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# Julian Assange: A Content Analysis of Media Framing in Newspapers around the World

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Julian Assange:  
A Content Analysis of Media Framing in Newspapers around the World

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A thesis  
presented to

the faculty of the Department of Communication

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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by

Meylin Menjivar Andrade

May 2013

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John King, Chair

Carrie Oliveira

Robert Andrew Dunn

Keywords: content analysis, framing theory, media, Julian Assange, Wikileaks

## ABSTRACT

Julian Assange:

A Content Analysis of Media Framing in Newspapers around the World

by

Meylin Menjivar Andrade

Researcher conducted a content analysis in order to examine how the media framed Julian Assange after the Ecuadorian government granted him political asylum at their embassy in London on August 16, 2012. Researchers compared 380 English and Spanish language newspaper articles from North America, Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America to examine regional differences in the way Assange was framed.

This study revealed that generally the tone toward Assange was mostly neutral or positive in all continents. Furthermore, European media gave more attention to Julian Assange than did media from North America or other continents.

Exploratory research revealed that English language newspapers placed Julian Assange in headlines more frequently than Spanish language sources. Interestingly, even when Assange's participation in the publication of secret documents affected many different countries, he was not given page prominence in newspapers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must thank Dr. John King for introducing me to the exciting world of public relations. When I started this program, I was not sure of the path that I wanted to follow. Your passion for International PR and research has allowed me to see the importance of learning from other cultures. Thank you for being so supportive and motivating. Your willingness to help me through the 2 years of this program has taught me the real essence of PR: to establish and maintain good relationships.

I would also like to thank Dr. Carrie Oliveira for helping me deal with the anxieties I had associated with the first semester of graduate school. You encouraged me and the rest of the class to push ourselves to be better thinkers, better students, and, as a result, better professionals of communication. The fact that you are so passionate about interpersonal communication showed me an important lesson in my life: If you love what you do for living, it makes it not feel like work; it looks like fun.

Thank you Dr. Andrew Dunn for being a part of this project and giving me your time and help. Certainly, writing a thesis is not easy work but your support and advice motivated me to try harder.

I would like to thank Dr. Dan Brown for being so supportive and helpful since before I started this program. Thank you for your time, your invaluable help, and your kindness. Thank you for advising me about what classes to take the first semester and your help with every single administrative process I have done. Everything was a lot easier due to your help.

Thank you Dr. Amber Kinser for allowing me to work with you during these 2 years. You have no idea of the great impact you have had in my career and in my life. At first, I was intimidated with graduate school. My language deficiency and inexperience with research made

me think that I would not be able to succeed in this program. But since the very beginning you showed me what a great woman and professional you are. You made me believe in myself and motivated me to give the best of myself. I love working with you. Thank you for all the time, help, and knowledge that you have shared with me. I feel truly blessed for the opportunity of working and learning with you.

I would also like to thank my husband Roberto for helping me so much. Without your support I would never had been able to get my master's degree, and to succeed through the craziness of graduate school. Thank you for caring about and loving me. Thank you to my parents: Margarita, and David, Evelyn and Ernesto. My sister and brother Sarai and Jonathan. You believed in me since the beginning... and here we are almost two years later. I cannot finish this without thanking and most important person in my life: God. Everything I have done, everything I possess, and everything I am is because of you. Gracias, Padre.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The way the public understands and interprets the messages they receive from news organizations depends on a wide variety of factors beyond the facts of the story. With the rise of digital technology and the resulting increased access to information from many different platforms, the public has choices as to how to receive information. Many news organizations take advantage of this increased access and use different techniques to reach and instill in their audiences certain interpretations of current events. Framing theory suggests that the way media consumers interpret many of the messages they receive depends enormously on how the information is presented by the media. (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Goffman (1974) conceptualized framing as system of interpretation that allow media consumers “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” information received (p. 21).

Journalists are selective not only about the stories they cover but how they cover them and present the final message to the audience (Baylor, 1996). Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, has been the center of controversy throughout many years due mainly to the leaking of secret diplomatic cables belonging to the U.S. State Department. Previous research has revealed that Assange has been framed both in a positive and a negative light in the media.

The present content analysis examines media portrayals of Julian Assange around the world; specifically in newspaper articles. Articles from different international regions were selected allowing the analysis of stories published in newspapers both English- and Spanish-speaking countries. The purpose of this broad sample is to determine whether differences exist in the way the media portray Assange throughout the world. The objective is to identify what

countries and continents give him more media coverage and the way that Assange is framed by these publications.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Framing Theory*

Framing is a process by which messages are structured in specific ways in order to influence the interpretation of the receiver (Goffman, 1974). Bock and Loebell (1990) made reference to the frame of a building that shapes the form that the structure takes. The doors and windows of a building allow a person standing on the outside to take a look at the inside, just as media frames can “activate particular existing cognitions in the mind of the viewer” (Shah et al., 2009, p.85). Consequently, media frame not only affect the content of messages but the interpretation of these messages.

Framing theory suggests that the way media present certain information enormously influences media consumers. People’s interpretation of these messages depends highly on how the information is presented to them by the media. (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Goffman (1974) conceptualized framing as a system of interpretation that allow media consumers “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” information received (p. 21). Similarly, Entman (2007) defined framing as a “process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 164). For Kuypers (2002), to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 22) . Framing is so powerful that it outlines individuals’ understanding of all kinds of situations (Kuypers, 2002).

Undoubtedly, salience is one of the most important characteristics of framing. As a result of being exposed to frames, individuals pay more attention to recurrent messages. Previous information promotes the reinforcement of existing judgments and the formation of new opinions (Entman, 1993). Given that people rely on the media as their most important source of information, it becomes imperative to analyze the process media apply to deliberately select the framing of their messages to their audiences.

Based on research conducted by Gamson and Lash (1983), Van Gorp (2005) proposes thinking of framing not only as an isolated process but as a “media package” (p. 486). Van Gorp (2005) describes a media package as “all indicators or framing devices by which the frame can be identified: metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, selection of sources, graphics, stereotypes, and dramatic characters” (p. 486). The process of framing becomes active when journalists choose which elements to include or exclude in their stories (Reese, 2001). Media agents become selective not only about the stories they cover but how they cover them and present the final message to the audience (Baylor, 1996).

It is clear that framing is a powerful mechanism applied by the media designed to influence the perceptions that news consumers have of current events; but what is the actual function of framing? Entman argued that frames typically “diagnose [and] evaluate” problems, and then “prescribe” solutions for them (p. 52). Entman (1993) defined four specific functions of framing: “problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Initially, frames define problems by determining “what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Then, frames assign responsibilities by pointing out the causes of the problem. Next, they make moral judgments evaluating those causes. Finally, frames suggest

possible solutions to the problem defined (p. 52). Often, pieces of information, such as a sentence in a story, can achieve more than one function of framing or, on the contrary, perform none of the functions (Entman, 1993). Additionally, “a frame in any particular text may not necessarily include all four functions” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Here it becomes important to remark that the uses and implications of framing theory are very broad. Framing has the “potential to bring disciplinary perspectives together in interesting ways” (Reese, 2007, p. 148).

Certainly, framing has significant repercussions for political communication (Entman, 1993). Entman (2007) suggests that framing plays an important role in the application of political power, especially if the audience is offered multiple frames. A particular political issue that is presented in multiple ways has a higher probability of influencing people on how they think about that issue (Terkildsen & Schell, 1997). If individuals perceive that at least one of the portrayals presented is aligned with their own personal point of view, they will pay more attention to the message and as a result, they will be more influenced by it. The media therefore uses framing for a variety of reasons including commercial and political interest knowing that the audience is often unaware of the frames contained in media messages. Given that frames bring to light portions of reality while burying others, public opinion frequently associates political framing with negative connotations. One of the biggest causes for this hostility is because framing theory implies that “distribution of public preferences are arbitrary, and that political elites can manipulate popular preferences to serve their own interests” (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 120).

Political frames can easily be identified in stories where the protagonist is a controversial personality (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009). Controversies always cause a wide variety of reactions from the public. Some people approve of and others condemn the individuals involved. The case

of Julian Assange and Wikileaks is undoubtedly a center of controversy all over the world. The thousands of media reports that result from searching Assange in Google are a just a small example of his prominence among media outlets. Hundreds of TV channels, radio stations, newspapers, and blogs among others present stories about Assange and Wikileaks on a regular basis. But, who is Julian Assang, and what has he done to be under such extensive public scrutiny?

### *Julian Assange and Wikileaks*

Julian Assange is an Australian-born activist, journalist, and editor of Wikileaks (Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.), an international online organization that publishes classified media from anonymous sources (Wikileaks, n.d.). In 1987 at the age of 16 Assange started hacking computers, reportedly under the alias Mendax, which means “nobly untruthful” (Khatchadourian, 2010). Even at that time when websites did not exist, computer networks were connected enough to form electronic grids; which Assange and his young friends started hacking jointly (Khatchadourian, 2010).

Assange and two more friends formed a group of hackers known as the International Subversives. They hacked computer systems in different regions of the world such as Europe and North America, including secure networks of the U.S. Department of Defense. (Khatchadourian, 2010). Evidently, the actions of Assange were far beyond those of just a curious young man. He was interested in accessing secret and sensitive information that, if made public, could affect the internal and external political activity of a nation.

As a result of his early involvement with system hacking, Assange came under the gaze of the Australian government. In 1991 at the age of 20 Assange and the International Subversives hacked the master terminal of Nortel, a Canadian telecommunications company maintained in Australia (Harrel, 2010). The police captured him and charged him with 31 crimes related to

hacking. Assange pled guilty to 25 charges (Khatchadourian, 2010). After a legal process against him that lasted 3 years he was only sentenced to pay a small fine to the Australian state.

After these legal troubles, Assange significantly reduced his hacking activities and held a variety of jobs, including a position as a computer-security assistant (Khatchadourian, 2010). However, his passion for looking for secret and sensitive information was still inside him. According to Khatchadourian Assange “had come to understand the defining human struggle not as left versus right or faith versus reason, but as individual versus institution” (2010). Assange supports the idea that free access to information could help to stop “illegitimate governance” (Harrell, 2010). Based on this idea Assange founded Wikileaks in 2006, installing the main server in Sweden because the Swedish constitution provides total legal protection to whistleblowers (CNN, 2010). From the very beginning Wikileaks has made documents that reveal ethically questionable activities of government officials and political leaders available to the public.

Wikileaks defines its goal in this manner: “to bring important news and information to the public... providing innovative, secure and anonymous way for sources to leak information to our journalists” (Wikileaks, n.d.). Wikileaks describes itself as an instrument against secrecy and in favor of transparency, an intermediary between the anonymous sources and the media (Khatchadourian, 2010). Given that many of the documents released by Wikileaks are written in complex military or diplomatic wording, journalists from the organization write “reader friendly” stories about the documents and provide the original source material from where the story comes. Writers of Wikileaks suggest that they have more liberty to state their own opinions in their stories because they also provide a means to the reader to access the original document. If

readers feel that they do not agree with the content, they can go directly to the original source and form their own opinion (Wikileaks, n.d.).

Undeniably, the impact of the content of the leaks published by the organization has helped to raise the number of enemies Julian Assange has. In spite of being widely disliked, given that Wikileaks is based in Sweden, a country that has strong legislation protecting whistleblowers, Assange had the liberty to express his views openly at public events and through the media internationally.

On several occasions Wikileaks has published documents that have resulted in stories in newspapers' front pages and breaking news on radio, television, and social media. Wikileaks has broken many stories pertaining to a variety of matters such as wars, killings, torture, government transparency, diplomacy, spying, ecology, corruption, taxes, religious organizations, and violence among others (Wikileaks, n.d.). Even when all of these stories have come from different countries, it is evident that Assange and Wikileaks have had a preference for undisclosed documents related with the U.S. government. Since 2007 Wikileaks has released a vast number of high-profile documents focused on alleged U.S. government misconduct (Karhula, 2011).

The unquestionable value of the content relies on the nature of the documents published. For example, in March 2007 Wikileaks released the U.S. military's operating manual for the Guantanamo prison camp. This document contained information about abused prisoners being held in near-isolation and put under rigorous interrogations (Sutton, 2007). In July 2010 Wikileaks made public the Afghan War Diary, a collection of more than 80,000 documents related to the War in Afghanistan (Gebauer et al., 2010) Most of the documents were classified as secret and exposed how the governments of the U.S. and other allied countries covered the



deaths of innocent civilians (Karhula, 2011). Then, in November of 2010 five major newspapers from Germany, Spain, France, United Kingdom, and the United States released 220,000 confidential diplomatic cables pertaining to the US State Department. The compromising cables revealed private communications within the US government with many embassies around the world. (Shane & Lehren, 2010). Journalists suggest that the unprecedented leak would cause political tension domestically and internationally for the U.S. government (Shane & Lehren, 2010). After such a large number of leaks, Assange and Wikileaks were in the spotlight. In 2010 the US government tried unsuccessfully to prosecute Assange based on the 1917 Espionage Act (Karhula, 2011). Assange's problems with the law escalated in June of 2010, when two women from Sweden accused him of sexual molestation and even rape.

Later, in August 2010 the Swedish police began a deeper investigation over the allegations of molestation (The Guardian, 2010). At that time, Assange was living in the United Kingdom. Since then the Swedish authorities have been trying to capture Assange to make him respond to the sexual allegations (BBC, 2012). In November 2010 the Swedish police issued an international arrest warrant against Assange. Three weeks later Assange turned himself in to the police in London and was put in jail, remaining there for 8 days until he was granted bail (BBC, 2012).

In February 2011 the District Judge of South London rules extradition for Julian Assange. Then, in July of the same year, lawyers asked the High Court to block Julian Assange's extradition (BBC, 2012). The attorneys alleged that English and Swedish regulations had different legal definitions of sex crimes (BBC, 2012). In November 2011 "two judges in the U.K. High Court uphold the decision to extradite [Julian] Assange to Sweden" (BBC, 2012). Since then Assange has been battling extradition, pleading his innocence, and alleging that the

accusations against him have political motivations (Addley & Topping, 2011). In May 2012 the Supreme Court established that Assange must be extradited to Sweden to face the pending legal process against him. (BBC, 2012).

Suddenly, Assange's case took a surprising turn. On June 2012 Assange "walked into the Ecuadorian embassy in London seeking political asylum" (Hough, 2012). Two months later the Ecuadorian government granted asylum to Assange, allowing him to stay in their embassy in London as long as it was necessary (Hough, 2012). Effectively, Assange has remained in the embassy until the present. Assange strategically chose the Ecuadorian embassy because even though that country has an extradition treaty with the U.S., political refugees are exempt from extradition. In addition, Assange knew that the bilateral relationship between the Ecuadorian and American governments had been strained over the recent past. He took for granted that Ecuador would not deny asylum to an enemy of the U.S. (Rozental, 2012).

Every controversial event in Assange's life has resulted in differing reactions from the media and an enormous amount of coverage. The next section consists of a discussion of what researchers have found involving media framing of Julian Assange during the times dealing with controversial events in his life and career.

### *Similar Studies*

The involvement of Julian Assange with the release of diplomatic cables pertaining to the U.S. State Department made the activist a widely known and controversial personality. Undeniably, the name "Assange" carries controversy by itself. However, the media also contributes to reinforce these controversial portrayals. Borman (2006) argued that the press tends to create images of protagonists and antagonists (Bormann, 2006). Julian Assange perfectly meets the criteria for being framed in one extreme or the other. Those who are opposed to the

publication of sensitive documents would tag him as a villain and those in favor of the leaks would frame him as a redeemer of the free press.

Handley and Rutigliano (2012) looked for media framing of Julian Assange in broadcasts from networks in the U.S. between November and December of 2010, simultaneous to the release of the secret diplomatic cables. They found that news anchors and reporters depicted Assange as a criminal and even a terrorist. The researchers explained how David Martin, a journalist from CBS showed “an image of Osama bin Laden morphed into an image of Assange” (Handley & Rutigliano, 2012, p.751), suggesting a link between them as terrorists (2012). Simultaneously, they found that broadcasters portrayed Assange as a “Mystery Man, fugitive, and in hiding, even after their reporters acknowledged that British authorities were perfectly capable of getting in touch with him” (Handley & Rutigliano, 2012, p. 751).

In a different study but in the same period of time, Handley and Ismail (2012) analyzed publications from major newspapers from Australia and Israel. They found that when the cables were just released to the public, both Assange and Wikileaks were being framed as a threat, in clear alignment with the U.S. government (p.13). However, a few weeks after the event, the tone of the publications shifted from extremely negative one to a more neutral one. Publications from the last week of the study revealed that the stories were referring to Assange and Wikileaks as whistleblowers but in a more neutral tone.

O’Brien (2013) analyzed press depictions of Julian Assange from online publications from the U.S. and the United Kingdom, countries closely involved with the activist. Her findings revealed that the U.K. press portrayed more positive representations of Assange, and that the U.S. press presented almost totally negative depictions of the activist (O’Brien, 2013). The tabloid press from both countries showed negative depictions of Assange (O’Brien, 2013).

O'Brien wrote that the stories from U.K. publications where the opinion of the writer was disclosed tended to skew more negativity toward Assange. For example, writers were focusing on how much money the British government was spending in processing Julian Assange; money that had to come from the taxpayers (O'Brien, 2013). Evidently, this type of coverage incites the reader to think negatively of Assange. Based on O'Brien's research, it would be reasonable to expect that the tone toward Julian Assange would more frequently be negative when the publishing source is from North America in contrast to sources from Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. Concurrently, O'Brien found that the amount of coverage of Julian Assange in the U.K. was four times higher than the amount of coverage in the U.S. The researcher comments that this difference could be that the U.K. media were more interested in covering Assange because he was physically there. The geographical closeness with the activist could be the reason why the U.K. press paid more attention to Julian Assange than the press in the U.S. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect the following outcomes: First, the frequency of mentions of Julian Assange would be higher in Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. Second, mentions of Julian Assange will more frequently appear in more prominent page positions when coming from sources published in Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. And third, mentions of Julian Assange will more frequently appear in more prominent story positions when the publishing source is from Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America.

Taking into consideration all of these studies, two important factors manifest themselves. First, is the evident framing of Julian Assange by the press. Frames of Assange get accentuated when the coverage coincides with major events related to the activist, such as the controversial

publications by Wikileaks or his legal battle against the Swedish government. Secondly, previous research reveals a huge contrast between the amount of media coverage Julian Assange and Wikileaks receives and the limited amount of research dealing with media coverage and framing of this subject. Very few researchers have studied the way that the media portrays Julian Assange. There are many studies about how Wikileaks has influenced the agenda of many countries, but only a small number of researchers have been interested in looking for media depictions of Assange. As a result, the analysis of media framing of Julian Assange represents a very attractive and innovative topic for investigators of media effects.

## CHAPTER 3

### HYPOTHESES AND EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS

The previous literature review led to a variety of hypotheses and research questions about media framing of Julian Assange in newspapers around the world.

#### *Hypotheses*

H1: The tone toward Julian Assange will more frequently be negative when the publishing source is from North America in contrast to sources from Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America

H2: The frequency of mentions of Julian Assange will be higher in Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America

H3: Mentions of Julian Assange will more frequently appear in more prominent page positions when coming from sources published in Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America

H4: Mentions of Julian Assange will more frequently appear in more prominent story positions when the publishing source is from Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America

#### *Exploratory Research*

On August 16, 2012, the Ecuadorian government decided to grant political asylum to Julian Assange. Since that date Assange has avoided extradition to Sweden by remaining in the Ecuadorian embassy in London (Hough, 2012). For Latin American governments political and diplomatic asylums are considered “sacred institutions” (Rozenal, 2012). Given the magnitude of coverage that Assange’s case could raise among Latin American press, it is reasonable to

analyze the differences between frames of Julian Assange in sources from Spanish and English languages. This study analyzes the following exploratory questions:

*Research Questions*

RQ1: Will the tone toward Julian Assange be more positive in sources written in the English language in contrast to those from Spanish language sources?

RQ2: Will journalists most frequently describe Julian Assange with descriptors?

RQ3: Will there be a difference in the story placement of mentions of Julian Assange in English and Spanish sources?

RQ4: Will Julian Assange more frequently be depicted with descriptors in sources written in the English language compared to Spanish?

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

Two coders, including the author, coded articles retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis database using the terms “Assange,” “asylum,” and “Ecuador” in the “Major world publications” section. Newspapers published between Aug. 16, 2012, and Aug. 23, 2012 were analyzed. These dates were strategically chosen because it was the week during which the Ecuadorian government granted political asylum to Julian Assange (Hough, 2012). One of the coders, who is proficient in Spanish, searched the terms “Assange” and “asilo” and “Ecuador” in the “Foreign language news” section, retrieving 300 results in the Spanish language. The unit of analysis was any mention of “Assange,” “asylum,” and “Ecuador” included in an article. The researcher was interested in including Spanish language sources, given that Ecuador is a Spanish speaking country.

The Lexis Nexis database yielded a population size of 853 articles. Using the randomizer instrument available on randomizer.org, (Urbaniak & Plous, 1997), a simple random sample of 500 articles was selected. In a simple random sample each member of the population has the same probability of being chosen during the sampling process (Yates, 2008). This study used a simple random sample because it is considered a simple and fair technique and because of the accessibility to an electronic randomizer instrument (randomizer.org). After removing duplicate articles, 380 articles from 20 different countries were analyzed and 2,317 mentions were coded, with the significance level for the study set at .01.

Lexis Nexis database was selected because of its accessibility and dependability. LexisNexis is “the world’s largest online electronic library of legal opinions, public records,



news, and business information” (UPI, 2006). Even though Lexis Nexis does not contain every single document published in the world, “it’s perhaps the largest message archive in existence, with more than 9.5 million documents added daily to over one billion documents already online” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 76).

Independent variables included the *nation* in which the newspaper was published, and the *language* (English or Spanish) in which the article was published. The variable nation was collapsed into *continents* (North America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Latin America), in order to eliminate empty cells.

- North America: Canada, United States.
- Europe: France, Spain, United Kingdom, Ireland
- Australia/New Zealand
- Asia: Singapore, Thailand, China, Israel
- Latin America: Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay

Dependent variables included the *page prominence* where the mention was located in the newspaper (inside page, section front/front page), with the purpose of establishing the importance assigned to the story. The variable *mention location* was used to determine where the mention was placed in a story: in the headline (or subheadline), in the lead (first sentence, first paragraph, or paired with a graphic), or in the body of the story. Dependent variables “page prominence” and “mention location” would help to determine how much attention newspapers are paying to Julian Assange all over the world. The variable *tone* was determined as negative,

neutral, or positive. The criterion for identifying negative tone was that the sentence had to have a clearly negative connotation. For example:

- Negative tone:
  - “The balcony address has proved throughout history to be the medium of choice for the maladjusted egomaniac and as such it was fitting to see Julian Assange on the first floor of the Ecuadorean embassy in London” (Penberthy, 2012).
  - “This Julian Assange spectacle is making a mockery of the police and costing us £50,000 a day” (Slack, 2012).
- Neutral
  - “Meanwhile, fresh details emerged of how unprepared the Embassy was to accommodate Assange when he suddenly arrived two months ago seeking political asylum” (Huffington Post, 2012).
  - “Ecuador has now made its decision: to grant political asylum to Julian Assange” (Weisbrot, 2012).
- Positive
  - “It struck many as odd that Mr. Assange, who shot to fame as fighter for media freedom, chose Ecuador as a potential refuge” (Neuman & Ayala, 2012).

The last dependent variable, *frame*, looked for specific adjectives and/or nouns accompanying the unit of analysis “Assange”. Specifically, these describer words would portray Assange in a negative or positive light. The researcher looked for the presence or absence of these words in sentences that had the name Julian Assange. Based on O’Brien’s (2013) and Handley and Rutigliano’s (2012) research, the coders looked for descriptors such as “fugitive,”

“criminal,” and “whistleblower”. These words had been found in previous research on media framing of Julian Assange. Some examples are:

- “Fugitive Julian Assange’s asylum plea at Ecuador’s embassy in London last night turned into a siege that could last years” (Dunn, 2012).
- “Here’s why Julian Assange is the most annoying and arrogant person in the whole world” (O’Neill, 2012).
- “Julian Assange himself is very clever to move focus from what he has actually suspected of having done to something that is completely different” (Doyle, Shipman, & Ledwith, 2012).

### *Trials and Training*

The first part of the process of training was to get a simple random sample of 30 articles from Lexis Nexis. The coders purposely picked articles from May 2012 to avoid overlapping the timeframe of the real study. Then, the two coders discussed the criteria used to assign values to the dependent variables. The Holsti formula (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 149) was used to measure inter-coder reliability. In the formula  $2A / (Na+Nb)$ , 2 represents the number of coders; A indicates the number of agreements between the coders; Na and Nb represent the number of units analyzed by each coder. In round three, the coders reached agreement. Table 1 indicates the results of the final trial round.

**Table 1***Holsti Formula (Calculation for Intercoder Reliability)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Holsti Formula</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
Continent	2 (30) / (30 + 30)	100%
Language	2 (30) / (30 + 30)	100%
Page	2 (30) / (30 + 30)	100%
Story	2 (30) / (30 + 30)	100%
Tone	2 (27) / (30 + 30)	90%
Frame	2 (28) / (30 + 30)	93%

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

#### *Hypotheses Tests*

**H1:** The tone toward Julian Assange will more frequently be negative when the publishing source is from North America in contrast to sources from Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. As indicated in Table 2, the negative tone toward Julian Assange appears to be higher in Europe, closely followed by Australia. The hypothesis was not supported because the finding is not statistically significant.

**Table 2**

*Tone Toward Mentions of Julian Assange*

	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral/Positive</b>
Europe	112 (8.6%)	1,197 (91.4%)
Australia/NZ	39 (7.6%)	471 (92.4%)
North America	11 (5.4%)	192 (94.6%)
Asia	1 (2.8%)	35 (97.2%)
Latin America	6 (2.3%)	253 (97.7%)

Note,  $n=2,317$ ;  $\chi^2=14.81$ ;  $df=4$ ;  $p=n.s.$

**H2:** The frequency of mentions of Julian Assange will be higher in Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. This hypothesis was supported, given that more than half of the mentions were found in newspapers published in Europe, followed by Australia and New Zealand. Asia was the continent with the fewest mentions of Julian Assange.

**Table 3**

*Frequency of Mentions of Julian Assange*

<b>Continent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Europe	1,309	56.5%
Australia/NZ	510	22.0%
Latin America	259	11.2%
North America	203	8.8%
Asia	36	1.6%

Note, n=2,317

**H3:** Mentions of Julian Assange will more frequently appear in more prominent page positions when coming from sources published in Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. As indicated in Table 4, mentions of Julian Assange received more page prominence in newspapers from Europe. In fact, Europe was the only continent where stories about Assange were placed in the front section of newspapers. Hypothesis 3 was supported based on results shown in Table 4. The hypothesis was not supported because the finding is not statistically significant.

**Table 4***Page Prominence of Mentions of Julian Assange*

	<b>Inside Page</b>	<b>Section Front/Front Page</b>
Europe	1,294 (98.9%)	15 (1.1%)
North America	203 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Australia/NZ	510 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Asia	36 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Latin America	259 (100%)	0 (0.0%)

Note, n=2,317;  $\chi^2=11.63$ ; df=4; p=n.s.

**H4:** Mentions of Julian Assange will more frequently appear in more prominent story positions when the publishing source is from Europe in contrast to sources from North America, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, and Latin America. As shown in Table 5, close to 10% of mentions of Assange in all continents were found to be placed in headlines, which is relatively high compared to similar previous research. However, the findings are not statistically significant.

**Table 5***Story Prominence of Mentions of Julian Assange*

	<b>Body</b>	<b>Headline</b>	<b>Graphic/Lead</b>
Australia/NZ	405 (79.4%)	48 (9.4%)	57 (11.2%)
North America	156 (76.8%)	20 (9.9%)	27 (13.3%)
Latin America	189 (73.0%)	27 (10.4%)	43 (16.6%)
Asia	26 (72.2%)	4 (11.1%)	6 (16.7%)
Europe	942 (72.0%)	134 (10.2%)	233 (17.8%)

Note, n= 2,317;  $\chi^2= 14.49$ ; df=8; p= n.s.

*Exploratory Research*

**RQ1:** Will the tone toward Julian Assange be more positive in sources written in the English language? As showed in Table 6, the tone toward Assange was more positive in Spanish language newspapers. However, the finding is not statistically significant.

**Table 6**

*Tone Toward Mentions of Julian Assange in English and Spanish Publications*

	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Neutral/Positive</b>
English	126 (8.1%)	1,435 (91.9%)
Spanish	43 (5.7%)	713 (94.3%)

Note, n= 2,317;  $\chi^2= 4.28$ ; df=1; p= n.s.

**RQ2:** Will journalists most frequently describe Julian Assange with descriptors? As indicated in Table 7, the majority of articles did not contain descriptors framing Assange. Only 6.3% on the total of mentions analyzed evidenced frame.

**Table 7**

*Framing of Julian Assange*

<b>Language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No Frame	2,172	93.7
Frame	145	6.3

Note, n=2,317

**RQ3:** Will there be a difference in the story placement of mentions of Julian Assange in English and Spanish sources? As shown in Table 8, Spanish language sources tended to place Assange more in headlines, leads, or paired with graphics.



**Table 8***Story Prominence of Mentions of Julian Assange in English and Spanish Publications*

	<b>Body</b>	<b>Headline</b>	<b>Graphic/lead</b>
English	1,220 (78.2%)	159 (10.2%)	182 (11.7%)
Spanish	498 (65.9%)	74 (9.8%)	366 (15.8%)

Note, n=2,317;  $\chi^2= 62.28$ ; df=2; p< .001

**RQ4:** Will Julian Assange more frequently be described with descriptors in sources written in the English language? As shown in Table 9, Spanish language newspapers used more descriptors for Julian Assange. Spanish press framed Assange three times more than English language sources.

**Table 9***Framing of Juian Assange in English and Spanish Sources*

	<b>No Frame</b>	<b>Frame</b>
English	1,505 (96.4%)	56 (3.6%)
Spanish	667 (88.2%)	89 (11.8%)

Note, n=2,317;  $\chi^2= 58.17$ ; df=1; p< .001

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In accordance with previous research, this study revealed that European media gave more attention to Julian Assange than media from North America or other continents. More than half of the mentions of Assange analyzed in this study came from newspapers published in Europe, especially the United Kingdom. Australia also pays close attention to Assange, but on a smaller scale as compared to the U.K. Twenty-two percent of the mentions examined came from Australian press. Another important finding is that Latin America appeared to cover more stories about Assange than North America. However, this should not be so unexpected. It is important to remember that for this study researchers analyzed international media coverage of Assange during the week the activist was granted political asylum by Ecuador. The fact that a Latin American government was protecting a man accused of variety of actions against the U.S. government could lead to the Latin American and Spanish press giving more coverage to the issue. What is surprising, though, is the limited amount of coverage that the North American press gave the event. It might be obvious to think that because the U.S. government leaks happened in 2010, the U.S. press would be more interested in Assange. On the other hand, it could be reasonable to believe that the US press purposely avoids paying much attention to Assange in order to support the Americans who consider Assange a threat to the nation. Assange is considered the founder of an organization that has compromised the diplomacy of the U.S. and has made the country be seen in a negative light throughout the world.

Moreover, results from exploratory research revealed that the majority (93.7%) of the mentions analyzed did not contain descriptors about Assange. This contradicts previous research

that suggested that the media uses a variety of descriptors to refer to Assange (Handley & Rutigliano, 2012). This could be caused by the fact that previous researchers have not only analyzed newspaper articles but also radio and TV broadcasts. There is a difference between news delivered orally and those delivered in a written format, so that could be to some degree a cause in the disparity of the results.

In regard to story prominence of mentions of Julian Assange, this study revealed that English language newspapers tended to mention Assange slightly more in headlines than Spanish language sources. This could be caused by the proximity of Assange to the United Kingdom, the participation of Assange in the publication of leaks about U.S. diplomacy, and the fact that Assange is an Australian citizen. Due to these facts, many people from English language countries have heard of Assange and Wikileaks, so they would be more likely to be interested in reading a story about him. Conversely, Spanish language countries are paying significant attention to the founder of Wikileaks. There is also a probability that the initiative of the Ecuadorian government to grant asylum to Assange has caused more Latin American countries be interested in the topic.

The relationship between Assange and Latin America 5 years ago was not even close to what it is now. Assange has lived in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since last June, and there is no sign that he will leave the embassy anytime soon. So, by law he is living in Ecuadorian territory; he is living in Latin American territory. That is enough reason for the Spanish speaking press to be interested in writing stories about Assange. Spanish language journalists had been using descriptors as a strategy to give to the public a closer view about this enigmatic person.

### *Limitations*

This study was designed to find media framing of Julian Assange by analyzing newspaper articles from countries all over the world. One of the dependent variables was the *page* where the mention was located in the newspaper (inside page, section front/front page), with the purpose of establishing the relevance that was assigned to the story. However, given the source of the articles that were analyzed was the Lexis-Nexis database, most of the articles did not have a page number. Many newspapers are now more focused on putting their articles on their websites. Evidently, in these times many newspapers are leaving behind the production of news on actual paper. So the lack of access to page numbers made it more difficult to address the variable related to defining the place of the story in the newspaper.

Another limitation was that many descriptors were located outside the coding range previously delimited by the researcher. The investigator decided that the unit of analysis would be any mention of “Assange” included in a newspaper article. The researchers coded only for the specific sentences containing the name Assange; this means that the units of observation were sentences (not paragraphs or entire stories). This coding scheme caused the researcher to discard a lot of data because many times the descriptors appeared elsewhere in the story and not adjacent to the name of Assange. It is likely that the researcher was not able to find higher frequencies of framing as a result of delimiting units of observations to sentences. In a future similar study, the researcher would code for two different units of analysis. This would allow a broader spectrum for the coding of more data.

### *Future Studies*

The literature review for this study evidenced the lack of studies of media framing of Julian Assange. A vast amount of research has been done about the Wikileaks organization but not about Assange. As previously stated in this study, very few researchers have analyzed the way that media portray Julian Assange. As a result the analysis of media framing of Julian Assange represents a very attractive and innovative topic for investigators of media effects.

Future research of Julian Assange should definitely target social media. Given that Assange is closely associated with technology and free access to information through the web, it would be interesting to study frames of him in the social media. Blogs, for example, could be a terrific location to look for framing. Facebook and Twitter could also be attractive places to look for framing of Julian Assange given the amount of journalists that rely on these platforms to inform their audiences.

### *Conclusion*

The present content analysis replicated some of the findings revealed in previous research that assert that Europe is the continent that gives more coverage to Julian Assange. The geographical proximity with Assange and his legal problems with the Swedish government make him a controversial and attractive subject for coverage.

Simultaneously, this study provided evidence to suggest that the interest from the Latin America press in Julian Assange has increased since the Ecuadorian government granted him political asylum in their embassy in London. Without a doubt, Julian Assange will continue to be the center of media controversy, both for his involvement with the biggest information leak of

the last few years, and because his incessant efforts to liberate sensitive information to the public even from his confinement in the Ecuadorian embassy.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A: Descriptors*

<b>Descriptors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Refugee	23	1.0%
Hacker	15	0.6%
Fugitive	8	0.3%
Leader	7	0.3%
Victim	6	0.3%
Whistleblower	6	0.3%

*Appendix B: Frequency of Newspapers by Nation*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
United Kingdom	26	29.5%
Australia	17	19.3%
Spain	12	13.6%
USA	9	10.2%
Canada	3	3.4%
Mexico	3	3.4%

*Appendix C: Newspapers*

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<b>Paper</b>	<b>Nation</b>
The Age	Australia
The Australian	Australia
Belfast Telegraph	Ireland
The Christian Science Monitor	Ireland
The Courier Mail	Australia
Daily Mirror	United Kingdom
The Evening Standard	United Kingdom
The Express	United Kingdom
Herald Sun	Australia
The Independent	United Kingdom
The New York Times	USA
The New Zealand Herald	New Zealand
South Wales Echo	United Kingdom
The Sun	United Kingdom
The Times	United Kingdom
Wall Street Journal	USA
The Advertiser	Australia
Birmingham Mail	United Kingdom
Canberra Times	Australia
The Christian Science Monitor	USA
Daily News	USA
The Daily Telegraph	United Kingdom

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The Daily Telegraph	Australia
Daily Record	United Kingdom
Daily Mail	United Kingdom
Daily Post	United Kingdom
Evening Times	United Kingdom
The Guardian	United Kingdom
The Herald	United Kingdom
Hobart Mercury	Australia
The International Herald Tribune	France
The Irish Times	Ireland
Liverpool Echo	United Kingdom
The Nation	Thailand
The Northern Echo	United Kingdom
The Scotsman	United Kingdom
The Straits Times	Singapore
The Washington Post	USA
Australian Financial Review	Australia
Northern Territory News	Australia
South China Morning Post	China
The Western Mail	United Kingdom
Mail on Sunday	United Kingdom
The Observer	United Kingdom
Sunday Herald	United Kingdom
Sunday Tasmanian	Australia
The Sunday Mail	Australia

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The Sunday Times	United Kingdom
Sunday Herald Sun	Australia
Sunday Territorian	Australia
Sunday Age	Australia
The Sunday Telegraph	United Kingdom
Daily Mirror	Ireland
Los Angeles Times	USA
Sydney Morning Herald	Australia
USA Today	USA
The Daily Telegraph (Australia)	Australia
Evening Times Online	United Kingdom
The Express	USA
The International Herald Tribune	USA
Belfast Telegraph	United Kingdom
The Gazette	Canada
Jerusalem Post	Israel
The Toronto Star	Canada
ABC	Spain
El Comercio (Ecuador)	Ecuador
El Nacional	Venezuela
El Correo	Spain
Expansion	Mexico
Hoy	Spain
La Voz del Interior	Argentina
La Verdad	Spain

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La Rioja	Spain
Al Dia	Costa Rica
El Mercurio	Chile
El Comercio (Peru)	Peru
El Pais	Spain
El Norte	Mexico
El Norte de Castilla	Spain
Reforma	Mexico
El Pais (Uruguay)	Uruguay
El Mercurio	Chile
Diario Vasco	Spain
La Nacion	Argentina
Cordoba	Spain
El Mundo	Spain
Mediterraneo	Spain
Elperiodico.com	Spain

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*Appendix D: Coding Model*

**IDENTIFICATION VARIABLES**

**Id** – ID number of the story

Write ID number of the story

**Coder** – Write ID number for the coder

1= Meylin

2= Deidre

**Date** – date of publication

Enter actual date as mmddyy with no spaces or punctuation (ex. 071511 = July 15, 2011)

**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

**Paper** – newspaper name

Enter the name of the newspaper (ex. New York Times)

**Nation** - Nation where the newspaper is published

Enter the telephone code of the nation (ex. US=1, Canada 0)

**DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

**Tone-** general tone in the sentence containing the mention

(To determine tone, read the sentence containing the mention, then read the sentence before and the sentence after and read NO FURTHER. Then, decide the overall tone. If equally positive and negative= neutral, 2)

1= Negative (Clearly negative)

2= Neutral (factual or neutral)

3= positive (clearly positive)

**Story** – Story prominence (If story is just one paragraph, the lead is only the first sentence.)

1= In the body of the story

2= paired with graphic or photo caption

3= in the lead of the story (first sentence/first paragraph)

4= in the headline of the story (including subheads)

**Page – Page prominence**

1= inside page of newspaper (also if no page number is given)

2= section front of newspaper (ex. B1, G1, Business front page, sports front page)

3= front page of newspaper (page A1 only)

4= Not applicable

**Frame** – Adjectives or characteristics attributed to Assange

- Type the adjectives mentioned in the story (ex. Criminal, fugitive, rapist, illegal, arrogant, brave, hero)
- If no adjective is mentioned, then write 0 (zero)
- If there is more than one adjective in the same sentence, code the first one in the sentence.

**How to search in LexisNexis**

- Go to Advanced Search
- Search Terms: Assange AND asylum AND Ecuador
- Dates between: 8/16/2012 - 8/23/12
- By Type: Major World Publications
- Sort: Oldest to Newest

## VITA

### MEYLIN MENJIVAR ANDRADE

#### Personal Data:

Date of Birthday: Feb 01, 1984

Place of Birth: Santa Ana, El Salvador

Marital Status: Married

#### Education:

Bachelor's Degree in Communication, Universidad Autonoma de Santa Ana, 2009

Bachelor's Degree in English, East Tennessee State University

Master of Arts in Professional Communication, East Tennessee State University, 2013

#### Professional Experience:

Television Reporter, Telecorporacion Salvadoreña, 2006-2009

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