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Amanda Knox

A Content Analysis of Media Framing in Newspapers Around the World

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Communication

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Masters of Arts in Professional Communication

by

Deidre D. Freyenberger

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Dr. John King, Chair

Dr. Andrew Herrmann

Dr. Kelly Price

Keywords: Amanda Knox, Content Analysis, Framing, Newspaper

ABSTRACT

Amanda Knox: A Content Analysis of Media Framing in Newspapers Around the World

by

Deidre Freyenberger

Newspaper coverage can have a positive or negative impact on the image of an individual. This study examined the framing of Amanda Knox in newspapers published worldwide during the 4 years Knox was imprisoned in Italy. An American foreign exchange student, Knox was studying in Italy when her roommate was murdered. A content analysis of 500 major world newspapers was conducted. The study's purpose was to determine the tone, story placement, and page placement of each mention of Amanda Knox. Newspaper articles associated with the topic were retrieved from the LexisNexis database and analyzed.

The results showed that mentions of Amanda Knox were more negative in the United Kingdom and Ireland (25.9%). Story placement of Amanda Knox was more prominent in newspapers of Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China. Page placement of Amanda Knox mentions was more prominent in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China (14%).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the years, the media have become trustworthy sources of information for individuals around the world. The public searches for information about events happening around the world and the media is the primary source. It is important to understand the different ways the media frame prominent news information. The framing theory explains the media's influence on society. Tettah and King (2011) described the framing theory "proposes that how an idea, issue or personality is presented (framed) in the media influence how people think about that issue or personality" (p. 505). Individuals usually believe the media and form opinions based on information received from media sources regardless of whether or not the information is factual. According to Chyi and McCombs (2004), "the news media often reframe the event by emphasizing different attributes of the event, consciously or unconsciously, in order to keep the story alive and fresh" (p. 22). It is often the case that various media outlets have differing viewpoints on high-profile news stories.

Agenda-setting theory relates closely with media framing. The salience of an object (the importance of an object) increases the amount of news coverage about the topic (Chyi & McCombs, 2004, p. 22). The topic could be a public figure, an issue, or any other topic the media is focused on. News media can increase the importance of a news story by the amount of time spent reporting on the issue.

In 2007 people from all around the world became particularly interested in an international case involving then 20-year-old Seattle native Amanda Knox who was studying abroad in Perugia, Italy. According to CBSnews.com on November 2, 2007, Knox's roommate,

Meredith Kercher, was found dead in the house they shared (Timeline of Amanda Knox case, 2011). Images of Knox and her boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, emerged the next day of them kissing and going lingerie shopping after Kercher's body was found. After changing her story while being questioned, Knox confessed that she was home when the murder occurred. Knox and Sollecito were charged with murder in July 2008. At the end of 2009 Knox and Sollecito were found guilty on all accounts of stabbing Kercher and were sentenced to 26 years in prison even though there was little to no physical evidence linking Knox to the murder. However in 2011 the DNA evidence used to convict Knox and Sollecito was reported as unreliable and the murder conviction was overturned. Knox was set free and she returned home to the United States. The case received worldwide media coverage throughout the trial.

The media's framing of Knox while she was on trial has been discussed since the trial ended. Using the nicknames like "Foxy Knoxy" and "Angel Face," media all over the world portrayed her in various ways. It is important to examine the media's portrayal of Knox because individuals around the world are framed differently depending on their primary source of news. Thus, this study analyzed newspaper articles and examine the media's framing of Amanda Knox during the 4-year trial.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Amanda Knox Case

The Amanda Knox case was covered worldwide through many media outlets. The portrayal of Knox varied depending on the nation. The case was full of scandal and gained a massive following all over the world. Knox, a 20-year-old Seattle native, traveled to Perugia, Italy to study in September 2007. Two months later the body of Knox's British roommate was found; her throat had been slashed. Meredith Kercher's body was discovered behind a closed door while images of Knox and her boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, kissing and hugging were taken outside the house. The next day Knox and Sollecito were photographed shopping at a lingerie shop. The photographs were used against her and her boyfriend when questioned by the police. According to CBSnews.com, Knox was questioned for 50 hours over 4 days and Knox "finally implicated herself, signing a statement saying she was in the house when her boss, local bar owner Patrick Lumumba, killed Meredith Kercher" (Timeline of the Amanda Knox case, 2011). Knox, Sollecito, and Lumumba were charged with the crime and arrested. Lumumba was soon released when his alibi was verified.

Media went into overdrive when prosecutor Giuliano Mignini theorized that Kercher had been murdered during a "ritualistic, satanic sex orgy" (Timeline of the Amanda Knox case, 2011). Lawyers in the courtroom accused Knox as having two sides "one of which is angelic, good, compassionate and the other Lucifer-like, demonic, and Satanic" (Timeline: Amanda Knox trial, 2011). Furthermore, once the photographs of Knox and Sollecito were discovered on the Internet, worldwide attention had grown significantly. More and more people wanted to know who Knox really was - a sex obsessed, violent woman or someone who was being framed in

court and by the media.

DNA evidence was found on the knife that linked Knox to the murder and there was DNA evidence on Kercher's bra clasp that belonged to Sollecito. On December 4, 2009, the jury found Knox and Sollecito guilty on all counts in the murder of Kercher. Knox and Sollecito began their appeal process in November 2010. In June 2011 forensic experts told the court "DNA evidence linking Knox to the alleged murder weapon is unsound" (Timeline: Amanda Knox trial, 2011). The DNA linking Sollecito to the murder had been contaminated because it was collected 6 weeks after the murder and was inconclusive. On October 3, 2011, the Italian jury overturned the 2009 murder conviction of Knox and Sollecito and they were freed. Rudy Guede, a drifter, was charged with the crime of murdering Kercher. A vaginal swab was taken from Kercher and the DNA found matched Guede. Throughout the trial, images and opinions about Knox were visible all around the world. An international media frenzy developed during the 4-year trial and Knox was constantly framed in newspapers, magazines, and television broadcasts.

American Citizens on Trial in Different Countries

Amanda Knox has not been the only case in recent years where an American citizen was convicted of a crime in a foreign country. During the summer of 2009 three Americans were arrested in Iran. According to Torpey (2011), Josh Fattal, Shane Bauer, and Sarah Shourd were hiking in Iraq when they were arrested for crossing into Iranian territory and for allegedly trying to commit espionage (para. 2). They pleaded their innocence and there was no evidence to suggest that they were trying to commit espionage, but eventually they were officially charged with spying. Shourd was released in September 2010 on a \$500,000 bond for "medical reasons" while Fattal and Bauer remained in prison (Iran releases U.S. hikers, 2011). In August 2011 Iran

sentenced Bauer and Fattal to 8 years in prison for illegally entering the country and spying for the United States, however, Iranian President Ahmadinejad said that Bauer and Fattal would be freed on humanitarian grounds (Iran releases U.S. hikers, 2011). On September 21, 2011, Iran released the American's on a bail of \$500,000 each. This case that could have been resolved within a few days lasted two years and had a negative impact on United States – Iranian relations (Iran releases U.S. hikers, 2011). The rapport between the United States and Iran were already stretched thin and this case did not improve the relationship. The American media coverage of this event framed the story negatively toward the Iran government and Iran as a country (Iran releases U.S. hikers, 2011). This trial can be linked to the Amanda Knox case because all of the defendants were Americans charged with a crime in a foreign country, and each case had an impact on the media's framing of the event.

The analysis of media coverage of Amanda Knox from 2007 to 2011 includes several elements that need to be examined from previous literature. The factors to be addressed include theoretical effects relating to media framing and agenda setting. Framing is the underlying theory for this study and must be discussed.

Framing

This study is based on the framing theory of mass communication. Previous framing research describes how media portray news stories. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) explained that media framing is based on the notion that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an impact on how the audience interprets the story. The way individuals classify information also adds to the framing theory and framing is a macrolevel and a microlevel construct (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12). “As a macroconstruct, the term ‘framing’ refers to modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present

information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12). Journalists use framing as a way to reduce the complexity of the story. Micrconstruct explains how individuals use the information they receive to form impressions about the issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12). Each of these variables contributes to the public’s view of certain issues. Media has the power to generate a specific reaction from the public by the way the story is portrayed.

Framing does not have a one-dimensional meaning. According to Scheufele (1999), media and individual frames have to be considered when reading a news story (p. 106). Media frames are defined as a main organizing objective or story line that delivers meaning to events that are unfolding (Scheufele,1999, p. 106). Scheufele (1999) explained that by “viewing media or news frames as necessary to turn meaningless and nonrecognizable happenings into discernible event” can lead to the story being framed (p.106). The way in which news events are covered by the media can affect how receivers of that news come to understand the events. Recipients of a news story build their opinion based on how the news story was framed and their own individual frames. Viewers interpret and process information based on the tone of the news story (Scheufele,1999, p. 107). Reporters play an important role in the development of opinions among the public and when the focus is framed only negatively or positively toward the subject, the other aspects of the story are excluded.

Framing has been explored by various scholars and has been defined in various ways. According to Chong and Druckman (2007), an individual’s attitude has a major influence on how one interprets media. For example, if an individual hears a news story about the positives of having an abortion but has a strong belief against it, the overall attitude will not be influenced by how the story was framed. In addition to attitude, selection and salience are categorized within

framing. Entman (1993) explained that to frame a story is to “select some aspect 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” (Entman,1993, p. 52). The media highlight a certain piece of information about a main topic of a news story, which raises the salience of the issue. The term salience means “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audience” (Entman,1993, p. 53). An increase in salience improves the probability that the audience will remember the information. Information can be added or taken out according to the message that media want to communicate to the public.

To assist in the understanding of media framing, Entman (1993) explained four illustrations of theoretical debates in the study of mass communication (p. 56). The first illustration discussed is audience autonomy. One of the key concepts to the framing concept is the notion of dominant meaning. “From a framing perspective, dominant meaning consists of the problem, causal, evaluative, and treatment interpretations with the highest probability of being noticed, processed, and accepted by the most people” (Entman,1993, p. 56). The dominant meaning can be identified by a particular framing of a situation that is frequently mentioned in the text and is the most common opinion among the audience (Entman,1993, p. 56).

Next, journalistic objectivity is discussed. “Journalists may follow the rules for ‘objective’ reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news text that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation” (Entman,1993, p. 56). Because some journalists lack the understanding of framing, they can unknowingly impose their dominant frames on the news (Entman, 1993, p. 56). If they had a better understanding of the difference between “including scattered oppositional facts and challenging a dominant frame,”

they might be better prepared to build news stories that make each issue equally salient (Entman, 1993, p. 57). A better understanding of this concept could result in more balanced reporting throughout the media environment.

The next item discussed is content analysis. Entman (1993) stated that content analysis has “the major task of determining textural meaning” and the identity of frames in the media (Entman, 1993, p. 57). He warns that coders need to be aware of drawing conclusions about dominant meanings. Proper coding instruction and agreement can result in valid results about issues and the frames that are being portrayed in the media.

Public opinion and normative democratic theory is the final element mentioned. The framing of any topic can influence public opinion and this specific topic deals with the democratic process. Entman stated that democratic process could be influenced by how the issues are framed in the media (Entman, 1993, p. 57). Media framing can potentially have an effect on any issue that is portrayed in the media and framing has become a popular topic in research studies throughout the world.

One way that media framing has been studied is by viewing the theory as a process. De Vreese (2005) examined the communicative processes of framing. “Communication is not static, but rather a dynamic process” that includes frame-building and frame-setting (p. 51). De Vreese stated that frame-building refers to the elements that influence the structure of each news frame internally (De Vreese, 2005, p. 52). However, external factors are equally as important. “The frame-building process takes place in a continuous interaction between journalists and elites and social movements” (De Vreese, 2005, p. 52). This process is expressed in the text of the news story.

De Vreese (2005) stated that frame-setting refers to the “interaction between media

frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions" (p. 52). As previously mentioned, frames in the news can affect one's interpretation of the news story topic and frame-setting has been studied intently. "This part of the framing process has been investigated most elaborately, often with the goal to explore the extent to which and understand what circumstances audiences reflect and mirror frames made available to them in" (De Vreese, 2005, p. 52). Framing can have a large influence on society and research has shown that individuals are inclined to mirror the viewpoint of the media whether they are conscious of it or not.

De Vreese (2005) continued by stating that there are consequences of framing on the individual and the societal level (p. 52). "An individual level consequence may be altered attitudes about an issues based on exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions" (De Vreese, 2005, p. 52). Framing can affect the individual and public knowledge of a news topic, which makes it an important part of the Amanda Knox study.

Knox was portrayed in the media in two different ways. According to Burleigh (2011), reporters began to call Knox "an all-American psychopath with a pretty face masking a liar and a killer" (p. 1). News media began to use the nickname 'Foxy Knoxy' when mentioning Knox. According to BBC News, "a picture began to be painted of a 'party girl' who abused drinks and drugs and had an active sex life" (Joyce, 2009). Her looks began to be the main focus and the news media began to portray Knox in this unflattering light. Knox was also depicted as a victim of a twisted, crooked Italian judicial system. Knox was portrayed as an innocent American girl being held captive in an Italian prison. Knox's parents participated in many American television interviews to maintain Knox as innocent. As mentioned before, the initial framing of a person or object can have a positive or negative effect on the public's opinion.

Agenda Setting

When studying the media, framing is an important variable to consider and along with framing research, the agenda-setting theory of communication research should also be acknowledged. The two theories are similar in ways and differ in others; however, it is valuable to this study to understand, identify, and discuss both theories. The core principle of agenda-setting theory is that “the prominence of elements in the news influences the prominence of those elements among the public” (Carol & McCombs, 2003, p. 36). There are two levels of agenda-setting. The first level is concerned with the salience of objects (public issues, public figures, or companies) and the second level is concerned with the salience of the characteristics of those objects (Carol & McCombs, 2003, p. 38). The news media present an agenda of those topics and they also describe each one. The research for this study focused on newspaper articles. Newspapers can influence readers by whether the story is the lead story, front page versus inside page, or the size of the headline (Carol & McCombs, 2003, p. 37). The amount of repeated attention to a story can have the most powerful influence on the public.

Agenda-setting research has focused on a variety of topics, but one of the most commonly researched issues is how agenda-setting is used in political issues and campaigns. McCombs and Shaw have played a very important part of the advancement of the agenda-setting theory.

McCombs (1997) described agenda-setting as the “transmission of salience, not the determination of opinions pro and con about a particular issue” (p. 433). McCombs went on to say that news media do not intentionally or deliberately set the agenda for the newscast; however, the topics that are chosen to be the main focus in a news story can affect the opinions of the audience (McCombs, 1997, p. 433). Each news organization should be aware of the their

portrayal of each story.

Although McCombs's (1997) research is mainly related to political issues, he presented insight on how the public comes to an agreement on which issues are the most important and prominent. McCombs (1997) did mention that there are limitations to the impact that the media has on the public. He stated that, "The news media help to achieve consensus, they do not alone determine what the consensus will be" (McCombs, 1997, p. 437). The story could be a prominent piece on the media's agenda; however, if it does not resonate with the public, the story will not be published. "There are agenda-setting effects of news coverage, but these effects do not inevitably flow from news coverage" (McCombs, 1997, p. 437.) The news media and the public have a significant influence on the progression of agenda-setting.

According to McCombs (1997) there are four visions of agenda-setting that should be identified. These four visions describe "both what the agenda-setting role of the news media is and the professional views of journalists about what the agenda-setting role of the news media should be" (McCombs, 1997, p. 438). The first vision is called professional detachment. In short, this vision states that the main focus of a journalist is to only report the news and to stand apart from the public (McCombs, 1997, p. 438). McCombs commented that this vision challenges the understanding of agenda-setting because most of the time the news media cannot stand apart from the community. "Whatever the media do, they have an effect on the community they serve" (McCombs, 1997, p. 438). News media may try to objectively report the news; however, the community will still be interested and feel the effects of how the news was portrayed to them.

The second vision of agenda-setting is called targeted involvement. This vision moves toward the active end of the agenda-setting scale in that "investigative reporting and editorial campaigns actively seek to move issues onto the public agenda" (McCombs, 1997, p. 438).

These editorial campaigns and news reports have a specific topic, for example government corruption. “These are active attempts to set the public agenda and, moreover, to set a portion of the government’s agenda” (McCombs, 1997, p. 438). This agenda-setting vision attempts to set the community’s agenda as well as the government’s agenda.

The next vision is called boosterism. McCombs (1997) explained that this type of news coverage could seem like cheerleading (p. 438). “Economic development in a community, everything from the new jobs that can result from a business firm coming to the community to the expenditure of public funds for construction of roads and community facilities, is newsworthy up to a point” (McCombs, 1997, p. 439). However, at a certain point there should be a line drawn between publicity and newsworthy information.

The final vision of agenda-setting is called proactive agenda-setting. McCombs (1997) states, “these journalists believe that it is the duty and responsibility of the news media to ensure through proactive reporting when necessary that the key issues, situations, and opportunities do come to community attention” (McCombs, 1997, p. 439). McCombs continued by saying that journalists are privileged and that “the core assumption of public journalism and proactive agenda-setting is that this privilege should be actively used to benefit the public” (McCombs, 1997, p. 439). News media need to enhance the bond between themselves and the community through communication (McCombs, 1997).

Throughout the years, agenda-setting has been defined in many ways. Shaw (1979) explained agenda-setting in a slightly different way than previously mentioned. He stated that agenda-setting declares “people are aware or not aware, pay attention to or neglect, play up or downgrade specific features of the public scene” as an outcome of news media viewing (Shaw, 1979, p. 96). Agenda-setting of the media does have a direct impact on people’s cognition.

People have the ability to decide their viewpoint of a new story; however, the way in which the media report a story can influence the audience whether the people are aware of it or not (Shaw, 1979, p. 97). Shaw (1979) also mentioned that cumulation, as a media trait, is important to be aware of when studying the agenda-setting theory. Cumulation is the persistent usage in the press of a topic, trend, or theme (Shaw, 1979, p. 102). “Because of the repeated publicity given them by the media, the favored topics tend to dominate the attention of the audience” (Shaw, 1979, p. 102). The cognition of a topic is more prominent in an individual’s mind when that topic is repeated over a long period of time in the media.

Sensationalism is often one aspect of agenda setting that relates to the media’s portrayal of an individual. McQuail (2000) stated that sensationalism is used by the mass media as an instrument to gain attention and prompt emotion from audiences. Sensationalism generates a certain level of interest in a story by using language or graphics that are thrilling and shocking. Wanta and Hu (1993) conducted a study involving agenda-setting in relation to international news. Results showed that high degrees of conflict and stories that include Americans have the strongest agenda-setting impact (Wanta & Hu, 1993). During the Amanda Knox case, the international media was accused of sensationalizing Knox and broadcasting biased views about her.

The agenda-setting theory of communication provides important information to help us better understand how someone in the public eye may be portrayed by journalists all over the world. In the case of Amanda Knox the news media presented her in a way that was positive or negative depending on the view of the news organization. The public does have the ability to decide for themselves which view they will take on a certain topic; however, the media do have an influence on the agenda of each community.

Media framing theory and the agenda-setting theory of communication both provide an insight to how the media can influence their audience. To sum up these two theories, De Vreese (2005) explained that, “a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic. While agenda-setting theory deals with the salience of issues, framing is concerned with the presentation of issues” (p. 53). The main purpose of this study was to examine the media attention that Amanda Knox received and these communication theories play a significant role within the research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses

Hypotheses were developed through previous research and analysis and information obtained from the literature review. According to Kerlinger and Lee (2000) the definition of a hypothesis is “a conjectural statement of the relation between two or more variables. Hypotheses are always in declarative sentence form, and they relate – either generally or specifically – variables to variables” (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 26). A well-written hypothesis should make a statement about the relations between variables and have a clear implication for testing that relationship (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 26). There are three main reasons that hypotheses are important to scientific research.

Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stated that the first of the three reasons is that hypotheses are the working instruments of theory (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 27). “Hypothesis can be deduced from theory and from other hypotheses” (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 27). From a broad hypothesis or theory, it is possible to determine more specific hypotheses (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 27). The second reason is that “hypotheses can be tested and shown to be probably true or probably false” (p. 27). Researchers are concerned with the predictions of the form, “If A, then B” and the researchers let the facts establish whether the hypotheses are true or false (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 27). Reason number three is that hypotheses are powerful instruments used for the advancement of knowledge because they allow researchers to extend beyond themselves. “Although constructed by humans, hypotheses exist, can be tested, and can be shown to be probably correct or incorrect apart from a person’s values and opinions (biases)” (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 27). Each of these reasons help to explain the important relationship

between hypotheses and each research study that has been performed. For this study, the researcher formulated and tested four hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 measured the overall tone of the mentions of Amanda Knox within worldwide newspapers. The tone was recognized as negative, neutral, or positive. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) explained that the way a news story is reported could have an impact on how the audience interprets the story (p. 12). Taking this into consideration, the following hypothesis was formed:

Hypothesis 1: Mentions of Amanda Knox in United States newspapers will more frequently be positive than mentions of Amanda Knox in newspapers outside of the United States.

Hypothesis 2 examined the tone of mentions of Amanda Knox in worldwide newspapers. The tone was recognized as negative, neutral, and positive. Knox's roommate, Meredith Kercher, was from the United Kingdom and because of that reason the following hypothesis was formed:

Hypothesis 2: Mentions of Amanda Knox in United Kingdom newspapers will more frequently be negative toward Amanda Knox than newspapers outside of the United Kingdom.

Hypothesis 3 evaluated the story placement of mentions of Amanda Knox in worldwide newspapers. Story placement will be measured as body, paired with a graphic or photo, lead, or headline. According to Carol and McCombs (2003), "the prominence of elements in the news influences the prominence of those elements among the public" (p. 36). The story and page placement or prominence has the ability to influence the media consumer. Therefore, the following two hypotheses were formed:

Hypothesis 3: Story placement of mentions of Amanda Knox will be more prominent in the United States than in other nations.

Hypothesis 4 measured the page placement of mentions of Amanda Knox in worldwide newspapers. Page placement will be recognized as inside, section front, front page, or not applicable.

Hypothesis 4: Page placement of mentions of Amanda Knox will be more prominent in United States newspapers than newspapers outside of the United States.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine how Amana Knox was framed in newspaper articles around the world. A quantitative content analysis was conducted for this study. The main focus for this study was to determine the tone, story placement, and page placement of newspaper articles that mentioned Amanda Knox. According to Neuendorf (2002) content analysis has been a fast-growing technique in the world of quantitative research (p. 1). Neuendorf stated that content analysis “may be briefly defined as the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). The technique includes the examination of “human interactions; the analysis of character portrayals in TV commercials, films, and novels; the computer-driven investigation of word usage in news releases and political speeches” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). Content analysis is used in many fields as an effective instrument to achieve research goals.

Content analysis has been used as a research tool for many studies on a variety of subjects and topics. Ivory, Williams, Martins, and Consalvo (2009) used content analysis to determine if the amount of profanity in video games has an effect on the final rating the game is given. Using content analysis for the study “provides the most comprehensive analysis of profanity in video games to date as well as analyses assessing possible relationships between profanity prevalence and games’ ratings, sales, and platforms” (Ivory et al., 2009, p. 2). Another content analysis study researched the media’s influence on public perceptions of foreign nations. Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) examined network newscasts that had an agenda-setting influence (p. 364). By using content analysis as the research tool for the study, the researchers were able to test whether the media attention of foreign nations in the news influenced how important the

nations are viewed as individuals and whether positive or negative coverage of those nations influenced individuals' assessments of the countries (Wanta et al., 2004, p. 364). Content analysis has been used to study various issues focused on how the media can influence perceptions of objects or individuals.

Research Design and Coding

For this research, the researcher used the LexisNexis database to retrieve the newspaper articles used for this study. Data were collected from November 2, 2007 to November 2, 2011. This time period was chosen because the Amanda Knox case began on November 2, 2007. Although Knox was found not guilty and freed from jail on October 3, 2011, the end date of November 2, 2011 was chosen to give the researcher a precise 4-year time period from which to gather data.

The unit of analysis for this study was each mention of "Amanda Knox" and "Knox." Dependent variables for this study included tone of the mention of Amanda Knox (negative, neutral, positive), story placement of the article (headline, lead, paired with graphic, body), and page prominence (inside, section front, front page). Independent variables included the nation and the newspaper from which the mention was made.

Using LexisNexis, the researcher used two search items "Amanda Knox" and "Knox." These search items were chosen after searching various terms; they yielded the most relevant results relating to the goal of this study. The researcher examined major world newspapers for those mentions between the specified dates. After searching the terms "Amanda Knox" and "Knox," the LexisNexis search found a population of 835 articles that contained the unit of analysis. A simple random sample of 500 articles was produced using the online sampling source Research Randomizer (Urbaniak & Plou, 2011) to be certain that each article had an equal

chance of being chosen. The simple random sample of 500 articles was chosen and analyzed for this study. The number of mentions that were analyzed in this study totaled 2,339.

This study was an analysis of the independent variables nation and newspaper. The dependent variables were tone, story placement, and page placement. Positive mentions included those that portrayed Amanda Knox in a way that showed Knox to be innocent while negative mentions were those that criticized Knox and portrayed Knox as guilty of the crime. For example, the phrase "Amanda Knox is innocent of the brutal sex murder of a British university student" (9/3/2010, *Daily Mail*), was coded as positive. The headline "Jailed Killer 'Foxy Knoxy' launches bid for freedom" (11/25/2010, *The Express*) was coded as negative. The story variable measured where the unit of analysis was located in the newspaper story. The story variable could be located in the body, paired with a graphic or photo, in the lead, or headline of the story. The page variable measured the placement of the unit of analysis within the newspaper, for example, inside page, section front, or front page. *Chi-square* analysis with SPSS software was used to test each hypothesis.

Inter-Coder Reliability Analysis

Coding instruments used included the LexisNexis database and a coding sheet. Two experienced coders were responsible for coding the material. Trial rounds of newspaper analysis were conducted in order to assure inter-coder reliability. Exactly 30 mentions were examined during each trial. The trial sample of data collection came from newspaper articles outside the random sample generated for this project. Through three trials of newspaper analysis, a 100% agreement was reached on all variables except tone, which had a 90% agreement.

For this study two trained coders, including the primary researcher, participated in coding training sessions. The primary researcher provided the characteristics that were to be looked for

when analyzing each news story with the second coder. This was done in order to guarantee that both coders understood the variables to be coded. Once each coder was clear on what to look for when coding, each coder coded newspaper articles outside of the random sample produced for this study. The coding scheme that was used consistently throughout the entire project (see Appendix A) was used during the trial coding session. The coders examined the articles, and more precisely, the sentences and phrases in which the unit of analysis was found. Both independent and dependent variables were coded for each mention of the unit of analysis.

During the third and final training period, the coders reached 100% agreement on nation, newspaper name, story placement, and page placement. A 90% agreement was reached for the tone variable. Next, Holsti's (1969) formula to measure inter-coder reliability was applied to the coding outcomes. The Holsti's (1969) formula for inter-coder reliability explains, $2M/N1+N2$, where M is the number of coding decisions the two judges agree on, and N1 and N2 refer to the number of coding decisions made by each individual coder. For this study, Holsti's formula was applied to story and page variables, $(2(30)/30+30)$, and a perfect agreement was reached. When the Holsti formula was applied to the tone variable, $(2(27)/30+30)$, a .90 agreement coefficient was reached. With the number (2,339) of mentions for the unit of analysis applied, the level of significance for this study was set at .01.

Limitations

Newspapers were the only form of media used for this study. Future research might include other forms of media such as radio, magazines, television, news transcripts, or online news sources. The LexisNexis database was used for this study; however, there are limitations to using the database. The LexisNexis database limits the study because not all newspapers are accessible through the database. Even though LexisNexis has its limitations, it is important to

note that nearly 2.5 billion documents are available through the database, and approximately 15 million documents are added each week (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 219). “All databases are ‘full text searchable,’ meaning that the user may specify any word or string of characters, and due to the unique organizing patterns of the system, all documents containing that string will be located almost instantly” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 219). The LexisNexis database has proved to be a respectable tool to assist researchers. For this study, the unit of analysis, Amanda Knox, could have been mentioned using a different term. Amanda Knox and Knox were used for this study; however, different newspapers around the world could call the subject by a different name. Another limitation was that only English language newspapers were analyzed in this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Introduction

Chi-square tests, as well as frequency tables, were analyzed to test the different research questions. The results section includes the quantitative data gained from conducting the tests. The research questions are matched with the data. In some instances, variables were collapsed to limit the number of empty or low frequency cells.

Frequencies

The frequency data produced a general overview of the information obtained. This information is shown below.

A random sample of 500 newspaper articles was coded from a search that was developed using the search terms “Amanda Knox” and “Knox.” From these articles, 2,339 mentions of the unit of analysis (Amanda Knox and Knox) were coded. In the sample mentions were coded from articles in 34 different newspapers from around the world. The countries that the newspapers were published in were Australia, Canada, China, Ireland, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand, United States, and United Kingdom.

In order to eliminate low expected frequency count cells, each nation was condensed. United States and Canada were paired, United Kingdom and Ireland were paired together, and Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China were grouped together. These groupings were applied to tone, and story placement of Amanda Knox mentions.

For the chi-square analysis, tone was condensed in order to eliminate cells with lower than expected frequencies. Neutral and positive mentions were combined. When mentions by tone were examined, a mention was considered neutral if it was not predominately positive or

negative. Negative mentions of Amanda Knox occurred most frequently in the United Kingdom and Ireland with 29%.

Story placement was condensed in order to eliminate lower than expected frequency cells for the chi-square analysis. Mentions that occurred appeared in a graphic or photo, lead, or headline of the story were combined. Results showed that newspapers in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China, mentioned Amanda Knox more prominently than other countries, 30.3%.

Once again, in order to eliminate low expected frequencies for chi-square analysis, page placement variables were condensed. Section front and front page were combined. The countries were also combined to eliminate low expected frequencies. Canada and the United States were paired together, while the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China were combined. Mentions of Amanda Knox were more prominent in North America with 14% of mentions being in the section front or front page.

Hypothesis 1

Table 1 illustrates the results of the first hypothesis: Mentions of Amanda Knox in United States newspapers will more frequently be positive than mentions of Amanda Knox in newspapers outside of the United States.

As shown in Table 1, the results did not support the hypothesis. Mentions of Amanda Knox in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and South Korea newspapers were more positive than mentions in the United States and Canada, 87.7%.

Hypothesis 2

The results of the second hypothesis are displayed in Table 1 as well. The second hypothesis stated: Mentions of Amanda Knox in United Kingdom newspapers will more frequently be negative toward Amanda Knox than newspapers outside of the United Kingdom.

As Table 1 shows, the second hypothesis was supported. Negative mentions of Amanda Knox were most frequent with 25.9% in the United Kingdom and Ireland newspapers.

Table 1

Frequency of Tone of Mentions

Country	Negative	Neutral/Positive
United States/Canada	52 (16.5%)	263 (83.5%)
United Kingdom/Ireland	484 (25.9%)	1385 (74.1%)
Australia/New Zealand/Thailand/South Korea/China	19 (12.3%)	136 (87.7%)

Note: N=2,339; Chi-square=25.196; df=2; p<.01

The nations were condensed to these countries pairings to eliminate empty or low frequency cells in chi-square analysis. Tone was also condensed to eliminate empty or low frequency cells. The nations were condensed to these countries pairings to eliminate empty or low frequency cells in chi-square analysis. Tone was also condensed to eliminate empty or low frequency cells.

Hypothesis 3

Table 2 displays the results of the third hypothesis: Story placement of mentions of Amanda Knox will be more prominent in United States newspapers than in other nations.

As Table 2 demonstrates, newspapers in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China, mentioned Amanda Knox more prominently than other countries. The probability was very close to .01 being .014. It is important to notice how close the probability is and it should be taken into consideration how close the frequency of story placement is to reaching significance. However, although it was close, the hypothesis was not supported because it did not reach significance.

Table 2

Frequency of Story Placement of Mentions

Country	Body	Graphic/Lead/Headline
United States/Canada	257 (81.6%)	58 (18.4%)
United Kingdom/Ireland	1455 (77.8%)	414 (22.2%)
Australia/New Zealand/Thailand/South Korea/China	108 (69.7%)	47 (30.3%)

N=2,339; Chi-square=8.542; df=2; NS=.014

Story placement was condensed to attempt to eliminate empty or low frequency cells. However, cells could not be reduced any further and, due to low frequency, results are not significant.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 measured the page placement of Amanda Knox mentions. Hypothesis 4 stated that page placement of mentions of Amanda Knox will be more prominent in United States newspapers than outside of the United States.

As Table 3 reflects, this hypothesis was supported. Mentions of Amanda Knox were

most prominent in North American newspapers with 14% on the section front and front pages.

Table 3

Frequency of Page Placement of Mentions

Country	Inside	Section Front/Front Page
United States/Canada	271 (86.0%)	44 (14.0%)
United Kingdom/Ireland/Australia/New Zealand/Thailand/South Korea/China	1998 (98.7%)	26 (1.3%)

N=2,339; Chi-square=151.046; df=1; p<.01

Page placement was condensed to eliminate empty or low frequency cells. Countries were also condensed to eliminate low frequency cells.

The next three tables are shown to illustrate the reasoning as to why the variables were collapsed to reach the final frequencies shown previously.

Table 4 shows the first tone table before the variables were collapsed.

Table 4

Frequency of Tone of Mentions (Noncollapsed)

Country	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Canada	24/28.6%	57/67.9%	3/3.6%
United Kingdom	464/26.2%	1190/67.3%	115/6.5%
Ireland	20/20.0%	74/74.0%	6/6.0%
Australia	19/19.0%	74/74.0%	7/7.0%
United States	28/12.1%	185/80.1%	18/7.8%
South Korea	0/0.0%	6/85.7%	1/14.3%
Thailand	0/0.0%	7/77.8%	2/22.2%
New Zealand	0/0.0%	30/88.2%	4/11.8%
China	0/0.0%	4/80.0%	1/20.0%

Note: N=2,339; Chi-square=49.211; df=16; p=ns

Table 5 shows the story placement of mentions of Amanda Knox prior to collapsing the variables.

Table 5

Frequency of Story Placement (Noncollapsed)

Country	Body	Graphic	Lead	Headline
China	5/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%
Canada	71/84.5%	0/0.0%	7/8.3%	6/7.1%
United States	186/80.5%	0/0.0%	24/10.4%	21/9.1%
United Kingdom	1383/78.2%	9/0.5%	223/12.6%	154/8.7%
Thailand	7/77.8%	0/0.0%	1/11.1%	1/11.1%
Ireland	72/72.0%	0/0.0%	16/16.0%	12/12.0%
New Zealand	24/70.6%	0/0.0%	5/14.7%	5/14.7%
Australia	68/68.0%	0/0.0%	19/19.0%	13/13.0%
South Korea	4/57.1%	0/0.0%	2/28.6%	1/14.3%

Note: N=2,339

Table 6 shows the page placement of mentions of Amanda Knox before the variables were collapsed.

Table 6

Frequency of Page Placement (Noncollapsed)

Country	Inside	Section Front	Front Page
Canada	66/78.6%	0/0.0%	18/21.4%
United States	205/88.7%	0/0.0%	26/11.3%
United Kingdom	1743/98.5%	4/0.2%	22/1.2%
Australia	100/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%
New Zealand	34/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%
Thailand	9/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%
South Korea	7/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%
China	5/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%
Ireland	100/100.0%	0/0.0%	0/0.0%

Note: N=2,339

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Summary of Major Findings

Based on the data and analysis conducted, two of the researcher's four hypotheses were supported.

Tone of Amanda Knox Mentions

The tone of Amanda Knox mentions during the 4-year process of the murder case was more negative in the United Kingdom and Ireland, 25.9%. This finding may be connected to the fact that Meredith Kercher, the victim, was from the United Kingdom. Because Amanda Knox was on trial for the murder of Kercher, the United Kingdom newspapers portrayed Knox in a negative way according to the findings.

Story Placement of Amanda Knox Mentions

Story placement of Amanda Knox mentions was more prominent in newspapers of Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, South Korea, and China. Mentions in these newspapers were in the graphic, lead, or headline of the story, 30.3%. The finding was not significant; however, it is important to take into consideration that the probability was very close to significance.

Page Placement of Amanda Knox Mentions

Page placement of Amanda Knox mentions was more prominent in newspapers in the United States and Canada, 14%. The mentions in these newspapers were on the section front or front page of newspapers in the United States and Canada. Because Amanda Knox was from the United States, that could have a connection with this finding. The Knox trial was a very high profile case and because she was a citizen of the United States may have fueled the media to report on the trial. The page prominence of a story does have an important influence on whether

or not the public is exposed to the framing of the story. Readers in the United States and Canada have a better chance of reading the story than those in other nations. The news story must be read in order for one to be influenced by the frame of the story and page placement plays a major role in how prominent a story is to the reader. Each of the hypotheses and the variables within them influence the framing of the story.

Future Research

Newspapers were the only form of media used for this research study. Other forms of media, which could be used in future research, might include radio, magazines, television, or online news sources. Additionally, there have been a few television movies and books written about the case that could determine how Amanda Knox was portrayed throughout the trial. As previously indicated, the unit of analysis “Amanda Knox” and “Knox,” might have been a limitation. Different newspapers could have used a different terms to identify Knox.

Only newspapers published in English were used for this study. Future research might include Italian newspapers. It would be interesting to see how the Italian media portrayed Knox throughout the trial. The only main individual involved in this trial who was from Italy originally was Knox’s boyfriend, Rafaele Sollecito. The tone of the media in Italy would be a thought-provoking study to research in comparison to the Amanda Knox research.

Future research might also focus on the gender difference in the media portrayal of Knox and her boyfriend, Rafaele Sollecito. Knox and Sollecito were both convicted of the same murder and had the same amount of prison time; however, Knox was the main focus of many newspaper stories and media attention. Several high profile court cases that have been reported on in the media have focused on the portrayal of women convicted of a crime. For instance, Debra Lafave, a Florida teacher, was accused of having sex with her 14-year-old student in 2004.

She was arrested and charged with committing a lewd or lascivious battery (Lafave case: a timeline, 2006). Lafave's attorney stated that she was "too pretty" to go to jail and after that statement the media referenced her in that way throughout the coverage of the case (Lafave case: a timeline, 2006). Another trial that relates to gender portrayal in the media would be the Casey Anthony case. In the summer of 2008 Casey Anthony was accused of murdering her young daughter, Caylee. Three years later Casey Anthony was found not guilty of murder (Casey Anthony trial: timeline of key events in the murder trial of the Florida mother, 2011). According to O'Neill (2011) the trial was said to be so appealing to the public because Anthony was an "attractive young mother" accused of murdering an innocent child (O'Neill, 2011, p. 1). Once again the media referenced looks of the defendant in a news story. The media have a tendency to focus on the attractiveness of women more often than men. It would be interesting to see if there is a difference and if gender had an influence on the portrayal of each person.

The main application of this study would be to assist media and public relations practitioners in understanding how their information could be being presented to the public. Reporters have the ability and often do change the wording of news stories that are presented to them by public relations practitioners. The results of this study showed that framing does frequently happen in news stories and it is important for practitioners to be familiar with this topic.

Media reporters could benefit from this study in understanding how to present a news story. Once newspapers receive newsworthy information, they should be aware of how to present the information without framing the news story in a negative or positive way. The stories should be without bias.

Studies focusing on media framing can be useful to any individual who is exposed to

different media forms. Future researchers should continue performing research on this topic and could compare the differences or similarities of media framing across the media platforms. The effect that media coverage has on the public and how the stories are framed is worthy of future research.

Although it may never be determined if the portrayal of Amanda Knox in newspapers had any impact on the trial itself, the main conclusion of this study is that the media do frame individuals and events differently throughout the world. Previous literature showed that there is a strong connection between the media and the opinions of the reader and how a topic is presented can influence ones viewpoint. Each variable tested had an effect on the others, for example: H1 looked at the tone of the mention but if the mention was not in a story that was prominently positioned in the newspaper, the public may not have been exposed to the story. Media framing will continue to influence the opinions of the public no matter what the news story is about. The results of this research showed that mentions of Amanda Knox were framed and positioned differently in newspapers throughout the world. There are still many ways that framing could be analyzed and media framing should continue to be the focus of future research.

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APPENDIX

Coding Instructions

Unit of Analysis: Each mention of Amanda Knox and Knox

Date: Between November 2, 2007 and November 2, 2011

Coder Name:

Date: Date of publication

Enter actual date as mmddyy with no spaces or punctuation (ex. 71010 = July 10, 2010)

Independent variables

Nation: Telephone code of the nation where the newspaper was published

United States – 1

United Kingdom – 44

Paper: Newspaper name

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

Dependent variables

Tone: Tone toward Amanda Knox and Knox in the sentence/phrase containing the mention

1 = Negative (clearly negative toward Amanda Knox)

2 = Neutral (factual or neutral)

3 = Positive (clearly positive toward Amanda Knox)

Story: Number describing the mention on the page where it was printed

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: Number of the placement of the story within the newspaper

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

2 = section front of newspaper (ex. B 1, G1, business front page)

3 = front page of newspaper (page A1 only)

4 = not applicable

VITA

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