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<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/2646>

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EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN PRESS FREEDOM AND POLITICS

By

Megan Wollerton  
B.A., Connecticut College, 2007  
M.A., University of Louisville, 2017

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
in Political Science

Department of Political Science  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2017

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A Thesis Approved on

May 5, 2017

by the following Thesis Committee:

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to  
Albert and Linda Wollerton,  
and Amelia Ollis  
for always supporting my academic goals.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jason Abbott, for providing guidance throughout the research and writing process. I would also like to thank my husband, Kevin, my parents, and my grandmother. Pursuing this degree would have been much more difficult without their patience and support.

## ABSTRACT

### EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN PRESS FREEDOM AND POLITICS

Megan Wollerton

April 28, 2017

Freedom of the press is a hallmark of liberal democracy. Denying this civil liberty emboldens a government to exert an undue degree of influence over its citizens. By comparing the media discourse in a democratic country to the media discourse in an authoritarian country, one could reasonably expect to identify unique language markers, which shed light on their divergent political climates. This study specifically sourced articles from the Venezuelan publication *El Universal* and the Costa Rican publication *The Tico Times*. The author then analyzed every article related to politics published by both newspapers in March 2014 and in March 2017 using the software program NVivo. The author noted a distinct shift from overt anti-government discourse in some of *El Universal's* 2014 articles to more uniformly measured, matter-of-fact reporting in its 2017 articles. *The Tico Times* maintained more consistency over time, but its political coverage decreased dramatically from 2014 to 2017.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### WHY DISCOURSE MATTERS

In an article titled, “Civil liberties, press freedom, and America’s global role,” author and Harvard University professor of international relations, Stephen M. Walt, wrote about the United States Justice Department’s 2013 decision to investigate reporters in an attempt to uncover the source of leaked information. Walt’s piece expressed concern over what this investigation would mean for press freedom in the U.S. (2013). At the same time, he added that:

Civil liberties and press freedoms in the United States are still far greater than in many other countries, and the outcry over the Department of Justice’s recent behavior reveals that politicians in both parties are aware that these principles are critical to sustaining a healthy democracy. (Walt, 2013, para. 9)

If we agree that civil liberties and press freedom “are critical to sustaining a healthy democracy,” how important is press freedom specifically? President Barack Obama echoed Walt’s sentiments in a 2015 World Press Freedom Day speech, stating that freedom of speech plays a “vital role” for democracy (2015, para. 1).

However, how does one approach this question from an academic perspective? For the purposes of this paper, media in Latin America will be the subject of analysis, with a comparative analysis of press freedom in Venezuela and Costa Rica. Furthermore, the author will tackle this study from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective.

CDA's main goal, according to scholar Teun A. van Dijk, is to "[...] get more insight into the crucial role of discourse in the reproduction of dominance and inequality" (1993, p. 253). van Dijk continues, saying, "[Critical Discourse Analysis] requires [...] an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" and that "[...] ultimately, its success is measured by its effectiveness and relevance, that is, by its contribution to change" (1993, p. 253). That is, CDA has a larger goal: to confront the elite paradigms, which contribute to inequality and other related concerns facing society. van Dijk adds:

Control of knowledge crucially shapes our interpretation of the world, as well as our discourse and other actions. Hence the relevance of a critical analysis of those forms of text and talk e.g. in the media and education, that essentially aim to construct such knowledge. (1993, p. 258)

## DEFINING FREEDOM

Before delving further into CDA, this study seeks to understand how press freedom and broader civil liberties relate to democracy. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers" ("Freedom," 2016, para. 3). As a basic human right, all countries are held to this principle through the United Nations. As Freedom House puts it, "[...] to deny it is to deny the universality of basic human rights" ("Freedom," 2016, para. 4).

World Press Freedom Day is held in on May 3 every year. In 2015, President Obama gave the following excerpted statement:

Well, as many of you know, Sunday is World Press Freedom Day, a day in which we reaffirm the vital role that a free press plays in democracy and shining a light on the many challenges, cruelties and also hopeful stories that exist in countries all around the world.

Journalists give all of us, as citizens, the chance to know the truth about our countries, ourselves, our governments. That makes us better. It makes us stronger. It gives voice to the voiceless, exposes injustice, and holds leaders like me accountable.

Unfortunately, in too many places around the world, a free press is under attack by governments that want to avoid the truth or mistrust the ability of citizens to make their own decisions. Journalists are harassed, sometimes even killed. Independent outlets are shut down. Dissent is silenced. And freedom of expression is stifled. (para. 1-3)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a similar statement in 2016 related to World Press Freedom Day:

On this World Press Freedom Day, I urge all Governments, politicians, businesses and citizens to commit to nurturing and protecting an independent, free media. Without this fundamental right, people are less free and less empowered. With it, we can work together for a world of dignity and opportunity for all. (para. 6)

While significant political and humanitarian figures have spoken out about the importance of press freedom, civil liberties and democracy, there are significant challenges associated with defining and measuring democracy and its related concepts.

One main reason relates to disparate definitions of the term in the field of political science. If scholars, politicians, and other thought leaders do not agree on the definition of democracy, they likely will not agree on how to measure it.

In *On Democracy*, Robert A Dahl wrote the following:

Democracy has been discussed off and on for about twenty-five hundred years, enough time to provide a tidy set of ideas about democracy on which everyone, or nearly everyone, could agree. For better or worse, that is not the case.

The twenty-five centuries during which democracy has been discussed, debated, supported, attacked, ignored, established, practiced, destroyed, and then sometimes reestablished have not, it seems, produced agreement on some of the most fundamental questions about democracy.

Ironically, the very fact that democracy has such a lengthy history has actually contributed to confusion and disagreement, for “democracy” has meant different things to different people at different times and places. (2015, pp. 2&3)

Despite this, Dahl wrote extensively on democracy and offered the following definition in his 1956 text, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, “[...] At a minimum, it seems to me, democratic theory is concerned with processes by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders [...]” (p. 3).

## MEASURING FREEDOM

While several indices of democracy exist, nonpartisan non-governmental organization Freedom House is one of the most commonly cited. Freedom House works to promote freedom and democracy worldwide. Part of its efforts include publishing annual reports detailing the current state of affairs, including a Freedom in the World

report and a Freedom of the Press report. The Freedom in the World report provides an overview of recent global trends in freedom, as well as a data-driven assessment of a particular country or territory's "freedom status" compared to others.

The team of researchers who work on this report measure freedom status using two key metrics: political rights and civil liberties ("Methodology," 2016). The political rights indicators include Electoral Process, Political Pluralism and Participation, and Functioning of Government ("Methodology," 2016). The civil liberties indicators include Freedom of Expression and Belief, Association and Organizational Rights, Rule of Law, and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights ("Methodology," 2016).

Based on the overall score given using these metrics, a country or territory is deemed "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free" ("Methodology," 2016). When a "Free" or "Partly Free" country is labeled both a liberal and an electoral democracy, it suggests that both political rights and civil liberties were present during the time period examined ("Methodology," 2016). Some "Partly Free" countries, on the other hand, receive only the electoral democracy designation because they were somehow deficient in terms of civil liberties and therefore cannot be considered liberal democracies ("Methodology," 2016). While Freedom House does not directly offer a definition of democracy, one could argue that its definition is contained in the paradigm it sets forth for measurement, including what constitutes an "electoral" versus a "liberal" democracy.

The 2015 Freedom in the World report, published on January 27, 2016 by Arch Puddington and Tyler Roylance, was titled "Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies: Global Freedom under Pressure." Beyond the title's not-so-subtle indication that there was a general downward trend in political rights and civil liberties among the 195

countries and 15 territories this report investigated from January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015, it also highlighted another important trend. This report marked the 10th year in a row where Freedom House saw an overall decline in global freedom (Puddington & Roylance, 2016).

Freedom House's Freedom of the Press report relies on Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its "mission statement" ("Freedom," 2016). As with the Freedom in the World report, the Freedom of the Press report ranks global freedom, but focuses instead on civil liberties with an emphasis on the media. Here Freedom House examines three main categories: the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment ("Freedom," 2016).

Jennifer Dunham's April 26, 2016 Freedom of the Press report for Freedom House paralleled the findings in the Freedom in the World report in many ways. In particular, the Freedom of the Press report noted an overall decline in press freedom during the 2015 calendar year (Dunham, 2016). In fact, the report stated that 2015 saw the worst global press freedom in the last 12 years (Dunham, 2016). As with the Freedom in the World report, this report pointed to a variety of reasons for this decline, which estimates that just 13 percent of the world's population lives in a place with a free press (Dunham, 2016).

Along the same lines as Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders is an international non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting media freedom worldwide. As such, Reporters Without Borders produces its own World Press Freedom Index, similar to Freedom House's Freedom of the Press report. Published on April 20, 2016, the index ranked 180 countries individually, as well as by region. The Reporters



Without Borders report notes similar declines overall, which closely resemble Freedom House's Freedom of the Press report ("World," 2016).

### WHY LATIN AMERICA

However, Reporters Without Borders' regional ranking went a step further to note that Latin America has less press freedom than Africa for the first time ever ("World," 2016). On a related note, a Freedom House article by Karin Deutsch Karlekar published on June 4, 2012 and titled "The Fragile State of Media Freedom in Latin America," all but predicted this trend in Latin America:

Press freedom blossomed in the Americas in the 1990s, as military governments gave way to civilian regimes, but the region has seen considerable backsliding during the past decade. Violence against journalists has increased, legal cases have been used to intimidate critical voices, and state funding and advertising have been directed toward progovernment media outlets while oppositionist outlets have been shuttered by regulatory controls and other forms of harassment. In each of the past five years, the regional average score for the Americas has declined. It is the only region globally to have exhibited such a pattern. (para. 4)

For Latin America, then, abuses to press freedom have been a long-term struggle. Furthermore, they closely mirror the many challenges to democracy the region has faced over time. This study strives to shed more light on that relationship.

In order to examine that relationship, one must first establish a research method. The authors of the text *Research Methods in Politics* identify and explain various methods of comparative research. One of the available options looks at two or more cases that might share select traits, but are otherwise quite different from one another

(Burnham, 2004, p. 78). Venezuela and Costa Rica were a clear fit for this type of analysis, which will be explained further in subsequent chapters. For the purposes of this study, press freedom is the dependent variable and governance is the key independent variable expected to exert the strongest influence on media discourse.

### CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Dr. Teun A. van Dijk, a former professor in the field of Discourse Studies at the University of Amsterdam and current visiting professor at the Univeritat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, is a preeminent Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) scholar. According to van Dijk, CDA deals with “[...] the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). He places particular emphasis on dominance, specifically the interplay between written or spoken communication and dominance. van Dijk defines dominance as, “[...] the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality” (1993, pp. 249-250).

CDA also deals closely with power. Power, for van Dijk, requires the exertion of control by one group over another (1993). Importantly, control can manifest in one of two ways: action and cognition (van Dijk, 1993). To clarify, not only can one group limit another group’s actions, it can also influence how the other group thinks (van Dijk, 1993). From here, van Dijk asserts that CDA is chiefly concerned with abuses of power. These include: “[...] breaches of laws, rules and principles of democracy, equality and justice by those who wield power” -- in other words, it returns to the concept of *dominance* (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255).

van Dijk has also written about applying discourse analysis to the field of political science, as well as the role of media in CDA. In his piece, “Power and the news media,” van Dijk highlights scenarios in which the media can be coerced to adapt political coverage to suit, rather than question, those in power. Specifically, he says, “There is evidence that in many situations the news media have been persuaded, manipulated, or even coerced to follow political (or military) views on international affairs” (van Dijk, 1992, p. 28).

In “Power and the news media,” van Dijk adds that many have written about the manner in which the media can influence the public (1992). A 1987 book titled *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* by Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, looks closely at television news and American politics, ultimately concluding that, “[...] television news conveys unusual and distinctive views of American politics, under the assumption, handsomely supported by our research, that such views eventually become our own” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 112). If the media can be coerced by elites and citizens can be coerced by the media – even in democracies like the United States, as Iyengar and Kinder outline – then what does this look like for populist Latin American countries like Venezuela compared to democratic Latin American countries like Costa Rica?

## THESIS OUTLINE

Press freedom is hardly the only prerequisite for democracy. At the same time, discourse plays a part in influencing how a society feels about the politics of its country. Since language has inherent subjective biases, it is impossible for a journalist or a larger publication to publish work without some sort of implied preferences. However, how

does this manifest in places like Venezuela where press freedom and broader democratic practices are less pervasive? In those areas, one might observe the more overt *dominance* described by van Dijk and the resulting control exerted over the media to maintain a message in support of the leadership. In contrast, how does it manifest in a comparatively “free” country like Costa Rica?

This paper will apply Critical Discourse Analysis to the field of political science to compare qualitatively the correlation, if any, between the Venezuelan government and its media and the Costa Rica government and its media. It expects to demonstrate that the media is a significant instrument used by the government of Venezuela to manipulate and control the public message and its citizens’ broader understanding of the current political landscape. Furthermore, it expects to show a positive correlation between control over media and a regime type that is growing increasingly less democratic. In contrast, this study also expects to demonstrate that the media is comparatively free in Costa Rica and that the government is less involved in shaping its political message through the media.

In particular, this paper plans to examine the political rhetoric used by the newspaper *El Universal* both before and after its sale to Spanish firm, Epalisticia S.L., in July 2014. This will involve a search for and analysis of keywords from newspaper articles related to politics from March 1, 2014 through March 31, 2014 and from March 1, 2017 through March 31, 2017 using the qualitative research tool NVivo. It will then be compared to the discourse used in Costa Rican newspaper *The Tico Times* owned by Producciones Magnolia during the same March 2014 and 2017 time periods to identify patterns and trends.

It is hypothesized that the Venezuelan newspaper will display an increasingly strong pro-government/strong anti-opposition bias and that the Costa Rican newspaper will display consistently weaker pro-regime/anti-opposition bias or that it will simply contain fewer context clues that suggest a strong pro-regime bias. Chapter 2 will provide a brief overview of Venezuelan and Costa Rican political history; Chapter 3 will introduce the CDA method and procedures; Chapter 4 will detail the data collection and findings, and an overall conclusion of the findings will follow at the end in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER TWO

### VENEZUELA TODAY

Freedom House called attention to corruption and populism in Latin America in its Freedom in the World report and placed particular emphasis on Venezuela. Despite Venezuela's Democratic Unity coalition winning a two-thirds majority in a congressional election in December 2015, it was still listed as a "country to watch" in 2016 due to economic decline and reports of corruption under President Nicolás Maduro (Puddington & Roylance, 2016). The Democratic Unity coalition's win in 2015 halted the Socialist party's 16-year Congressional stronghold. It did not last very long, though. In January 2016, three members of the Democratic Unity coalition left after being pressured by the Supreme Court (Puddington & Roylance, 2016).

The report also mentioned Venezuela's sluggish oil revenues, blaming corruption and mismanagement. It noted food shortages, increased crime rates, and the highest inflation rate in the world leading up to the Congressional elections in December 2015 (Puddington & Roylance, 2016). From there, it highlighted President Nicolás Maduro's government and its response to these problems with increased repression, including prosecuting major opposition to his rule, and becoming more involved with the media (Puddington & Roylance, 2016).

These are not new trends for Venezuela. Freedom House identified eight key factors in its report, which have contributed to the continued decline in freedom in Latin America over the last decade. They identify President Hugo Chávez's rise to

authoritarian rule in Venezuela and the resulting rise of other populist, antidemocratic Latin American leaders as one of the main contributing factors (Puddington & Roylance, 2016).

Nicolás Maduro has been the president of Venezuela since April 19, 2013, after receiving 50.6 percent of the vote (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). His Executive Vice President, Aristobulo Isturiz, has been Maduro's second in command since January 6, 2016. A simple majority elects the president to a 6-year term; the last election was held on April 14, 2013 following the death of President Hugo Chávez. The next election is expected to take place in late 2018 or early 2019 and there are no term limits (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017).

Nearly half of Venezuela's income comes from oil exports (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). 2015 ended with a 10 percent decrease in Venezuela's GDP, 275 percent inflation and mass shortages of consumer products (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Projections suggest that the GDP will continue to decrease and inflation will continue to rise. Dropping oil prices have contributed significantly to these economic problems (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017).

The reaction has been felt outside of Venezuela as well. Worries regarding currency devaluation have caused some US and multinational companies to slow or stop their Venezuelan businesses (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). Investments in the oil market have slowed as well, resulting from uncertainty in the market and concerns over the cash flow of Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017). President Maduro has responded by tightening state control over economic matters and pointing the finger at private businesses (Central Intelligence

Agency, 2017). The Venezuelan government has had control over the country's currency since 2003.

## VENEZUELAN POLITICAL HISTORY

According to Larry Diamond, Jonathan Hartlyn and Juan J. Linz in the edited second edition of the text *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, democratization was making a profound impact on Latin America, including Venezuela in the 1990s (1999). At this time, the authors had a great deal of hope about the trajectory of Venezuela. As the authors explain, though, the region had still experienced significant ebbs and flows in governance -- even with the trend toward democratization in Latin America in the 1990s (Diamond, 1999).

The authors outline the challenges Latin America has faced, beginning with colonization (Diamond, 1999). They explain that, "[...] with the exception of the United States, the countries of Latin America are by far the oldest of the "new nations" that have broken free of European colonial rule in the past two centuries" and that "[...] neither the colonial experience nor the colonial legacies were uniform" (Diamond, 1999, pp. 1&7). As a result, it is particularly important to examine the history of each country to understand the "causal explanations" and "path dependence," which has led Venezuela to its current state (Diamond, 1999, p. 1).

According to Diamond, Hartlyn, and Linz, "Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela were all relatively unimportant colonial backwaters" (1999, p. 7). Partly because of this, Venezuela did not develop early political institutions as quickly as some of its counterparts (Diamond, 1999). The authors explain:



The early development of a partial, elite democracy, however tentative and flawed, contributed to the ultimate development of full democracy. Of those countries in Latin America that have had the most overall success with democracy historically, or that now have liberal democracy, only Venezuela failed to develop and early elite democracy. (Diamond, 1999, p. 13)

Even so, Venezuela made progress toward democracy, beginning in 1958 (Diamond, 1999). The income the government earned from the oil industry allowed the most powerful, elite-dominated political parties to create a strong central state. The government then relied on the revenue from petroleum to build Venezuela's infrastructure. The creation of roads, towns, hospitals, schools and more helped transition the country from a largely agrarian society into a country with higher literacy rates and urbanization (Diamond, 1999).

Challenges to Venezuela's growth soon became apparent, though. A currency devaluation in 1983 led to income inequality and quality of life decreased for many. The state was also unable to provide many of the services it had previously offered its citizens. From there, malnutrition increased, diseases that had been absent for a long time returned and corruption rose. Venezuela's citizens responded with protest movements for reform, lower voter turnouts, and support for "antiparty" candidates (Diamond, 1999, p. 368).

When the second edition of this text was published in 1999, Diamond, Hartlyn and Linz were fairly optimistic about Venezuela's democratization, despite its setbacks:

Although there can be no doubt about the severity of the crisis of democracy in Venezuela, obituaries are premature. The "system" has been considerably more

resilient than much early commentary or theorizing anticipated or allowed for. Despite sustained economic decline, civil violence and military conspiracy, institutional decay, and leadership betrayal, sufficient reserves remained in “the system” and in the population to defeat two attempted coups, to generate a host of new political movements (including one major new party), to remove and impeach one sitting president, to choose an interim successor, to hold two national elections, and to return a trusted elder statesman to the presidency—all in the space of a few years. (p. 368)

Appealing to the citizens’ desire for reform and promising to look after the poorest in Venezuela, Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez won 56 percent of the vote in the 1998 presidential election (Blake, 2005). Soon after, he renamed Venezuela to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and revised Venezuela’s constitution to “[...] reduce the power of political parties while providing new mechanisms for direct democracy and advisory roles for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)” (Blake, 2005, p. 382).

Another revision allowed for recall elections. At the same time Chávez was advocating for Venezuelan citizens, he was also making constitutional changes that gave him a great deal more power as president. Legislation gave Chávez the power to close down TV and radio stations, as well as remove a broadcast station’s license: “The most prominent ongoing debate over liberty under Chávez involved the freedom of the press” (Blake, 2005, p. 399).

Jonathan Tepperman, managing editor of the “Foreign Affairs” magazine, wrote the following in his *New York Times* review of Rory Carroll’s book *Comandante: Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela*:

Having won power in 1999 by promising to make Venezuela a more equitable society, Chávez initially impressed even conservative critics and nervous financial markets. But after a few years in office, he lost patience with the slow pace and frustrations of democratic governance [...] No sooner would Chávez announce a lavish new project than he'd lose interest and allow it to languish. Venezuela, long the envy of its neighbors, slowly rotted from neglect, sinking into "moneyed dysfunction" — the fate of a system "led by a masterful politician who happened to be a disastrous manager." (2013, para. 4&6)

When Chávez passed away from complications due to cancer in March of 2013, he left behind a volatile state economy dependent on and fueled by the petroleum market.

His former vice president, Nicolás Maduro, won the special election in April 2013 with plans to continue Chávez's political aspirations for Venezuela (Wallenfeldt, 2016). However, some claim Chávez's supporters weren't quite as thrilled with Maduro. Javier Corrales, a professor of political science at Amherst College said, "In regimes that are so person-based, the moment that the person on which everything hangs is removed, the entire foundation becomes very weak because there was nothing else supporting this other than this figure" (Neuman, 2013, para. 28). Middle-class citizens have protested Maduro's government, while poorer citizens continue to believe in Chávez's legacy despite Maduro imprisoning its strongest critics, including individual journalists and entire media outlets (Wallenfeldt, 2016). Low oil prices and high inflation continue to contribute to unrest and Maduro (and Chávez's) socialist party, the PSUV, lost control of Venezuela's National Assembly (Wallenfeldt, 2016).

Since then, the “centrist-conservative opposition” controlling the Assembly have attempted to remove Maduro as president by reducing the president’s six-year term to four years and also by a recall (Wallenfeldt, 2016). Maduro then circumvented these attempts by declaring a state of emergency that enabled him to “work around the legislature,” although opinion polls suggested that most Venezuelans wanted Maduro to leave office (Wallenfeldt, 2016). At this time, some among Maduro’s opposition believe his governance has shifted from authoritarian to dictatorial rule (Wallenfeldt, 2016).

### COSTA RICA TODAY

While Latin America has endured decades of volatile shifts between democratization and subsequent rises in populism, Costa Rica has maintained a relatively stable government (“Costa,” 2016). Not only does that put it in sharp contrast to Venezuela, Costa Rica is something of an anomaly for the region as a whole. Freedom House’s Freedom in the World report for Costa Rica designated it a “Free” country, a status it has maintained since 1998 when the organization began publishing reports (“Costa,” 2016).

Luis Guillermo Solís has been Costa Rica’s president since May 8, 2014. His First Vice President is Helio Fallas. Costa Rican presidents and vice presidents are elected on the same ballot for a term of four years with the possibility of non-consecutive terms. President Solís received 77.8 percent of the vote against Johnny Araya, who received 22.2 percent of the vote. Costa Rica’s Supreme Court includes 22 judges, who are elected for 8-year terms (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017).

Investors from abroad consider Costa Rica a relatively attractive place due to its political stability and comparatively high levels of education (Central Intelligence

Agency, 2017). The country also has free-trade zone incentives. Combined, these factors make Costa Rica among the highest recipients of foreign direct investment per person in Latin America. Investors in Costa Rica still face challenges related to the high price of energy, poor infrastructure, and more, however (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017).

### COSTA RICAN POLITICAL HISTORY

In the beginning sentences of Chapter 8 in the text *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, the authors explain a key difference between Costa Rica and Venezuela:

Since 1949, Costa Rica has had a constitutional, representative, republican (liberal) government with a high correspondence between the actual governance of the system and the formal political arrangements described in its constitution. Electoral probity has remained a hallmark of the system, and all changes of administration have occurred in accord with the law. Citizens enjoy a degree of participation in public decisions equal to or greater than that in most other Western, liberal constitutional regimes. One may, therefore, justly characterize Costa Rica as a liberal, representative, constitutional democracy. (Diamond, 1999, p. 429)

Where “[...] Venezuela failed to develop an early elite democracy [...],” “Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Costa Rica all began evolving by the mid-nineteenth century some form of competitive oligarchy or “aristocratic democracy” (Diamond, 1999, p. 13). Costa Rica was a relatively unappealing place to develop a strong colonial infrastructure. It had few natural resources compared to other territories in the Spanish empire. Even so,

the authors believe Costa Rica actually benefitted from “the leveling effect of poverty and isolation” (Diamond, 1999, p. 9).

In 1561, the Spanish began their conquest of Costa Rica and the colony was initiated after 1575. Since “Spain’s Costa Rican colony never developed significant exportable agricultural or mineral wealth,” it was not considered a particularly important colony (Diamond, 1999, p. 431). As a result, owning land did not equate to wealth in colonial Costa Rica. According to the authors, “This limited wealth differentiation contributed a certain egalitarianism among lower-status Costa Ricans, but the colony was far from democratic” (Diamond, 1999, p. 431). Only elites were allowed to participate in the government (Diamond, 1999).

The authors explain two key reasons why Costa Rica was able to democratize more successfully than other countries in Latin America. First, Costa Rica did not evolve a “quasi-feudalistic hacienda system” (Diamond, 1999, p. 431). Without the quasi-feudalistic hacienda system, the Creole aristocracy did not have control over the land and they did not take advantage of Indians and black slaves to produce for the local economy. Without this social hierarchy, military forces did not develop and the indigenous populations were not wiped out by exploitative working conditions or disease (Diamond, 1999).

Second, Costa Rica’s colonial period came to a close without wars (Diamond, 1999). Costa Rica was a remote province of Guatemala during colonial rule, which itself was part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) (Diamond, 1999). Mexico gained its independence in 1821 and its Central American colonies were included. However, instead of becoming part of Mexico, they established the Central American Republic.

While liberals and conservatives fought for dominance in the four northern territories, conservatives won control of Costa Rica early. Because of this, it stayed away from the civil conflict (Diamond, 1999).

In 1845, Costa Rican coffee became an important commodity for trade on the European market. This established a dominant class of Costa Ricans who participated in the coffee industry and eventually became aristocrats and political leaders. Between 1844 and 1847, trends toward direct elections and suffrage developed and in 1848 and 1861, Costa Ricans passed laws building electoral rolls, or logs, of those registered to vote (Diamond, 1999).

According to the text, this “[...] revealed an early ‘preoccupation for organizing the electoral process with great care’” (Diamond, 1999, p. 432). At the same time, only about 10 percent of citizens were eligible to vote. Women, the illiterate and individuals without property were excluded from the voting process (Diamond, 1999).

Costa Rica’s military force grew considerably after 1870 and from 1824 to 1899 Costa Rican presidencies lasted for only 2.4 years. 37 percent of Costa Rica’s presidents during this period quit before finishing their terms and another 20 percent of them were overthrown by coups. The majority of the generals from 1835 to 1899 were almost exclusively coffee aristocrats (Diamond, 1999, p. 432-433).

As organized laborers and interest groups established in the nineteenth century, Costa Rican society diversified further (Diamond, 1999). The presidential election of 1899 between the Liberal Progressives and the Catholic Union Party ended decades of dictatorial rule in Costa Rica (Diamond, 1999). In 1913 President Jimenez Oreamuno amended the constitution to allow direct popular elections (Diamond, 1999). Oreamuno’s

work helped increase voter participation and access to the government. Coffee aristocrats developed “[...] liberal democratic institutions and processes [...]” during this time with the goal of securing their own political dominance (Diamond, 1999, p. 435).

The text goes on to explain that:

Costa Rica differs notably from other Latin American nations in its distribution of authority among branches of government. There exist important checks on executive power, and both the Legislative Assembly and the judiciary enjoy unusual strength and independence relative to the executive. The absence of a standing army greatly strengthens the authority of civil government, and extensive and generally respected social, economic, and civil guarantees provide a framework that facilitates citizen political participation. (Diamond, 1999, p. 442)

Costa Rican presidents serve a four-year term without the opportunity for reelection (Diamond, 1999). While the country deals with challenges related to environmental concerns, the spread of infectious diseases, human trafficking and the drug trade, Costa Rica continues to be considered a liberal democracy under President Solís due to its civil liberties and free elections (Diamond, 1999).



## CHAPTER THREE

### CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS METHOD

The historical overview of Venezuela and Costa Rica in Chapter 2 showcased some extreme differences between the two Latin American countries. Chapter 3 will provide a parallel overview of the differences between the Venezuelan publication *El Universal* and the Costa Rican publication *The Tico Times*. In addition, this section will offer a look at the methodology being used to assess each outlet's comparative pro- or anti-government biases through Critical Discourse Analysis.

The poet Andrés Mata and his friend, Andrés Vigas, founded Venezuela's *El Universal* newspaper in 1909. Mata's family continued to run the daily newspaper for the next 105 years. *El Universal* was sold to a Spanish holding company called Epalisticia for under \$22 million in July of 2014, according to a *Bloomberg* article titled, "El Universal Buyer Betting on Political Change in Venezuela" (Munoz, 2014).

While *Bloomberg* reported that the new owners planned, "[...] to maintain the newspaper's criticism of the government [...]," little was known about Epalisticia at the time of purchase and many media outlets speculated that the acquisition likely did not bode well for press freedom in Venezuela (Munoz, 2014, para, 10). Specifically, the *Bloomberg* article went on to explain that, "El Universal is the third private media company to be sold since former President Hugo Chávez died from cancer last year and was succeeded by his hand-picked successor Nicolas Maduro" (Munoz, 2014, para. 3).

A related article published by *The Washington Post* spoke with Mariengracia Chirinos, a researcher with Caracas media watchdog group IPYS: “In both cases [the cases of the two other media companies which were sold after the death of Hugo Chávez], media companies that were critical of the government were sold to unknown investors, and that was followed by an editorial shift” (Miroff, 2014, para. 9).

Another related article by the *New York Times* stated:

Venezuela is a deeply divided country, where propaganda and the news media have long been part of the political battleground between a powerful leftist state and an opposition concentrated in the middle class and the elite. The government operates at least 10 television stations and more than 100 radio stations, and critics say that independent media outlets increasingly feel pressured into silence or self-censorship. (Neuman, 2014, para. 3)

For these reasons, one might expect the post-2014-sale *El Universal* to show stronger pro-government and anti-opposition biases. *El Universal* is a primarily Spanish-language outlet, but it has an English-language section for daily news.

Elisabeth Dyer founded *The Tico Times* in 1956 and Producciones Magnolia currently owns the publication. *The Tico Times* is based in San José, Costa Rica and it is a daily English-language newspaper, which transitioned to web-only content in recent years. The “About Us” section of the website states:

Our aim is to continue The Tico Times’ legacy of quality reporting, investigative journalism, environmental coverage and quality photography, while adding more multimedia content and technological tools. We believe in providing substance with style. (The Tico Times, para. 4)

*The Tico Times* has also won a variety of awards, including IAPA Grand Prize for Press Freedom in 1995.

In order to conduct this Critical Discourse Analysis, the author will rely heavily on the qualitative analysis tool, NVivo. Available for both Microsoft and Mac operating systems, the NVivo program allows one to add news stories, interview text, speeches and even images and audio files into a software database. Not only does this allow one to view all of the added media in one central location, it also makes it possible to organize the media into folders by type or category. From there, one can run queries to identify patterns in the language. By “patterns,” the author is referring to word frequencies, as well as where in the text a specific phrase, topic, or type of speech is used.

For the purposes of this analysis, the author focused exclusively on news articles from *El Universal* and *The Tico Times*. More specifically, the author added all of the English-language articles from these two publications related to politics published from March 1, 2014 through March 31, 2014 and from March 1, 2017 through March 31, 2017. These particular periods were selected in order to track any changes over time within the same publication, as well as to compare the discourse used in *El Universal* and in *The Tico Times*. *The Tico Times* published 78 news articles related to politics in March 2014, but just 9 news articles related to politics in March 2017, for a total of 87 articles. *El Universal* published 32 news articles related to politics in March 2014 and 25 news articles related to politics in March 2017, for a total of 57 articles.

There is also the question of how to qualitatively assess the words and topics NVivo identifies as objectively as possible. Of course, it is not possible to remove bias from a qualitative study entirely. However, this author’s method was influenced by

University Umm Kuraa, Mecca, KSA Assistant Professor Amira Massaabi's approach. Massaabi's qualitative study entitled "Freedom of Speech and Newspaper Excesses" similarly relies on Critical Discourse Analysis "[...] to study the rhetoric of excess in the construction of political identity and relations in 100 articles pertaining to two different ideologically-oriented Tunisian newspapers, namely "Le Maghreb" and "El Dhamir" (Massaabi, 2014, p. 83).

Massaabi's study is not identical to this one in terms of the subjects analyzed – hers focuses on two Tunisian newspapers, whereas this one strives to compare two newspapers from Venezuela and Costa Rica, respectively. Even so, the methodology she relied on to conduct her analysis will prove useful here. In addition to van Dijk's CDA approach, Massaabi also drew her methodology from Norman Fairclough's brand of Critical Discourse Analysis. Massaabi explains:

According to this approach, texts, language, communication should be considered in their social context. They do not merely passively report upon the world, but they imbue it with meaning, fabricate it, shape perspectives and call the world into being. Fairclough's analytic framework includes three levels of analysis: the text, the discursive practice, and the sociocultural practice. In other words, the text is an instance of discourse practice, which is part of social practice. (Massaabi, 2014, p. 84)

Massaabi goes on to explain that:

Fairclough's CDA approach is based on three elements: description, interpretation and explanation. Linguistic characteristics of texts are described, the relationship between the productive and interpretative processes of discursive practice and the

texts is interpreted, and the relationship between discursive practice and social practice is maintained. (Massaabi, 2014, p. 84; Fairclough, 1995)

In other words, in addition to understanding van Dijk's "Socio-Cognitive Approach," which pays attention to "the underlying message the writer might have when producing the text," it is also useful to understand the broader social context that could potentially be informing the writer's words (Massaabi, 2014, p. 84). In this way, considering van Dijk and Fairclough's approaches together add depth to a study, since they place differing emphasis on the individual author of an article and the larger social context that could be influencing an author's work.

Massaabi identifies her research questions as follows:

1. What rhetoric is used by 'Le Maghreb' and 'El Dhamir'?
2. What images of media did this rhetoric construct in the press in the aftermath of revolution?
3. What implications could these images have on the building of democracy in Tunisia? (Massaabi, 2014, p. 84).

This research study seeks to create a similar construct, with some slight variations:

1. What, discourse language is used by *El Universal* and *The Tico Times*?
2. What does this discourse say about the state of press freedom in Venezuela and Costa Rica comparatively?
3. How, if at all, does this discourse align with the current levels of democracy or non-democracy in Venezuela and Costa Rica?

Through NVivo software, the author will run text frequency and individual text queries of words such as "freedom," "democracy" and others related to a free and open press in

order to establish patterns and themes in the language. Drawing from Massaabi's method, the author will also attempt to identify discourse patterns in the following categories: insults, repetition, exaggeration, and metaphor (2014). From there, the author will examine the broader context clues in the text surrounding those key words. This will enable the author to assess qualitatively the relative pro- or anti-government bias present in the language. For the purposes of this study, the words "Venezuela," "Costa Rica," and related variations, such as "Venezuelan," have been excluded from the data collection process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

It is easy to identify immediate discrepancies between the words frequently used in Venezuela's *El Universal* articles and the words frequently used in Costa Rica's *The Tico Times* articles. One can also observe changes in the discourse used by time period within both publications. Of course, one must take a closer look at the context behind these words to determine how they might relate to press freedom in their respective countries.

In March 2014, *El Universal*'s use of the words "national," "human," "people," "opposition," and "guard" stand out [refer to Tables 1 and 4 in the Appendix]. Here, many of the references to "national" refer to Venezuela's National Guard and their interactions with protestors. "Human" refers to either human rights violations or human rights organizations concerned about the conditions in Venezuela. "People" mainly refers to incidences where citizens were arrested, "injured," or otherwise detained by the Venezuelan government for expressing opposing viewpoints. "Opposition" is the general term used in *El Universal* during this time period to define anyone who does not support the Maduro government. "Guard," as with "national," refers to the Venezuelan National Guard and its interactions with citizens.

In March 2017, the words "OAS," "democratic," and "foreign" stand out [see Tables 1 and 5 in the Appendix]. The Organization of American States (OAS) includes 35 member states, including Venezuela. OAS leader, Luis Almagro, has expressed

interest in suspending Venezuela from the OAS and encouraging them to have elections. “Democratic” refers to Venezuelan opposition group, the Democratic Unified Panel (MUD). It references the importance of democracy and upholding those principles. “Foreign” mainly refers to the Foreign Affairs minister and concerns over the current state of Venezuela.

On a broader scale, the most frequently used words in the *El Universal* articles are inwardly focused on the state. The only language with an external focus among the *El Universal*'s top ten most commonly used words -- “opposition” and “foreign” – are extremely vague. *El Universal*'s use of “opposition” and “foreign” contributes to an “us” versus “them”-style ethnocentrism (Sumner, 1940).

William Graham Sumner is commonly cited as the first person to use the term ethnocentrism. According to Sumner's text, *Folkways: A study of the sociological importance of usages, manners, customs, mores, and morals*, ethnocentrism refers to:

[...] the view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything and all others are scaled and rated, in reference to one's group. Each group thinks that its own folkways are the only right ones. And if it observes that other people have other folkways, these excite its scorn. (1940, p. 13)

Sumner further explains that, “[...] ethnocentrism leads a people to exaggerate and intensify everything in their own folkways which is peculiar and which differentiates them from others” (1940, p. 13). Here are the top 100 words used in the 2014 and 2017 *El Universal* articles gathered for this analysis in a “word cloud:”

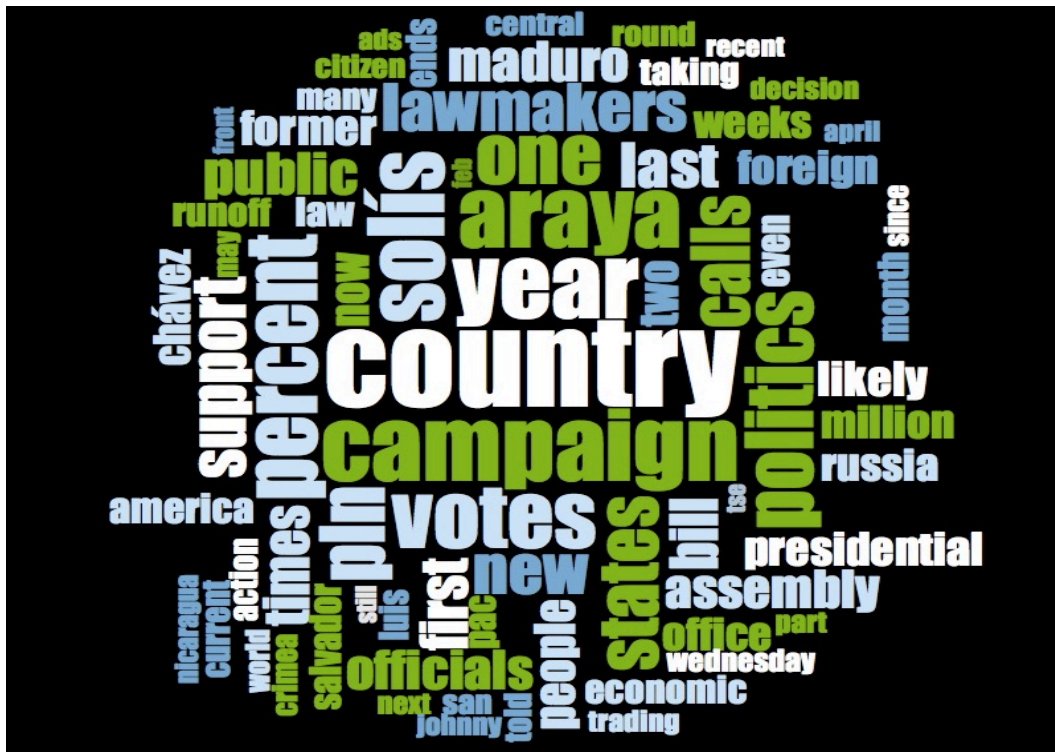




efforts toward a common goal, it instead relates to the “United States” in every case except one. The use of “authorities,” too, doesn’t offer much interest in terms of analysis. *The Tico Times* used this word often during this time period when referencing the police and other official government employees who were involved in detaining suspected terrorists, arresting individuals suspected of fraud, and so on. *The Tico Times*’ language is more difficult to analyze for bias at-a-glance, but one theme became clear after this preliminary analysis. *The Tico Times* articles don’t appear to project the same ethnocentrism as *El Universal*’s. For instance, *The Tico Times* clearly identified the external subjects under discussion, such as “Mexico” or “America,” rather than simply using words like “opposition” or “foreign.” Here are the top 100 words used in *The Tico Times*’ 2014 and 2017 articles:

FIGURE 2

THE TICO TIMES’ TOP 100 WORDS IN 2014 AND 2017



After running word frequency queries for *El Universal* and *The Tico Times*, the author conducted more targeted word searches related to the concept of freedom – or lack of freedom – in the press [see Table 3 in the Appendix]. The author expected the tally to demonstrate that *El Universal* articles used language like “dissent,” “opposition,” “anti,” and “closed” more often than *The Tico Times*. Clearly, this was not the case. In fact, *The Tico Times* used the words listed in Table 3 more often than *El Universal* in all but two instances. Specifically, *El Universal* used “dissent” and “dialogue” more often than *The Tico Times*. This result could be due in part to the fact that *The Tico Times* published 87 politics articles during the same time period *El Universal* published 57. In other words, while *The Tico Times* used the word “opposition” more often than *El Universal*, it was still not one of *The Tico Times*’ top ten most commonly used words.

From here, the author examined the articles more closely to identify broader discourse themes. Interestingly, the majority of the *El Universal* articles were fairly measured. Most of them were very short and contained a high frequency of quotations citing other sources. In this way, the publication largely managed to avoid editorializing. While *El Universal* did publish pieces about protests and other unrest in Venezuela, the authors stayed away from putting a value on the information. Instead, information was reported in a very matter-of-fact way. The Maduro government might not have liked the articles, but the authors wrote them largely without offering any opinions, perspective, or broader context.

While that is an important takeaway for this study, there were still some notable differences between the 2014 and the 2017 *El Universal* articles. Occasionally in March 2014, *El Universal* published editorial pieces. One piece, titled “Death in the Streets,”

refers to student-led street protests and how citizens died at the hands of the Venezuelan government (Olivares, 2014). An excerpt of the piece by author Francisco Olivares states:

On February 12, Youth Day, when the massive rally that had gathered in Parque Carabobo in Caracas began to disperse itself, a rain of teargas and shotgun bullets mixed with pistol shots fell over the crowd. Stones clashed against bullets and a barrier of armed officers forced the youngsters to run to and fro without finding an exit. Videos, photographs and testimonies recorded security men of the Minister of Interior and Justice, officers from the GNB and armed motorcyclists shooting against dissenters. (2014, para. 6)

Another piece published by *El Universal* in March 2014 shows clear anti-Maduro sentiments. The article, titled, “The soldiers attacked ‘like a pack of hunting hounds,’” explains that, “Excessive use of force by the security forces against demonstrators was denounced by Venezuelan human rights organizations [...]” (De la Rosa, 2014, para. 2).

The author, Alicia De la Rosa, also included narratives from individual protesters:

On seeing Ottaviani's mangled face, the guards stopped beating him and tied him up with plastic handcuffs. They loaded him onto a motorcycle and drove him off to a GNB bus parked on the Altamira highway interchange, where they held him for hours with other detained protesters. (2014, para. 4)

An *El Universal* article titled “NGO: Truth Commission likely to legitimate violation against Human Rights” doesn’t editorialize, but it uses strong language to summarize how someone else feels rather than relying on a direct quote. Here the author says, “He added that the commission is not oriented to do justice but to mask torture, cruel,

inhuman, and degrading treatment; arbitrary detentions, and systematic aggression against protesters” (“NGO,” 2014, para. 3).

Another 2014 *El Universal* article titled “Against political parties,” expressed clear fear of the Maduro government. Author Oscar Media states: “On February 18, Leopoldo López gave himself to authorities and on February 20, a bench warrant against Carlos Vecchio was confirmed. Meanwhile Antonio Rivera had already concealed. Who will be next? Everyone is a target” (2014, para. 17).

Another piece, “Mission Silence,” shows that *El Universal* was closely tracking the number of “victims of attacks of freedom of expression” in 2014:

Sánchez is part of the 147 social communicators quantified by newspaper *El Universal* as victims of attacks of freedom of expression from February 12 to March 20 of the current year, during mobilization of people in the streets occurred in Venezuela to protest against insecurity, scarcity and the high cost of living. (Hernández, para. 3)

Finally, Joseph Poliszuk wrote the following in a 2014 *El Universal* article:

On the streets of San Cristóbal, the capital city of the Venezuelan western border state of Táchira, residents drove pieces of rebar into the pavement, leaving them partly exposed to puncture tires. In case the national guard seeks a means of breaking through protesters trench lines by using tanks, a barricade network has been engineered using not only ordinary barbed wire, but also chain-link fences, sewer grates and protruding rebar spikes to block traffic along Ferrero Tamayo avenue. (para. 1).

*El Universal* largely excludes bylines from its published articles, but five of the six pieces above used author bylines. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, no such articles appeared in March 2017. This clearly demonstrates a shift away from editorial and opinion pieces, particularly those with an anti-Maduro bias. One explanation could relate to the sale of *El Universal* in July 2014 to Spanish company Epalisticia S.L. Perhaps the new owners were interested in shifting the publication's editorial stance. However, some of *El Universal's* pre-sale editorial staff still work at the publication today. Others, like English-language translator Adrián Valera, stopped working there the same month *El Universal* sold to Epalisticia, according to his LinkedIn profile. Either editorials are simply not being translated into English due to a lack of resources, or these stories are no longer being written at *El Universal*. Generally, though, the author expected to find more overt instances of pro-Maduro bias.

*The Tico Times'* coverage is quite different than *El Universal's*. It consistently reported on problems of governance in Costa Rica and throughout Latin American. However, it also published an opinion piece in March 2014 titled "Why I support Nicolás Maduro," the sort of article the author expected to find on *El Universal's* pages rather than *The Tico Times'*.

In it, author Niklas Jespersen writes:

Under Chávez and Maduro, Venezuela has been gripped by a revolution that gives power to ordinary people. Local democratic councils now exist all over Venezuela, as well as experiments with workers' democracy in factories. Unlike what is often claimed, all major television channels – with the exception of two state-owned channels – are part of the opposition, as are hundreds of radio

stations and newspapers. No Venezuelan TV station has been closed or censored, despite the fact that all major private TV channels boasted about their role in the 2002 coup. If The Tico Times organized a bloody coup against Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla, would they be allowed to continue? In Venezuela, that's what happened. (2014, para. 11)

At the same time, *The Tico Times* commenters made sure to express their own opinions on Jespersen's piece. One commenter named "Ben" wrote, "Right wing people suck they steal from the poor and don't pay fair wages. This is well written thank you" (Jespersen, 2014). Other commenters then responded to him. One, named "Patiko," said:

Ben, if you really think this article (without sources, without facts, with logical inconsistencies, and to top it off, written by someone who is an open shill for Chavismo) is well written, you would make the perfect stooge for a Maduro, a Castro, a Chavez, or an Ortega. Maybe you should move to one of these places. You could be an editor for the dictator's propaganda de jour, making sure it is, "well-written". (Jespersen, 2014).

The same day Jespersen published his piece, *The Tico Times* writer Gary Lehring published an article called "The real communist threat in Costa Rica." In the article he wrote:

In Costa Rica, many applaud Venezuela's use of petroleum wealth to greatly expand education, increase access to health services, reduce poverty and promote economic equality, while many others condemn what they see as simply another Latin American military dictatorship impoverishing the populace and generating

the very real problems of inflation, state corruption, censorship of the media, rampant crime and frequent food shortages. (Lehring, 2014, para. 3)

This clearly shows an attempt at balanced reporting, as well as the freedom for commenters to respond to articles however they choose. At the same time, there was a significant decrease in the number of articles related to politics *The Tico Times* published in March 2014 and in March 2017. In March 2014, *The Tico Times* published 78 articles about politics. In March 2017, it published just 9, although some of the same journalists, such as L. Arias, still work there today.

In an article titled, “At 60, The Tico Times celebrates tradition — and reinvention,” author Katherine Stanley explained that *The Tico Times*’ last print edition was circulated on September 28, 2012. From there, she explained that some journalists working for *The Tico Times* agreed to write as volunteers or to take pay decreases to ensure the now-online paper would continue (Stanley, 2016). Unfortunately, that does not fully explain why there is such a difference in the number of political articles published in 2014 (two years after the paper’s last print edition) and the number of political articles published in 2017. In 2014, *The Tico Times* did re-publish pieces from other news sources, such as *The Washington Post*, on a fairly regular basis. That was much less common in its March 2017 coverage, although the reason behind it is not entirely clear.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Overall, the word choices in *The Tico Times* support the idea that it is a more fair and balanced publication than *El Universal*. At the same time, the results of the Critical Discourse Analysis were not quite what author expected. Considering the current state of politics in Venezuela, the author expected to find many more instances of language biased toward the Maduro government.

Even with a strong anti-Maduro sentiment among many in Venezuela, it is widely believed that his administration still has a strong influence over media (Wyss, 2017). As recently as February 15, 2017, the Venezuelan government reportedly shut down CNN's Spanish-language network from broadcasting in the country (Wyss, 2017). As journalist Jim Wyss wrote in the Miami Herald:

Venezuela on Wednesday pulled the plug on CNN en Español — shutting down the cable news network just days after President Nicolás Maduro had accused the station of meddling in Venezuelan affairs. In a statement, the National Telecommunications Commission, Conatel, said the channel's coverage represented "direct aggressions against the peace and democratic stability" of the country and "generated an environment of intolerance." Conatel said it was opening an investigation into CNN en Español and had ordered all cable operators to suspend broadcasts. The decision, if it sticks, represents a further chokehold on independent media in the socialist country. (2017, para. 1-3)

Because of the current climate, the author expected to find more instances of insults, repetition, exaggeration, metaphor and other “extreme” language choices directed toward other political parties. Relatedly, the author expected to provide a conclusive tally grouping by count the different types of discourse bias used in *El Universal* compared to *The Tico Times*. However, *El Universal*’s English-language articles related to politics published in March 2014 and in March 2017 were unexpectedly measured, for the most part.

The publication did not express strong pro- or anti-Maduro viewpoints, with the exception of the few articles published in 2014. Instead, the authors limited themselves to extremely short news articles that often relied on quotes without offering any sort of further analysis or qualification to establish context for the readers. This is also an interesting editorial choice, though. By avoiding editorializing and leaning heavily on quotes, *El Universal* managed to share opposing viewpoints without appearing to support them. The fact that the publication shares opposing viewpoints at all is perhaps even more interesting.

If the author were to conduct this study again, it might be useful to examine and search for patterns in even more news articles over a longer time period. Broadening the scope of the project might make it easier to understand how a publication manages the content it publishes. In addition, opening up the analysis to interviews, political speeches, audio clips, and images could also prove useful. It might also be interesting to compare two publications in Venezuela during a particular point in time to see how each media company reports on the same news. The author also considers it a limitation that this

Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted alone. For such a qualitative study, it is difficult for an author to act without any bias.

The author would consider working on this project more collaboratively so that a team could discuss and debate patterns, their meanings, and any potential biases. It also is a potential limitation that these articles were written in English. Since both Venezuela and Costa Rica are primarily Spanish-speaking countries, some of the nuances in the language used to communicate with Venezuelan and Costa Rican citizens in Spanish could be different than the language used to communicate to a smaller set of English-language readers.

Even with the limitations of this study, the author believes the exercise proved useful in demonstrating the power of discourse. How publications use language to communicate to an audience can offer a great deal of insight into how citizens think about their government. While the author did not find as many instances of strong pro-Maduro language as expected, *El Universal* did display an interesting editorial shift from 2014 to 2017. It stopped publishing anti-Maduro editorials and focused exclusively on short, quotation-heavy pieces. *The Tico Times* published comparatively balanced news articles during the same time period, although its political coverage decreased considerably from 2014 to 2017.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1

*EL UNIVERSAL* 'S TOP TEN WORDS 2014 AND 2017 (SUMMARY)

<i>El Universal</i> – 2014	<i>El Universal</i> – 2017
States	Government
Government	President
National	OAS
Human	Political
February	Almagro
People	Organization
Maduro	American
Opposition	Democratic
Guard	Foreign
Caracas	General

TABLE 2

*THE TICO TIMES'* TOP TEN WORDS 2014 AND 2017 (SUMMARY)

<i>The Tico Times - 2014</i>	<i>The Tico Times - 2017</i>
Campaign	President
Arraya	Solis
Percent	Countries
Votes	Summit
Pin	United
Politics	Mexico
Solis	Call
One	Bill
New	Authorities
Last	America

TABLE 3

*EL UNIVERSAL AND THE TICO TIMES'* WORD SEARCH

	<i>El Universal - 2014 and 2017</i>	<i>The Tico Times - 2014 and 2017</i>
Dissent	8	1
Talk	6	20
Opposition	35	70
Pro-	4	8
Anti-	4	29

Security	16	40
Open	3	23
Necessary	5	6
Must	11	19
State	80	107
Private	3	14
Freedom	10	15
Press	23	41
Dialogue	19	6
Democracy	7	14
Closed	1	26
Agree	3	15

TABLE 4

*EL UNIVERSAL'S* TOP TEN WORDS 2014 (IN-DEPTH)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
states	6	52	0.96%	state, states
government	10	46	0.85%	government, governments
national	8	42	0.78%	national, nations
human	5	39	0.72%	human, humanity
february	8	35	0.65%	february
people	6	33	0.61%	people
maduro	6	27	0.50%	maduro
opposition	10	22	0.41%	opposition
guard	5	22	0.41%	guard, guards
caracas	7	20	0.37%	caracas

TABLE 5

*EL UNIVERSAL'S TOP TEN WORDS 2017 (IN-DEPTH)*

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
government	10	37	1.60%	government
president	9	27	1.17%	president, presidents
oas	3	23	0.99%	oas
political	9	19	0.82%	political, politically
almagro	7	16	0.69%	almagro
organization	12	16	0.69%	organization, organizations
american	8	15	0.65%	american
democratic	10	15	0.65%	democratic
foreign	7	15	0.65%	foreign
general	7	14	0.60%	general

TABLE 6

*EL UNIVERSAL'S TOP TEN WORDS 2014 AND 2017 (IN-DEPTH)*

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
government	10	83	1.07%	government, governments
states	6	80	1.04%	state, states
national	8	49	0.63%	national, nationalization, nations
human	5	47	0.61%	human, humanity
february	8	40	0.52%	february
maduro	6	40	0.52%	maduro
people	6	37	0.48%	people, peoples
political	9	36	0.47%	political, politically
opposition	10	35	0.45%	opposition
oas	3	32	0.41%	oas



TABLE 7

*THE TICO TIMES'* TOP TEN WORDS 2014 (IN-DEPTH)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
campaign	8	139	0.49%	campaign, campaigned, campaigning, campaigns
araya	5	137	0.49%	araya
percent	7	131	0.47%	percent, percent'
votes	5	128	0.45%	vote, voted, votes, voting
pln	3	115	0.41%	pln
politics	8	114	0.40%	political, politically, politics
solís	5	112	0.40%	solís, solís'
one	3	108	0.38%	one, ones
new	3	85	0.30%	new
last	4	84	0.30%	last, lasted, lasting

TABLE 8

*THE TICO TIMES'* TOP TEN WORDS 2017 (IN-DEPTH)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
president	9	28	1.17%	president, presidents
solís	5	26	1.09%	solís, solís'
countries	9	26	1.09%	countries, countries', country
summit	6	16	0.67%	summit, summits
united	6	16	0.67%	united, unites
mexico	6	15	0.63%	mexico
call	4	15	0.63%	call, called, calls
bill	4	11	0.46%	bill
authorities	11	9	0.38%	authorities,

				authorizations
america	7	8	0.34%	america

TABLE 9

*THE TICO TIMES'* TOP TEN WORDS 2014 AND 2017 (IN-DEPTH)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
campaign	8	145	0.47%	campaign, campaigned, campaigning, campaigns
solís	5	138	0.45%	solís, solís'
araya	5	137	0.45%	araya
percent	7	132	0.43%	percent, percent'
pln	3	117	0.38%	pln
one	3	117	0.38%	one, ones
bill	4	86	0.28%	bill, bills
assembly	8	76	0.25%	assembly
chávez	6	63	0.21%	chávez
action	6	48	0.16%	action, actions

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### EDUCATION

Master of Arts in Political Science, May 2017 (expected date)

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

- Frankfort Legislative Intern, Dr. Jason Gainous
- Student Scholarship Member, Louisville Committee on Foreign Relations, Dr. Chuck Ziegler

Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, May 2007

Connecticut College, New London, CT

- Member, Pi Sigma Alpha, National Political Science Honor Society

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CNET/CBS Interactive, Louisville, KY 03/2013-Present

- Write reviews, news, and other related content about smart home technology

#### FREELANCE WRITER

Louisville, KY

- Contributing Editor – NBC Universal/SYFY Channel/DVICE.com, 04/2010-08/2013  
Blogged about technology, science, and design

#### CLIENT SERVICE ADMINISTRATOR

ARGI Financial Group, Louisville, KY 01/2011-10/2012

- Supported two Certified Financial Planners who advise clients on:  
Strategies for retirement planning, tax planning, investment planning, risk management, executive financial planning, and education and estate needs
- Oversaw all client service needs for 500+ clients with over \$250 million of assets

#### DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR

NBC Universal/SYFY Channel, New York, NY 09/2008-04/2010

- Edited SYFY Online content and wrote weekly DVICE.com newsletter
- Assisted SVP and GM of SYFY Digital with all day-to-day activities