapers were called to the riots on the first night.¹⁴

¹⁰ Carter 2004, 201-202.

¹¹ First of the underground press, Lloyd Ellis 1971, 103.

¹² The Stonewall riots: a documentary history.

¹³ Duberman 1993, 249.

¹⁴ Duberman 1993, 244.

In this thesis, the newspaper articles are analysed by using the methods of close reading, comparing and content analysis. The methodology of this thesis relies heavily on John E. Richardson's ideas of content analysis and critical discourse analysis¹⁵. I used close-reading when dividing the articles into categories by different themes and content analysis I used when analysing the articles on more in depth, as "content analysis is often done to reveal purposes, motives and other characteristics of the communicators as they are (presumably) reflected in the content or identify the (presumable) effects of the content upon the attention, attitudes or acts of readers and listeners."¹⁶

With it, I have analysed how the newspapers have shaped the image they have wanted to convey of the rioters, as the focus has been on which details have been included or excluded, word choices and other language choices.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Stonewall riots has been researched before, but not too widely. Some of the newspapers' articles have been analysed as well, but not with the focus on presenting the rioters. *Stonewall – The Definitive Story Of The LGBTQ Rights Uprising That Changed America* (1993) by Martin Duberman examines the riots from the point of view of some of the individuals who took part in the riots and the activism that followed afterwards. This book gives voice to the individuals, so the rioters themselves, but it does not focus on the image that was given of them. The book is used to understand the how the rioters experienced the rioting and to briefly compare their memories of the rioters to the newspaper versions.

Stonewall – The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution (2004) by David Carter has researched the riots widely and in detail and offers many viewpoints to them. This book is used to understand the Stonewall riots as a phenomenon better and to explore the specific details related to the riots.

The Stonewall riots are not the only event in LGBTQ+ history worth researching. *A Queer History of The United States* (2011) by Michael Bronski is used to understand queer history as a whole and to get more in-depth understanding of the 1960s for the LGBTQ+ community.

¹⁵ Some ideas of critical discourse analysis are used in the thesis, but for a primary method it was not suitable.

¹⁶ Richardson 2007, 16.

STRUCTURE

The analysis part of the thesis will be divided into two chapters. In the first one, I will analyse whether the articles portrayed the rioters active or passive, the age of the rioters and whether their actions were presented as justified or unjustified. In the second chapter I will analyse whether the articles portrayed the rioting crowd as homogenous or heterogenous group of people and how violent the rioters were presented as.

Throughout these both chapters I will compare the major and underground newspapers to find out whether the size and style of the publication determined how the rioters were presented in the articles.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1960s were a terrible and non-tolerant time for the LGBTQ+ people. Yet, there were some improvements to their situation in form of activism, but those improvements were not huge or widely applied, and prejudices existed strongly in society, in many parts of life the LGBTQ+ people were harshly discriminated against, especially by the authorities.¹⁷ The Stonewall riots begun on the early hours 28th of June¹⁸ and continued for a few days, ending on 2nd of July¹⁹. The riots were sparked by an unannounced raid on a busy night. The raid was not uncommon occurrence, but it was for the second time within a week and instead of leaving, people stayed outside and started to throw things they could find and harass the police²⁰. The police had to retreat inside of the bar and call the tactical patrol force for assistance²¹. The general consensus among historians about the reasons why the riots started on that particular night, seems to be that frustration had been bottling up and people simply had had enough of discrimination.

¹⁷ Smith 1999, xii- xiii, Duberman, 1993, 93, 121, Carter 2004, 15, 122.

¹⁸ Carter 2004, 137.

¹⁹ Saturday night was active with fighting against the police, Sunday had significant crowd as well, Monday and Tuesday were quiet and Wednesday was active (Carter, 2004, 187-189,197, 200-201).

²⁰ Carter 2004 160, 148.

²¹ Carter 2004 173.

1. “Why couldn’t they leave us alone” – Activity and justification

One of the themes found from the articles was whether the articles wrote about the rioters as an active group of people who resisted the police or merely as a passive group that the police did something to. Closely related to this theme is also whether the rioters were presented acting with a justified or unjustified cause. Rioters’ age was also mentioned significant amount in the articles. These three different themes will be explored in this chapter.

1.1 Active or Passive?

According to John E. Richardson the choice of verbs is also closely related to presentation of people in newspapers because verbs can be used to assert activity of certain person or people, is something done to them or are they doing something, and the blame and responsibility can also be changed by the choice and use of verbs.²² These twelve articles tell slightly differently about the activity of the rioters.

The *New York Times* published three articles related to the riots and in one of them the rioting crowd is described almost passive. The article from 3rd of July gave the least active image of the rioters as all the verbs describe what was done to them. In the article it is written that “at least four persons were arrested and charged with harassment” and “the police dispersed a hostile crowd”²³, which merely described what were the police’s actions and presented the rioters as a quite passive group. Although, calling the crowd hostile implies their activity, but what they did is not mentioned, and this striped them away of any activity or control.

*Last night a chanting crowd of about 500 persons was scattered by members of Tactical Patrol Force and police of Charles Street station who were the targets [of] occasionally [thrown] of bottles and beer cans. A few fires were set in trash baskets along Christopher Street*²⁴

In the paragraph, activity of the police is once again enforced by telling what they did to the rioters, but the “hostility” is also specified. Interestingly enough, even though it is mentioned that the rioters threw objects at the police and set fires, but in these sentences

²² Richardson 2007, 57.

²³ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 83, *New York Times*, 3rd July 1969. (all footnotes related to Stein (2019) refer to the e-book format)

²⁴ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 83, *New York Times*, 3rd July 1969.

their activity is still dismissed. “Targets of --- bottles and beer cans” does not even mention directly who did what with bottles and beer cans, as only the objects are mentioned. The last part about fires is also in a passive voice, even though it is heavily implied that the rioters set the fires, not the police. The other two *New York Times* articles gave slightly more active image of the rioters, by reporting their actions actively such as “the young men threw bricks--”²⁵ and that “some of them were throwing bottles and lighting small fires”, but in addition told about the actions taken against the rioters, too; “were pushed and showed along”²⁶. However, none of the three articles gave voice to the rioters, apart from quoting a few of the slogans they were shouting. They did give a voice to the police department, by indirectly quoting them, and therefore seem to reinforce the image that the rioting crowd had no real control of the events and that the police had the situation under control for the whole time.

The *New York Daily News* reported the events in a similar manner in their article published in 29th of June. Again, there were mentions of crowd throwing things and “customers and villagers swarmed over the plainclothes cops”²⁷, so the activity of the crowd is mentioned briefly, but there are no comments from the rioters, and the article focused on what was done to the police, by telling the injuries they suffered, and the actions they took during the raid. *New York Post* article from 28th of June is reporting the events similarly, as the only activity of the crowd is described as shouting and battering of various objects. It seems that it is a conscious choice to write about the riots in a way that strips the rioters away from activity and agency, as if to undermine their resistance.

Rest of the articles gave voice to the rioters in varying degrees, but they also described the crowd as more active and their actions in more in-depth details. *New York Daily News* article from 6th of July was very different from the one published in 29th of June. It is focused on the rioters, in general, and their actions and reactions to the events. The rioters did get a voice in the article, as well, and their actions are described with quite metaphorical language.

The crowd began to get out of hand, eyewitnesses said. Then without, warning, Queen Power exploded with all the fury of a gay atomic bomb.

²⁵ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 75, *New York Times*, 29th June 1969.

²⁶ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 80, *New York Times*, 30th June 1969.

²⁷ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 74, *New York Daily News*, 29th June 1969.

*Queens, princesses and ladies-in-waiting began hurling anything they could lay their polished, manicured fingernails on. Bobby pins, compacts, curlers, lipstick tubes and other femme fatale missiles were flying in the direction of the cops. War was on. The lilies of the valley had become carnivorous jungle plants.*²⁸

The paragraph gives a wildly different image of the rioters in general, and of their activity, than for example the *New York Times* article. It is also entirely possible that the feminine related words are meant to undermine their resistance, as to present it somehow weaker or ridiculous. *Village Voice* article from 3rd of July, written by Smith, instead gave voice to the police, and only quoted the shouting of the rioters, because the reporter was following the police officials during the raid. In it, the activity of the rioters is written into the article with detail, again with the descriptions of throwing coins and beer cans, but he also referred to the crowd as “mob” more than once and mentions the uneasiness of the polices inside the bar, which undermines the image that police would have had control over the crowd all the time, and gives some of the control to the rioters.

New York Post article is similar, but it describes the events more. Articles that were featured in *Rat* and *East Village Other* are written from the point of view of the reporters, similarly as Smith’s article in *Village Voice*, but in those cases, the reporters were among the rioters, and obviously highlight the activity of the crowd. The other two *Village Voice* articles also wrote the crowd as active, instead of only something passive that the police were dealing with.

The length of the articles seems affect the way the activity of the crowd was described. Shorter articles obviously mean less details. Articles written from the first-person point of view allow to make and write observations that cannot be included in a formal-style newspaper article. The traditional format of newspaper article might also have affected the reporters to write more about the actions of police than the actions of rioters, especially if the newspaper is (discreetly) more on the side of the police department. Especially in this case, as prevalent perceptions of the LGBTQ+ people meant that it was not expected them to fight back or resist the police, and it could have been awkward for the police to admit in a major newspaper that they could not control a

²⁸ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

crowd that was stereotypically thought to be weak and feminine. According to Richardson, “language simultaneously reflects reality and constructs it to be certain way”²⁹. This could be the reason why the rioters were presented as passive. There seems to be some differences between major and underground newspapers. The differences are not very clear, but all of the underground press describes the crowd as active, but many of the major newspapers do so, too. Exception is the short *New York Times* article that truly described the crowd as passive. Therefore, 92 % of the articles describe the crowd as somewhat active. 36 % of these articles give only slightly active image of the rioters, and all of these are major newspapers. Generally, major newspapers describe the actions of the crowd less, but overall, the rioters were presented as an active group of people who were resisting the police. This could be because it is hard to report about a violent riot without presenting the rioters as a group that is doing something. Yet, major newspapers could have been reluctant to side with LGBTQ+ people if their readership were more conservative, and it could have been easier to write them as major population expected them to be. Resisting the police was not a surprising element to LGBTQ+ community as “most of homophile activity in the 1950s and 1960s was in response to police repression.”³⁰

1.2 Justified or Unjustified?

Closely related to the activity of the crowd is the fact whether the rioters were given a voice in the articles. If the voice was given to the rioters, it seems that they were portrayed as more active. Also related to voice is whether the rioters were presented to have a justified or unjustified reason for rioting. Not all of the articles stated this clearly, but some articles were very open about where their sympathies lie. Some of the articles mention something that might make the rioters seem as if they were acting unjustifiably but the same articles might also include details that make their cause seem justified. Therefore, the distinction between two type of articles is not so straightforward.

The articles that very clearly portray rioters’ actions as justified are the *New York Daily News* article from 6th of July and *New York Post* article from 8th of July, *Village Voice* article from 10th of July, as well as articles by *East Village Other* and *Rat*.

²⁹ Richardson 2007, 26.

³⁰ Armstrong & Crage 2006, 728.

New York Daily News article included quotes such as “we’ve had all we can take from Gestapo” and “did pigs tell you that they smashed everything in sight?” and “[d]id you ask them why it took them two years to discover that the Stonewall didn’t have a liquor license?”³¹ from the rioters, heavily implying that Stonewall riots were about something more than a singular police raid. “We never bothered anybody, why couldn’t they leave us alone”³², in this way the article takes a sympathetic approach, too, by portraying the rioters, and the patrons of Stonewall Inn, as victims. Interesting aspect in this *New York Daily News* article is that they establish the narrative of LGBTQ+ people having done nothing to provoke the police, for example, by interviewing a woman³³ who lived close to the bar, who said that bar-goers never caused any trouble and she is quoted:

*It was just awful when the police came. It was like a swarm of hornets attacking a bunch of butterflies.*³⁴

The same article mentioned the corruption of police departments and stated the legality of police’s actions during the raid. *New York Post* article implied justification by including people’s experiences of harassment from police prior to the riots, and stating that Stonewall Inn was a safe place where “you felt safe among your own without fear of being busted or beaten up --”³⁵ and mentioning that other LGBTQ+ bars have been raided, too. According to Duberman, Stonewall Inn was seen as “a place less susceptible to police raids than other gay bars”³⁶, which could explain why an unannounced raid angered people to large extent. *East Village Other* also mentions the oppression and that LGBTQ+ people have experienced terrible treatment and it has to stop, but differing from major newspaper articles, it also mentions that “homosexuality, however, is a reality and not just a passing thing”³⁷ and therefore attempts to normalise LGBTQ+ people in general, and not just offer background information about their treatment.

³¹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

³² Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

³³ It is worth of noticing that the woman is stated to have two children and that she has never been into Stonewall Inn, implying that she is a part of majority population, and still having nothing against the LGBTQ+ population.

³⁴ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

³⁵ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 86, *New York Post*, 8th July 1969.

³⁶ Duberman 1993, 225.

³⁷ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 87, *East Village Other*, 9th July 1969.

The *Village Voice* article from 10th of July, on the other hand, portrays the rioters as victims of exploitation from police and the mafia, and says there is nothing isolated about the raid of Stonewall Inn, but that it is more of a trend. But it very strongly and clearly states their sympathies.

*I think basically most people's sympathy has to lie with homosexuals. They're the guys who have been exploited for so long in the squeeze between the crooks who cater to them at outrageous prices on one side and on the other by the cops, either operating to show off for Daily News camp of public indignation or out of their own righteousness as self-appointed defenders of the public morals.*³⁸

This paragraph briefly offers a picture of the situation in which LGBTQ+ people had been for quite some time, and it offers reasons why they would want things to change and therefore, it makes the spontaneous rioting seem more justified. The LGBTQ+ community had been the victim of police harassment for several decades in New York.³⁹ The article from *Rat* also conveyed the image that the LGBTQ+ people are unfairly harassed by the police, and that harassment played a role in the beginning of the riots. The *Village Voice* article from 3rd of July written by Truscott did not provide much background reasoning for the riot, but it includes a quote by Allen Ginsberg: “we are one of the largest minorities in the country –10 per cent, you know. It’s about time we did something to assert ourselves.”⁴⁰ This makes the rioting seem more connected to the fight for basic rights rather than just to one singular police raid to a LGBTQ+ bar. According to Nieminen and Pantti, shallow information only states what has happened, and in-depth information maps out consequences and forces behind the events.⁴¹ In the cases of these newspaper articles, it seems to have been a conscious choice between shallow and in-depth information, depending on what sort of image the newspapers wanted to convey, as more information could have made the rioters seem acting justifiably.

A few articles clearly portrayed rioters acting unjustifiably. *Village Voice* article written by Smith offered no background information, but he described first night of riots’

³⁸ Stein 2019, chapter five, document 90, *Village Voice*, 10th July 1969.

³⁹ Chauncey 1997, 17.

⁴⁰ Stein 2019, chapter five, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

⁴¹ Nieminen & Pantti 2009, 12.

events from the point of view of polices. This article mostly strongly defended the actions of the police by mentioning the legality of their actions and “according to the police, they are not picking on homosexuals”⁴², and thereby attempting to undermine the aspects of the raid having anything to do with sexual minorities. “A strange mood was in the crowd – I noticed the full moon. Loud defiances mixed with skittish hilarity made for a more dangerous stage of protest; they were feeling their impunity. This kind of crowd freaks easily”⁴³, is the only explanation that Smith offers for the actions of rioters. This explanation, especially the full moon, simplifies and undermines all the other reasons behind the Stonewall riots, but also portrays the rioters as a group that could be affected by something supernatural, and as ridiculous as full moon. This could also potentially be referring to the fact that LGBTQ+ people were commonly thought to have mental illnesses⁴⁴. The full moon is also mentioned in the *Village Voice* article from 10th of July, which was sympathetic towards LGBTQ+ people, the first quote in the article is “the combination of a full moon and Judy Garland’s funeral was too much for them --”⁴⁵. The singer-actor’s funeral has been a popular reason for the Stonewall riots’ sparking, but it has been debated among historians⁴⁶ and also stating a famous people’s funeral as a reason for the riots undermines the real reasons.

New York Times article from 29th of June referred the riots as “rampage” and very strongly defended the police’s actions by emphasising the facts that police had a warrant and Stonewall Inn was operating without a liquor license. The article also mentions that “the raid was one of the three held on Village bars in last two weeks”⁴⁷, but did not specify if other Village bars were also LGBTQ+ bars, which were popular in the Village.⁴⁸ Yet, the leaving out of the LGBTQ+ aspects, undermines the greater reasons behind the riots, and makes the rioters actions seem unjustified. *New York Daily News* article from 29th of June offered only the one raid as an explanation.

The remaining three articles do not clearly implicate the actions of rioters as justified or unjustified, but they are leaning more towards unjustified in their tone. In the other

⁴² Stein 2019, chapter five, document 82, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

⁴³ Stein 2019, chapter five, document 82, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

⁴⁴ Carter 2004, 24.

⁴⁵ Stein 2019, chapter five, document 90, *Village Voice*, 10th July 1969.

⁴⁶ Duberman writes that Sylvia Rivera insisted it affected the mood of the night prior to riots, Duberman 1993, 235 and Carter states it was just “ridicule” from straight person and no evidence exists from the riots, Carter 2004, 260.

⁴⁷ Stein 2019, chapter five, document 75, *New York Times*, 29th June 1969.

⁴⁸ Armstrong & Crage 2006, 737.

articles, justification of rioters' actions, or lack of it, seems to have been constructed by providing reasons for the riot. There are not very clear differences between major and underground newspapers. Most of the underground newspapers presented the riots as justified, but so did multiple major newspapers. Out of those that implicated justification or lack of it, 33 % presented the riots as unjustified and 67 % as justified. Some newspapers give excessive reasons, and included the rioters' voice in the articles, which obviously gives better understanding of the riots' backgrounds to the readers. A part of journalism is to include background information about the events and including apparent reasons for the riots necessarily does not mean that they consciously tried to justify the rioting. Again, the idea of shallow and in-depth information⁴⁹ applies. Underground newspapers were stating their general sympathies more strongly than major newspapers. In a way, differences within underground press are not surprising as Donna Lloyd Ellis states that underground press was not a united group.⁵⁰

Another interesting aspect is that some of the articles highlight the age of the rioters. 50 % of the articles mention age in one way or another, as other articles focus on other characteristics of the rioters, and the articles that do mention age emphasise the young age of the rioters. *New York Times* article from 29th of June mentioned "young men"⁵¹ four times and other *New York Times* article from 30th mentioned "young men" once and "youths" twice⁵². The article featured in *Rat* called the rioters "kids" three times⁵³. *Village Voice* article from 3rd of July referred them as kids and called them the "up-and-coming generation" and highlighted the difference the actions between the young and "older boys".⁵⁴ In turn, *New York Daily News* referred the rioters as "the girls" and described some of the rioters as "they were in their early 20s"⁵⁵. *New York Post* article's approach is a mix of all of these, as it referred to the rioters as "young homosexuals" and "gay young men", mentioned the specific ages of a few persons who appear in the article and referred to them as "gay boys", too.⁵⁶ Previous research also mentions that

⁴⁹ Nieminen & Pantti 2009, 12.

⁵⁰ Lloyd Ellis 1971, 105.

⁵¹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 75, *New York Times*, 29th June 1969.

⁵² Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 80, *New York Times*, 30th June 1969.

⁵³ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 88, *Rat*, 9th July 1969.

⁵⁴ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

⁵⁵ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

⁵⁶ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 86, *New York Post*, 8th July 1969.

the older LGBTQ+ people did not participate in the riots as actively as the younger generation.⁵⁷

There can be numerous different reasons for mentioning the age of rioters. One could be that the reporters want to highlight that the riots can be indicating a change that comes with changing times and a new generation. Another could be that the newspapers attempt to undermine the significance or the reasons of the Stonewall riots by presenting the riots as something foolish that immature young people have come up with. In addition, the audience of the newspapers might react more strongly if the violence is done by young people or if the police is being violent towards people who are described as “kids”. Fairclough presents that representation in media is always about a choice, which details are the most important to include.⁵⁸ Therefore, mentioning the age holds some significance. According to Richardson, reporters name the people they are writing about⁵⁹, and adding the age is possibly a part of that. There are no big differences between major and underground newspapers, which is not surprising as age is quite neutral thing to mention, and not necessarily related to any political bias.

⁵⁷ Duberman 1993, 250.

⁵⁸ Fairclough 2002, 13.

⁵⁹ Richardson 2007, 49.

2. “Face wrath of all the Gods that ever lived” – describing rioters and violence

As mentioned, John E. Richardson writes that reporters must name the people they are writing about and the naming process always includes a choice⁶⁰, and thereby it can be assumed that each term used to describe a rioter or rioters is a conscious choice, and made to convey certain image of the rioters to the readers. Some of the articles gave more heterogenous image of the rioters than others, so they have made different choices in the naming process. Describing violence that the rioters did or experienced is also an important aspect of presenting the rioters as police brutality was a prominent background factor to the riots. These are the themes that will be explored in this chapter.

2.1 Diversity

Almost none of the articles mentioned the race or ethnicity of the rioters, except the *East Village Other* article that the reporter themselves is white. It could be assumed with the Richardson’s theory about naming the people that in the context of reporting about this riot, the race and ethnicity aspects were less important aspects. Yet another possibility is that the rioting crowd was so diverse that describing their races and ethnicities was not reasonable. However, race could provide completely different experiences for LGBTQ+ people⁶¹, therefore race is an important aspect of LGBTQ+ history. Previous research suggests that the rioters were diverse in their race and ethnicities, with examples of prominent figures in the riots, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera.⁶² Jessi Gan writes that “published news accounts, for mainstream as well as gay publications, generally elided the roles of gender-variant people and people of color at Stonewall, while subsuming them under the term ‘gay’.”⁶³ This means that “gay” was used as an umbrella term and it is challenging to determine which people the newspapers meant with it. Admittedly, LGBTQ+ is also an umbrella term.⁶⁴

Despite the lack of mentioning race or ethnicity, these twelve articles gave different images of the rioters. 58 % articles convey the image that the crowd was diverse.

⁶⁰ Richardson 2007, 49.

⁶¹ Lair 2015, 234.

⁶² Gan 2007, 130–131.

⁶³ Gan 2007, 132.

⁶⁴ Kunzel 2018, 1564.

Remaining 42 % articles describe the crowd either very neutrally or as that all of the rioters were similar to each other and conveyed rioters as homogenous group.

The obvious issue is that the descriptions are merely based on the interpretations of the reporters, and that sexuality and gender are not necessarily aspects that are linked to the looks of a person. For example, according to Carter, The *Rat* reporter described a person as a man as other sources have described the person as a lesbian.⁶⁵ However, post World War II, LGBTQ+ people had created a system of recognising each other by certain ways of acting and clothing.⁶⁶ These systems might not have been visible to straight people. Some of the descriptions could have been blatant or discreet homophobia or transphobia⁶⁷. Closely related to the question of who the rioters were, is the language that is used to describe LGBTQ+ people. 58 % of the articles use much more terms and some of them can be considered offensive by today's standards and 1960's standards too.

Out of the major newspapers only *New York Daily News* (29th of June) and *New York Post* (8th of July) gave an image of heterogenous crowd. *New York Daily News* did this more discreetly by using neutral and polite language, and mentioning more than once that the rioters were "customers and villagers"⁶⁸, therefore implying not all of the rioters were necessarily people who visited the bar and possibly were not LGBTQ+ people, but just locals to the particular part of the city. However, it could hold significance that they are named as villagers as Greenwich Village was popular among LGBTQ+ people⁶⁹. This could also be an attempt to present the riots as a local problem. Gan states that also straight people participated, too.⁷⁰ *New York Post* uses more diverse language in this article, "the nellies, fems, gay boys, queens – all those that flaunt their homosexuality --"⁷¹ Almost all of the terms refer to men, which implies that rioters were mostly people who were perceived as men, but the vagueness of the terms queen⁷² and "all those that flaunt their homosexuality" also imply that maybe all of the rioters were not assumed to be men. However, according memories of people who used to frequent Stonewall Inn, it

⁶⁵ Carter 2004, 152.

⁶⁶ Bronski, 2011, 198.

⁶⁷ For example, calling transwoman a drag queen or a man wearing (traditional) women's clothes could just be a jab from the reporter who does not tolerate trans people, but these are impossible to know.

⁶⁸ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 74, *New York Daily News*, 29th June 1969.

⁶⁹ Armstrong & Crage 2006, 737.

⁷⁰ Gan 2007, 132.

⁷¹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 86, *New York Post*, 8th July 1969.

⁷² "any gay man who was not conventionally masculine -- indicated a group of gay man", Carter 2004, 76.

was a place mostly for men, and women were rarer, but still there.⁷³ Previous research also suggests that “people who did the most fighting were the drag queens and hustlers”⁷⁴. Gan suggests that even though all of the LGBTQ+ community was in a poor position in society, trans people were treated the worst, and therefore they fought the most in the riots.⁷⁵ Another LGBTQ+ related riots were also highly dependent on for example transwomen⁷⁶.

Many of the underground newspapers conveyed the crowd as diverse, with perceived men, women and trans people. The *Village Voice* articles from 3rd of July are quite similar. Smith described that the customers were joined by “Friday night tourists” and one rioter as “a dyke”⁷⁷. In addition, he mentions transwomen, drag queens and men wearing make-up. According to Carter, some transwomen were present in the bar in the first night of the riots.⁷⁸ The other article used more often negatively associated terms, and “stonewall boys”, “three more blatant queens – in full drag”, “a dyke” and “with additions of onlookers, Eastsiders and rough street people who saw a chance for little action”.⁷⁹ Both of these articles imply that not all of the rioters possibly were LGBTQ+ people and that at least not all of the people were assumed to be men. According to Carter, Smith’s article was “less offensive than Truscott’s”, but the LGBTQ+ people’s reactions to the articles were not positive and rage and plans of lighting up their headquarters followed.⁸⁰ Some researchers say that the *Village Voice* articles prolonged the riots by a day.⁸¹ It is to be noted that originally underground press’ intentions was not cater to minority groups, but generally to the younger generation.⁸² The third *Village Voice* article describes the rioters as “bizarre alliance between the Stonewall queens, the Stonewall heavies and the street people against the cops”⁸³, therefore implying that the rioters were diverse group of people who were only united by their anger towards the police. According to Duberman, LGBTQ+ community was not

⁷³ Duberman 1993, 234.

⁷⁴ Carter 2004, 162-163.

⁷⁵ Gan 2007, 128.

⁷⁶ Kunzel 2018, 1580.

⁷⁷ Stein, 2019, chapter 5, document 82, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

⁷⁸ Carter 2004, 142.

⁷⁹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

⁸⁰ Carter 2004, 201-202.

⁸¹ Armstrong & Crage 2006, 745 and Carter, 2004, 202.

⁸² Lloyd Ellis 1971, 102-103.

⁸³ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 90, *Village Voice*, 10th July 1969.

particularly cohesive or united group.⁸⁴ Previous research also suggests that some of the customers were “street queens who hustled”⁸⁵. The *Rat* article mostly refers to the rioters as “guys”, but he also mentions “the blond drag queen”⁸⁶. *East Village Other* uses most often offensive language, and “fag” is mentioned multiple times, but also “queens” and “a few “butch” members”⁸⁷, implying that the crowd was diverse, at least with perceived men and women.

The *New York Times* article from 3rd of July, refers the rioters only as “persons”, which is very neutral way to describe a group of people as it indicates nothing about gender, age, race, ethnicity or sexuality. It also makes the crowd seem a mass without identities. MORITZ states, in addition, that LGBTQ+ people have not been something that the press is keen to include⁸⁸. It is difficult to say whether the *New York Times* felt that this was not worth reporting more on or whether they wanted to stick to the strictly professional way of reporting and not to assume anything about the rioters. *New York Times* did have a reputation of reporting news in a manner that lacked sensationalism and included only facts.⁸⁹ This could partly explain their scarce way of reporting about the riots. The *New York Post* article from 28th of June is very similar as rioters are only described as persons and passersby. The other two *New York Times* articles use similarly neutral language, but they have added more description by calling the rioters “young men” multiple times. It implies that the rioters are a homogenous crowd.

New York Daily News article from 6th of July also conveyed the homogenous image of the rioters, but still in a different way, as it refers the rioters almost exclusively as women or with feminine related traits. Reporter does occasionally write “she was a he” in this article, but otherwise he refers the rioters as “the girls” and relies heavily on court metaphors with “queens, princesses and ladies-in-waiting”, as well as other metaphors about “Florence Nightingales” who helped the wounded and calls one person a “wonder woman”, and refers the riots as “war of roses.”⁹⁰ All of this combined with descriptions of “stood bra strap to bra strap” and instead of writing that the rioters threw coins and garbage as the other articles, it was “bobby pins, compacts, curlers, lipstick

⁸⁴ Duberman 1993, 254.

⁸⁵ Duberman 1993, 224. Referring to sex workers.

⁸⁶ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 88, *Rat*, 9th July 1969.

⁸⁷ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 87, *East Village Other*, 9th July 1969.

⁸⁸ Moritz 1992, 155, 157.

⁸⁹ Britannica Academic 2017b.

⁹⁰ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

tubes and other femme fatale missiles --”, which conveys very strongly the image of feminine crowd, which is interesting because it differs so strongly from the other articles. It is almost impossible to say whether he refers to men, drag queens, transwomen or women in general because of the term queen is vague, but traditionally it meant feminine men⁹¹, but some of the trans people were called queen, too⁹². It is difficult to say what has made the reporter to write the article this way, especially when the other *Daily News* article is different, and its reputation is not very pro-LGBTQ+⁹³. It could be that the article has been intended as some sort of ridicule to the rioting crowd. It could also be an attempt to undermine the rioting by presenting all of them as women, and therefore demasculinize gay men, and with the mocking tone undermine their issues and dismiss the rioting with 1960s women stereotypes, as silly and irrational. Yet, the article presented the riots as somewhat justified. Moritz states the article as example of common “contempt” from the press to the LGBTQ+ community.⁹⁴

The differences between major newspapers and underground newspapers are somewhat clearer in this case. Only major newspapers convey homogenous image of the rioters, but some of the major newspapers also convey heterogenous image, but all of the underground newspapers describe the crowd as heterogenous. A reason for homogenous image in major newspapers could have been that simplified terms and descriptions were more easily understandable to the major population, while underground newspapers’ audience could have understood less-known terms. There is also clear difference in the use of language between major and underground newspapers. Again, Richardson’s theory about naming might be applicable. If major newspapers attempted to use only neutral terms, it could have been more difficult to convey a diverse image of the rioters. All of the underground publications use offensive terms in their articles. Out of the major newspaper articles, only two of them use offensive language: *New York Daily News* and *New York Post*. In this case the size of the newspaper might be the reason, as major newspapers’ language is more official and politely neutral. Using informal language was also part of underground newspapers’ style and a possibly a way to appeal to younger readership. Often, slurs were reclaimed and therefore not used in an offensive manner. In the underground newspapers not all of the reporters were

⁹¹ Carter 2004, 75-76.

⁹² Sylvia Rivera among many.

⁹³ *Village Voice* said *Daily News* article was anything but kind to the cause.

⁹⁴ Moritz 1992, 154.

professionals, for example the *Village Voice* reporter Lucian Truscott is described as “an aspiring writer”.⁹⁵ In addition, it is important to remember that underground press was also dependent on advertisers⁹⁶ and it could have affected what sort of language was used in their articles. Similarly, ownership affected both underground and major newspapers, but it is challenging to investigate.⁹⁷ But at least, New York Times has had a history of ownership affecting the newspaper’s content.⁹⁸

2.2 Violence

The Stonewall riots did not lead to deaths, but violence is still closely linked to the events of the riots and to reporting of them. In all of the articles, violence is mentioned in one way or another. The difference comes up in whose violence the articles are writing about. 50 % of the articles describe only the violence of the rioters, and 50 % describe violence of the rioters and the police. Describing the degree of violence obviously affects the image that the readers of the newspapers will get of the rioters and the police. Violence of the rioters, as well as the police’s, are also prevalent in the eyewitness accounts⁹⁹. Research also suggests there might have been a pressure to the riots be similar as other riots that took place during 1960s.¹⁰⁰

New York Post from 28th of June and 8th of July and *New York Times* articles from 29th of June and 3rd of July described the violence of the rioters in similar ways. These four articles did not include much details and described them mostly through objects they threw and the charges on which some of the rioters were arrested, “disorderly conduct” and “felonious assault on a police officer”¹⁰¹, implies that the rioters have been violent, and that the violence have been targeted at the police, and that they have been the victim in this case. The other *New York Post* article just mentions what the rioters threw at the police. *New York Times* also mentions that “a patrolman suffered a broken wrist¹⁰²”. According to other sources, he got the injury by falling down¹⁰³, but that is not specified in any of the articles, which makes it seem more violent incident. All of these articles

⁹⁵ Carter 2004, 144.

⁹⁶ Lloyd Ellis 1971, 121.

⁹⁷ Chomsky 2006, 3.

⁹⁸ Chomsky 2006, 15.

⁹⁹ Duberman 1993, 244-248, 253.

¹⁰⁰ Duberman 1993, 253.

¹⁰¹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 73, *New York Post*, 28th June 1969.

¹⁰² Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 75, *New York Times*, 29th June 1969.

¹⁰³ Duberman 1993, 249.

failed to mention any of the rioters' injuries, which make it seem as if they were not injured. Yet, according to Duberman "a considerable amount of blood had been shed" and that injuries of the rioters included "two lost fingers" and that one rioter had injured so badly "she bled simultaneously from her mouth, nose and ears"¹⁰⁴. It seems that not mentioning the rioters' injuries was a conscious choice made by the reporters. Perhaps mentioning the injuries would have been seen as sympathetic towards LGBTQ+ people and it would have acknowledged the police as violent.

New York Daily News article from 29th of June and *Village Voice* from 3rd of July gave more detailed description of the violence. Similarly, as before, "the cops were targets—" and "windows were smashed" and "the front of the raided bar, the Stonewall Inn, was firebombed"¹⁰⁵". The last comment is interesting because several other articles have debunked the description of firebomb largely as exaggeration.¹⁰⁶ The intention of the exaggeration might have been to make the events seem more dramatic and therefore possibly sell more copies of the paper. It is also clear that the eyewitness accounts of what happened contradict each other strongly.¹⁰⁷ Another possibility is that they wanted to convey more violent image of the rioters and therefore present them in even worse light. *Village Voice* reported that "beer cans and bottles were heaved at the windows and a rain of coins descended on the cops" and "the crowd erupted into cobblestone and bottle heaving"¹⁰⁸. These descriptions imply that the crowd was violent, but not all of the violence was necessarily targeted at the police, as they destroyed the property, too. There are mentions of the "blaze of flame"¹⁰⁹ and the usage of parking meter as a battering ram, which conveys that the violence escalated just from throwing things. The article uses language that strongly refers to the violence, with the word choices such as "full scale attack" and "battle with the crowd."¹¹⁰ The difference to the other articles is that it mentions injuries of the rioters and the police officers are not described as completely blameless victims, as he writes that "the cops amused themselves by arbitrarily breaking up small groups of people"¹¹¹. Injuries of the police are mentioned

¹⁰⁴ Duberman 1993, 249.

¹⁰⁵ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 74, *New York Daily News*, 29th June 1969.

¹⁰⁶ For example, *East Village Other* commented on it.

¹⁰⁷ Duberman 1993, 242-243.

¹⁰⁸ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

¹⁰⁹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

¹¹⁰ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

¹¹¹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 81, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

again, and “object that injured Patrolman Gil Weissman”¹¹² is part of the description, too. The articles very rarely name any of the participants¹¹³, but in this case, one possibility is that the *New York Daily News* attempts to make the readers feel more sympathy towards the injured police officers, by giving at least one of them a name. According to Stewart-Winter a LGBTQ+ person’s name being on a newspaper article was a dire consequence of having dealt with police in the mid-20th century¹¹⁴. Yet, none of the articles mention full names of the rioters, which could be an indication of changing times. 1960s, in general, “loosened up American culture.”¹¹⁵

The third *New York Times* article is similar to the other two, but this one states the violence of the police, too, “a number of people who did not retreat fast enough were pushed and shoved along, and at least two men were clubbed to the ground.”¹¹⁶ The passive verb choice is worth noticing again, as the police is not directly stated to be behind the actions. Obviously, it is worth noticing that these articles are about different nights of the riots. Yet, the police violence is only mentioned in one of them and even then, very shortly and the word choices of pushing and shoving are not the most violent. *New York Daily News* from 6th of July uses more violence linked language, when describing both rioters and police. The people interviewed for the article talk about “war” and “battle”, and the reporter continues with the same theme as he writes for example “the war was on”, “the defenders of Stonewall launched an attack” and the injured are described as “fallen warriors”¹¹⁷. The comparisons to war and battle obviously create a link between the events of the riots and violence. War related images are mentioned 12 times in the article. In addition, he writes that “queen power exploded with all the fury of a gay atomic bomb”¹¹⁸ and the comparisons to the weapons, such as atomic bombs, enforce the image. Police’s actions are described with more intensity, too. “Invasion of helmeted TPF” and “smashed everything in sight” and “hornets attacking a bunch of butterflies”.¹¹⁹ Including the butterfly comment could be an

¹¹² Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 74, *New York Daily News*, 29th June 1969.

¹¹³ Exceptions include the folk singer Dave Van Ronk who gets mentioned in six of the articles (celebrity status possibly makes mentioning of his name worth it) and Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine gets mentioned a few times.

¹¹⁴ Stewart-Winter 2015, 64.

¹¹⁵ Kuklick 2009, 297.

¹¹⁶ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 80, *New York Times*, 30th June 1969.

¹¹⁷ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

¹¹⁸ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

¹¹⁹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 85, *New York Daily News*, 6th July 1969.

attempt to enforce the stereotype of femininity and weakness and undermine their resistance, or reinforce the image of their innocence, as they did not deserve the treatment from the police.

The *East Village Other* from 9th of July described the rioters' actions similarly to other articles, for example, by mentioning what they threw. The actions of the rioters are not described with overly violent language, except for the "battering the entrance". Police's actions are told about in slightly different language. "Who was promptly beaten in front of two hundred people by three other pigs" and "he was pummelled, dragged, kicked and lifted down"¹²⁰ gives a wildly different image of the actions of the police, as they seem much more violent towards the rioters than vice versa. The injuries of the rioters are described as more severe, too, as he writes "my buddy received seven stiches over his left eye".¹²¹ The war comparisons appear in this one, too. The rioters seem more violent as their fury was described as "face wrath of all the gods that ever lived"¹²², implying that the violence escalated when the police started to beat people up. Research also suggests that the rioters got angry and violent after they saw a police "clubbing" one of the rioters¹²³.

The *Rat* described the violence of the rioters quite similarly as other articles, but mentioned that "yet were reticent about provoking any pig violence"¹²⁴, which implies that the crowd was scared and they were, at least in the beginning, considering which sort of actions to take. Yet, later in the article he portrays the rioters more violent by writing that "a few pigs in the outside had to flee for their lives and barricade themselves in" and that "soon pandemonium broke loose"¹²⁵. Still, he insists that the police had the advantage as they were better equipped. "But kids were really scared about going too far as they saw the cops pulling guns from inside, pointed directly at the crowd" and in addition how a police officer "hurled it [the gun] at the crowd"¹²⁶. He rather emphasises the possibility of police violence with the gun comments and "but no one was ready to get their heads beat in"¹²⁷, and therefore implied that the police was

¹²⁰ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 87, *East Village Other*, 9th July 1969.

¹²¹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 87, *East Village Other*, 9th July 1969.

¹²² Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 87, *East Village Other*, 9th July 1969.

¹²³ Carter 2004, 148.

¹²⁴ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 88, *Rat*, 9th July 1969.

¹²⁵ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 88, *Rat*, 9th July 1969.

¹²⁶ Stein, 2019, chapter 5, document 88, *Rat*, 9th July 1969.

¹²⁷ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 88, *Rat*, 9th July 1969.

completely willing to use force when dealing with rioters and that they had the situation under control with the fear of violence, which, once again, is quite different image than the other articles give. This is supported by other research as rioter stated that he did not attempt to be provocative because “since you [the police] have a gun and a billy club, and I don’t.”¹²⁸

Village Voice article from 3rd of July written by the reporter who followed the police describes both of the sides as violent. The article has the similar descriptions of throwing objects and smashing windows, but the reporter refers the rioters as a mob, which holds more violent connotations than merely a crowd. He wrote how one of the cops got hit with a bottle and started to bleed from his head, and description of blood made the situation seem more violent than previously. “It sounds like powerful rage bent on vendetta¹²⁹” is also one of the descriptions of the crowd, which has, once again, more violence-linked words with “rage” and “vendetta”. Yet, the police officers are described almost equally violent.

And while the other cops help, he slaps the prisoner five or six times very hard and finishes with a punch to mouth. They handcuff the guy as he almost passes out. “All right,” Pine announces, “we book him for assault.”¹³⁰

The whole scene seems very much like exaggerated police brutality, which is very different description to some other articles, as some of them have shown the police as passive, but in this, they are in-detail beating up a rioter. They even arrest the beaten-up rioter, which implies that some of the arrested seem to be arrested just because the police decided so. None of the newspaper articles straightforwardly mention it¹³¹, but previous research states that the police also frisked some people during the riots, and it made “everybody generally very uncomfortable”¹³², which indicates that the police did harass the rioters in multiple ways. According to previous research, multiple eyewitness accounts state the police beat random people up.¹³³

¹²⁸ Carter 2004, 149.

¹²⁹ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 82, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

¹³⁰ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 82, *Village Voice*, 3rd July 1969.

¹³¹ Exception could be Smith’s *Village Voice* article that mentions the “checks” that police did to transwomen.

¹³² Carter 2004, 141.

¹³³ Carter 2004, 177, 188.

The *Village Voice* article from 10th of June did not even describe the violence as much as just mentioned it, in a quote by a person they have interviewed. “But people were getting their heads busted and there was mostly ugliness on both sides--”¹³⁴, which is the most simplistic description of the events.

There seems to be somewhat clear division between major newspapers and underground newspapers in the description of violence. Most of the major newspapers describe only the rioters as violent, and most of the underground newspapers have included the police violence. A few exceptions do exist as one *Village Voice* article focuses only on violence of the police and one *New York Times* and one *New York Daily News* wrote about police violence, too. In this case, the underground newspapers could have been more inclined to write about the police violence, as most of them seemed to resent the police as they called them “pigs” multiple times. It would also fit the image of their publications as they were opposed to the general system, while major newspapers could have found it easier to side with the police because their readers most likely have been more conservative and have more faith in the police. In addition, Fairclough’s idea about prioritizing which details to include, makes it seem that most of major newspapers did not think police’s violence was something worth including, and most of underground newspaper thought the opposite. In addition, Richardson’s ideas about language being used as a tool to shape reality could apply this one, too, as the choice of words in presenting the violence of rioters and police does give very different images of the events.

¹³⁴ Stein 2019, chapter 5, document 90, *Village Voice*, 10th July 1969.

Conclusion

Even though all of the articles used in this thesis reported the same event, albeit some focused on different days of the riots, they painted, in some cases, widely different image of the rioters. Some of the differences are seen in the portrayed activity or passiveness of the crowd, whether the crowd was portrayed as heterogenous or homogenous, whether they were actions were justified or unjustified, and how violent and angry the crowd was described. The differences between major and underground newspapers were not always so clear as one could expect.

The differences between major and underground newspapers did exist. Out of all the articles, 92 % portrayed the crowd as active, 58 % as heterogenous, and 50 % depicted the police and rioters as violent. Out of those that implied justification clearly, 67 % wrote that the rioters' actions were justifiable. Therefore, the articles did divide into two groups most of the time unevenly, depending on the issue. Yet, differences between major and underground newspapers did exist, and most of the time only a few major and underground newspapers were the exceptions. Some of the differences are challenging to explain and would require more research into ownership and readership. Out of underground newspapers, most of the time at least one of *Village Voice* articles differed from the usual way of other underground press. This could be because *Village Voice* did not have the best reputation among LGBTQ+ people and that despite being an underground newspaper, its attitude towards LGBTQ+ issues was conservative. It is worth noticing that underground newspapers did not necessarily specialize in reporting news, unless they were local, like in this case, and that could have been a reason that affected the reporting. Most often *New York Daily News* was the exception of the major newspapers. This could be because their style is different than the *New York Times* since the *Daily News* can be considered a tabloid¹³⁵, and therefore it could have been less formal in its reporting. In addition, it did not have a good reputation among LGBTQ+ people either, and its readership could consist more of working-class people.

In conclusion, the differences between the major and underground newspapers do exist, but they are not as clear as one could have expected. It seems that the commonly used categorization of newspapers as *major-*, or mainstream and *underground* newspapers is

¹³⁵ Britannica academic 2017a.

not always useful as the differences are not huge. The findings that not all of the major newspapers were as conservative as one could have expected, could tell about a bigger cultural change in the society that was beginning or had begun in relation to the LGBTQ+ people. The significance of these findings could be that the attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people in society are not always straightforward and linear. In addition, the findings that some of the underground newspapers reported the events in more conservative resembling manner could indicate that the conservative-liberal axis exist within underground press, too.

There are various aspects that can still be further researched about the Stonewall riots. This thesis focused on printed primary sources, but primary sources in other types of media, for example TV and radio, could be researched, too because the rioters could have been represented differently in them. The participation of certain groups of LGBTQ+ people, for example, lesbians' participation could be researched through different primary sources because a lot of the research focuses on gay men. The presentation of the rioters in pro-LGBTQ+ newsletters could be worth researching because their agenda and bias are different than those of newspapers. In addition, newspaper articles about the pride marches, which started in 1970, and their development could be studied to discover more about the change of press' attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people. Political aspects of the Stonewall Riots could be researched, as many of the political histories do not discuss the riots at all.

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