

ABSTRACT

RENDON GOMEZ, HECTOR RODOLFO. News Media Narratives: Local, International, and Digital Frames of Mexican Elections. (Under the direction of Dr. Melissa Johnson).

This dissertation explores different streams of information available for the public in the digital age. It takes the case of the Mexican presidential election in 2012 to study frames disseminated by formal news outlets and social media users. This work is also interested in communicative patterns and practices identifiable through the analysis of the different discourses linked to presidential candidates. The methodological approach used for this dissertation is based on a mixture of traditional/manual content analysis, computer-assisted content analysis, and social network analysis. Due to the differences found in content published in traditional newspapers and social media platforms, the specific method used for each chapter needed to be adapted depending on the nature of the data.

The case study employed here takes the frames attached to each Mexican presidential candidate in 2012 to explore the relationship between media and political power. To achieve the latter two different datasets were obtained. The first one is the news stories about the four candidates produced during the three-month period of the campaigns previous to the election. The second dataset is a sample of Twitter posts published during the previous month of the 2012 election. To obtain a more complete picture of the frames available on different media platforms in a globalized environment, the first dataset includes news stories from eight newspapers published in two countries with a strong social, economic, and cultural relationship—Mexico and the United States. Also, both datasets are analyzed from a bilingual perspective—Spanish and English.

The social network analysis is based on the Twitter dataset. It takes three main features of tweets to analyze the network distribution for each one of the presidential

candidates: (1) locations voluntarily provided by Twitter users to study the relevance of international, regional, and local networks; (2) hashtags provide a concentration of topics social media users are interested in and have been useful in the past to understand media frames on digital media; and (3) the text included in tweets to establish discursive connections between the candidates and the main frames disseminated through Twitter.

This work intends to highlight the importance of media in the construction of accountable and democratic institutions in the Mexican context. Another main objective of this dissertation is to provide an updated version of content analysis that considers both traditional and digital media, with the addition of social network analysis. This would allow researchers to conduct studies that attempt to explain media framing from a comprehensive point of view. The media landscape we have in the information age demands an updated approach to content analysis and this work is an honest effort in that direction.

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News Media Narratives: Local, International, and Digital Frames of Mexican Elections

by
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DEDICATION

To Etna, for all the smiles. To my son Maximiliano, for helping me rediscover the world. To my mother, Marina, for her courage to raise three children on her own. And to my brothers, Piter and Arturo, for believing in me as I believe in them. /

Para Etna, por todas las sonrisas. Para mi hijo Maximiliano, por ayudarme a redescubrir el mundo. A mi madre, Marina, por su valor para hacerse cargo de tres hijos sola. Y para mis hermanos, Piter y Arturo, por creer en mí como yo creo en ellos.

BIOGRAPHY

Héctor Rendón was born in Mazatlan, Mexico, in 1982. His family moved to Mexico City when he was still very young. When he was 19 years old he traveled to Moscow, Russia, to take courses of international journalism during one academic year. Then he went back to finish his college career and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Communication at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). After working for a few years as a journalist, he went to Bremen, Germany, to study the Master of Arts program in Digital Media at the University of the Arts. His master studies were supported by a scholarship granted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). After graduating in 2009, once again he went back to Mexico and continued working as a journalist for a few more years. He then decided to pursue his doctoral studies and obtained a Fulbright-García Robles scholarship from the U.S. Department of State and the Mexican government. In 2012 he joined the Ph.D. program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media at North Carolina State University.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Mexican presidential elections have had a profound effect in the country's political and social life since the beginning of the 21st century. The year 2000 brought about what was widely seen as a democratic shift after 70 years of political dominance by the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI). Vicente Fox, from the National Action Party (PAN), was a figure able to transmit a message about political change among the Mexican public. People bought the idea and ousted the PRI from the presidential office in the 2000 election.

However, disenchantment came about very quickly. Fox and his government did not produce the political, social, economic, and cultural transformations the nation was expecting. Corruption, violence, lack of government accountability, and other deep-rooted problems in the Mexican society continued to be a serious issue. In some cases the situation got even more problematic after the PAN party took office. Murders related to drug violence, for instance, have increased significantly since the so-called democratic transition of the Latin American country (Sabet & Rios, 2009).

In this context, Mexico's media outlets have been at the center of the discussion either for having issues related to self-censorship (Lara-Méndez et al., 2011; Anduaga, Noriega, & Alvarado, 2015) or for historically playing along with the federal government to decrease news coverage about national problems (Avilés Fabila, 2007). Since several decades ago, the political entanglement between media owners and politicians has encouraged the general public to raise important questions about media framing and media bias (Trejo Delarbre, 1996). The most recent and resounding case has been that of the current Mexican president, Enrique Peña Nieto, who after 12 years of PAN rule won the presidency

back for the PRI party in 2012. Peña's close relationship with the owner of the biggest media conglomerate in Mexico and Latin America—Televisa—and his marriage to an actress working for that same company generated questions about the interests embedded in the broadcaster's news stories (Islas & Arribas, 2012). At the core of this issue is a desire from the Mexican society to construct a nation that serves the interests of the general population.

With the advent of digital tools and the dissemination of contrasting opinions, Mexico like much of the rest of the world has witnessed the emergence of a more critical society that is less afraid to speak out about political, economic, cultural and social issues (Candón-Mena, 2013). The country's newspapers, TV and radio stations, political magazines, and digital news outlets are challenged on a daily basis by common citizens who use social media platforms to produce and consume information. The lack of trust in politicians (CNN México, 2015) and in media outlets from the establishment (INE, 2014) has helped create a perfect storm to allow social media platforms to become a relevant source of information for as many as 50 million Mexicans (AMIPCI, 2015a, 2015b). Today more than ever the role of news stories and their contribution to society is being scrutinized.

Media framing of specific situations or public figures has an effect on how people perceive these issues (Entman, 2007). The different frames reveal the interests inserted in media platforms and their discourse. And ultimately this might have an impact on the distribution of power. In that sense, the frames disseminated by media platforms during an important period of time like the presidential campaigns would affect who is going to be the next president of a country (Miller, Andsager, & Riechert, 1998). For that reason, the current state of Mexican media and the nation's political context calls for a comprehensive analysis

of the discourses the public can find out there. This way, it is possible to identify the role played by the various media entities during key political events, like presidential campaigns and national elections.

The first two types of entities relevant for this case have already been mentioned: national media with high circulation—with wide national reach—and popular social media platforms. In addition to these, the international dimension also plays a significant role when it comes to shaping national frames in Mexico, especially because it has been estimated that 33.7 million Mexicans—or people of Mexican origin—live in the United States (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). That number is equivalent to about 25% of the whole current population of Mexico (Tenorio, 2015). U.S. residents who were born in Mexico still can vote in Mexican elections, although it has been found that the Mexican process to vote in foreign countries is particularly complex (Johnson, Davis & Cronin, 2009). International communication practices in a globalized world have become as relevant as the messages transmitted through national infrastructures. In most cases it is difficult to distinguish among the local, the national and the international structures (Wiley, 2004).

Historically the United States has been Mexico's closest social, economic, geographic, political, and cultural partner. A powerful media system like the one built in the U.S. has a special treatment for anything related to Mexico (Rendón & Johnson, 2015). Even though the U.S. society has been known for not paying attention to international issues (Aguayo, 1998), Mexico and Mexican-related topics are common media subjects. Therefore, a media system like the one based in the U.S. can provide an international perspective on how Mexican political aspects are framed at the international level.

Another dimension of discourses available for the public in relation to Mexican political issues is the international discourse disseminated through social media. Because English is the most pervasive language for international matters, it makes sense to analyze the variations in content of social media communicating in English in comparison to social media messages written in Spanish—Mexico’s most widespread language.

Political life and public deliberation in Mexico seem to be experiencing crucial times. Attempts to help the public make informed decisions are necessary at all fronts to consolidate democracy as a system where government officers work for the public’s benefit and not for personal gain. This study intends to contribute in this direction and the goal is to help the public understand the implications of the different media discourses at hand and the power interests embedded in them.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes six chapters. The case study is the coverage of the 2012 Mexican presidential election in Mexican and United States newspapers, and on digital media.

Briefly speaking, the first part of this work includes the lists of tables and figures produced with the data obtained for this study. This chapter—Chapter 1—offers a review of the literature, which is mainly interested in content analysis, international communication, media frames, and social network analysis. Chapter 2 focuses on a bilingual content analysis of newspapers based in Mexico and the United States; it explores the differences in coverage regarding each one of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates and the variances of coverage between the two countries. Chapter 3 includes a bilingual content analysis of

Twitter content related to the Mexican election; it also analyzes the frames produced by social media users about each candidate. Chapter 4 is a social network analysis where geolocated tweets are used to determine the geographic and political implications tied to the scope of the discourses available on this platform. Chapter 5 discusses and compares the bilingual content analysis of newspapers in Mexico and the United States to the content analysis on social media, while including at the same time a multi-scalar dimension added by the social network analysis. The final chapter includes the conclusions, contributions of this dissertation, limitations, possible future research avenues, and the list of references used for this study.

News Frames and the Construction of Reality

News stories have been extensively studied as an instrument of power to direct public deliberation related to political, social, cultural, and economic issues. For the purposes of this dissertation the term *news* is defined as a representation of a reality that attempts to provide one interpretation of the world (Carey, 2009). News does not talk about reality; it refers to a fractured and subjectified understanding of public life (Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2010).

Throughout the history of journalism, news stories have been scrutinized and criticized for being part of a media system that was created to advance the interests of certain groups (van Dijk, 1996). From an academic perspective, the study of journalism and its possible effects is relevant to be able to understand the circumstances in which a society distributes power (Entman, 2010). In this context news reports become important for political interests. Politicians—and the systems they are attached to—use news outlets to position

themselves and advance their interests among the public. They create a public persona through news stories: they frame themselves and present a benevolent picture to the audiences. Then they promote that frame through propaganda and news outlets and in some cases they achieve the necessary popularity to get elected for public offices. Once they are in government they continue framing their image as the best option the public could have taken (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996).

In most countries all over the world the purposes of propaganda are well known—politicians and institutions will always try to advance their interests—but journalists and news outlets are expected to follow professional standards that would prevent them from disseminating biased information (Entman, 2007). But since journalists respond to a media structure embedded in a system of political and economic interests, they follow the editorial line of their publisher. And publishers cannot exist without advancing their own interests as well (Lunt & Livingstone, 2012). That is why the *conservative* and *liberal* media dichotomy has been created in the United States (Alterman, 2008), or the *right* and *left* media in Mexico. Each outlet adjusts to a line where they can conciliate their needs with the needs of the political, social, and economic systems surrounding them. It does not come as a surprise to hear about the interests of news companies, as they play an important role in the power relations within a society.

In relation to this, academic research can provide a different perspective on the roles of media during specific historical events (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996). Previous research in this area has explored the correlation between the images of political figures distributed by media outlets and the public's perception (Johnson, 2010; McCombs, Llamas, & Lopez-

Escobar, 1997). Also, an expanded version of agenda-setting theory suggests that media focus has an effect on the public's understanding of issues (Wanta & Hu, 1993; Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004). Other studies suggest that effects of news frames are closely tied to belief importance and belief content, with the latter having a bigger impact depending on the individual's involvement with political issues (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012). Frames are produced with the intention of displaying certain attributes, while hiding other aspects of the same issue (Entman, 2010; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012). There is an open selection of qualities that are chosen to make a point from the transmitter's point of view.

By studying high circulation media it is possible to examine the kind of information the public is receiving. One clear example of this is the cascading effect. Entman (2010) studied the cascading effect of frames that are distributed from hegemonic institutions. For example, surveys create a dominant public discourse, and politicians who would disagree with a specific issue are afraid to speak out because the surveys would argue the contrary; this situation empowers even more the existent news frames (Entman, 2003).

According to Entman (2010), news frames have two or more of the following functions: 1) frames identify effects and problematize them, 2) they also identify causes of the issues, 3) they include and disseminate a moral judgment related to the figures included in the news frame, and 4) they propose solutions to the issue. From a general perspective, framing takes and connects specific aspects of a story to make this perception of reality more salient (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003).

Framing theory is also useful to explore how media content might affect public policy stances (Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012). This theory

has been used to analyze public policies and politics; it is in this area where it has been used more extensively. Social effects of framing have been found to be relevant. Even if a limited number of people in society or among the elites choose to reinterpret their schemas with new information provided through framing, this might be translated into an important impact on political power (Aguayo, 1998).

Policy makers and interest groups want to promote their positions over those of other groups. The information published by media outlets and their frames are closely linked to the sources they use within the stories, and how these sources are quoted. One example of this is Andsager's (2000) study about framing abortion policy in the U.S. during 1995-1996. Pro-life discourse was more prominent in most of the analyzed newspapers because pro-life sources were used more frequently in the stories, making this narrative easier to identify by the public in comparison to the pro-choice discourse.

In this sense, frames disseminated through media achieve success when they are able to link past events or narratives to a current situation. These are called "schemas" (Entman, 2010; Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Schemas are the previous knowledge persons have in relation to a situation; they represent the cognitive structures people have created over time, and frames provide a possibility to reinterpret people's understanding of reality through new information or to reinforce existing schemas.

In frame theory it is important to make a distinction between slant and bias, which are often used interchangeably. In news, slant refers to a political story that stresses a one-sided discourse and pays no attention to different perspectives of the issue (Entman, 2010). On the other hand, there are two types of bias: content bias, and decision-making bias. First, content

bias refers to the systematic dissemination of slanted frames that deliberately intend to generate a prominent discourse, thus helping advance the efforts of a specific group. And secondly, decision-making bias is related to subjectivity and how journalists' own understanding of the world affects the selection of information to be included in their stories. Considering this, slanted framing is a common media practice. And despite what many journalists believe, decision-making bias is a human condition that necessarily affects the selection of information and ultimately shape news stories. In relation to this, Entman (2010) found that in the first weeks of the U.S. presidential campaigns of 2008, news outlets labeled as liberal media—which are often associated with favor toward the Democratic Party in the United States—tended to distribute more positive frames of Republicans than of Democrats. This suggests that decision-making bias can be affected by the over-compensation produced by the editorial line of a news outlet.

Studies have shown that high frequency of frame dissemination plays a role to successfully positioning an idea among the public beliefs. But despite this, qualities included in frames are more effective with the public than the frequency of publication of the frame (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Other studies have focused on international communication in terms of how the U.S. media depicts other countries. For example, Wang and Shoemaker (2011) conducted an investigation to analyze opinion about China in the U.S. They found that the political environment in China acts as a predictor of media coverage of the Asian country in the U.S. media. Also, an increasing number of public relations contracts of China have improved the image of the Asian nation in U.S. news stories.

In frame theory, content analysis is the most commonly used method to explore how media portray a group or issue of public interest. Comparative content analyses between contrasting media systems have been produced in the past to understand how discourse about the same topic differs from one country to another (Benson & Hallin, 2007). This research explored the U.S. and French media news in the 1960s and 1990s to identify differences and similarities between the media systems in those countries. The study found that, in comparison to U.S. newspapers, the French press was more likely to offer a critical point of view about social issues and to include more civil society opinions. In Benson and Hallin's study *The New York Times* tended to present more prominently the opinions of the political elite than the ideas of other interest groups; this temporal analysis suggested that these tendencies remained with a similar nature from the 1960s until the 1990s.

A recent study compared Brazilian news stories, photos and telenovela scenes to explore how they portray people living in favelas—marginalized neighborhoods—(Rosas-Moreno & Straubhaar, 2015). Other studies have identified trust as an issue worth of exploring (Hopmann, 2015). In addition, Saperas and Carrasco-Campos (2015) explored the different ways to operationalize framing. The study took 50 papers that included framing theory published by the *Journal of Communication* from 2009 to 2013. They conducted a content analysis on those papers and found that there is a standardized way to do framing research. Later on this dissertation explains how framing research was conducted specifically in this case.

Mexican Elections and Mexican Diaspora as Media Topics

There have been several research efforts about media coverage of Mexican elections (e.g. Cantú, Díaz, Galarza, & Suárez, 2013; Flores-Macías, 2013; Schedler, 2009). One way to approach the study of elections is through geography. One analysis of political preferences in Mexico found that geographic location of voters is correlated to their political preference (Hernández-Hernández, 2015). Geospatial analysis tied to elections offers a different dimension to media and political studies. Territoriality in the context of political issues plays an important role to define the democratic life of a country.

After 70 years of PRI party rule, Mexico is currently experiencing a *semi*-democratic transition (Flores-Macías, 2013). The *transition* in Mexico from what the Nobel laureate Vargas Llosa (1990) identified as the perfect dictatorship to an authoritarian democracy (Meyer, 2013) has lasted 27 years already, from 1988 to 2015, with no signs of achieving a political system that the public can trust (Hernández, 2008). In the 1988, 2006 and 2012 presidential elections there were fraud accusations, all of them coming from the leftist candidate running for president at the time. Research has shown that in the case of the 2006 presidential election the fraud frame was fueled by the inconsistencies presented by the Mexican electoral system (Schedler, 2009). The ambiguity of the Federal Electoral Institute—the Mexican authority in charge of organizing national elections—gave place to a divided society. Some people believed the fraud narrative and others denied them, but the authorities did not present a thorough and transparent argument that would have dissipated the accusations.

Other studies about Mexican elections have been defined by geographic considerations and the scope of media systems. Ruiz (2015) explored how media affected voters' opinion in the city of Monterrey—an economic powerhouse for Mexico. Additionally, researchers have been interested in the validity of polls in the context of Mexican elections (Fierro Alvidrez, 2000). The analysis of political agenda is also important to understand common patterns in public communication. According to some scholars, Latin American countries with governments that share a similar political stand often disseminate comparable narratives through their media systems (Badillo, Mastrini & Marengi, 2015). In this case, Latin American governments identified as liberal share similar discourse characteristics through mediated communication.

With regards to transnational studies focused on Mexicans living in the United States, scholars have explored the post-national capabilities afforded by new media to politically enable Mexicans who live in a different country (Moreno Esparza, 2011). Study of Mexican migrants can be approached from the point of view that they can be engaged locally with their immediate physical space, but at the same time they can be related to a distant territory with the help of media technologies. This approach understands the public as transnational audiences with the potential to be socially, culturally, economically, and politically attached to territories that are not physically close. In these types of studies there have also been attempts to explore the notion of media platforms as generators of a fraction of what we call social reality (Carey, 1988; Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2010). News outlets play an important role in this constant construction of perceived threats and benefits in social and international issues (Holt, 2013; Scott, 2013; Valentino, 1999). However it is important to keep in mind the

limitations of media messages and news stories. As we mentioned earlier, news is not reality, but a representation of reality (Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2010). For Carey (1988), media are an aspect of communication, through which reality itself is constructed, repaired, or transformed. This understanding of news stories seems appropriate for the purposes of this work and for the purposes of news content analysis in general.

Scholars have also identified a shift in the way journalism is publicly perceived and the role of media (Tuñez & Guevara, 2009). In journalistic practice, events are turned into news only if they represent a discourse that is not normalized; i.e. news stories include a sense of novelty that contributes information that was previously unknown. Tuñez and Guevara (2009) argue that what media outlets consider news is highly defined by the geographic region in which they operate.

Methodologically speaking, several ways to study Mexican politics-related content have been utilized in the past. There have been efforts to conduct visual analysis (Johnson, 2010), to integrate visual analysis with textual analysis (Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2010), and to use computer-assisted content analysis to predict news flows from Mexico into the United States media (Johnson, 1997). Other studies have combined agenda-setting theory, content analysis and polling results (Alanis, 2013). In terms of methods where digital media play a role, there is a limited number of studies. A study focused on digital news outlets related to the Mexican elections in 2012 found that the strategic game frame was pervasive in comparison to the issue frame (Muñiz, 2015). And despite the emergence and growth of social media, television in Mexico remains the first source of news for political issues (Alanis, 2013).

However, in the specific case of the 2012 Mexican presidential election there were important differences between the main source of information and the preference for a candidate. Cantú, Díaz, Galarza, and Suárez (2013) conducted a study about exposure to news outlets and the connection with the individual's sympathy for a candidate. They found that those who said they only received news from TV supported candidate Peña Nieto more than any other group exposed to other media content, and showed the lowest sympathy for candidate López Obrador. In contrast, those who said only received their political information from internet sources said they preferred López Obrador, and among these media consumers Peña Nieto had the lowest preference.

U.S. Coverage of Mexico

Mexico and the United States share one of the most active social, cultural, economic, and political relationships in the world. Most Mexicans living outside of their home country live in the United States—33.7 million people of Mexican descent; also, there are more U.S. expatriates in Mexico than in any other country of the world (CIA, 2014). Mexico is the second largest economic partner of the U.S., just after Canada. The Latin American country buys more goods from the U.S. than China; and the U.S. is the main market for most Mexican products—75% of all Mexico's exports go to the U.S. (CIA, 2014). With the signature of the North American Free Trade Agreement—commonly known as NAFTA—in 1994, commerce between the two nations increased 300% during the first 10 years of the treaty (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005).

With the strong economic and social relationship between these two nations, an increase in the relationship is also expected in other areas of public life (Schmitt, 1995). Recent research has found a significant rise in academic studies related to coverage of Mexico and Mexican-Americans in U.S. media (Rendón & Johnson, 2015). This study explored the academic work produced about coverage of Mexico in the United States media from 1984 to 2014. The data suggests a correlation between geographic and cultural proximity and academic production about this topic. U.S. states with a high increase of Hispanic population in the past decades and border states seems to be a predictor of academic research related to this topic. Additionally, in the last three decades, academic production about media coverage of Mexico in the U.S. has seen four different phases. From 1984 to 1993, studies were focused on cultural traits portrayed by the media about Mexicans. That period of time saw a significant increase of Mexican immigration to the U.S. Phase I was defined as the Cultural Understanding Phase. From 1995 to 1996—Phase II—, academic research mainly focused on NAFTA issues, which makes sense since researchers attempted to explore anything related to the agreement signed in 1994. Phase III was described as the International and Cultural Integration phase. It was the longest of all the phases and lasted from 1997 to 2010. Here academics explored concepts about framing Mexico and the cultural integration of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. And lastly, in recent years there has been a shift in the focus of academic work. Phase IV is identified as the Threat Phase; from 2010 to 2014 the attention was given to media discourses that disseminated the narrative of Mexico and Mexican-Americans as generators of a dangerous position for the U.S. society (Rendón

& Johnson, 2015). In most of the studies included in this meta-analysis, newspapers were the main objects of study, followed by television and films.

Most of the research about coverage of Mexico in the United States media has been produced by academics working for public universities. The author's last name, another relevant factor of cultural proximity that has been found to have a significant impact on the production of academic research (Li & Tang, 2012), was irrelevant for this topic. In this case, a significant minority of studies was produced by academics based in Mexico or with Hispanic surnames. The study *Coverage of Mexico in United States media: Phases of academic scholarship* (Rendón & Johnson, 2015) intends to serve as a theoretical background for any research related to coverage of Mexico or Mexican-related issues in the U.S. media.

One of the most relevant findings of this investigation was that there has not been a single study that considers digital media as part of the media landscape that shapes public opinion about Mexico within the United States. This is an important gap of research about new media: No studies combine the concepts of traditional and digital media as a source for comparative studies. This is connected to the power dynamics in the media system (Castells, 2013). The lack of academic studies including digital media may be based on the difficulty posed by the transient nature of new media platforms and the sampling issues that this might produce (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009). Despite this, there are researchers who have suggested adapted methodologies to integrate new forms of discourses in media studies (e.g. Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2014). Most of the studies analyzed in Rendón and Johnson (2015) were focused on discourse analysis, threat narrative, news frames, and priming. Framing theory

research has increased significantly in recent years (Saperas & Carrasco-Campos, 2015). However, these kind of studies in relation to the Mexican context have not increased at the same pace.

The Decline of Foreign News Bureaus

In a context where mass self-communication (Castells, 2012) has become pervasive in highly connected societies, news companies are cutting back expenses to stay alive. Social media platforms allow previous consumers of information to become producers of stories—some scholars have defined this ambivalent position of digital media users as *prosumers*, which means being producer and consumer at the same time (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Other scholars have used the term *produsage* to explain the dual nature of social media users: they can be producers and consumers of information at the same time (Horan, 2013). Those user-generated stories on digital media have a global scope and many times challenge the power structures of media outlets (Castells, 2011; Entman, 2007). In this scenario news outlets that were considered dominant in the past have completely cut off their foreign correspondents. An instance of this issue is the newspaper *Chicago Tribune*, which since 2011 had zero foreign correspondents (Enda, 2011). Now it is common to find journalistic content in *formal* news outlets that was originally published by social media users. The relevance of digital media for the news industry is undeniable, both from positive and negative perspectives.

In the U.S. alone, foreign stories in newspapers have declined 53% from 1985 to 2010 (Kumar, 2011). This seems to indicate that national newspapers are focusing more on

local stories; they are trying to differentiate their content from the global nature of digital media.

The Washington Post is another instance of this decreased coverage of international issues. In 2012 this newspaper had an important number of foreign bureaus—16—distributed all over the world. However, 12 of those 16 offices employed only one journalist; and the remaining 4 bureaus had 2 reporters (Martin, 2012). In 2015 the situation for that outlet—one of the papers with the highest circulation in the U.S.—has not changed. It still has the exact same structure, with Mexico City’s bureau having the privilege of boasting two journalists.

The fact that *The Washington Post* still refers to sole journalists as entire bureaus is questionable. Martin (2012) suggests that newspapers are misusing the word *bureau*, because if one person does the job of bureau chief and reporter then it does not seem appropriate to describe these offices as foreign bureaus. There is a need in the case of traditional newspapers to publicly present themselves as international organizations, but at the same they have cut their expenses in international reporting.

In a similar way, the foreign correspondents writing within African countries for U.S. newspapers significantly decreased from 2003 to 2011. This tendency to cut international reporting is not exclusive to the U.S. media system. Excluding the BBC, since 1979 the British press has seen a harsh and consistent decline in the number of stories produced about international issues (Willmott, 2010).

Digital Media and Framing Theory

Social media and its communicative implications at the national level have been widely studied in recent years. A notable case is that of the so-called Arab Spring. Newsom and Lengel (2012) explored the use of social media during the social media revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. Their main interest was to understand the role of women in this context, which was found to be crucial to spark social unrest. Another study by Bruns, Highfield, and Burgess (2013) analyzed the networks produced by Twitter users who were using different languages. Using the case of Egypt and Libya the authors explored the interactions between users who tweeted in English, Arabic and a combination of English and Arabic at the same time. The intention was to determine the differences and similarities of these linguistically different networks on digital platforms.

Twitter has also been examined as an organizational tool and as a platform to disseminate frames regarding public issues. Burch, Frederick, and Pegoraro (2015) studied the frames posted on Twitter during the Vancouver riots in the summer of 2011. This content analysis found five different frames with which most of the tweets were aligned. In this context Twitter was conceptualized as a news platform with the capacity to have an impact on public opinion views regarding the issue.

Comparisons between social-media framing and traditional news outlets framing have been conducted as well. One example of this contrasting approach of traditional and digital media is an analysis of news about Edward Snowden (Qin, 2015). In this work the author employed a semantic network analysis and identified topical connections. This study also found the NSA whistle-blower portrayal in social media as a problem connected to privacy.

In contrast, traditional journalists linked Snowden's case mainly to national security issues. The framing of this figure was different in social media and traditional news outlets. This case is an example of the value researchers can find by doing content analysis using framing theory on a study that considers both social and traditional news media.

Another comparison of traditional news outlets and social media platforms involved frames about the Arab Spring exposed by a media system based on a different country. Chung and Cho (2013) used the case of the Arab Spring to explore the frames embedded in United States-based newspapers regarding the role of social media during the uprisings. This study suggests the recognition from traditional news outlets that digital networking platforms are tools that can induce political change.

A Content Analysis for the Digital Age

Content analysis has been largely used as a method to explore patterns of communication embedded in media outlets (Krippendorff, 2013; Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). For Krippendorff (2013), content analysis refers to a technique that studies a body of communication processes—they could be based on text, video, audio, images, computer systems—that allows researchers to make valid and reliable inferences about the context. In this method there are quantitative and qualitative procedures, but for the purposes of this dissertation the main focus is on a quantitative design, with an initial approach based on a qualitative analysis of the data. Riffe, Lacy & Fico (2005) have defined quantitative content analysis as the “systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods” (p. 18).

Content analysis can also be enriched by slant and bias conceptualizations. This is useful to explore framing as a tool used by media entities—either companies or individuals—that attempt to gain control of the power distribution and guide public deliberation focus (Entman, 2007). From a general point of view, content analysis usually has three possibilities to explore its object of analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). First, the *content* can be defined by a media platform and this can be taken as the main object of analysis. Secondly, content can be defined as a specific characteristic of the text that is of interest to answer a research question—e.g. place of publication, text length, etc. And thirdly, relevant *content* can be discovered as the researcher does the analysis of a body of communication processes. Riffe, Lacy & Fico (2005) explain that the corpus of analysis for content analysis is most often text-based, although in general any communicative practice can be explored with content analysis if the purpose is appropriate, that is the case of studies based on visual content analysis (Kazienko & Chawla, 2015).

Krippendorff (2013) also states that content analysis works best when it deals with questions related to the use of language. In this respect, he explains that one of the specific applications of this method is to conduct agenda-setting studies, or to answer something linked to how media agenda shapes public conversation. The latter is the approach taken for this dissertation.

In traditional content analysis reliability is related to the level of agreement coders have when they categorize the information in question (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). When doing manual coding researchers need to make sure that they design a study in such a way to avoid prejudices to interfere with the data interpretation (Krippendorff, 2013). But in the case

of a computer-assisted content analysis, reliability of the study is usually tied to its conceptualization (Sjovaag & Stavelin, 2012). As a general rule, a content analysis study—either manual or computer-assisted—can be considered reliable if it is replicated and delivers the same results. Validity, on the other hand, is tied to what is commonly known as *truth* (Krippendorff, 2013). Validity is achieved if the variables measure what the researcher says they measure. Face validity can be understood as *common truth* (Krippendorff, 2013) and this is achieved by making an argument to explain why a measurement is valid on its face (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). According to these authors, face validity is common in content analysis research.

In specific studies that have used content analysis methodology, there have been academic efforts to understand foreign news coverage and the role of social media sources in the stories published by news outlets (Van Leuven, Heinrich, & Deprez, 2015). This last study found that Belgian journalists covering uprisings in the Middle East—Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia—present important differences in terms of the types of sources employed in their reports. In the case of Egypt and Tunisia, Belgian journalists relied more on mainstream sources, whereas in the case of Syria they tended to include testimonies extracted from social media platforms like Twitter. The latter speaks at a deeper level to the social structures and limitations imposed in each one of those Arab countries.

In some cases, it might be worthwhile to do a thematic analysis along with a content analysis (Oltra, Delicado, Prades, Pereira, & Schmidt, 2014). Oltra et al. used a multi-lingual approach to analyze scientific content on the internet. The study used English, Spanish, and Portuguese web content to explore the frames presented on the web regarding nuclear fusion.

Additionally, topical analyses have been linked in the past to social network analysis (Choi & Park, 2015); the author of this last study created a visualization of the network topology developed by web communities by linking the interests expressed by internet participants.

Automated content analysis has been found to be reliable in the context of social science research. Scharrow (2013) conducted a study that involved a machine-learning content analysis and according to this research, statistical machine learning can be a valuable approach for communication research. The author used traditional coding for the training of the computer-assisted processes and the method offers a valuable procedure to link traditional and computer-assisted content analysis.

In a similar study, Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) proposed a methodology to conduct quantitative content analysis in the context of digital news outlets. This work used an automated computer-assisted content analysis and concluded that there is a need to adapt the methodology according to the nature of the digital content. In this case, they combined techniques used in traditional content analysis and automatic coding. The computer-assisted content analysis allowed the authors to handle large quantities of data.

Network Analysis in the Context of News Narratives

Social network analysis focuses on the structures and individuals that help produce communication intended to achieve a common objective shared by those who are part of the network (Castells, 2011). In this case, Castells refers to the network of a social movement where the nodes have a shared objective. From that perspective, social network analysis can be part of a study where human interactions and their mediated messages are at the center of

the inquiries. But this method can also be applied to explore linkages, disruptions, intentions, and patterns of human and non-human entities.

Rainie and Wellman (2012) define network as an organizational tool to comprehend how individuals, institutions, and machines interact with each other. In this sense, previous research has explored the potential influence of certain digital media outlets using hyperlinked networks of webpages (Weber & Monge, 2011). From this perspective, it is useful to apply social network theory to digital content that links to other sources. Weber and Monge (2011) analyzed information flows and connections between formal news outlets, but if this were to be applied in a social media context it would offer a different dimension to the way we understand the flows of information on social media.

In the past there have been efforts to integrate network and content analysis in a single body of research (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013; Xu et al., 2015). The use of Twitter as a source for publicly available information seems to be appropriate to create a geospatial distribution of different narratives that can be found on the Internet. Himmelboim, McCreery, and Smith's (2013) study found that there is a disconnection of groups with varied ideological postures. A group with a shared view about specific public policies is not exposed to contrasting opinions. But most importantly, this study found that the political orientation of social media users plays a role on what types of sources they use in their interactions. Conservatives in the United States tended to use blogs, whereas those persons who self-identify as liberals more often linked their posts to traditional news outlets. One possible explanation for this could be that conservatives might not agree with the content published by high circulation newspapers. In another study, Xu and colleagues (2015)

explored the notion of *hashtags* on Twitter as a way to find similarities and differences among user networks in this platform. The authors found that this is an efficient way to find clusters that share a common narrative.

The duality of production and consumption of information has been analyzed in the context of semantic network analysis applied to social media discourses. Horan (2013) took more than 2 million tweets to explore user activity and the sorts of news they were referring to. This research suggested that users who share hard news have a tendency to be producers, while those interested in soft news were inclined to assume a consumer position.

Other authors have suggested that network analysis can provide a different dimension to agenda setting research. Schultz et al. (2012) argue that semantic network analysis adds a third level to agenda setting theory: network agenda building. This study involved a computer-assisted content analysis of 3,700 news articles and 126 press releases to identify the different frames in the United States and the United Kingdom in relation to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico during 2010. By analyzing concepts as a network, it was found that the wording in the press releases was successful in transferring BP-generated frames to news articles, thus displaying BP as a company not being responsible for the spill and to present an understanding corporation that would take care of the issue.

A Case for a Combined Bilingual Content and Social Network Analysis in an International Context

Nation states and their relationship to other countries and/or cultures tend to be determined by the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Media outlets play an

important role to convey messages to the public and affect their perception. Language is not a reflection of an objective reality, language actually creates that objective reality (Vatz, 1973). In this respect, media discourses become relevant for what Bitzer (1968) identifies as the rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation is a specific context that produces exigence for someone—or an institution—to speak out and affect the circumstances. Thus, news organizations that transmit government bulletins only will be aligned with the persuasive intentions of those in power, whereas independent news outlets are believed to be aligned with what is perceived as the public interest. In rhetorical terms, exigence can be understood as *kairos*: speak at the right moment in the right way to achieve persuasion (Bitzer, 1968). In this context the use of content and network analysis would be appropriate.

In order to understand how two societies currently generate narratives, exchange information and build a system of beliefs of one another, there are several factors to be considered. The first of them is the public discourse disseminated through established media organizations. The content published by news outlets is a representation of institutional, social, cultural, economic, and political desires. Secondly, in the time of mass self-dissemination, social media play a role in the construction of reality as well (Castells, 2011). Therefore, to explore discourses in the context of international communication, a bilingual content analysis is a useful tool. Along these lines, it cannot be ignored that infrastructure availability, network barriers, connections and disconnections are also fundamental to analyze streams of information. Additionally, the physicality of nations is different in a digital context. For that reason, with the exception of isolated nations, the geographic borders are not the same borders for digital media. Digital content has a different set of constraints

based more on infrastructural availability. Then, the study of content flows embedded in globalized networks is also useful to explain how a topic is being conceptualized around the world.

Traditional media studies tend to approach content from a static viewpoint, whereas digital media imply a changing nature. The fleeting flows of digital media produces a complex scenario for researchers (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012; McMillan, 2000). That is perhaps the main challenge of this time when it comes to conduct content and network analysis in the digital age. The content, the narratives, and the nodes fluctuate from one position to another in a physical and conceptual sense. It is a major difficulty to chase, find and stabilize the object of analysis. But as paradoxical as it may sound, this is also one of the most valuable assets of digital media research.

A relevant challenge in the type of research pursued in this dissertation is to conciliate the different ideological approaches to networks and territorialities. On one hand, Rainie and Wellman (2012) explain the networks and information flow as primary elements that affect our perception of reality, and this perception can lead societies to revolutions that in theory would benefit the masses. But on the other hand, other scholars have a different take on networks (Galloway & Thacker, 2007). For them, networks include an ambivalent essence. They are mechanisms of control managed by distributed entities, and at the same time they can be used to fight control. Digital networks are channels for effective communication, and at the same time they are also an efficient mechanism for dominance and surveillance. From this perspective, those looking to modify power distribution should take advantage of the vulnerabilities embedded in networks.

Another important challenge for international communication studies mixed with digital media is the definition of nation. Carey (2002) reminds us that the nation is a relatively new political system in comparison to other forms of social organization; the nation-state has been around only for the last 350 years. Prior to nations people were organized in religions, civilizations, empires, and kingdoms. For Carey, in the modern era, nationalism has become a pervasive form of ideological bonding. From a traditional point of view, a nation can be understood as a territory that is articulated in cultural terms as imagined communities (Anderson, 2006). This defines physical boundaries, social interactions, economic dynamics, political systems, and communication practices—e.g. freedom of speech and censorship. In this conceptualization a nation is most of the time something palpable; it carries a physicality linked to the limitations of the human body. Then, nations are constrained by time—they exist at a point in time—and space—borders as a political institution.

If a traditional definition of a nation entails physicality—government buildings, a constitution, public officers, etc.—in the digital revolution the nation becomes an intangible moving object and concept. Someone who lives in a territory, within the boundaries of a country, is not necessarily *living* in that nation. Thus, with media technologies nationality and nation become constructs generated by individual experiences and made possible by communication networks (Wiley, 2004; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). It can be understood that with the digital, nations—or any sense of belonging to a social group—experience a modification of time and space; then, nations and nationality could be approached as contextual constructs that cannot be taken for granted.

The way the conceptual challenge of nation and nationality is address in this dissertation is by including these two terms as part of the technological framework that enables communication. It cannot be ignored that the nation-state is not a fixed concept. But even though the understanding of the nation-state has been modified by digital media tools, countries still set the context for media systems to exist, i.e. national governments provide and regulate a legal system, infrastructure, and physical channels in which digital and traditional communicative practices take place. For that reason, in studies involving digital media and international communication, the nation-state can be studied as part of the technological network that affects communication flows and patterns.

Methodological Overview

This dissertation employs a mixed methods approach. Given the different nature of traditional press and social media it seems appropriate to include the methodological details in each chapter. This is an effort to avoid confusing the reader and an attempt to emphasize the contrasting conceptualizations involved in each stage of this work that, ultimately, comprise a single body of research. Also, this organizational structure seeks to prevent the reader from attempting to apply a methodology created for a specific chapter to the rest of this dissertation. For that reason each chapter includes its own methodological definitions, sample description, procedures, and operationalization. By doing this it is also expected to offer an analogy of the intricate ways of research that includes media narratives with different natures to make sense of public deliberation with a more comprehensive approach.

The main methods used in this dissertation are content and social network analyses. Content analysis is useful to explore the different frames about the candidates and disseminated through mediated communication. The main theoretical framework for content analysis in this research was taken from Krippendorff's (2004), Entman's (2007, 2010) and Riffe, Lacy, & Fico's (2014) conceptualizations. The social network analysis in this work offers visualizations and frequencies of frames about the same candidates on social media. The main concepts for the social network analysis were borrowed from Castells (2011, 2012), Kazienko and Chawla (2015), Himmelboim, McCreery, and Smith (2013), and Rainie and Wellman (2012). The objective of this mixed methodology is to explore communication practices and power distribution from a comprehensive point of view.

Specific instruments to process and code large amounts of data were developed specifically for this dissertation. This allowed the customization of the tools to process content published by newspapers and social media in Spanish and English.

Chapter 2, as defined in the organizational structure section presented before, includes a bilingual content analysis of four traditional and high-circulation newspapers based in Mexico—(*El Universal*, *La Jornada*, *Reforma* and the financial newspaper *El Economista*)—and four traditional and high-circulation newspapers printed in the United States—*Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the financial publication *Wall Street Journal*. The sample in this chapter includes 2,046 news stories published in Mexico and 72 stories disseminated by U.S. news outlets about the four presidential candidates in the 2012 Mexican election. These stories were explored with manual and computer-assisted content analysis techniques. The specific construction of the

sample, the coding procedures, and the operationalization of the research are explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Similarly, Chapter 3 includes a bilingual content analysis of social media posts written in Spanish and English. The sample was obtained through the Internet Archive—www.archive.org—which acts as a general repository of internet content. Every month this platform provides a *spritzer* version of Twitter, which means that they build a random sample that includes 1% of all tweets published all over the world. The monthly file for the month prior to the 2012 Mexican presidential election was downloaded. The 40 GB files were coded in JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) format, and to make them manageable as a database a script written in Python was developed. This allowed the files to be converted to Comma-Separated Values (CSV) files. Then the files containing tweets for each day were merged also using computer-assisted tools. After this point a general search per day was conducted to isolate all the tweets containing mentions of either one of the four presidential candidates. A daily database during the month of June 2012 was created for each candidate. Then a manual content analysis was performed to identify frames linked to the candidates and a computer system was trained to then conduct a computer-assisted content analysis that covered all 11,066 tweets that were identified as being related to the Mexican election. A more detailed explanation of this methodology is included in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is a social network analysis that takes the Twitter databases used in Chapter 3 and linked to each presidential candidate. In network analysis we can take as sample the myriad of individuals or artifacts connected through communication infrastructures (Castells, 2011, 2012). In this case we take tweets and some of the features included in them as the

main elements for the social network analysis. Locations, hashtags, links, and the text of each tweet were isolated by candidate to identify the most relevant components embedded in them as a general body. Computer software was used to identify the word frequencies, which was useful to identify the most relevant locations, hashtags, and links. Once the main locations were identified they were divided into three different dimensions: international networks, regional/state networks, and local/city networks. Using a Geographical Information System (GIS) all locations were deployed on a map to create visualizations of the different networks connected to each candidate. This permitted the exploration of similarities and differences in international, regional, and local network composition for each candidate. Additionally, a manual content analysis was conducted on a sub-sample of tweets to identify recurrent hashtags and topics related to each candidate. Then word frequencies were also run to confirm the frequencies and main hashtags tied to each candidate.

Chapter 5 is a comparative analysis that includes all the elements explored in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. It amalgamates relevant data and frames identified in newspapers and social media. It also integrates the insights provided by the social network analysis to attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of the 2012 Mexican presidential election from a communication perspective.

General Research Questions

Each chapter has areas of interest that produced specific inquiries, but there are overarching research questions that transcend the nuances of dealing with different methodologies. In this sense, the most important things to ask in the context of national—Mexican media—,

international—media outlets based in a foreign nation—, and digital —social media platforms—framing of Mexican presidential elections are the following:

RQ1. What are the frames that can be found in national, international, and digital narratives linked to the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates?

RQ2. What are the main differences in frames found in Mexican newspapers regarding each one of the candidates?

RQ3. What are the main differences in frames found in United States newspapers in connection to each one of the candidates?

RQ4. How does framing of Mexican presidential candidates in national news stories differs from frames disseminated in United States news outlets?

RQ5. What are the main frames written in Spanish on Twitter in connection to each one of the candidates?

RQ6. What are the main frames written in English on Twitter in connection to each one of the candidates, and how does this compare to the frames disseminated in Spanish on the same social media platform?

RQ7. What are the main locations linked to each candidate on social media at the international, regional, and local levels?

RQ8. What are the geographic areas producing most information regarding Mexican elections?

RQ9. How do newspaper frames compare to frames disseminated by social media users?

RQ10. What are the main connections between the results of the content and social network analysis to the actual results of the 2012 Mexican presidential election?

CHAPTER 2: Newspaper Coverage of Mexican Elections, A National and International Approach

In this dissertation international communication is defined as the study of media systems placed in two or more countries with dissimilar cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002). It is important to establish the differences between international communication and intercultural communication, which are often confused. While the two areas of study deal with values and belief systems, international communication is focused on the study of communicative exchanges across borders between two media systems that respond to a specific political context, and intercultural communication is based on the interchanges between individuals who belong to different cultures (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002). For that reason international communication is usually explored from a mass-media point of view, and intercultural communication is researched based on interpersonal communication theories. International communication has been historically interested in the processes that consider media systems as a whole and the macro structures that affect information flows across political and physical borders. This work takes this as the main framework for this chapter.

International communication affirms that this type of research is relevant because information transmission affects the way a society perceives other nations (Aguayo, 1998; Gudykunst & Mody, 2002; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). The relevance of this area has increased since a globalized environment has changed the shape of media; through news organizations, individuals from different societies produce a certain understanding of each other, especially when they lack direct contact (Wu, 1998).

According to Gudykunst & Mody (2002), the main subject of analysis in international communication is the interaction of two or more nations connected through media platforms. By analyzing media structures, messages, information flows, and their networks it is possible to explore topics such as media imperialism and cultural impositions. One example of this is the study of news agencies and their content. These media entities—like the Associated Press—started with the telegraph and the radio, and over time were able to dominate the international flow of news, which allowed them to impose the Western understanding of the world in other countries (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002).

In addition, international communication studies tend to have as their main objective the production of understanding between different countries. Scholars have suggested that the most important questions in international communication research should focus on understanding more about the entities in control of the information dissemination and their purposes. For that reason, the main source of inquiry in international communication, at least since the 1920s, has been tied to the question of power: who holds it, how is it transferred, and how is it represented through objectified words, images and sounds. When international communication is discussed, we are dealing with societal structures and institutions that promote some concepts and arbitrarily set barriers for contrasting views. By doing so, public institutions encourage a national value system that works both to define national and foreign identities. These frames are expanded through media technologies and make their way to the public beliefs.

The Study of Communication about Mexico in the United States

Two of the main theoretical concepts that have been used to investigate factors that affect media content are geographical proximity and cultural proximity (Aguayo, 1998; Johnson, 1997; Wu, 1998; Branton & Dunaway, 2009). Some authors have found that in certain circumstances geographic proximity from one news outlet to another country is a predictor of the number of news stories the outlet will publish about that other nation (Branton & Dunaway, 2009); while other scholars have found that variables linked to cultural proximity tend to have a bigger impact. Johnson (1997) studied coverage of Mexico in U.S. newspapers and found that cultural proximity can predict the number of news about the Latin American country in the U.S. media, whereas geographical proximity, important as it is, was a weaker predictor. In relation to this, in his paper about coverage of Mexico and Canada in the U.S., Wu (1998) explained that physical proximity of U.S. cities to the border with Mexico is a strong predictor of the number of stories about the Latin American country; whereas distance of cities to the Canadian border did not play a factor in the coverage of that nation. Also, previous studies about cultural and geographical proximity have found that framing about the war on drugs in Mexico varies depending on the physical proximity to the country (Lacasse & Forster, 2012). The analysis stated that U.S. newspapers closer to the border with Mexico published more stories with a peace journalism—conciliatory—frame, while distant U.S. newspapers depicted the issue from a perspective based on a war journalism frame.

The theoretical approaches used to investigate content related to international communication and its possible effects are mainly centered in framing and agenda-setting theories. As mentioned in Chapter 1, any sort of portrayal of a country in media stories has

an impact on the way societies perceive public issues about that nation. Frames serve a social function useful to conceptualize and generalize issues, explain—or exclude—causes of those issues, and offer solutions to them. Researchers who have worked with framing theory have suggested that news outlets are an important entity to produce stances in relation to foreign nations (Aguirre, 1993; Coatsworth & Rico, 1989; Johnson, 2010; Schwarz, 2006; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004).

One major example of the latter is Aguayo's (1998) work. He conducted a study with framing and agenda-setting theories to analyze how the United States elites produce their understanding of Mexico as a country. He found that negative or positive mentions about Mexico on *The New York Times* are directly linked to the state of the United States economy. That is, when the U.S. economy is doing well, there are not as many negative frames about Mexico as when the U.S. economy is struggling. In this sense, media outlets disseminate values and belief systems that can originate from various perspectives. They could be economic, social, and political. The values embedded in frames have an effect on the way the other nation is perceived (Aguayo, 1998).

Studies about agenda-setting are interested in how successful media companies are in dictating public agenda (McCombs, 2014; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). From this viewpoint communication and media practices are seen as efforts to impose focal points to the audiences. Therefore, agenda-setting research is often focused on the adoption of media discourses by specific social groups that use this information to advance their interests or campaign against anything that can be perceived as a threat (Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004; Wanta & Hu, 1993; Wu & Coleman, 2009). Considering the latter, media coverage of a

different country turns out to be essential to produce positive or negative stands about that other country (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Thus, the media agenda is a key player in the construction of international identities, which ultimately affects public policies and the social reality of millions of individuals (Aguayo, 1998).

Previous Research Findings

Johnson, Davis, and Cronin (2009) investigated U.S. media framing and second level agenda setting in the context of Mexico's 2006 presidential election. They explored through content analysis the framing on the new Mexican law for citizens living abroad to participate in the national elections. U.S. newspapers depicted the new regulation as a failure due to corruption in Mexican institutions and a poor instrumentation. They also found that U.S. media published more stories about Andres Manuel López Obrador, the leftist candidate who eventually lost the election by a marginal percentage.

Another study by Aguirre, Rodriguez and Simmers (2011) explained how media in the U.S. produce a threat narrative about Mexico and Mexicans. Using content analysis of newspaper stories from *Los Angeles Times* they found that racial profiling language produced by the U.S. Border Patrol influence news content. In this sense, the researchers suggested that this type of discourse generates the perception that Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans are a threat to the U.S. society.

Capetillo-Ponce (2002) also studied newspaper coverage of Mexico in the United States. He took articles from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Christian Science Monitor* to investigate topic variations of coverage in longitudinal

research. The study ranges from 1982 to 1995. With this content analysis he found a clear shift on news coverage, from topics related to corrupt institutions in Mexico, or poverty, to political and economic aspects; this change in media coverage might have been influenced by the signature of NAFTA.

The significant body of literature about coverage of Mexico in the U.S. has increased due to several economic, social, political and cultural factors (Schmitt, 1995). The study of how the U.S. media represents Mexico has a level of complexity that makes it interesting as a research subject. Nonetheless, this kind of relationship is not exclusive of these two nations. All neighboring countries have power dynamics going on (Cohen, 1997). Every nation can identify cultural, economic and political issues with their neighbors; therefore, the exhaustive research related to how one country's media portrays another nation could be replicated. In the long run, a series of studies like this one would shed light on international communication dynamics and patterns, which in turn would support theories about international power structures.

Research Questions

RQ1. In relation to Mexican presidential elections: Does the amount of news coverage and space devoted by news outlets reflect the probable position a candidate will obtain in the actual election?

RQ2. What are the main frames Mexican and United States media tended to reproduce during the 2012 presidential campaigns in Mexico?

RQ3. What are the main differences of frame dissemination among the Mexican newspapers with regards to the Mexican presidential election in 2012?

RQ4. What are the main differences of frame dissemination among the United States newspapers with regards to the Mexican presidential election in 2012?

RQ5. How do frames disseminated by the Mexican outlets compare to the frames included in the United States news stories?

Methods

Content analysis is a frequently used method to explore framing theory linked to mediated communication (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). The purpose of content analysis is to take a body of communication processes to produce inferences related to the context in which those communications took place (Krippendorff, 2013). Content analysis is helpful to explore contrasting media systems and understand the differences and similarities of the media constructs.

The main approach in this chapter is a quantitative computer-assisted content analysis procedure that considers the frequencies of the presidential candidates and their frames in the news stories published both in Mexico and the United States. However, some aspects of qualitative content analysis were also included here. Conventional content analysis was helpful to identify the different coding categories from the sample itself (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005); additionally, there is a qualitative summative content analysis that compares and interprets frames based on the context of the 2012 Mexican presidential election.

The computer-assisted content analysis was based on text searches that were qualitatively identified to refer to certainty, activities, optimism, realism, and commonality (Krippendorff, 2013). This approach is what Krippendorff and other scholars like Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2014) have defined as coding/dictionary computer-assisted content analysis. In Krippendorff's terms: "...the construction of computer thesauri and dictionaries serves as a theory of how readers rearticulate given texts in simpler terms and categorize them according to the needs of their research" (2013, p. 284)

Sample

The objects of analysis for this chapter were obtained using a probability sampling approach (Babbie, 2001). A simple random sampling allowed all news stories available through academic databases to have the same opportunity to be part of this study. More specifically, the news articles were retrieved from two databases: ProQuest Newsstand and LexisNexis Academic.

Four newspapers with high-circulation from Mexico were selected. Three of them are considered general information newspapers—*El Universal*, *La Jornada*, and *Reforma*—one of them was a financial publication—*El Economista*. In the case of the United States newspapers, a similar newspaper structure was designed; four high-circulation newspapers were included, three of them with a general news approach—*Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*—and one financial newspaper—*The Wall Street Journal*.

The Mexican news outlets were chosen to represent diverging editorial approaches: *El Economista*, a financial high circulation newspaper; *El Universal*, one of the oldest national high circulation publications in Mexico (Lepidus, 1927), which displayed a coverage that supported the PRI candidate during the 2012 election (Damián, 2012); *La Jornada*, a liberal high circulation newspaper that was born in opposition to the PRI government (Covo-Maurice, 2002); and *Reforma*, which is the national newspaper with the highest circulation among them all. Keeping in mind the substantial differences of the Mexican and the United States media systems, the publications from the U.S. in this work were intended to present a similar structure of the chosen Mexican outlets.

According to the Mexican Printed Media National Registry (Padrón Nacional de Medios Impresos)—produced by the Mexican Interior Secretariat (PNMI, 2016)—and according to data from the Alliance for Audited Media (2013), circulation of the Spanish- and English-language newspapers included in this study were distributed as follows:

Country	Newspaper	Daily printed average
Mexico	<i>Reforma</i>	133,446
Mexico	<i>La Jornada</i>	107,659
Mexico	<i>El Universal</i>	56,138
Mexico	<i>El Economista</i>	27,329
United States	<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	1,480,725
United States	<i>The New York Times</i>	731,395
United States	<i>The Washington Post</i>	431,149
United States	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	432,873

Mexico's newspaper circulation is very low if compared to the U.S. publications. However, *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, and *El Universal* remain as high circulation papers for the socioeconomic context of the Latin American country, where the daily publication with the highest circulation—*La Prensa*, which is a tabloid—prints an average of 276,912 daily issues (PNMI, 2016). And *El Economista* is one of the two main financial newspapers in the country, along with *El Financiero*.

El Economista, *La Jornada*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* were obtained from the ProQuest Newsstand database. Whereas *El Universal*, *Reforma*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* stories were retrieved from LexisNexis Academic.

In both databases and for both countries the search of articles was conducted from March 30, 2012, to July 1st, 2012. This includes the full period of the official 2012 presidential campaigns in Mexico and the day of the election itself—July 1st. The search was performed using the last names of the four presidential candidates and the word *election*. Due to the linguistic differences between the two media systems, the search needed to be adapted for each context. The search used for the Mexican publications included the following formula: "lopez obrador" OR "peña nieto" OR "vazquez mota" OR "quadri" AND "elecciones." For the U.S. newspapers the search included a translation of the word *elecciones*: "lopez obrador" OR "pena nieto" OR "vazquez mota" OR "quadri" AND "election." In Mexico the plural of election is common to identify major national electoral processes; and it was found that for U.S. publications databases yielded a more comprehensive set of articles with the singular "election" and using the name *pena* instead of *peña* for the PRI candidate.

The search in Mexican papers produced 2,046 stories related to the 2012 presidential election. And U.S. newspapers published 72 stories about the same topic during the three-month period of the campaigns, from March 30, 2012, to July 1st, 2012. The total sample (N) was 2,118 news articles published in the two countries.

The stories were distributed as follows:

Publication	n value
<i>El Economista</i>	195
<i>El Universal</i>	221
<i>La Jornada</i>	723
<i>Reforma</i>	907
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	18
<i>The New York Times</i>	16
<i>The Washington Post</i>	16
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	22

Coding Procedures

A random sub-sample that included 10% of each newspaper's stories was created to do a manual content analysis. The objective of this step was to identify the most frequent frames tied to each candidate in newspapers from Mexico and the United States. Once this was done the frames of Mexican and U.S. newspapers were compared to produce a set of keywords that were constantly used for each one of the identified frames. These keywords were included in the coding book and selected to be part of the final coding procedures.

A coding book in Spanish was first created, and then a coding book in English was also generated, both based on the dictionary words obtained through the manual identification of frames. In some cases the concepts needed to be adapted, since they do not have the same connotation in Spanish and English. The keywords were organized and used to train a computer system based on Excel software to identify their presence or absence in news stories. The articles published by each newspaper during a single day were included in a single dataset to perform a computer-assisted content analysis.

The supervised machine content analysis produced the final quantitative data of this chapter. SPSS software was employed to perform the statistical analyses.

Results

The sample of 2,118 news stories published in Mexico and the United States from March 30th, 2012, to July 1st, 2012, yielded 18 main recurrent and relevant frames identified through a manual content analysis. The main frames disseminated during that period were: (1) candidate López Obrador was described as a populist, (2) candidate Peña Nieto and the PRI party were presented as authoritarian figures, (3) the possibility of an election fraud, (4) an ongoing socioeconomic crisis in Mexico, (5) Mexico's corruption issues as one of the main challenges to solve, (6) security concerns and violence in Mexico, (7) the need of political reforms to improve Mexico's economy and governance, (8) Mexico's issues with poverty, (9) accountability as a relevant agenda item for the candidate who wins the election, (10) Mexico's construction of democracy, (11) the role played by young Mexicans during the campaigns, (12) polls as a predictor of the election winner, (13) public demonstrations as part

of the election process, (14) debates as an important element of the election, (15) Mexico's need to improve its position in the world, (16) the need to improve the human rights conditions in Mexico, (17) the #YoSoy132 social movement as a relevant entity during the campaigns, and (18) the Mexican media companies role during the elections.

Mexican and U.S. Coverage

Newspapers from both countries had a statistically significant difference in coverage in the case of three of the four candidates. As determined in a 2-tailed independent-samples *t*-test without assuming equal variances, the daily frequency of mentions in each country was significantly different for the leftist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador [$t(73) = 4.51$, $p = .001$], the conservative candidate Josefina Vázquez Mota [$t(121) = 4.88$, $p = .001$], and the candidate from a small party Quadri [$t(308) = 6.47$, $p = .001$]. Only Peña Nieto—the PRI party candidate who would end up winning the actual presidential election—had a more equal coverage in Mexico and the United States newspapers. Peña Nieto was the most included figure in both Mexican and United States newspapers. As it was expected, in all cases Mexican publications had a higher frequency of candidates' mentions than the U.S. newspapers. *See table 2.1.*

Table 2.1
Average mentions of candidates per day, by country

<i>Country</i>	López Obrador	Peña Nieto	Vázquez Mota	Quadri
Mexico (n=2,046)	8.74	12.59	5.42	1.82
United States (n=72)	4.02	9.74	2.51	0.23

Tested with a one-way ANOVA, coverage of all candidates was significantly different among newspapers of both countries, with *Reforma* and *El Economista* presenting major differences in coverage of all candidates in comparison to the rest of the publications. Of the U.S. outlets *The Washington Post* generated the most important differences in coverage not only among the English-language outlets, but also in comparison to the Mexican newspapers. For López Obrador was [$F(7) = 22.47, p = .001$], for Peña Nieto was [$F(7) = 28.59, p = .001$], for Vázquez Mota was [$F(7) = 28.32, p = .001$], and for Quadri was [$F(7) = 11.03, p = .001$].

Mexican newspapers

The main differences between newspapers in terms of mentions of candidates during a single day were as follows:

El Universal and *La Jornada* had a statistically significant difference of coverage about López Obrador in comparison to the rest of the Mexican publications ($F(7) = 22.47, p = .05$). These two publications produced less than half the average mentions of López Obrador if compared to *El Economista* and *Reforma*. *El Universal* had the lowest presence of this candidate on its pages.

In the case Peña Nieto, *Reforma* and *El Universal* yielded a significantly different coverage ($F(7) = 28.59, p = .01$) if compared to all the rest of the Mexican newspapers. *Reforma* was the publication with the highest frequency and *El Universal* was again the publication with the lowest rate of mentions for Peña Nieto.

In the case of Vázquez Mota, her mentions in *El Economista* and *Reforma* were statistically significant different than the coverage of the other Mexican publications ($F(7) =$

28.32, $p = .01$). *Reforma* again had more mentions of the PAN candidate, followed by *El Economista*. A similar case was true for candidate Quadri, with *Reforma* and *El Economista* having a significant difference in mentions ($F(7) = 11.03, p = .05$). *El Economista* was the newspaper where Quadri had the most frequent presence, followed by *Reforma*. See table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Average mentions of candidates per day, by Mexican newspaper

	<i>El Economista</i>	<i>El Universal</i>	<i>La Jornada</i>	<i>Reforma</i>
Candidate	$n=195$	$n=221$	$n=723$	$n=907$
López Obrador	12.05	3.97	6.19	14.48
Peña Nieto	11.11	4.20	10.10	22.24
Vázquez Mota	6.50	2.17	2.46	10.68
Quadri	5.05	0.50	0.74	3.29

United States Newspapers

With regards to the U.S. news outlets the difference in coverage of candidates was statistically significant for Peña Nieto. Especially, *The Washington Post's* mentions of this candidate differed from all the other U.S. publications ($p = .01$). Whenever this newspaper published stories about the 2012 Mexican presidential election it had more than twice the presence of this candidate than did the rest of the news outlets.

If compared to each other, the rest of the newspapers had a more balanced presence of candidates. All publications included in this study had no statistically significant differences in the number of mentions they produced of López Obrador. The same was true for Vázquez Mota and Quadri.

However, if we compare the frequencies between candidates there are important differences. In the case of *The Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*, Peña Nieto received 100% more mentions than the second most frequent candidate to appear in their stories—López Obrador. The difference was even more significant for *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, where Peña Nieto's coverage was almost three times bigger than that of the leftist candidate.

The Washington Post was the publication that had the most mentions of all candidates. *The New York Times* had an equal coverage of López Obrador and Vázquez Mota, but these candidates had less than half the mentions Peña Nieto had in this publication's articles. *See table 2.3.*

Of all newspapers, *The Washington Post* had the highest frequencies for Peña Nieto; whereas the lowest number of mentions for this candidate was produced by *Los Angeles Times*. López Obrador had the highest presence also in *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* generated the lowest rate of mentions for him. In this sense, *The Washington Post* had the highest rate of mentions of all U.S. publications for all the candidates.

Table 2.3

Average mentions of candidates per day, by U.S. newspaper

	<i>LA Times</i>	<i>NY Times</i>	<i>Washington Post</i>	<i>WSJ</i>
Candidate	<i>n=18</i>	<i>n=16</i>	<i>n=16</i>	<i>n=22</i>
López Obrador	3.50	2.70	9.33	3.35
Peña Nieto	7.21	8.20	20.33	9.00
Vázquez Mota	1.42	2.70	4.66	2.52
Quadri	0.14	0.20	0.66	0.17

All publications

In a one-way ANOVA test that included all publications from both countries, only *The Washington Post* had a similar coverage of López Obrador if compared to the Mexican publications. The latter is because this Washington, D.C.-based outlet included an outstanding presence of Peña Nieto on its pages. Another relevant element about coverage of López Obrador is that *El Universal* and *La Jornada* had a similar coverage of him as all the U.S. newspapers. In this sense, *El Universal* and *La Jornada*'s coverage about López Obrador was not statistically different than the coverage produced by U.S. outlets.

On the other hand, *El Economista* and *Reforma* had significant differences in the way they covered López Obrador if compared to *El Universal*, *La Jornada*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Reforma's coverage of Peña Nieto was similar to that of *The Washington Post*, and these two outlets produced significantly higher mentions of Peña Nieto than all the other

newspapers from both countries. *El Economista*, *La Jornada*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* published mentions of Peña Nieto that were similar to the rest of these publications. In addition, *El Universal's* frequencies were similar to that of *Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times* for Peña Nieto.

Coverage of Vázquez Mota and Quadri was characterized by their limited presence across all publications. The absence was even more evident in the case of Quadri.

Frames by Country

Election fraud. Mexican outlets conveyed this frame more frequently to the public; they had twice as many mentions of the possibility of a fraud related to the presidential election than the U.S. publications. The difference between Mexican and U.S. newspapers was statistically significant [$t(84) = 2.07, p = .05$].

Populism. There was no statistical difference between U.S. and Mexican media in terms of portraying the leftist candidate—López Obrador—as a populist who would harm Mexico if he won the presidential election.

Authoritarian. In this frame where the PRI party was displayed as an authoritarian party that could suppress social liberties, there was a statistically significant difference in coverage between Mexican and U.S. newspapers [$t(56) = -1.95, p = .05$]: the U.S. outlets produced more mentions of this frame than the Mexican publications. A topic that was frequently associated with the authoritarian PRI regime was related to the clashes between police and the people of San Salvador Atenco, located in the state where Peña Nieto was governor.

Socioeconomic crisis. Mexican newspapers were more prone to remind readers of past or probable future social and economic crisis. Mexico's newspapers mentions of this frame were four times more frequent than that of the U.S. newspapers [$t(116) = 4.20, p = .001$].

Corruption. Both nations were similarly exposed to the same number of references to corruption within the Mexican government. There was no significant difference among Mexican and U.S. stories.

Security. In this frame the U.S. outlets were more likely to remind the reader of the violence issues happening in Mexico. U.S. articles included twice the mentions of this frame than the Mexican stories. The difference was statistically significant [$t(52) = -2.02, p = .05$].

See table 2.4.

Table 2.4
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by country

	Populism	Authoritarian	Election fraud	Economic crisis	Corruption	Security
Mexico <i>n</i> =2,046	0.08	0.18	0.78*	0.44*	1.50	1.33
U.S. <i>n</i> =72	0.08	0.36*	0.36	0.08	1.51	2.29*

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Reforms. In the frame where Mexico's economy was depicted as in need of structural reforms that would boost companies and income for the country there was no statistically significant difference between the two countries coverage.

Poverty. As in the case of economic reforms, the frame where Mexico was described as a nation plagued by poverty there was no significant difference between the Mexican and U.S. publications. They produced a similar number of mentions.

Media. The role of media companies in the Mexican election was important for news stories, especially for the U.S. outlets, which had 50% more mentions of this frame than the Mexican counterparts. However, the difference in coverage between the two countries was found to be not statistically significant.

Accountability. In relation to the frame where accountability was described as one of the qualities the next Mexican president should have, there was no significant difference between the Mexican and the U.S. coverage.

Democracy. The construction of democracy in Mexico was statistically similarly covered in that country and in the U.S.

Young Mexicans. After a group of students protested the visit of Peña Nieto to their university young Mexicans became a relevant topic for news outlets, especially for Mexican newspapers, which produced two times more this frame than the U.S. publications. Statistical difference was significant [$t(140) = 3.17, p = .01$]. See table 2.5.

Table 2.5
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by country

	Reforms	Poverty	Media	Accountability	Democracy	Young Mexicans
Mexico <i>n</i> =2,046	0.64	0.65	1.09	0.29	1.36	3.16*
U.S. <i>n</i> =72	0.48	0.57	1.59	0.14	0.91	1.44

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Polls. Descriptions of poll results and the expected winner of the presidential election were other common topics during the campaigns. This frame had one of the highest frequencies in both Mexican and United States news outlets. There was found to be no statistically significant difference between the mentions in the two countries.

Demonstration. Narratives that included public demonstrations on the streets of Mexico was much more present in Mexican outlets; they produced as many as five mentions of this frame for each mention in the U.S. papers [$t(320) = 5.56, p = .001$].

Debates. Mexican newspapers were also more inclined to cover the debates between the presidential candidates. There was a significant difference between Mexico and U.S. coverages of this subject, with Mexican outlets reproducing three times more this frame than the U.S. publications [$t(136) = 3.36, p = .001$].

World. This frame was related to the need of Mexico to improve its position in the world stage. Here, U.S. articles had twice as many references to this frame than the Mexican papers [$t(50) = -2.10, p = .05$].

Human Rights. Mexican newspapers were more prone to report a frame that displayed human rights as an issue for the Latin American country. U.S. publications had three times less mentions of this frame than the Mexican ones [$t(159) = 3.08, p = .01$].

#YoSoy132. After a visit of Peña Nieto to Universidad Iberoamericana, the #YoSoy132 was created by college students in Mexico City. This frame became a consistent topic in Mexican media stories. However, inclusion of this frame in U.S. newspapers was not as frequent. This produced a significant difference of coverage, with Mexican mentions being five times the size of the U.S. mentions [$t(307) = 5.88, p = .001$]. See table 2.6.

Table 2.6
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by country

	Polls	Demonstration	Debates	World image	Human Rights	#YoSoy132
Mexico <i>n</i> =2,046	2.94	1.10*	4.05*	0.78	0.38*	1.24*
U.S. <i>n</i> =72	2.66	0.17	1.61	1.66*	0.12	0.12

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Frames by newspaper

When comparing with a one-way ANOVA all the identified frames for this study among all publications, the following areas produced a statistically significant different coverage: Fraud [$F(7) = 3.57, p = .001$], authoritarian [$F(7) = 5.75, p = .001$], Socioeconomic crisis [$F(7) = 4.77, p = .001$], corruption [$F(7) = 4.29, p = .001$], security [$F(7) = 4.25, p = .001$], reforms [$F(7) = 7.24, p = .001$], poverty [$F(7) = 2.70, p = .01$], media [$F(7) = 2.90, p = .01$], democracy [$F(7) = 8.38, p = .001$], young Mexicans [$F(7) = 7.12, p = .001$], polls [$F(7) = 12.13, p = .001$], demonstration [$F(7) = 5.36, p = .001$], debates [$F(7) = 5.17, p = .001$], world [$F(7) = 7.73, p = .001$], and #YoSoy132 [$F(7) = 3.16, p = .01$].

On the other hand, the following frames were no different in terms of mentions by newspaper: populism, accountability, and human rights.

When looking at what specific newspapers put more emphasis on the different frames the results are as follows: *Reforma* reproduced the possible election fraud frame at the highest frequency, with *The Washington Post* being in second place. *Reforma's* coverage of this topic was significantly different than that of *El Universal* ($p = .001$), *La Jornada* ($p = .001$), *The New York Times* ($p = .05$), and *The Wall Street Journal* ($p = .01$).

The Washington Post was the publication of both countries that reproduced the most mentions of López Obrador as a populist who could have harmed the country's stability; *Reforma* was second in most mentions of the populism frame.

The authoritarian PRI frame was mostly disseminated by *El Economista* in first place, and then by *The New York Times*. In relation to this, Atenco's police brutality attributed to candidate Peña Nieto was mostly included by *La Jornada* and then by *Los Angeles Times*.

The New York Times, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* did not publish a single reference to this frame.

The highest frequencies for the socioeconomic crisis frame were by *El Economista* and *Reforma*. Corruption problems in Mexico's government were mostly covered by *The Washington Post*, *Reforma* and *The New York Times*.

The issues related to security and violence as national concerns in Mexico were mostly published by *The Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. The need for legislative reforms to improve Mexico's economy and government was stronger in *El Economista* first, and then in *The Washington Post's* pages. *The Washington Post* was also the publication of both countries that had a higher rate mentioning Mexico's struggle with poverty. *The Wall Street Journal's* agenda was more focused on the influence of media companies like Televisa in the election process. In terms of accountability, *Reforma* and *Los Angeles Times* were more interested in this frame than the rest of the publications.

When it comes to the construction of democracy in Mexico, *The New York Times* and *Reforma* were the two outlets more interested in this subject. *Reforma* mostly covered the frame of young Mexicans' irruption into the campaigns; this last outlet also devoted the most space to public demonstrations related to the 2012 election.

The polls topic as a relevant part of the election process was mostly covered by *El Economista*, *The Washington Post*, and *Reforma*. In terms of the debate frame, *El Economista* yielded the highest rate of mentions. For the need of Mexico to improve its position in the world *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* had the most frequent mentions per day.

The human rights frame was mostly covered by *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, and *The Washington Post*. Whereas the #YoSoy132 movement had more presence in *Reforma* and *El Economista*. See tables 2.7 to 2.12.

Table 2.7
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by Mexican newspapers

	Populism	Authoritarian	Election fraud	Economic crisis	Corruption	Security
<i>El Economista</i>	0.11	0.67*	0.77	0.50	1.72	1.61
<i>El Universal</i>	0.02	0.07	0.32	0.16	0.65	0.81
<i>La Jornada</i>	0.03	0.12	0.56	0.34	0.83	1.14
<i>Reforma</i>	0.18	0.22	1.38*	0.76*	2.79*	1.89*

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Note: *El Economista* n=195; *El Universal* n=221; *La Jornada* n=723; *Reforma* n=907.

Table 2.8
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by Mexican newspapers

	Reforms	Poverty	Media	Accountability	Democracy	Young Mexicans
<i>El Economista</i>	1.77*	0.55	1.55	0.05	1.50	1.94
<i>El Universal</i>	0.17	0.38	0.12*	0.21	0.59	1.03
<i>La Jornada</i>	0.29	0.59	1.20	0.05	0.64	2.09
<i>Reforma</i>	1.12	0.95*	1.70	0.62	2.63*	6.19*

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Note: *El Economista* n=195; *El Universal* n=221; *La Jornada* n=723; *Reforma* n=907.

Table 2.9
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by Mexican newspapers

	Polls	Demonstration	Debates	World image	Human Rights	#YoSoy132
<i>El Economista</i>	5.50	0.88	7.33*	1.00	0.16	2.16*
<i>El Universal</i>	0.91	0.32	1.45	0.35	0.29	0.48
<i>La Jornada</i>	1.03	0.74	2.65	0.51	0.35	1.11
<i>Reforma</i>	5.93*	2.13*	6.90	1.35*	0.52	1.83

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Note: *El Economista* n=195; *El Universal* n=221; *La Jornada* n=723; *Reforma* n=907.

Table 2.10
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by U.S. newspapers

	Populism	Authoritarian	Election fraud	Economic crisis	Corruption	Security
<i>LA Times</i>	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.28	2.57
<i>NY Times</i>	0.00	0.60	0.10	0.30*	2.40	2.40
<i>Washington Post</i>	0.33	0.50	1.33	0.00	3.50*	4.16*
<i>WSJ</i>	0.11	0.05*	0.05*	0.05	0.47	1.35

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Note: *LA Times* n=18; *NY Times* n=16; *The Washington Post* n=16; *WSJ* n=22.

Table 2.11
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by U.S. newspapers

	Reforms	Poverty	Media	Accountability	Democracy	Young Mexicans
<i>LA Times</i>	0.42	0.14	0.35	0.28	1.14	2.21*
<i>NY Times</i>	0.20	0.60	0.30	0.20	2.00*	0.90
<i>Washington Post</i>	1.50*	2.50*	1.33	0.16	0.66	1.83
<i>WSJ</i>	0.35	0.23	3.47*	0.00	0.17	1.00

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Note: *LA Times* n=18; *NY Times* n=16; *The Washington Post* n=16; *WSJ* n=22.

Table 2.12
Newspaper frame frequencies per day, by U.S. newspapers

	Polls	Demonstration	Debates	World image	Human Rights	#YoSoy132
<i>LA Times</i>	2.78	0.28	0.85	0.57	0.07	0.07
<i>NY Times</i>	2.40	0.10	1.20	0.80	0.30	0.10
<i>Washington Post</i>	4.50*	0.33	4.00*	3.16*	0.33	0.00
<i>WSJ</i>	2.05	0.05*	1.64	2.52	0.00	0.23*

*Statistically significant different coverage.

Note: *LA Times* n=18; *NY Times* n=16; *The Washington Post* n=16; *WSJ* n=22.

Discussion

As it was expected, there was a disparate coverage of Mexican elections in Mexico and the United States, with high circulation Mexican newspapers publishing 30 times more news stories about the 2012 presidential election than high circulation United States newspapers. The difference in coverage supports the idea that newsworthiness is defined in part by the geographies in which media outlets operate (Tuñez & Guevara, 2009), and also on the basis that the nation-state identity is in part constructed through media technologies like the printing press (Carey, 2009). However, it is possible that Mexican elites also read newspapers published in the United States, and also there might be a significant readership of Mexican publications outside of the country.

Coverage of the 2012 presidential election by Mexican newspaper suggests that there is a correlation between the number of stories published and the quantity of issues printed everyday. For this study there were 907 articles found from *Reforma*, 723 stories from *La Jornada*, 221 articles from *El Universal* and 195 news stories from *El Economista*; this is also the same order from the newspaper with highest circulation to the one with the lowest. This suggests that larger circulation of a Mexican publication during presidential campaigns seems to translate into wider coverage of presidential elections.

An interesting finding is that in U.S. newspapers the PRI candidate—Peña Nieto—had a presence twice the size of López Obrador, the other candidate who during the campaigns was considered to have possibilities of winning the presidency. In Mexico the difference was 30% more space devoted for Peña Nieto than to López Obrador. In addition, the difference of Peña Nieto with the candidate who appeared as the third place in most polls

before the election—Vázquez Mota—is even wider. If we compare the results of this study with the actual outcome of the election, the candidates' positions yielded by this study are the same as the actual results of the presidential election in 2012: Peña Nieto ultimately won the election and became Mexico's president, López Obrador got the second largest number of votes, Vázquez Mota was third place, and Quadri was a distant fourth place. One of the main areas of interest was to explore if news coverage and space devoted by news outlets correlate with the probable position a candidate will obtain in the actual election. In this sense, this study suggests that in the case of the 2012 Mexican presidential election, a higher frequency of mentions in both Mexican and U.S. newspapers during the campaigns was correlated with the winner of the election.

Another area of interest in this dissertation was in relation to the main frames conveyed by Mexican and United States newspapers to the public; what similarities and differences can be found in terms of coverage. In this respect, Mexican outlets were mostly focused on reporting about polls and debates, but very close to those topics was the role of young Mexicans during the campaigns. This tendency could be attributed to the fact that young protestors accused the media establishment of helping candidate Peña Nieto get elected through higher and more positive coverage, which could have resulted in a limited coverage about the views of young Mexicans. This suggests that newspapers in Mexico avoided criticism of their own work within their pages. Thus, the role of media companies in the election was a relevant subject. The latter had more mentions than other frames commonly associated with Mexican politics—like corruption. U.S. newspapers were also mainly focused on the polls and debates frames, but they added the frame of Mexico's world

position at the top of their coverage. In addition to that, the most relevant frames for the U.S. outlets were corruption, security and the involvement of the Mexican youth in the election process.

In this sense, the main frames published by Mexican newspapers could be considered in close relation to issues that have affected Mexico during several decades. The only frames that disrupted their traditional approach to the electoral process were those related to the impact of the young population of Mexico on the election, which was also related to the #YoSoy132 social movement. Despite this, the most recurrent frame was to highlight the relevance of debates so the public was able to make an informed decision for the election day. After that frame, the role of young Mexicans was the second most relevant, then the frame that described poll results stating that Peña Nieto was leading the race to win the election. Another two main frames disseminated by the Mexican publications included in this dissertation were a depiction of Mexico as a country with serious corruption issues, and the need to build a stronger democracy for this nation to improve the current state of politics.

United States newspapers most frequently associated their content about the Mexican presidential election with common issues found regularly on media stories published during non-election times. Reports describing poll results was the most recurrent topic, and they all presented the PRI candidate Peña Nieto as the most probable winner of the election.

Interestingly, portrayals of Mexico as a violent country with serious security issues was the second most common frame in U.S. newspapers; in Mexican publications this frame was important but not as much as in the English-speaking news outlets included in this study. In third place U.S. publications presented the need of Mexico to improve its position in the

world, both socially and economically. Another relevant frame was to picture the debates as an important part of the election process. And the fifth main frame in the United States media was the accusations of media bias in Mexico to favor Peña Nieto; these stories also placed emphasis on the conflictive relationship between Televisa and Peña Nieto.

One of the main differences among frames disseminated in Mexican and U.S. newspapers was that in the national publications the #YoSoy132 was a very important topic by itself, and United States newspapers preferred to approach this subject from the more general angle of young Mexicans making an impact on the campaigns.

Similarly to what was found in the comparison between Mexican and U.S. publications, in seven of the newspapers presence of candidates was similar to the final results of the election. Only in the case of *El Economista* did López Obrador have slightly more coverage than Peña Nieto.

When analyzing specific differences between frames included by the Mexican publications, *La Jornada* tended to include the polls frame at a lower rate in comparison to *El Universal* and *El Economista*. This might be due to the fact that the leftist candidate—López Obrador—dismissed the poll results where he appeared to be losing the race (González Anaya, 2012). And *La Jornada* is widely considered as a left newspaper (Covo-Maurice, 2002).

Another aspect worth of mentioning is that *El Universal* had a significantly different coverage of Peña Nieto than all Mexican papers; mentions of this candidate in this outlet were very low. In relation to this, *El Universal* was one of the media outlets targeted by the Mexican youth during the campaigns. It was heavily criticized during the months previous to

the election for supposedly supporting the interests of candidate Peña Nieto (Villamil, 2012b). In this sense, it is interesting that *El Universal* did not emphasize the role of media companies during the elections. Of all the national newspapers, *El Universal* produced the lowest frequency of mentions related to Televisa, Twitter, social media, and media in general as entities that purposely advance their interests through biased news reports. In addition, this publication also did not cover the #YoSoy132 social movement at the same rate of the rest of the Mexican outlets. This trend was most evident in *El Universal*, which—as mentioned above—was one of the main targets of the #YoSoy132 movement and the university students who protested against the supposed entanglement between media owners and the PRI party to help advance Peña Nieto in the race to become president.

Reforma was much more devoted to the security frame than the other Mexican publications. Perhaps this is related to the fact that *Reforma*'s owner is living in the United States because of his concerns about violence in Mexico (Aguirre, 2014).

In the U.S. publications it is relevant to point out that *The Wall Street Journal*—a publication known for being in line with the business interests—it was more frequent to find the frame about security issues in Mexico, than in the rest of the publications. In all the other three U.S. outlets it was more important to publish about corruption in Mexico than about violence. Also, *The Wall Street Journal* didn't make any mention of the human rights issue that was present in all other publications, including the Mexican newspapers. But at the same time *The Wall Street Journal* was the publication that included at a higher frequency the #YoSoy132 frame as a movement that was impacting the presidential campaigns. It also was

the publication with the highest number of mentions about the image of Mexico in the world, with almost two mentions per story.

Two of the U.S. publications that are considered to be more liberal—*Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*—were more interested in disseminating the frame where Mexico was depicted as a nation that is building a democratic political system.

It is also important to highlight that *The Washington Post* devoted an average amount of coverage of López Obrador, while at the same time it published more about candidate Peña Nieto. The large presence of Peña Nieto across all publications from both countries denotes that the national and international media systems were mostly interested in the figure of this candidate. The latter, and the fact that the other candidates coverage shows a correlation with the actual election results (INE, 2012), suggests that in the specific case of the 2012 presidential election the amount of media space devoted to a Mexican candidate was related to the actual results of the election.

CHAPTER 3: Social Media Frames and Mexican Elections

The self-communication capabilities afforded by new technologies have modified the media landscape (Castells, 2012). Digital media have been around since not too long ago, but the important questions they bring were already being asked with analog media (Peters, 1999). Human identity, sense of belonging, time and space alteration, replication of mediated information, power control, and persuasion are some of the examples of subjects that have been researched with analog media as well.

One of the most relevant differences between digital and analog media involved a reconceptualization of the processes to store, manage, and disseminate information, but maybe the main modification was when the internet was created. This transformed communicative practices by allowing people to mass self-communicate with the use of computers and internet connections (Castells, 2011). With the internet, potentially any person can make use of the technological structures that amplify the voice. Unlike with the telegraph, radio, cinema, or television—media that have a limited number of perspectives of the world—the technological affordances of digital media allow the presence of uncountable transmitters of data. However, it is also relevant to acknowledge the persistent inequalities of access to new media, especially in terms of the digital divide related to media literacies, bandwidth, and technology availability, among other relevant aspects.

Journalism has been in crisis since the beginning of the 21st century. This, because in the past the business of legitimate and trustworthy news stories was alive thanks to the illusion that not everyone can be a generator of stories (Schiller, 1981). With the internet and digital media individuals were reminded that truth is a social construct. And as any social

construct, truth is formulated, conveyed, manipulated, and imposed by individuals or groups of interest. In many ways the internet represents a way to remember that media are extensions of human senses (McLuhan, 2003).

Journalism and New Technologies

Transference of power from one medium to another is not new. When electricity was the new technology it reduced the power of the printing press (Carey, 2009). This disrupted the news industry and modified journalistic practices, from a slow process of information production to a more immediate and widespread availability of news articles; this technological shift also produced a change in the style and criteria of journalism, toward shorter, more *objective* news stories, as well as a new sense of shared temporality and territory due to the immediacy of news across large geographical areas. Today journalism is immersed in a similar change of pace, where new technologies that allow multiple channels of communication enable information generators to communicate faster than ever with a potential worldwide scope. The issue for the news industry is the widespread availability of platforms and technologies to aggregate and recirculate information without generating revenue for the original source. That is why digital media are often accused of debilitating journalism. New agents who gather, store and publish information over the internet have gained influence to the detriment of traditional news outlets and in favor of, for instance, social movements (Castells, 2012). Owners of news outlets are dissatisfied because their economic power and political influence are being redistributed by new technologies to a wider set of social actors who are using the

same digital networks. The capability to self-disseminate messages to a broad audience has proven to be a challenge for well-established economic and political powers (Castells, 2011).

In the United States, 50% of the people who use social media have shared news stories, 46% of the total population have discussed news events on social networks at some point, and half of the total Facebook users get news from that platform—i.e. 30% of the total U.S. population (Anderson & Caumont, 2014).

Social media are increasing their sphere of influence. Thus, news outlets have tried to differentiate themselves from bloggers and independent journalists by presenting their stories as the product of a superstructure that could only be comparable to a superior entity with hundreds of eyes and presence all over the world (Peters, 1999). In the network society, the potential to colonize other people's minds through media technologies has reached individuals; mass self-communication is conveying fragmented visions of reality and allows for the fast creation of communities despite physical distance.

With the use of media in the networked society, the previous dominant voice of the few has been substituted with the whisperings of the many (Castells, 2011; Peters, 1999). Social media has become a way for people to remember that they not only are consumers of stories, that they can also produce and objectify their perspectives of the world. Wired and wireless technologies interact with each other; messages generated by a lonely voice have the potential to reach the same audience as news companies. The network society fragmented the public discourse and returned it to the origins of human communication: Almost everyone can speak, but it is difficult to be heard.

Research questions

The inquiries for this chapter are related to the frames that were published on Twitter during the month prior to the 2012 Mexican presidential election. Additionally, the frequency with which these frames were disseminated in this social media platform also comprise some of the most relevant questions to be answered in this chapter.

RQ1. How many tweets were published in relation to each one of the presidential candidates during the last month of the 2012 campaigns?

RQ2. What are the frequencies of mentions for each one of the candidates?

RQ3. What were the most common frames in Spanish posted on Twitter during the 2012 Mexican presidential campaigns?

RQ4. What were the most common frames in English posted on Twitter during the 2012 Mexican presidential campaigns?

RQ5. How do the main frames on Twitter written in Spanish compare to the main frames published in English during the 2012 Mexican presidential campaigns?

RQ6. What frames were linked to each one of the candidates?

RQ7. How does the presence of each candidate on Twitter compares to the presence of the other candidates?

Methods

As in Chapter 2, the methods for this section include a combination of methodologies. The most relevant approach is a quantitative computer-assisted content analysis that was useful to handle thousands of tweets and explore their contents. To achieve this, a manual content

analysis was initially performed on a sub-sample of tweets to identify the possible frames that were posted on Twitter before the 2012 Mexican presidential election (Scharkow, 2013; Sjovaag & Stavelin, 2012). Once the saturation of frames was reached, the resulting frames were included in the study. The coding book produced with the manual content analysis was then used to build a dictionary, train a computer system and be able to identify specific content in a large quantity of data.

Sample

Twitter has three different types of access to the data streams posted on their website (Long, 2013): full access to all public tweets is called a *firehose*; this modality can only be accessed by Twitter business partners. The second is the *gardenhose*, which includes 10% of all public tweets; access to this stream is usually done through a private provider with *firehose* access. Lastly, Twitter has the *spritzer* stream, which is a random sample of 1% of all public tweets (GNIP, 2016). This last stream is free and anyone with some programming knowledge and technological resources can access it.

The original sample obtained for this chapter was retrieved from the Internet Archive—www.archive.org—, a non-profit organization based in California. This web service stores content published on the internet and makes it available for the public. More specifically the dataset was obtained from their Twitter Stream Grab, which stores a *spritzer* version of anything published on that social media platform; this means that this dataset includes a simple random sampling of 1% of all tweets posted all over the world during a specific month (Archive.org, 2012).

The files for June 2012—the month before the Mexican presidential election of that year—were downloaded and stored locally. The original files were compressed as a tar (.tar) file. Once this file was decompressed the total size of the database was 39GB. This database was structured by day, hour, and minute, which means that a random selection of 1% of all tweets that were published at a specific time during the month of June 2012 was included. The specific files that contained the tweets' data were JSON (.json—JavaScript Object Notation) files; this is a common format to handle information that is intended to be published on the internet.

To make the data manageable, a systematic sampling was conducted. Tweets published every other day starting on June 1st, 2012, and ending on June 29, 2012, between 9 and 10 am, 1 and 2 pm, and 5 and 6 pm—central Mexico time—were included in the research. Those times were selected to represent different times of engagement by different audiences. This covered the last month of the presidential campaigns in Mexico of that year. Once the final JSON files were isolated, a python script needed to be written to parse the data and create the database. JSON files are not database-ready, therefore they needed to be converted to a format that would allow the information to be deployed on a database.

Python is high-level programming language that can handle object-oriented content. And the Twitter stream includes dozens of objects, the most relevant one being the text written in the Twitter post. For that reason the use of the python language to convert these objects into a database seemed appropriate. The Twitter API Developers overview (Twitter, 2015) was used to identify the fields relevant for this research. The fields included in the python script were:

1. Date of tweet publication (created_at).
2. Tweet identification number (id).
3. Tweet written content (text).
4. Twitter username (screen_name).
5. Number of followers for each user (followers_count).
6. Number of retweets received by each post (retweet_count).
7. GPS tweet location provided by the Twitter platform with the authorization of the user (coordinates).
8. Location name provided voluntarily by users (location)
9. Hashtags—“A word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the accompanying text (such as a tweet)” (Merriam-Webster, 2015)—(hashtags).
10. Uniform Resource Locator, usually referred to as url or internet address (urls).
11. Language chosen by the user within the Twitter platform (lang).

The script was larger, but the portion of it that handled the objects for the conversion was the following:

```
def json_to_tuple(tweet):
    lat=None
    lon=None
    if tweet['geo'] is not None:
        lat=tweet['geo']['coordinates'][0]
        lon=tweet['geo']['coordinates'][1]
    location=tweet['user']['location']
    if location is not None:
        location= location.encode('utf-8')
    screen_name=tweet['user']['screen_name']
    followers_count=tweet['user']['followers_count']
    hashtags=tweet['entities']['hashtags']
    urls=tweet['entities']['urls']
    return (tweet['id'],
```

```

screen_name,
tweet['text'].encode('utf-8'),
followers_count,
tweet['retweet_count'],
lat,lon,
location,
user_mentions,
hashtags,
urls,
tweet.get('lang', '\N'), # \N is NULL placeholder for PSQL COPY
tweet['created_at'] # FIXME: Format for PSQL COPY
#uncomment this line out if you want to write the whole tweet to the file
#json.dumps(tweet)
)

```

With the final selection of files the python script converted 3GB of JSON data into Comma Separated Values (.csv) files. Then, all documents that included tweets published on the same day were merged to create a database with tweets divided by day of publication. After this, a database search using the internet names of each one of the four candidates was performed to isolate the sample that would be relevant for this dissertation. All the other tweets where none of the candidates was mentioned were excluded from the general database. Then, a particular daily database for each candidate was produced; these files included all tweets that mentioned each one of the candidates separated by day of publication.

The Twitter names for the candidates were selected by doing a manual qualitative reading of tweets to identify the most common way internet users were referring to the candidates. The internet names used for the candidates were: “epn” for Enrique Peña Nieto; “amlo” for Andrés Manuel López Obrador; josefinavm for Josefina Vázquez Mota; and “g_quadri” for Gabriel Quadri.

This was the sampling sequence:

1. Obtained Twitter dataset from the Internet Archive.
2. Decompress .tar file
3. Development of python script to convert JSON files to CSV files.
4. Merged all CSV files belonging to one day into one.
5. Irrelevant tweets were filtered to keep the ones that contained mentions of the candidates.
6. A database for each candidate was produced.
7. Manual content analysis on a sub-sample was conducted to identify most frequent frames linked to candidates.
8. Creation of coding book with identified keywords of frames.
9. A computer system was trained to search for the keywords.
10. Statistical analysis using SPSS was conducted.

Coding Procedures

Once the final databases were ready, a random sub-sample for each candidate was created to conduct a manual content analysis of 5% of all tweets. The objective of this was to identify the most common frames tied to the candidates on Twitter. Even though the sub-sample yielded only a few tweets written in English, coding books for both Spanish and English were created using the most common and unique keywords that referred to each identified frame. As in Chapter 2, a computer system was trained using the keywords to identify the frequencies and distributions of frames related to the candidates.

An unrelated tweet containing any of the frame keywords would be discarded by the computer-assisted content analysis because it would be very difficult to include a frame keyword and the name of the candidate and still be unrelated to the Mexican presidential election. The chosen keywords were carefully selected to minimize the presence of unrelated information to the election. At the end, the computer-assisted content analysis generated the final quantitative data to be used in SPSS software and perform the statistical analysis.

Results

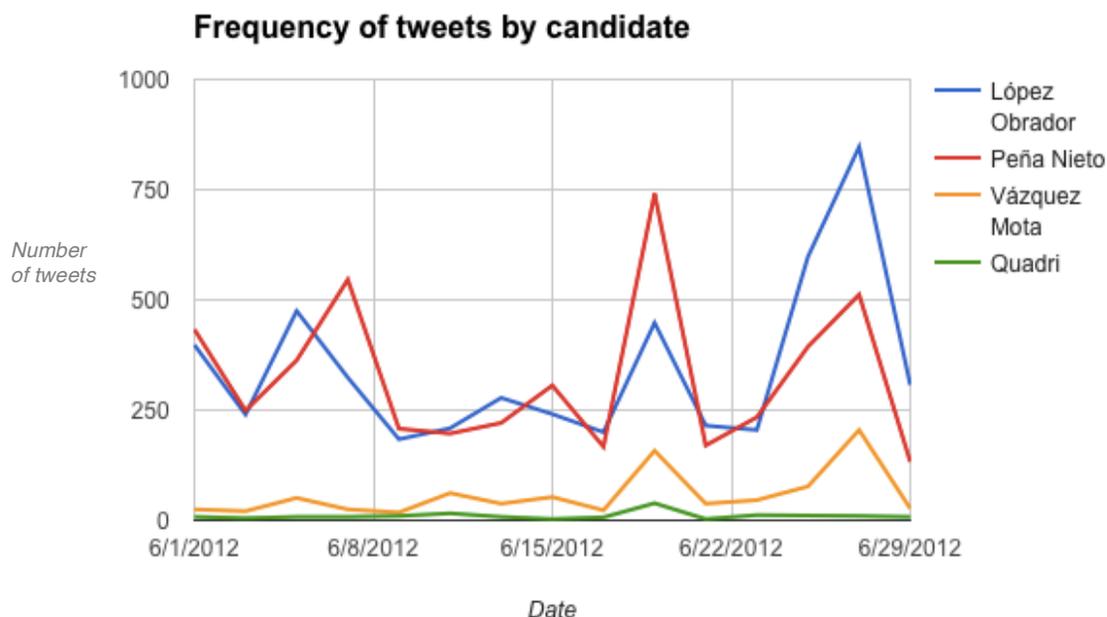
The database mining yielded a total of 11,066 tweets that mentioned any one of the four presidential candidates. The identifiable frames in Spanish were 23, which were recurrent topics during the last month of the 2012 Mexican presidential campaigns. The identified frames were as follows:

1. Expectation of a political change with a certain candidate
2. Possible fraud in the election
3. Negative campaigning
4. Corruption
5. Campaign promises
6. Money issues
7. Televisa and media role during the campaigns
8. Poverty
9. Violence
10. Drugs issues

11. Call for vote
12. Support of a candidate
13. Construction of democracy
14. Truthfulness of candidate
15. Opinions on which candidate is better
16. Young Mexicans role in the elections
17. Poll results and poll issues
18. Opinion on who is going to win the presidency
19. Public demonstrations against a candidate
20. Issues related to debates between candidates
21. A candidate is dangerous for the country
22. #YoSoy132 movement
23. The use of *bots* (fake or automated social media accounts) on social media to better the public's perception on a candidate

With 5,169 tweets, López Obrador was the candidate with the highest presence on Twitter. The second candidate with the largest presence was Peña Nieto, with 4,874 tweets. Next ranked was Vázquez Mota with 867, and Quadri at a distant 156 messages posted on this social media network. Average daily tweets tied to each candidate were: López Obrador 345 daily tweets, Peña Nieto 324, Vázquez Mota 57, and Quadri 10. *See table 3.1.*

Table 3.1



Frequency of mentions for each candidate—including all mentions in the databases of the other candidates—were distributed as follows: López Obrador had a total of 6,771 mentions, Peña Nieto 6,244, Vázquez Mota 1,488, and Quadri 450. Average daily number of mentions of each candidate was: López Obrador 451 daily mentions, Peña Nieto 416, Vázquez Mota 99, and Quadri 30 averaged mentions per day. *See table 3.2.*

Considering all 11,066 tweets included in this dissertation, López Obrador had presence in 61% of all tweets, whereas Peña Nieto was included in 56% of all the messages, Vázquez Mota in 13%, and Quadri was present in 4% of all tweets.

All the tweets included in this study produced a total 179,273 words. As expected, by having the highest frequencies of tweets candidate López Obrador was also the one who had the largest number of words related to him—83,694 words. Peña Nieto had 77,992 words,

Vázquez Mota 15,089, and Quadri 2,498 words. Average words per tweet were: Vázquez Mota 17.40, López Obrador 16.19, Quadri 16.01, and Peña Nieto 16.0.

Table 3.2

Total and average daily mentions linked to each candidate

Candidate	Total mentions	Average daily mentions
López Obrador	6,771	451
Peña Nieto	6,244	416
Vázquez Mota	1,488	99
Quadri	450	30

In 13% of all tweets where López Obrador was mentioned also candidate Peña Nieto was included. The opposite situation was similar; in 15% of all tweets where Peña Nieto was mentioned, López Obrador was also present. In the case of these two candidates, there was a statistically significant difference when it came to the inclusion of the other candidate's name in the same tweet [$t(15) = 5.85, p = .001$]. This means that in general Twitter users were focused only on one of the two main candidates, and they were not likely to include the other name in their messages.

In the analysis to identify the total number of different users that were tweeting about the election it was found that all 5,169 tweets about López Obrador were posted from 4,650 different Twitter accounts. This means that each user who was engaged with the figure of this candidate tweeted on average 1.11 tweets. For candidate Peña Nieto there were 4,441 unique

users identified, who tweeted 4,874 messages—1.09 tweets per unique user. Candidate Vázquez Mota’s dataset had 867 tweets about her, and it was found that the communication came from 814 different accounts—1.06 tweets per unique user. And lastly, candidate Quadri had the lowest ratio of tweets per unique user, with 1.04 posts—156 total tweets disseminated on 149 different Twitter accounts. *See table 3.3.*

Table 3.3

Total number of tweets compared to unique users

Candidate	Tweets	Unique users	Tweets per user
López Obrador	5,169	4,650	1.11
Peña Nieto	4,874	4,441	1.09
Vázquez Mota	867	814	1.06
Quadri	156	149	1.04
Total	11,066	10,054	1.10

The most frequent frames on Twitter were related to electoral procedures, public opinions, and social issues. The frame with the highest frequency was the call for a vote in favor of a specific candidate—this frame had 1,196 mentions, which means it was present in 11%—1,196—of all tweets.

The second most active frame related to the 2012 Mexican presidential election on this social network was the role of the #YoSoy132 movement that originated at the Universidad Iberoamericana against the PRI candidate Peña Nieto. This frame was

mentioned in 7%—821—of all tweets. In third place was the frame where the users expressed their support or opinions about the performance of the candidates during the debates, with 6%—662 tweets. Twitter users' perceptions on who was going to win the election was the fourth most common frame with 5%—535—of all tweets having this approach.

The role of the media conglomerate Televisa, which was perceived to actively campaign in favor of Peña Nieto (Cantú et al., 2013), was the fifth most common frame; it was included in 3.4%—378—of all Twitter posts. Televisa's frame was only a little bit more recurrent than the discomfort of the Mexican youth towards the country's political system. This last frame appeared on 3.2%—351—of the social network's messages included in this study.

The rest of the frames were distributed as follows: Poll results and poll issues 2.8%—316—, opinions on which candidate is better 2.5%—286—, construction of democracy 2.1%—234—, truthfulness of candidate 2%—228—, expectation of a political change with a certain candidate 1.6%—179—, public demonstrations against a candidate 1.6%—178—, support for a candidate 1.6%—174—, corruption 1.5%—163—, campaign promises 1.2%—133—, negative campaigns 1.2%—132—, possible fraud in the election 1%—115—, hope that a candidate will end poverty in Mexico 0.8%—86—, the use of fake or automated social media accounts—*bots*—on social media to better the public's perception on a candidate 0.7%—77—, a candidate is dangerous for the country 0.6%—63—, Mexico's economic issues 0.5%—55—, drugs issues 0.5%—53—, and violence 0.5%—50. For a detailed view of frame frequencies tied to the different candidates *see tables 3.4 to 3.7*.

Table 3.4

Twitter daily frame frequencies linked to each candidate

<i>Candidate</i>	Political change	Election fraud	Negative campaigns	Corruption	Campaign promises	Money issues
López	6.80	4.80	6.00	4.00	3.47	2.13
Obrador						
Peña Nieto	4.80	2.67	2.47	6.47	2.60	1.40
Vázquez	0.20	0.20	0.33	0.33	2.40	0.07
Mota						
Quadri	0.13	0	0	0.07	0.40	0.07

Note: López Obrador $n=5,169$; Peña Nieto $n=4,874$; Vázquez Mota $n=867$; Quadri $n=156$.

Table 3.5

Twitter daily frame frequencies linked to each candidate

<i>Candidate</i>	Televisa	End poverty	Violence	Drug issues	Call for vote	Support a candidate
López	8.73	3.07	0.73	1.00	48.07	4.00
Obrador						
Peña Nieto	16.20	2.27	2.53	2.47	26.00	5.73
Vázquez Mota	0.13	0.33	0.00	0.07	4.93	1.80
Quadri	0.13	0.07	0.07	0	0.73	0.07

Note: López Obrador $n=5,169$; Peña Nieto $n=4,874$; Vázquez Mota $n=867$; Quadri $n=156$.

Table 3.6

Twitter daily frame frequencies linked to each candidate

<i>Candidate</i>	Democracy	Candidate truthfulness	Best candidate	Young Mexicans	Polls	Who will win
López	1.00	9.73	7.00	11.20	9.33	18.20
Obrador						
Peña Nieto	14.27	4.40	9.47	10.07	10.20	14.07
Vázquez Mota	0.20	1.07	2.40	2.00	1.20	3.07
Quadri	0.13	0	0.20	0.13	0.33	0.33

Note: López Obrador $n=5,169$; Peña Nieto $n=4,874$; Vázquez Mota $n=867$; Quadri $n=156$.

Table 3.7

Twitter daily frame frequencies linked to each candidate

<i>Candidate</i>	Demonstration	Debates	Candidate dangerous	#YoSoy132	Bots
López Obrador	6.20	14.87	3.40	23.46	1.87
Peña Nieto	5.47	20.73	0.67	24.93	3.20
Vázquez Mota	0.20	6.00	0.13	4.80	0.07
Quadri	0	2.53	0	1.53	0

Note: López Obrador $n=5,169$; Peña Nieto $n=4,874$; Vázquez Mota $n=867$; Quadri $n=156$.

As determined with a one-way ANOVA test where all four candidates were included, almost all frames had a statistically significant different presence on Twitter linked to each candidate. The cases where there was a more equal presence of frames tied to candidates were the following: campaign promises, the role of media company Televisa in the election, construction of democracy in Mexico, issues related to debates between candidates, and the #YoSoy132 movement.

Of all the 23 main identified frames, López Obrador had more mentions in 12 of them; while Peña Nieto had higher mention rates in the other 11 frames. The first candidate had a higher association on Twitter with these frames: expectation of a political change with a certain candidate, possible fraud in the election, negative campaigning, campaign promises, money issues, that the candidate would end Mexico's poverty, call for vote, truthfulness of candidate, the role of young Mexicans in the elections, opinions on who is going to win the presidency, public demonstrations against a candidate, and the frame that a candidate is dangerous for the country.

Tweets about Peña Nieto had a stronger relationship with the following frames: corruption, Televisa and the media role during the campaigns, violence in Mexico, drug-related issues, support of a candidate, construction of democracy, opinions on which candidate is better, poll results and poll issues, discourse related to debates between candidates, the #YoSoy132 movement, and the use of fake or automated social media accounts to better the public's perception of a candidate.

The only cases where Josefina Vázquez Mota had a higher number of mentions were in frames that could be considered secondary frames because their presence was not as

significant as the main frames identified in this study. Vázquez Mota had higher frequencies in following secondary frames: investments in Mexico, tweets about the country's development, Mexico's stability, and human rights issues. There was not a single identified frame where Quadri had a majority of mentions over the other candidates.

A post hoc test was conducted to identify frame differences between the two main candidates, Peña Nieto and López Obrador, who had almost all the Twitter mentions. It was found that López Obrador and Peña Nieto had statistically significant differences in the following frames tied to their names: The candidate will produce a political change in the country ($p = .05$), with 30% more mentions in López Obrador's tweets. Possible fraud in the election ($p = .05$), with 45% more mentions in López Obrador's tweets. Violence in Mexico ($p = .05$), with 71% more mentions in Peña Nieto's tweets. Drug issues ($p = .05$), with 60% more mentions in Peña Nieto's tweets. Truthfulness of candidate ($p = .001$), with 55% more mentions in López Obrador's tweets. A candidate is dangerous for the country ($p = .001$), with 80% more mentions in López Obrador's tweets.

Tweets in English

In terms of tweets published in English, the database obtained from the Internet Archive did not yield a significant number of tweets published in this language. In fact, it can be said that the 2012 Mexican presidential election was solely dominated by Twitter discourses written in Spanish. There were a few instances where users wrote in Spanish and added a few words or a hashtag in English, but the sample was too small to be considered.

Digital sources

Given the nature of Twitter, where users' messages are limited to 140 characters (Twitter, 2016), the posts of this platform have an implicit tendency to be efficient in terms of space. For that reason it is not uncommon to find on Twitter web addresses that are modified using a third party *url shortener* service like Bitly—www.bit.ly—or Google URL Shortener—www.goo.gl. These services transform web addresses to make them short and in the process the original source is hidden. It was common to find these sort of links on Twitter during the 2012 Mexican presidential elections.

If only those addresses that displayed the actual source of the content are considered, it was found that for López Obrador the ten most common sources used in tweets where he was mentioned were as follows:

1. youtube.com—social media platform to upload and share videos.
2. facebook.com—social media platform to share multimedia content.
3. amlo.si—one of the webpages developed by López Obrador's campaign.
4. aristeguinoticias.com—news website created by renowned Mexican journalist Carmen Aristegui.
5. sdpnoticias.com—news website founded to support López Obrador during his 2006 presidential campaign. By 2008 the site had taken distance from this politician and his causes (El Universal, 2008).
6. proceso.com.mx—political magazine and website that was founded in opposition to the PRI government in 1976 (Proceso, 2016).

7. milenio.com—national newspaper, TV cable news channel, and website that has been criticized for helping the PRI party advance their interests and those of now president Peña Nieto (Eme Equis, 2014).
8. el5antuario.org—independent blog that was created in 2011 to support liberal stances (Mireles, 2012). Website is now inactive, but they still update their Facebook page—facebook.com/5antuario.
9. ustream.tv—web service to stream live video.
10. adnpolitico.com—news website created by CNN México.

Among the most frequently shared sources on tweets where López Obrador was mentioned, it is important to notice the distribution of sites: three social media services—YouTube, Facebook, and Ustream—, two news sources that during the campaigns were considered liberal and closer to López Obrador views—aristeguinoticias.com, and proceso.com.mx—, two sources that during the campaigns were considered to support Peña Nieto—milenio.com, and sdnnoticias.com—, one source that was considered neutral—adnpolitico.com—, López Obrador’s own website—amlo.si—, and one blog that openly promoted this candidate’s political campaign—el5antuario.org.

Tweets where the PRI candidate Peña Nieto was present included the following sources:

1. youtube.com
2. facebook.com
3. proceso.com.mx
4. aristeguinoticias.com

5. guardian.co.uk—British news site and newspaper that documented the arrangement between media conglomerate Televisa and candidate Peña Nieto. According to the source reports, Televisa’s objective was to help this politician become president of Mexico (Tuckman, 2012).
6. instagram.com—social media platform to share pictures.
7. sdpnoticias.com
8. epn.mx—Peña Nieto’s own campaign website.
9. sinembargo.mx—Mexican news site.
10. ustream.tv

In the case of Peña Nieto the distribution of websites was more social media oriented and with more news sources that were regarded to be in opposition of this candidate’s campaign: four social media platforms—YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Ustream—, four websites that during the campaigns were considered to be against Peña Nieto—proceso.com.mx, aristeguinoicias.com, guardian.co.uk, and sinembargo.mx—, one website that was considered to support this candidate—sdpnoticias.com—, and the candidate’s own website—epn.mx.

Josefina Vázquez Mota, the only female running for president in the 2012 election, was linked to the following sources on Twitter:

1. youtube.com
2. instagram.com
3. noticiasmx.terra.com.mx—infotainment website with presence in most Latin American countries.

4. josefina.mx—the candidate’s own campaign site.
5. reforma.com—national newspaper and website, which published information about the then governor Peña Nieto favoring contracts with Televisa. Reforma and Televisa had a history of attacks against each other (Terra, 2010)
6. facebook.com
7. informador.com.mx—regional newspaper distributed in north-central Mexico.
8. cronica.com.mx—regional newspaper sold mainly in Mexico City.
9. sinembargo.mx
10. cnn.mx—Mexican news site of the U.S.-based network CNN.

Vázquez Mota had a wider variety of types of publications: three social media websites—YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook—, two sites that were considered neutral during the campaigns—terra.com.mx, and cnn.mx—, two regional publications—informador.com.mx, and cronica.com.mx—the candidate’s own website—josefina.mx—, a national publication—reforma.com—and a news site—sinembargo.mx.

Tweets where candidate Quadri was mentioned were few in comparison to the rest of the candidates. And he only had a few sources, the most important ones being:

1. Ustream.tv
2. elsoldemexico.com.mx—news site owned by media company OEM, which was criticized during the campaigns for supporting candidate Peña Nieto (Eme Equis, 2012).
3. gabrielquadri.blogspot.com—the candidate’s own blog.
4. eluniversal.mx—national newspaper.

For a comparison of the main sources linked to each candidate *see table 3.8*.

Table 3.8

Main sources linked to each candidate and frequencies

López Obrador	Peña Nieto	Vázquez Mota	Quadri
YouTube – 245	YouTube – 111	YouTube – 32	Ustream - 4
Facebook – 93	Facebook – 72	Instagram – 10	El Sol de México - 2
amlo.si – 92	Proceso – 35	Terra – 7	Quadri’s blog-1
Aristegui Noticias – 49	Aristegui Noticias – 28	josefina.mx – 7	El Universal - 1
SDP Noticias – 45	The Guardian – 25	Reforma – 7	La Silla Rota-1
Proceso – 24	Instagram – 23	Facebook – 5	Yahoo México-1
Milenio – 23	SDP Noticias – 23	Informador – 4	Proceso – 1
el5antuario – 19	e pn.mx – 20	Crónica – 3	Uno Noticias-1
Ustream – 18	SinEmbargo -18	SinEmbargo-3	YouTube – 1
ADNPolítico-17	Ustream – 15	CNN – 2	n/a

Discussion

There were six frames where the two main candidates of the election had a statistically significant difference. This means that Twitter users produced a relevant association of one

candidate to a specific frame. López Obrador had a stronger link to four of the six frames; two of these had a positive connotation and two had negative implications. The two positive frames for López Obrador were the idea that the candidate would produce a political change in the country if he became president, and that this candidate can be considered truthful. The first negative frame was related to the leftist candidate saying that there could be a fraud in the election that would steal from him the presidency, and the second negative frame was about the implication that López Obrador is dangerous for Mexico.

In addition, in frames where the two main candidates had a more balanced distribution of mentions, López Obrador was more frequently linked to the frame where he was accusing Peña Nieto's team of using negative campaign strategies. López Obrador was also tied to constructive campaign promises, social media users accusing this candidate of getting money illegally for his campaign, that the candidate would end Mexico's poverty, petitions to vote for a candidate, the role of young Mexicans in the elections, and tweets about collective public demonstrations.

One of the frames strongly linked to Peña Nieto had positive contexts and the other one was negative. The first one claimed that Peña Nieto was the best option to eradicate Mexico's violence, whereas the negative narrative accused this candidate of being surrounded by people who were involved in drug dealing.

Also, it is relevant to point out that Peña Nieto had a higher rate of association to corruption, the media company for which his wife used to work—Televisa—, the #YoSoy132 movement that was born in opposition to the PRI party, and the use of fake social media accounts to inflate the candidate's positive image on Twitter. But at the same

time, Peña Nieto had higher frequencies on tweets that mentioned the construction of democracy in Mexico as a priority, opinions on which candidate is better, and poll results in his favor.

Another interesting result is that Peña Nieto had the lowest rate of words per tweet. This means that even candidate Quadri—who had very little presence on the social media platform—received on average slightly more words per tweet than the candidate who later on would end up winning the election. Since the nature of Twitter is to have short, concrete messages (Twitter, 2016), this could suggest that Peña Nieto’s followers on this social media platform were more knowledgeable on how to use Twitter.

But the most important finding of this chapter is that, contrary to what was seen in the results of Chapter 2, on Twitter candidate López Obrador had a wider coverage than candidate Peña Nieto. He also was associated with more positive frames than Peña Nieto, who in the end won the presidential election.

It does not come as a surprise the fact that the most common frame on Twitter was the call to vote for a specific candidate. But interestingly the second most common frame was related to the #YoSoy132 social movement against the PRI party candidate Peña Nieto, which was originated first on YouTube and then expanded to other social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. During a visit from Peña Nieto to Universidad Iberoamericana some students interrupted the candidate’s speech to ask him to respond to questions about the assassination and disappearance of several people during the San Salvador Atenco protests against the construction of an international airport (Moreno Sánchez, 2010). The Atenco

public demonstrations against the airport were violently shut down by police forces. This happened when Peña Nieto was governor of the state where San Salvador Atenco is located.

At Universidad Iberoamericana a few dozen students stood up and yelled at Peña Nieto, asking him to respond to questions about the human rights violations during the Atenco protests. Later on the PRI leader of that time, Pedro Joaquín Coldwell, said on a radio newscast that the protestors were not students but people hired by candidate López Obrador to disrupt Peña Nieto's rally (Vanguardia, 2012). However, the students posted a video on YouTube where they showed their university identification cards to demonstrate they were actually students expressing their opinion on Peña Nieto's candidacy to be president (CNN México, 2012a).

The fact that the #YoSoy132 movement was born among the wealthy, educated and young Mexican population explains why this movement was so relevant on social media platforms. It also illustrates why candidate Peña Nieto was associated with more negative frames on social media than López Obrador. Social media platforms were the tools the #YoSoy132 movement employed to organize public gatherings, demonstrations, and to distribute information mainly against the possibility of a PRI party comeback to Mexico's presidency. This social movement gained so much strength that the students were able to organize an independent debate among three of the four candidates. Peña Nieto was invited but decided not to attend the debate (CNN México, 2012b). Interestingly, this debate organized by the students was transmitted live on YouTube a few days before the election day (Másde131, 2012).

Another frame related to the impact of the youth in this election is that of the media company Televisa and its owners' interests in supporting Peña Nieto's campaign. This was the fifth most frequent frame overall and the second frame with the highest presence on Twitter if the frames related to the election process are not considered—call for vote, issues related to the candidates' debates, and opinions on who is going to win the election.

Media company Televisa—the biggest in Mexico and one of the most important in the Spanish-speaking world (Chávez, 2007)—was also the target of many accusations and a heated public debate about the influence of the company on Peña Nieto because the candidate married Televisa's actress Angélica Rivera a few months before the election. This was seen by many as a political strategy to make Peña Nieto an appealing candidate with the help of a mass media figure who appeared in several telenovelas (Villamil, 2012). Some scholars found that Televisa's newscasts were perceived by citizens as to be in favor of Peña Nieto (Cantú et al., 2013).

In this context, it seems relevant that young Mexicans represent the majority of the country's internet users. In 2011, the year prior to the election, 36.9% of the Mexican population—about 44 million people—had access to an internet connection and it was noticeable that social media users spent more time on the internet than watching TV (Islas & Arribas, 2012). In addition, 60% of the total Twitter users were between 18 and 30 years old (Islas, 2012). By 2015, 37% of Mexicans between 18 and 34 years had the biggest presence on digital platforms (AMIPCI, 2015a). In total, Mexico currently has 51 million internet users out of a total 121 million population (Notimex, 2015), which means that there are close to 19 million young Mexicans using this media platform. All these are indicators of a

younger generation displaying discomfort with politicians. The #YoSoy132 social movement and most frequent frames identified in this chapter appear as a rejection of old politics and the demand for a renewed and inclusive political system in the country. If all the mentions related to the #YoSoy132 movement, Televisa, and the Mexican youth are put together, these discourses represent 14% of all the frames found on social media for this dissertation.

The results of digital sources presented in this chapter suggest that other social media platforms were the preferred websites by Twitter users who linked their publications to external addresses. In this sense, YouTube, Facebook, Ustream, and Instagram played a relevant role in terms of the sources Twitter users chose to share on this platform. Also, it seems important that tweets about López Obrador were able to position the candidate's own website—*amlo.si*—among the most frequently linked sources; whereas candidate Peña Nieto's campaign website—*e pn.mx*—did not come out close to the top of his list.

In addition, two outlets that were considered to be liberal during the 2012 presidential campaigns dominated most of the mentions devoted to news sources—*Proceso* and *Aristegui Noticias*; in contrast, those outlets identified to be in favor of Peña Nieto had less frequent mentions—*SDP Noticias* and *Milenio*. Another relevant element is the presence of the British newspaper *The Guardian*, which was only connected to Peña Nieto's tweets because this outlet published documents about the efforts of Televisa to make Peña Nieto president of the country (Tuckman, 2012). This publication disseminated the contracts Peña Nieto gave Televisa during his time as governor.

It is also interesting that supporters of the PAN party were the ones that most frequently used the internet as source of information during the 2012 election (Cantú et al.,

2013), but despite this they were not able to take their candidate—Vázquez Mota—to a more salient position on Twitter narratives.

Another area of interest for this research was to explore the discursive differences in terms of national and international demographics attached to different languages. Originally this chapter was designed to conduct a comparative analysis that included tweets both in Spanish and in English to explore possible contrasts in terms of narrative construction and frame dissemination. It was designed that way due to the apparent borderless nature of social media. The inclusion of both Spanish and English tweets was set to offer an international perspective on the topic. However, the almost complete absence of tweets in English about Mexico's election in 2012 confirms that social networks and the different discourses included in them are confined not only by the available infrastructure, but also by the social and linguistic space in which people are inserted or with which they identify. In this respect, tweets in Spanish were found to be coming from several different countries around the world; this is discussed in Chapter 4. However, just across the border English speakers were silent.

The nature of social media networks suggests an endless number of discursive possibilities. But despite this, the actual practice of self-communication has its own borders. In this sense, the narrative potential on social media might be broad, but the actual performance of communication on social media—as in any other setting—is dependent on personal, social and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the constraints of social media are defined by a set of principles that are transferred from the social space of individuals to their communicative practices on digital media.

CHAPTER 4: Social Network Analysis and the Geographies of Mexican Elections

The network society has modified public narratives (Castells, 2012). New media technologies that permit self-dissemination of discourses have changed the way we build social interactions (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). For that reason, when a researcher is dealing with new modes of communication, specifically where digital technologies are involved, it is relevant to analyze the components of their networks to understand the flows of information. With social network analysis it is possible to explore macro structures that affect society through dissimilar geographies: power relationships, institutional influence, and economic control, just to name a few.

Media Infrastructures and Culture

The printing press in Europe was able to create an imaginary sense of what France was; this shaped the path for the institutional convention of a *country* (Anderson, 2006; Carey, 2002). But to produce a common culture for larger territories—like in the United States, for instance—it took more than newspapers and an efficient post office to build a nation. In the U.S. it wasn't until the telegraph and the railroad came about that it became possible to create a set of practices and spatio-temporal relations that defined a U.S. national identity through social, political, economic, and religious institutions.

In the 1800s U.S., Chicago was founded as a frontier that would put New York City in contact with the far distant Western territories (Carey, 2002). Chicago was conceived as a frontier and its foundation generated a need for lines of communication that would

synchronize time and make distances shorter. The goal was to make these cities work in the same direction. In this sense, frontiers—or borders, for that matter—are not abandoned territories, but a clear message of an expanding circle of political, economic, and cultural influence that gives place to national identification. The U.S. south, Carey (2002) explains, is an example of how the lack of communication channels keeps two cultures away from each other. It was later, in part thanks to the introduction of *northern* United States television in the south, that social norms and practices were to some extent homogenized. But in the same way media can help create general standards and systems of beliefs, it can also fracture them. With the invention of satellite services, cable networks, and digital technologies, the concept of national identity was again redefined. In the U.S. these technologies allowed a fragmented notion of what is it to be *American*. There is, indeed, a contradiction in this process where media technologies are essential players: in the network society we have homogenizing communicative practices that at the same time enable cultural fragmentation (Carey, 2002). Those fractures are often associated with concepts like ethnicity, social class, geographic location, and culture.

Carey (2009) argues that communication is the process that sticks together communities. Thus, communication is not only a sender and receiver interaction with messages, it is a complex operation that generates common interests, topics, systems of beliefs, and territories, among other things. In this context the available infrastructure to facilitate or hinder communication is critical to generate social cohesion. Media developments allowed the U.S. to exist as its institutions reached remote places and integrated people in the *American* culture. In this respect, media technologies function as an

extension of social practices to create connections that promote common points of reference. All media—even in oral societies—operate networks in a similar way other social institutions have brought people together throughout history—like church, family, or school systems. But media technologies have reconceptualized distances, social space, trajectories, storage, and distribution (Kittler, 1999; Ong, 2002; Peters, 1999). In this context, any culture gets disseminated, reinforced, or weakened by messages and media practices embedded in network infrastructures. For that reason media technologies and the forces affecting them can create local, regional, national, international, and communal identities (Castells, 2012). With all this in mind, it is possible to affirm that social cohesion and cultural values are created in part thanks to the affordances and limitations of media technologies. In this sense, media technologies produce new practices and modes of perception and experience, which create a different sense of belonging to a shared time and space with others.

Cultural Production in the Network Society

The identity of a social group is defined partially by media images and symbols (Carey, 2009; Virilio, 1989). Regulatory systems built around media have an important role in how societies perceive themselves and other cultures. The notion of a country, as an institution that produces a sense of belonging and ideological frameworks through regulation and infrastructure, is essential to investigate power structures, patterns, and exchanges within the network society. Nationality—says Carey (2002)—is the only non-psychological attribute of human identity in the modern era.

The current network society and its media developments have offered a different dimension to the production of culture and institutions: media networks constantly modify geographies and temporalities (McLuhan, 2003; Peters, 1999). In the network society, territoriality has become a blurred concept (Wiley, 2004). The process of globalization makes this more evident. In media studies it is often assumed that nation or nationality are variables that are explained by themselves, they are taken for granted, but these concepts are social constructs that need to be problematized because they do not have the same meaning in all circumstances (Wiley, 2004). Specifically for the study of communication in the network society, it seems more appropriate to understand nations as regulatory systems that provide infrastructures and have the ability to set audiences—e.g. through access to the internet, satellite distribution of signals, granting residency, dictating immigration policies, etc. In this sense, countries and institutions embedded in the network society are also part of a grand technological device that allows or blocks communication (Carey, 2002). A nation's space and time, in some ways, are technological borders that contain information and allow connections to produce ideologies and cultural framings.

Research questions

This chapter includes a social network analysis to explore the geographies created by Twitter users in connection to each one of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates. A social network analysis tied to content analysis gives a different dimension to a content analysis study; social media users who post online are also playing a part in the production of political narratives (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013). In this respect, this chapter is focused on

understanding the networks from a multi-level approach to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is geographic location tied to social media usage a predictor of political support from the public?

RQ2: How were global networks shaped on Twitter for each of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidate?

RQ3: What were the global frequencies for each location attached to each candidate?

RQ4: How were regional networks shaped on Twitter for each of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates?

RQ5: What were the regional frequencies for each location attached to each candidate?

RQ6: How were local networks shaped on Twitter for each of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidate?

RQ7: What were the local frequencies for each location attached to each candidate?

RQ8: What were the main hashtags related to the 2012 Mexican presidential election posted on Twitter?

RQ9: What hashtags or frames were associated with specific candidates?

Methods

The data used to conduct the social network analysis is the same obtained to do the social media content analysis on Chapter 3. The main difference is that the analysis of the dataset put a special emphasis on obtaining the location from where Twitter users were publishing information about the candidates. The geo-located posts were helpful to build the social

networks linked to the election. To achieve this, public tweets that contained a location were analyzed to generate the local, regional, and international networks produced by the discourses linked to each candidate.

Sample

The dataset for the social network analysis is the same one used for Chapter 3, with the main difference that the main elements to be explored—beside the message conveyed in the tweets—was the identified locations of Twitter users. As explained in Chapter 3, the original data file containing a *spritzer* version of tweets published during June 2012 was obtained from the Internet Archive—www.archive.org. The *spritzer* version of twitter contains 1% of all tweets made public around the world. The original data was packaged in a tar (.tar) file, and the extracted documents were coded in JSON (JavaScript Object Notation) format. The python script that was developed to transform those files into CSV documents considered the extraction of the locations voluntarily provided by users, and the coordinates of tweets in the case of users who allowed this social media platform to access their GPS location. In some cases users allow Twitter to access their geographic location information to share it through the social media platform; if users did not authorize the social network platform to gather this information it was not included in the Twitter data. And in other cases the location is manually provided by Twitter users, which is open to personal interpretation regarding the meaning of *location*. To see part of the python script that was used to convert the documents consult the methods section on Chapter 3.

The converted CSV files were then merged and organized by day of tweet publication. As stated in Chapter 3, to make sure this project remained manageable a systematic sampling of the data files was created. It contained all tweets published every other day starting on Jun 1st, 2012, and ending on June 29th, of the same year. The systematic sampling was also applied to the single days to finally include tweets posted between 9 and 10 am, 1 and 2 pm, and 5 and 6 pm, using the central Mexico timezone. A search on the final daily files was performed to identify all tweets that contained information related to each one of the four Mexican presidential candidates.

A database for each candidate was created, containing all tweets that mentioned their most common name used on this social media network. For López Obrador the search was conducted using the acronym “amlo.” For Peña Nieto also his acronym was the most frequent identification “epn.” Vázquez Mota’s search was done using “josefinavm.” And finally for Quadri the search word was “g_quadri.”

The final database for López Obrador had 5,169 tweets, Peña Nieto-related posts accounted for 4,874, Vázquez Mota’s database was made up of 867 tweets, and Quadri had 156 tweets linked to his name.

Procedures

Once the datasets for each candidate were ready, computer software was used to run word frequencies on the fields related to user location—coordinates and the voluntarily provided location. The objective of this was to identify and rank the locations, from the most common to the least common user location tweeting about a candidate. This permitted the author to

classify regular location names and tie them to their frequencies per tweet. The final list of locations for each candidate was then sorted to filter them in three main categories:

International locations. This category refers to the official names of countries and slight variations of it. For instance, all frequencies for “United States” and “USA” were merged to reflect a single nation. The final coordinates of each self-identified location were established by the geographical center of each nation—i.e. the geographic center of the countries involved in this study.

Regional locations. Some places were tied to specific names of states located either in Mexico or in the United States. For example, some users identified their location as “Baja California”—a Mexican state—and did not provide the name of a country or a city. Another example would be users who said they were in “Texas” and did not specify their country or town. As with the country networks, the final coordinates of each self-identified state were established by the geographical center of those states, which means the position on the visualizations is the geographic center of the states.

City locations. In this category were included all towns, cities, and neighborhoods provided either by users or by Twitter in the form of coordinates. Also here the coordinates of self-identified cities were established in the geographical center of each city, town or neighborhood.

As a general rule for this chapter, any location provided manually by users that was not a geographic territory—as they are commonly known by social convention—was filtered out of the databases; for example, several Twitter users wrote “in the sky” as their location. And to protect social media users’ privacy, the screen names were not included nor tied to

specific mentions of the candidates. In the case of users that allowed Twitter to geo-locate their actual coordinates—if any—the rule was to exclude the exact locations from this work. The latter was also to protect social media users.

All tweets that did not include a location were tagged as such to differentiate them from those that could be associated with a geographic location. Under this approach, it is fair to say that those tweets that did not include any local, regional, or international attachment to a territory—either identified by coordinates or self-published—were excluded from this social network analysis. Given these screening procedures, the final sample size for the Lopez Obrador's network analysis was 3,032 tweets that included a location; for Peña Nieto the sample size resulted in 2,709 tweets; for Josefina Vázquez Mota was 481 tweets; and for candidate Quadri the final sample size for this social network analysis included 86 tweets. In some tweets the location included a city, a state, and a country; in these cases those tweets were useful for the three types of networks analyzed here: local, regional, and international.

Then, the CSV database of each candidate was formatted accordingly to the needs of Geographic Information System (GIS) software. The objective of this step was to generate visualizations of the social networks at the local, regional, and international levels. For the purposes of this dissertation, Gephi was the software used to create the visual representations of the networks.

The size of the nodes in the visualizations represents the frequencies with which a candidate was connected to a geographic territory. That is to say, bigger nodes mean a larger number of tweets originated in that area. Additionally, the color of the edges also represents

the strength of the link between a candidate and a specific location. Darker links mean higher frequency of tweets.

Results

Users who posted information related to any Mexican presidential candidate said they were located in 59 different countries; 66 different states located in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada; and 310 cities or localities around the world.

Mexico was naturally the country from which most Twitter users posted messages on this social network about one or more of the candidates—this country alone produced 88% of all tweets that included a country location. Without considering Mexico, the 5 most frequent countries from which Twitter users posted about one or more of the candidates were: United States, Spain, Italy, Brazil, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Chile, Netherlands, and Colombia.

The definition of regional networks in this dissertation was initially determined to be composed of tweets that included a Mexican state as their location. As this study progressed, it was found that social media users also frequently identified states located in other countries, mainly within the U.S.

The situation of Mexico City is complex because it is the capital city, but at the same time it is one of the 32 political entities in Mexico. Considering Mexico City as a region, it was found that this location produced 30% of all tweets that included a state/region of publication. If on the contrary Mexico City is not considered a region, the 10 most extensive

state networks of all candidates were located in: Puebla, Veracruz, Jalisco, Tabasco, Nuevo León, State of Mexico, Yucatán, Oaxaca, Baja California, and Chiapas.

At the city level, Mexico City was again a powerhouse for information production about the 2012 Mexican presidential election. The capital city generated 24% of all tweets that included a city location. If we consider all localities but Mexico City, then the top 10 city networks on Twitter were: Guadalajara, Monterrey, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Villahermosa, Tijuana, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, and Guanajuato. *See table 4.1.*

Table 4.1

Most frequent international, regional, and local tweet locations

Country	%	State	%	City	%
USA	27.84%	Puebla	9.17%	Guadalajara	11.22%
Spain	7.84%	Veracruz	7.01%	Monterrey	7.68%
Italy	5.49%	Jalisco	6.37%	Puebla	6.57%
Brazil	5.09%	Tabasco	4.79%	Veracruz	5.27%
Canada	4.70%	Nuevo Leon	4.63%	Oaxaca	2.67%
France	4.70%	Edomex	3.95%	Villahermosa	2.56%
U.K.	4.31%	Yucatán	3.84%	Tijuana	2.32%
Chile	1.96%	Oaxaca	3.58%	Querétaro	2.12%
Netherlands	1.96%	Baja California	3.53%	San Luis Potosí	2.08%
Colombia	1.56%	Chiapas	3.32%	Guanajuato	1.89%

Note: Mexico City was by far the most frequent city.

In terms of each candidate, three of the four presidential contenders reached a significant geographic area around the world. López Obrador was the candidate with the wider geographic coverage at the international scale. Users who posted tweets mentioning this candidate identified themselves as attached to 41 different countries. In comparison, users who tweeted about candidate Peña Nieto had as their location 27 different countries. According to the information provided by users, in the case of Josefina Vázquez Mota people tweeting about her were located in 19 different nations. And Quadri's mentions were limited to 3 countries.

This tendency is also related to the number of mentions each candidate received on Twitter, with López Obrador having the most number of tweets mentioning him, with 5,169 tweets; Peña Nieto had 4,874 tweets; Vázquez Mota had 867; and Quadri had 156 total mentions. As was expected, a higher number of tweets mentioning a candidate was associated with a wider geographic distribution of the messages.

The most frequently identified country after Mexico was the United States—except in the case of Quadri, who had no tweets coming from that country. After the U.S., most international tweets were identified as coming from Spain, Brazil, Canada, and France. *See table 4.2.*

In terms of regional scope of information related to the Mexican presidential candidates in 2012, Mexico City—which in Mexico's political composition is the equivalent to a Mexican state—was by far the place where most people on Twitter displayed a geographic connection to a candidate. But if we consider only the rest of the states, Puebla

had the highest share of tweets, then Veracruz, Tabasco, and then the State of Mexico—this state has the same name as the country and is adjacent to Mexico City.

Table 4.2

Top 10 countries by candidate — Total tweets from locations provided by Twitter users

	López Obrador	Peña Nieto	Vázquez Mota	Quadri
1	Mexico – 1500	Mexico – 179	Mexico – 203	Mexico – 44
2	USA – 30	USA – 18	USA – 23	Spain – 1
3	Spain – 11	Spain – 8	Italy – 2	Singapore – 1
4	UK – 8	Brazil – 6	Brazil – 2	n/a
5	Canada – 7	Italy – 6	India – 2	n/a
6	France – 6	Canada – 5	Australia – 1	n/a
7	Brazil – 5	France – 5	Austria – 1	n/a
8	Australia – 3	Chile – 3	France – 1	n/a
9	Colombia – 3	UK – 3	Netherlands – 1	n/a
10	Venezuela – 2	Denmark – 2	Japan – 1	n/a

In total, 58 states from Mexico and the United States were identified as having links with Peña Nieto. This candidate had the highest number of states identified by users. The top 10 for this candidate are all Mexican states, with Mexico City, Puebla, Veracruz, Baja California, and Hidalgo being the top five. Several states from the U.S. were also in the list

of regions reached by Peña Nieto's regional network. The main U.S. states were: Florida, Texas, New York, and California.

In the case of López Obrador, he was connected to 51 different states in Mexico and the United States. After Mexico City the top five states in his regional network were Puebla, Veracruz, Jalisco, Tabasco, and the State of Mexico. Internationally speaking, the leftist candidate had mentions coming from the states of California, Texas, New York, Georgia, and Florida, among other with lower frequencies.

The only female candidate in this election, Josefina Vázquez Mota, had a regional network that reached a total of 33 different states in Mexico and the United States. The main local states for her were Mexico City, Jalisco, Puebla, Nuevo León, and San Luis Potosí. Internationally, she had a few mentions from users that said they were located in New York, Florida, Tennessee, Nevada, and New Hampshire.

For candidate Quadri the numbers were much smaller in comparison to the rest of the participants in the election, but he still was able to reach 17 different states in Mexico and two in the United States. The main locations in Mexico were: Mexico City, Puebla, Tabasco, Nuevo León, and Michoacán; whereas for the international states he had one mention from California and one from Washington state.

Nationally speaking, López Obrador had presence in all 31 Mexican states and the Federal District, and Peña Nieto only missed tweets coming from the state of Tlaxcala; other than that, he also was linked to each one of the Mexican States. In terms of overall national mentions, López Obrador had 1,180 tweets published from accounts identified in some

Mexican state and Peña Nieto had 1,077. For a detailed view of the most salient state frequencies *see table 4.3*.

Table 4.3

Top 10 states by candidate — Total tweets from locations provided by Twitter users

	López Obrador	Peña Nieto	Vázquez Mota	Quadri
1	Puebla – 99	Puebla – 61	Jalisco – 16	Puebla – 3
2	Veracruz – 68	Veracruz – 59	N. Leon – 12	Tabasco – 2
3	Jalisco – 62	Baja Calif. – 49	Puebla – 11	Nuevo Leon – 2
4	Tabasco – 47	Hidalgo – 46	S.L.P. – 10	Michoacan – 2
5	Edomex – 38	Oaxaca – 41	Oaxaca – 9	Q. Roo – 2
6	Nuevo Leon – 37	Jalisco – 41	Queretaro – 9	California – 1
7	Chiapas – 33	Tabasco – 39	Guanajuato 8	Aguascalientes – 1
8	Yucatan – 28	Yucatan – 39	Veracruz – 6	Baja Calif. – 1
9	Queretaro – 21	Nuevo Leon – 37	Sonora – 5	Campeche – 1
10	Sinaloa – 20	Edomex – 34	New York – 5	Washington – 1

The local network for each candidate was clearly dominated by the presence of Twitter users who identified Mexico City as their geographic location. After this, Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Puebla city also had a significant presence. After those cities the most consistent localities were Veracruz city, Tijuana, and Villahermosa, which had an

important number of mentions as well, especially in tweets where candidates Peña Nieto and López Obrador were included.

Without the overwhelming streams coming from Mexico City, for López Obrador the most mentions came from Guadalajara, Puebla, Monterrey, Veracruz, Villahermosa, and Tijuana. Interestingly, the city of Los Angeles, California, appeared as the eleventh most relevant city in the local network of this candidate. Also in the U.S., the leftist candidate had some tweets from Miami, New York, and Houston. In total, López Obrador had tweets coming from 184 different cities distributed around the world.

As mentioned before, Peña Nieto's local network was also mainly composed of tweets posted from Mexico City. The rest of his top five cities were: Guadalajara, Monterrey, Puebla city, and Veracruz city. The most relevant city at the international level for this candidate was New York City, followed by Los Angeles. This candidate had tweets from 226 different cities.

Vázquez Mota's city network was comprised of mentions from Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Puebla, and San Luis Potosí. Internationally she was able to reach Twitter users who identified their location in New York City, New Delhi, San Antonio, and Boston. In total she had tweets based in 77 different cities.

As for the rest of the categories analyzed here, candidate Quadri had a limited presence in cities as well. Most tweets mentioning him were identified as being sent from Mexico City, Monterrey, Puebla, Guadalajara, and Tijuana. He also had single mentions from Barcelona, San Diego, and Seattle. In total Quadri had a local network composed of 21 different cities. *See table 4.4.*

Table 4.4

Top 10 cities by candidate — Total tweets from locations provided by Twitter users

	López Obrador	Peña Nieto	Vázquez Mota	Quadri
1	Mexico City – 479	Mexico City – 247	Mexico City -69	Mexico City -15
2	Guadalajara – 125	Guadalajara – 145	Monterrey – 17	Monterrey – 4
3	Puebla – 92	Monterrey – 87	Guadalajara – 12	Puebla – 3
4	Monterrey – 87	Puebla – 61	Puebla – 11	Guadalajara – 3
5	Veracruz – 68	Veracruz – 59	S.L.P. – 10	Tijuana – 2
6	Villahermosa – 32	Oaxaca – 41	Oaxaca – 9	Villahermosa – 2
7	Tijuana – 26	Tijuana – 28	Queretaro – 9	Acapulco – 1
8	Xalapa – 19	Aguascalientes – 28	Guanajuato – 8	Barcelona – 1
9	S.L.P. – 18	Guanajuato – 28	Tampico – 6	Cancun – 1
10	Oaxaca – 17	Villahermosa – 27	Veracruz – 6	San Diego – 1

For a general overview of the candidates scope at the local, regional, and international levels *see table 4.5*.

Table 4.5

Number of local, regional, and countries linked to the candidates on Twitter

Candidate	Cities	States	Countries
López Obrador	184	51	41
Peña Nieto	226	58	27
Vázquez Mota	77	33	19
Quadri	21	17	3

Hashtags as Topical Clusters

Hashtags are a way to hold together a series of messages posted on social media. This allows building a fragmented discourse related to one specific topic. In this study López Obrador and Peña Nieto had several hashtags tied to their names on Twitter. But the most frequent ones were as follows:

López Obrador had 635 tweets with #AMLO included in them; this is the candidate's name acronym. In second place, the most used hashtag by users who tweeted about this candidate used #MiVotoEsPorAMLO—which translates into English as “My vote is for AMLO.” This hashtag had 340 mentions. In third place was the hashtag #TodoMéxicoEnElZócaloConAMLO—which refers to a political rally organized in the capital of the country and roughly translates to: All of Mexico is with López Obrador in Mexico City's main square. This hashtag was used 249 times. Then, the fourth most used hashtag linked to the leftist candidate was #YoSoy132, a direct reference to the social

movement sparked by Peña Nieto's harsh encounter with students at Universidad Iberoamericana; this hashtag had 110 mentions. The fifth most used hashtag with 100 mentions was #PanistasConAMLO, which is a message of support supposedly coming from members of Vázquez Mota's party—the PAN. Another relevant hashtag associated with López Obrador was #ConAMLOtiembalaElPeso, which is a negative message that implies that if López Obrador was elected president the Mexican currency would be devaluated.

In the case of Peña Nieto, also the initials of his name—#EPN—were the most used hashtag, but with 280 tweets it received less than half of the mentions López Obrador got with the hashtag #AMLO. The second most used hashtag during June 2012 in Peña Nieto's tweets was #DemocraciaEsToleranciaVoyConEPN, which is a complex way of using the election context to state that López Obrador is an intolerant politician, and that those who want democracy for Mexico should vote for Peña Nieto. This hashtag was present 187 times and the literal translation would be “Democracy is Tolerance, I'm with Peña Nieto.” The third most frequent tag connected to Peña Nieto's figure was #MexicoConEPN, with 146 mentions. This translates to “Mexico is with Peña Nieto.” In fourth place was found to be the unusually long hashtag #EnUnMesMéxicoCambiaráConEPN—“In a month Mexico will change with Peña Nieto.” This was posted 145 times. The fifth most relevant hashtag for this candidate was #YoSoy132, with 117 mentions.

If we consider the top ten hashtags for each one of the two main candidates, Peña Nieto had five of them with negative connotations and five positive. On the other hand, in López Obrador's database seven of the ten most frequently used hashtags during June 2012 were positive, and three had negative implications.

Of the top 10 hashtags in Vázquez Mota's tweets 6 of them were positive and the rest negative. For Quadri, half of the hashtags were negative and the other half were positive, but the number of hashtags produced by Twitter users for these two candidates was very small in comparison to the two main candidates of the election.

Network Visualizations

International networks



Figure 4.1
López Obrador international network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.



Figure 4.2
Peña Nieto international network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.



Figure 4.3
Vázquez Mota international network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.



Figure 4.4
Quadri international network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.

Regional networks

Figure 4.5
López Obrador regional network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.



Figure 4.6
Peña Nieto regional network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.



Figure 4.7
Vázquez Mota regional network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.

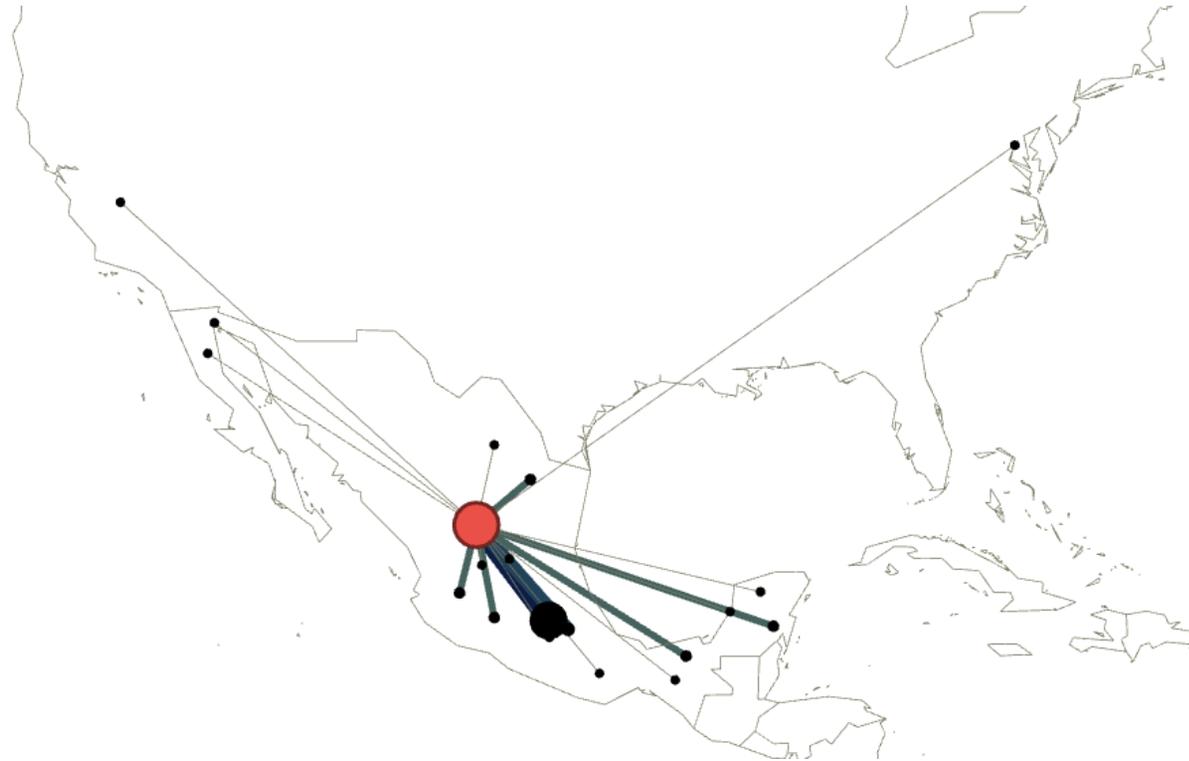


Figure 4.8
Quadri regional network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.

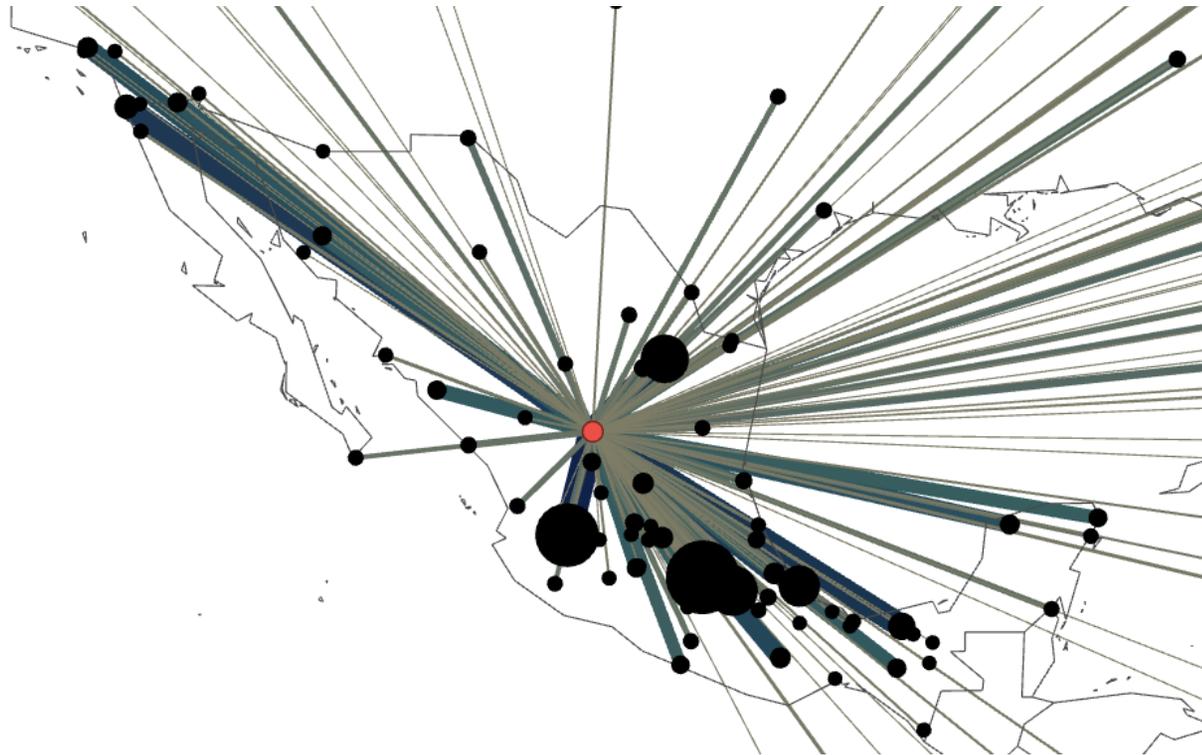
Local networks

Figure 4.9
López Obrador local network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.

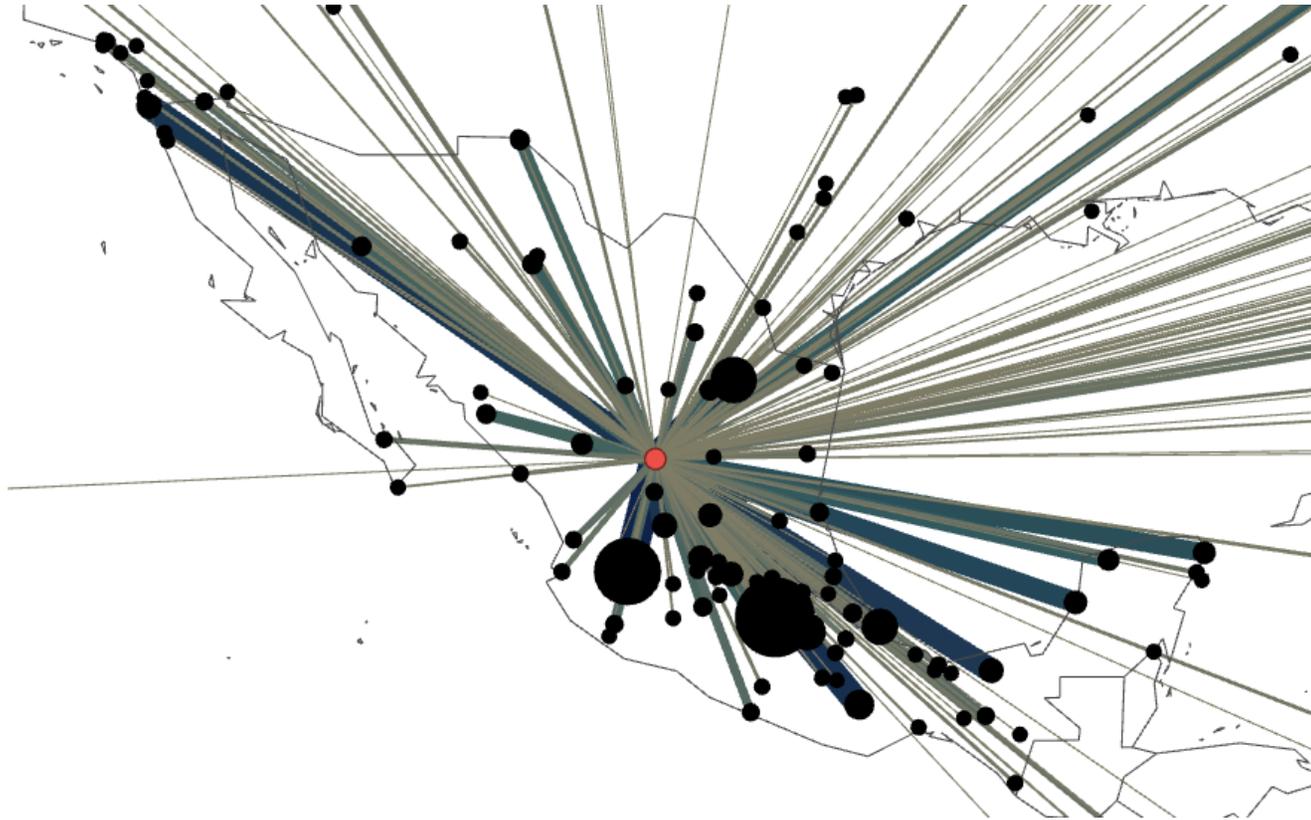


Figure 4.10
Peña Nieto local network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.



Figure 4.11
Vázquez Mota local network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.

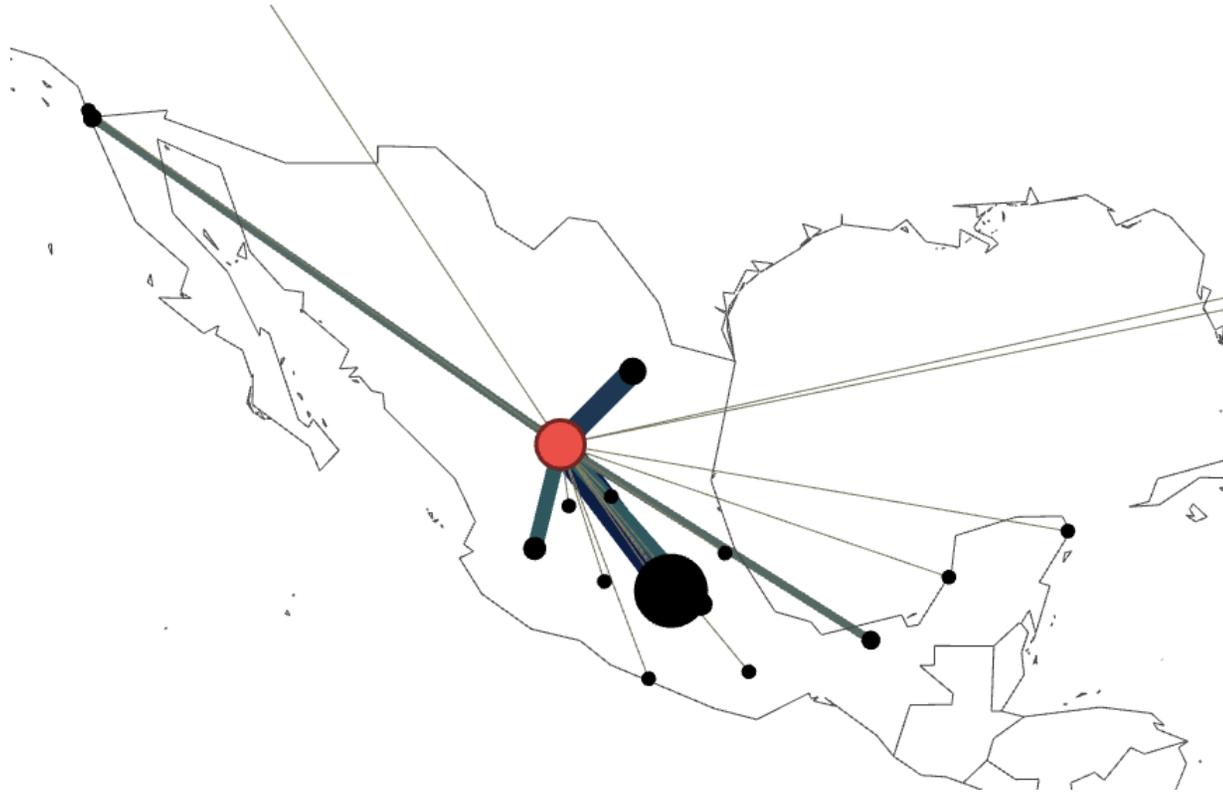


Figure 4.12
Quadri local network on Twitter

Note: the red node represents the candidate. Bigger nodes and darker edges mean higher frequencies of tweets coming from that geographic area.

Discussion

As in any presidential election around the world, it is expected that the country where the election is happening will have a higher impact in terms of information flows. For that reason it comes as no surprise that Mexico was by far the country where most Twitter users who published information about one of the four candidates identified it as their location. The United States, which is the nation with the largest Mexican population living outside of Mexico, was the second place where most users said they were based in or geographically attached to. Spain came in as the third country where users showed some engagement with one of the candidates. Given the historical evolution of Mexico as a nation it seems natural that the United States and Spain are the two main countries to be in relation with the political climate during the Mexican campaigns.

There are other countries that were expected to appear on the list of places with people in some way involved in the Mexican presidential election. That is the case for Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, and the United Kingdom. These are countries with more or less strong cultural, economic, or social relationships with Mexico. However, it is also relevant to highlight the case of other nations that are not normally recognized as being in close social, economic, or cultural contact with Mexico. In this sense, even though India and Australia—for instance—had lower numbers of users attached to its territories, it seems important that the scope of the Mexican election seemed to have reached other parts of the world that are not typically associated with the Latin American country. In a deeper analysis, it was found that most of the tweets sent from Indian cities were retweets for candidate Vázquez Mota. There are some indications that these messages were part of an orchestrated

digital and political strategy—perhaps planned by the candidate’s campaign team—but this cannot be confirmed with the available data. However, what was confirmed is that those Twitter accounts stopped posting tweets a few weeks after the 2012 Mexican presidential election day—July 1st, 2012.

In terms of regional coverage of users linked to one of the candidates initially this study was designed to include only the frequencies tied to each one of the 31 Mexican states and the Federal District. However, as the analysis progressed it was found that in the case of López Obrador, Peña Nieto and Vázquez Mota there were users that mentioned their state as being in the United States. And even though the top 10 states for all candidates were Mexican, the presence of U.S. states was especially relevant. New York was even the 10th most identified area for Vázquez Mota. Other states that had a salient presence were California, Florida, Texas, and New Jersey, all of which have an important share of Hispanic population: California 38%, Texas 38%, Florida, 23%, New York 18%, and New Jersey 18%; Mexicans living in the U.S. are primarily based in California and Texas, with 11.4 million and 7.9 million of Mexicans or of Mexican-descent among their populations respectively (U.S. Census, 2011). Other states with an important presence of Hispanics also were in the regional networks for Mexican presidential candidates on Twitter, like North Carolina and the capital Washington D.C.

Taking into account the previous aspect, even though the regional networks were initially designed to include only Mexican states, the nature of the findings required an adaptation of the geographies tied to different candidates to display the regional distribution of engagements, which included geographies in the U.S. as well. This suggests what other

scholars have previously identified, that social space and networks are dynamically constructed depending on the context (Wiley, 2004).

López Obrador had tweets from all 32 different federal entities in Mexico, while Peña Nieto did not have tweets linked to the state of Tlaxcala, a small state in the center of the country. As stated in the results section of this chapter, López Obrador had more mentions coming from Mexican states than Peña Nieto. Despite this, almost a third of those messages were located in Mexico City, where López Obrador was Mayor from 2000 to 2006. If we do not consider the mentions originating from the Mexican capital, then Peña Nieto had more presence at the national level. This is in line with the actual results of the election, which shows a strong support for López Obrador in Mexico City, where he won and obtained more votes than in any other Mexican state—2.5 million votes. Although Peña Nieto won in the majority of the states (INE, 2012). It is worth noticing that in Mexico the winner of the election is determined by simple majority of the entire national population.

This analysis suggests that Peña Nieto's regional presence on Twitter was more fragmented, but the scope of his campaign was more successful in reaching more geographic areas in comparison to López Obrador's regional network. This can be one of the reasons why Peña Nieto ended up winning the presidential election. The latter might suggest that a more evenly distributed presence of a candidate across territories can yield more positive results than higher frequencies on specific locations.

Specifically talking about the local networks, a similar scenario to the regional networks was presented. López Obrador's campaign was more successful in terms of total tweets that included mentions of him. However, this social network analysis suggests that his

political strategy at the city level was dominated by a few cities generating most of the tweets. Peña Nieto seemed to have developed a more geographically diverse strategy at the local level. He was able to reach more geographies in this type of networks as well. This candidate received mentions from 226 different cities, and López Obrador from 184 localities.

Also relevant is the fact that Vázquez Mota's second most important city—after Mexico City—was Monterrey, which is the capital of the state of Nuevo León, one of the only three states won by this candidate in the 2012 election. This could be an indication that the PAN candidate had an effective campaign in this state.

This chapter also suggests that in the context of Mexican presidential elections, the geographic limits inherently related to traditional media platforms like newspapers or television, are not the same in digital media. This has been largely explored in other contexts, but up to this point it had not been tied to Mexican elections.

Another area of interest in this chapter was related to the use of hashtags. The results show that Twitter users who supported López Obrador produced more cluster density. In comparison to Peña Nieto's hashtags, López Obrador had a bigger impact in terms of number of mentions. In addition, users who tweeted about López Obrador generated seven positive hashtags within the 10 most used clusters. Peña Nieto in comparison had five positive hashtags among his 10 most frequent hashtags.

If this social network analysis were presented without context, it could be said that López Obrador had some advantages in terms of international network and the scope of his social media persona. The general assessment seemed to be in favor of López Obrador

because the topics surrounding his presence on Twitter were more positive than those linked to Peña Nieto. However, Peña Nieto had an edge in terms of geographic diversity of users who were interested in tweeting about him. The initial analysis of the data in this chapter suggested that López Obrador would perform better in the actual election and would have been able to get more votes than Peña Nieto. The contrary was true and this suggests that even though social media platforms have gained a powerful voice in the last decade, they are made up of fragmented voices that sometimes are concentrated in very specific geographic regions.

CHAPTER 5: Contrasting Narratives in the Digital Age and the Social Media Discourse Disruption

This chapter integrates all the discourses and geographic flows explored in this dissertation. It is a comparative analysis that intends to present a general overview of all aspects included in this work: the content analysis of national—Mexican—and international—United States—newspapers, the social media content analysis based on Twitter, and the social network analysis conducted with the use of Twitter users' locations.

Coverage of Candidates and Election Results

In newspapers Peña Nieto had a more extensive coverage both in Mexico and the United States. Only in the case of *El Economista*, did López Obrador have more mentions than any other candidate; in all the other outlets Peña Nieto's presence was more dominant. This was especially true for U.S. newspapers, where coverage of the PRI candidate doubled that of the leftist candidate—López Obrador. This scenario was different on Twitter, where López Obrador had the highest rate of mentions among this platform's users; Peña Nieto followed him with the second largest number of mentions. In this sense, there was a narrative in newspapers that was focused on the candidate that ultimately won the election, whereas social media users generated a diverging discourse, which was more interested in the figure of López Obrador and the hopes that this candidate would win the election. This suggests that the candidate of traditional news outlets was not the candidate of social media users. This manifests at a deeper level about the power distribution in Mexican politics. Despite the thousands of individual voices that were found on social media, the actual results of the

election were similar to the coverage of traditional newspapers both in Mexico and the United States. This suggests that media discourses of traditional news outlets might produce an effective impact on the Mexican presidential elections, perhaps due to a cascading effect where less powerful media outlets adopt the discourse of big media companies (Entman, 2003). *See table 5.1.*

Table 5.1

Presence of candidates in newspapers compared to presence on Twitter

Candidate	Newspapers		Twitter	
	Mentions	%	Mentions	%
López Obrador	2,621	30.04%	6,771	45.28%
Peña Nieto	3,960	45.39%	6,244	41.75%
Vázquez Mota	1,625	18.62%	1,488	9.95%
Quadri	517	5.92%	450	3%

In the actual election Peña Nieto received 38.15% of the votes, López Obrador 31.64%, Vázquez Mota 25.40%, and Quadri 2.30%—the rest of the votes went to unregistered candidates or were deliberately invalidated by citizens who disagreed with all presidential candidates. In a comparison of the election results to the Mexican and U.S. coverage of the candidates, similar results and trends were found. Overall presence on Mexican newspapers for Peña Nieto accounted for 44.06% of all mentions, López Obrador received 30.60% of the mentions, Vázquez Mota 18.96%, and Quadri 6.36%. In U.S.

newspapers Peña Nieto got 59% of the total mentions, López Obrador, 24.35%, Vázquez Mota 15.20%, and Quadri 1.41%. As noted in Chapter 2, the candidates are in the same position both in the election results and in newspaper media coverage, but it seems remarkably significant also how close the numbers were between the Mexican coverage of López Obrador and the percentage of votes he received in the election. *See table 5.2.*

Table 5.2

2012 presidential election results and media coverage by candidate

Candidate	Election Results		Newspaper Coverage			
	Votes	%	Mexico		United States	
			Mentions	%	Mentions	%
López Obrador	15,535,117	31.64%	2,432	30.60%	189	24.35%
Peña Nieto	18,727,398	38.15%	3,502	44.06%	458	59%
Vázquez Mota	12,473,106	25.40%	1,507	18.96%	118	15.20%
Quadri	1,129,108	2.30%	506	6.36%	11	1.41%
Total	49,087,446	100%*	7,947	100%	776	100%

*The rest of the votes were either for unregistered candidates or invalidated.

When social media discourses are included in the picture, the difference between Twitter and newspaper presence of candidates is clear. All newspapers from Mexico and the United States devoted 45.39% of their mentions to candidate Peña Nieto, 30.04% to López Obrador, 18.62% to Josefina Vázquez Mota, and 5.92% to Quadri. On Twitter the story was

different. López Obrador had the highest rate of mentions with 45.28%, Peña received 41.75% of all the mentions, Vázquez Mota 9.95%, and Quadri 3%. *See table 5.3.*

Table 5.3

Election results, newspaper coverage and Twitter mentions of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates

Candidate	Election Results		Media mentions			
	Votes	%	Newspapers		Social media	
			Mentions	%	Mentions	%
López Obrador	15,535,117	31.64%	2,621	30.04%	6,771	45.28%
Peña Nieto	18,727,398	38.15%	3,960	45.39%	6,244	41.75%
Vázquez Mota	12,473,106	25.40%	1,625	18.62%	1,488	9.95%
Quadri	1,129,108	2.30%	517	5.92%	450	3%
Total	49,087,446	100%*	8,723	100%	14,953	100%

*The rest of the votes were either for unregistered candidates or invalidated.

These last comparisons between actual voting and presence distributions among the candidates does not imply that media—whether traditional or digital—chose who was going to be the Mexican president. It has been suggested in the past that media content impact political attitudes and beliefs (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Entman, 2007; Valentino, 1999), and in this case the data suggests that media content in the Mexican political of 2012

might have represented an important element of the complex social processes that helped the public decide for whom to vote.

News Frames on Social Media and Newspapers

The idea that the candidate of national and international newspapers was not the candidate of social media is supported by the media frame variances. In Chapter 2 it was explained that the manual analysis of newspapers' content determined that the news outlets included in this dissertation disseminated a total of 18 main frames that were recurrent in a subsample of the 2,118 articles. In contrast, on Twitter there were 23 main identifiable frames that were constant throughout the analysis of a subsample of all 11,066 tweets.

Of all narratives, there were 10 common frames found in both newspapers and on social media: (1) the prevalent corruption in Mexico's society, (2) concerns related to violence going on in some parts of the country, (3) the need to build a solid democracy, (4) the involvement of young Mexicans in the election, (5) relevance of polls during the campaigns, (6) relevance of debates during the campaigns, (7) the social movement #YoSoy132 and its involvement in the election, (8) media companies and their role in the election, (9) public demonstrations against or in favor of a candidate, (10) issues related to the country's economy. For a detailed view of all frames found in newspapers and on Twitter *see tables 5.4 and 5.5.*

Table 5.4

Main frames found in both newspapers and on Twitter

Frames in newspapers and Twitter	
1	Mexico's corruption issues as one of the main challenges to solve
2	Security and violence concerns
3	Mexico's need to build a solid democracy
4	The role played by young Mexicans during the campaigns
5	Polls as a predictor of the election winner
6	Debates as an important element of the election
7	The #YoSoy132 social movement as a relevant entity during the campaigns
8	Mexican media companies involvement in the elections
9	Public demonstrations as part of the election process
10	The need of political reforms to improve Mexico's economy and governance

Table 5.5

Specific frames found in newspapers and on Twitter

Newspapers	Twitter
1. Candidate López Obrador was described as a populist	1. Expectation of a political change with a certain candidate
2. Candidate Peña Nieto and the PRI party were presented as authoritarian figures	2. Possible fraud in the election 3. Negative campaigning 4. Campaign promises
3. The possibility of an election fraud	5. Poverty
4. An ongoing socioeconomic crisis in Mexico	6. Drugs issues 7. Call for vote
5. Mexico's issues with poverty	8. Support of a candidate
6. Accountability as a relevant agenda item for the candidate who wins the election	9. Truthfulness of candidate 10. Opinions on which candidate is better 11. Opinion on who is going to win the
7. Mexico's need to improve its position in the world	presidency 12. A candidate is dangerous for the
8. The need to improve the human rights conditions in Mexico	country 13. The use of <i>bots</i> to improve the public's perception on a candidate

Above all frames, social media users were more likely to post messages that intended to convince other users to vote for a specific candidate. In second place, they framed the #YoSoy132 social movement described in Chapter 3 as a key element to prevent the PRI candidate Peña Nieto to become Mexico's president. The #YoSoy132 movement was born on social media, therefore it makes sense for it to appear as one of the main frames on Twitter. After these frames, social media users were inclined to post the following frames: debates as an important part of the campaigns, especially because the #YoSoy132 movement organized their own presidential debate that was streamed live on YouTube; personal opinions on who is going to win the election was another regular approach; and the media involvement in the election was another area of public scrutiny. This last frame was mainly about allegations against the media company Televisa, which was accused of openly supporting candidate Peña Nieto—who is married to an actress that used to work for Televisa—to advance the company's own economic interests.

In the comparison between daily frequencies of the most common frames seen on social media, and national and international newspapers, it was found that Twitter has the ability to generate a higher rate of occurrence. This is due to the nature of Twitter, where messages are short, immediate, and there is a wide variety of voices participating in the construction of narratives. The most recurrent frame on Twitter, as explained in Chapter 3, was about users urging other people to vote for a specific candidate, with a frequency of 19.93 daily mentions. In Mexican newspapers the most common frame was description of debates as an important part of the process; on average each publication disseminated this frame 4.05 times every day. And in U.S. newspapers polls results and the narrative about

which candidate was the frontrunner was the most common frame, at 2.66 daily mentions per newspaper. For a complete list of the most recurrent frames and their frequencies *see table 5.6*.

Table 5.6

Most common and daily frequencies of frames found on Twitter, and Mexican and U.S. newspapers

Twitter	Mexican newspapers	U.S. newspapers
Call for vote 19.93	Debates 4.05	Polls 2.66
#YoSoy132 13.68	Young Mexicans 3.16	Violence/security 2.29
Debates 11.03	Polls 2.94	Mexico's world image 1.66
Who is going to win 8.92	Corruption 1.50	Debates 1.61
Media 6.30	Democracy 1.36	Media 1.59
Young Mexicans 5.85	Violence/security 1.33	Corruption 1.51
Polls 5.27	#YoSoy132 1.24	Young Mexicans 1.44
Democracy 3.90	Demonstrations 1.10	Democracy 0.91
Political change 2.98	Media 1.09	Poverty 0.57
Demonstration 2.97	Election fraud 0.78	Political reforms 0.48

Note: Value indicates daily frequencies on Twitter, and daily frequencies by newspaper.

It is worth noticing that among the main frames published by newspapers the state of violence and the problems related to corruption in Mexico were a top priority. However,

these issues were not as relevant for Twitter users, who were more interested in promoting a positive image for a specific candidate. This difference addresses the contrasting nature of the media analyzed in this work: Newspapers disseminate information of public interest that intends to engage large segments of the population, and Twitter was born as a tool to help any entity—individuals or organizations—self-communicate their views with potentially large audiences. For that reason it is reasonable that newspaper frames both in Mexico and the United States had a more generalized approach, and social media frames were often dedicated to communicate individual desires, fears, and expectations in relation to the election.

In this comparison between newspapers and Twitter it was found that the frame about polls' descriptions of which candidate was winning during the campaigns was the most frequent in U.S. publications, and the third most frequent in Mexican outlets. In this context, it might be possible that a wide dissemination related to polls and their results might have produced a bandwagon effect that ultimately helped drive voter behavior. However, on Twitter the frame related to the relevance of polls was the seventh most recurrent topic and it was often linked to dismissing attitudes toward the poll results that presented Peña Nieto as the most probable winner of the election. As was noted in Chapter 3, on Twitter López Obrador had more positive frames linked to his name than Peña Nieto, therefore it seems reasonable that most social media users did not replicate the message that according to most polls Peña Nieto was going to win the election. In this sense, social media users were engaged in a careful selection of topics that were crafted to advance the position of their favorite candidate—López Obrador.

Digital Sources and the Dismissal of Traditional Newspaper Content

Of the 11,066 public tweets found for this dissertation, 2,715 contained links to other websites. As a general rule, social media users did not take the newspapers included in this study as their main sources on Twitter. Tweets about López Obrador were linked to *La Jornada* (11 links), *El Universal* (10), *Reforma* (4), and *The Washington Post* (1); candidate Peña Nieto's information was connected to *La Jornada* (9), *Reforma* (5), *El Universal* (2), and *The New York Times* (1); the PAN candidate Vázquez Mota was linked to *Reforma* (7); and Quadri had one tweet linked to *El Universal*. These numbers indicate that the traditional high circulation Mexican and U.S. newspapers employed in this study were used as tweet sources at a rate of 0.018 links per tweet—i.e. 1.8% of tweets connecting to an external source linked their message to one of the publications included in this dissertation.

In this respect, it is relevant to clarify that *reforma.com*—the web version of *Reforma*—, requires internet users to pay in order to access news articles online; this might be argued as a reason for social media users not linking to this website. However, all the other Mexican publications offer their content for free on their web versions, and they were not used as references at higher rates. In fact, *Reforma* had more links than *El Universal* and *El Economista*. See table 5.7.

Table 5.7

References on Twitter to high circulation newspapers

Newspaper	References on Twitter	References per tweet
<i>El Economista</i>	0	0
<i>El Universal</i>	13	0.004
<i>La Jornada</i>	20	0.007
<i>Reforma</i>	16	0.005
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	0	0
<i>The New York Times</i>	1	0.001
<i>The Washington Post</i>	1	0.001
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	0	0
All references	51	0.018

This suggests that in the Mexican context high circulation traditional newspapers—national and international—were not relevant sources for digital media users. On the other hand, newspaper articles used Twitter content as reference a total of 216 times. There were 2,118 news stories both from Mexico and the United States, therefore these outlets linked their content to Twitter at a frequency of 0.10 mentions per article, which means that 10% of all news articles made a reference to this social network. In some cases, Twitter itself was the main subject of the article. An example of this is a story published by *Reforma* with the title: *Triplica Quadri seguidores tras debate—After debate, Quadri triples followers* (*Reforma*,

2012). This article specifically highlighted that candidate Quadri significantly increased his Twitter followers after a good performance in one of the presidential debates. *See table 5.8.*

Table 5.8

Newspaper references to Twitter content

Newspaper	Total Twitter references	References per story
<i>El Economista</i>	12	0.061
<i>El Universal</i>	4	0.018
<i>La Jornada</i>	28	0.038
<i>Reforma</i>	140	0.154
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	1	0.055
<i>The New York Times</i>	13	0.812
<i>The Washington Post</i>	4	0.250
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	14	0.636
All newspapers	216	0.101

Since the sample did not yield a significant number of tweets in the English language dealing with the 2012 Mexican presidential election, it comes as no surprise that the U.S. publications were barely used as source on tweets. But the amount of information produced by the Mexican outlets might have initially suggested that they would have a bigger impact on social media. However, that was not the case. Twitter users preferred to link to other social media websites or to news outlets that were born digital, like *aristeguinoticias.com*,

sdpnoticias.com, and sinembargo.mx. This could be an indication that digital platforms have a unique language that facilitates links between outlets of similar nature and poses limitations for those publications that were created with dissimilar processes and nature.

The results about the exchange of references between newspapers and Twitter users suggest that social media users were not listening to traditional high-circulation newspapers. Nor they were sharing information from those sources at the rate at which they disseminated content published on other social media networks like YouTube and Facebook. And, at the same time, the same newspapers *were* paying attention to what some social media users had to say. In this context, the attention given by high circulation newspapers to Twitter content was repaid with the indifference of social media users.

Another interesting element is that U.S. publications farther from the Mexico-U.S. border tended to make more references to Twitter content. It seems relevant that *Los Angeles Times*—the closest publication to the border—was the outlet that published fewer references to Twitter content than *The Washington Post*—second closest to the border in this study—, and lastly *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. This suggests that newspapers closer to the border would be more likely to not use Twitter as reference to discuss Mexican politics. Nonetheless, more information is needed to find out if in this case proximity to the border plays the salient role other scholars have found in different studies about coverage of Mexico in the United States (Johnson, 1997; Branton & Dunaway, 2009).

Social Network Analysis as a Dimension of Content Analysis

This dissertation included a bilingual content analysis of national and international newspapers, a bilingual content analysis of social media content, and the identification of local, regional and international networks generated on Twitter. In Chapter 1 it was argued that previous research has considered social network analysis to add a different dimension to studies that include content analysis dealing either with analog or digital data (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013; Weber & Monge, 2011; Xu et al., 2015). It was under this premise that this dissertation considered social network analysis as an element that could potentially offer a more comprehensive picture of a computer-assisted content analyses.

The results of Chapter 4 showed that López Obrador had a larger presence on social media, and at the same time the discursive patterns linked to this candidate were more structured in comparison to the patterns of communication displayed by the candidate who in the end won the presidential election—Peña Nieto. This work suggests that the local and regional narratives were more extended in the case of Peña Nieto, and López Obrador had a wider scope at the international level.

Almost all Mexican and U.S. publications produced a bigger presence for candidate Peña Nieto than for any other candidate. As has been explained before, in the case of U.S. articles the presence of the PRI candidate doubled the presence of López Obrador, the second most frequently mentioned candidate in newspaper stories.

On social media it is difficult to measure the *circulation* of messages, but specifically on Twitter the follower and retweet counts have been used in previous research as indicators of information scope (Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith,

2013; Kazienko and Chawla, 2015; Choi & Park, 2015; Qin, 2015; Xu, Chiu, Chen, & Mukherjee, 2015). In this sense, considering all tweets that mentioned López Obrador, he had the highest number of followers—6,972,839—associated with users who tweeted about this candidate; tweets about him were retweeted a total 450,488 times. Followers associated with Peña Nieto accounted for 3,363,856, whereas retweets of messages about this candidate were 320,362. Josefina Vázquez Mota had 796,782 followers connected to tweets about her, and those messages were retweeted 176,337 times. Quadri was far behind with a base of 260,064 expanded followers, and retweets for him were only 4,850 in total.

With these proportions, the numbers suggest that the candidate of the then governing party—Vázquez Mota—generated higher rates of engagement in comparison to the other candidates. This is the only variable in this dissertation where the female PAN candidate displayed a better performance than the two candidates who ended up in first and second place in the actual election. For every tweet about Vázquez Mota, there were 203 retweets. Second in this scale was López Obrador, who received 87 retweets for every tweet about him. Then, candidate Peña Nieto had 65 retweets per tweet. And lastly Quadri averaged 31 retweets per tweet published about him. In the following table expanded followers numbers include all followers of users who tweeted about a candidate during June 2012; whereas level of engagement was calculated dividing the number of retweets by the total number of tweets published by social media users about each candidate. *See table 5.9.*

The previous table supports previous findings that suggest this candidate Vázquez Mota's party had the highest proportion of internet users during the 2012 election (Cantú et al., 2013). As was explained in Chapter 4, in a closer analysis of tweets about Vázquez Mota

it was found a clear pattern of retweets to any message this candidate posted on Twitter. This was a systematic practice that suggests a strategy developed to help improve her position on social media.

Table 5.9

Number of tweets, expanded followers, retweets linked to each candidate, and proportion of retweets per tweet—level of engagement

Candidate	Tweets	Expanded followers	Retweets	Engagement (retweets/tweets)
López Obrador	5,169	6,972,839	450,488	87
Peña Nieto	4,874	3,363,856	320,362	65
Vázquez Mota	867	796,782	176,337	203
Quadri	156	260,064	4,850	31

Another contrasting element between the scope of information published by newspapers and content posted online is that traditional media engagement is difficult to quantify, and Twitter offers the possibility to explore the different networks created by this platform's users. All newspapers included in this work are national publications in Mexico and the United States, but it is a major challenge to find out in which specific locations they produced some level of engagement with readers.

In a comparison between country locations found on Twitter and mentions of specific countries in news articles, it was found that both on social media and newspapers—national

and international—the most frequent connection to a country other than Mexico was with the United States. After the U.S. Twitter users were more likely to identify their location as Spain, which was also the third most mentioned country within Mexican news articles.

From a broader perspective, international networks on Twitter presented important differences if compared to the country networks found in newspaper content. After Mexico and the U.S., social media users more frequently identified their location in a European country, whereas national and international newspapers more often connected their stories about the 2012 Mexican presidential election to other Latin American nations. Both Mexican and United States publications had high frequencies in mentions of countries that share a historic evolution with Mexico, but those nations had a lower presence on Twitter. In other words, beyond the social, cultural, political, and economic relevance of the Mexico-U.S. relationship explained in Chapter 1, social media users engaged with the presidential campaigns included in this dissertation were more likely to be located in different countries as the ones more frequently included in newspaper stories.

Even in the hypothetical case of Twitter users not giving their actual location, the fact that they identified Mexico, the U.S., Europe, and Latin America as their main geographic spaces relates at a deeper level to the cultural, social, economic, and political connections of people who were interested in the 2012 Mexican election. *See table 5.10.*

Table 5.10

Most frequent Twitter users country of origin and most mentioned countries in newspaper articles

Twitter		Mexican newspapers		U.S. newspapers	
Country location	%	Country in articles	%	Country in articles	%
USA	27.84%	USA	22.86%	USA	44.81%
Spain	7.84%	Spain	8.08%	Brazil	17.03%
Italy	5.49%	Argentina	7.77%	Argentina	8.14%
Brazil	5.09%	Brazil	6.99%	Colombia	7.03%
Canada	4.70%	Chile	5.75%	Peru	3.33%
France	4.70%	France	5.59%	China	2.96%
U.K.	4.31%	Colombia	5.59%	Chile	2.22%
Chile	1.96%	China	4.82%	France	1.85%
Netherlands	1.96%	Cuba	4.66%	Venezuela	1.11%
Colombia	1.56%	Venezuela	2.33%	Panama	1.11%

In the previous table, percentage of Twitter locations was calculated dividing the frequency of user locations by the total number of users who included a country as part of the user profile. Percentages for Mexican newspapers locations were calculated taking the total number of mentions of a specific country within the news stories, which were divided by the

total number of country mentions in Mexican publications; this same procedure was used for U.S. publications, but using the U.S.-specific data.

As stated before, Mexico City—also called the Federal District—is one of the 32 political entities that compose Mexico as a country. If the capital is analyzed also at the level of states it not only produced most of the tweets, this geographic space also received the majority of mentions in national and international newspapers, with 12% and 40% respectively. If the capital is excluded there is a clear pattern of Twitter users located mostly in Mexican states, and at the same time Mexican articles mentioned also mostly local geographic regions. In contrast, the most salient aspect of this part of the analysis was that United States outlets focused on information related to Washington D.C., with stories related to the U.S. federal government's relations with their Mexican counterparts. Another U.S. state that had a high number of mentions was Texas; this state was included in stories about border issues. Also, it is worth highlighting that the second most mentioned state in stories disseminated by U.S. news outlets was the Mexican state Sinaloa, which is home to the Sinaloa Cartel—one of the most recognizable and powerful crime organizations in Mexico.

At the city level, Twitter users who said they were based in Mexico City accounted for 26% of all tweets that had a city location in them. In a similar trend, U.S. publications devoted 47% of their city mentions to Mexico City. On the other hand, the Mexican capital accounted for 11% of all mentions of this kind. Similarly to what has been done at the international and state levels, if Mexico City is excluded then the most common places mentioned in Mexican publications were: Veracruz, Puebla, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Monterrey, Iztapalapa—this is a specific area located in Mexico City—, Queretaro, Oaxaca,

Toluca, and Durango. Whereas for U.S. outlets the most common mentions of cities were: Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, Veracruz, Nezahualcoyotl—also a specific place of the greater Mexico City’s metropolitan area—, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Merida, New York, Ciudad Juarez, Acapulco, and Tlaxcala. *See tables 5.11 and 5.12.*

Table 5.11

Most frequent Twitter users state of origin and most mentioned states in newspapers articles

Twitter		Mexican newspapers		U.S. newspapers	
State location	%	States in articles	%	States in articles	%
Puebla	9.17%	Guerrero	8.01%	D.C.	13.54%
Veracruz	7.01%	Veracruz	7.33%	Sinaloa	12.90%
Jalisco	6.37%	Chiapas	6.31%	Texas	12.25%
Tabasco	4.79%	Tabasco	5.93%	Guerrero	9.03%
Nuevo Leon	4.63%	Jalisco	5.80%	Veracruz	7.09%
Edomex	3.95%	Puebla	5.73%	Jalisco	5.16%
Yucatán	3.84%	Hidalgo	5.28%	Michoacan	4.51%
Oaxaca	3.58%	Guanajuato	4.64%	Chiapas	3.87%
Baja Calif.	3.53%	Morelos	4.06%	Coahuila	3.87%
Chiapas	3.32%	Michoacan	3.54%	California	3.22%

Table 5.12

Most frequent Twitter users city of origin and most mentioned cities on newspapers articles

Twitter		Mexican newspapers		U.S. newspapers	
City location	%	City in articles	%	City in articles	%
Guadalajara	11.22%	Veracruz	6.56%	Laredo/Nuevo Laredo	10.28%
Monterrey	7.68%	Puebla	5.13%	Veracruz	10.28%
Puebla	6.57%	Guadalajara	5.04%	Nezahualcoyotl	10.28%
Veracruz	5.27%	Guanajuato	4.15%	Monterrey	9.34%
Oaxaca	2.67%	Monterrey	3.88%	Guadalajara	7.47%
Villahermosa	2.56%	Iztapalapa	2.74%	Merida	4.67%
Tijuana	2.32%	Queretaro	2.56%	New York	3.73%
Querétaro	2.12%	Oaxaca	2.44%	Ciudad Juarez	3.73%
S.L. Potosí	2.08%	Toluca	2.16%	Acapulco	2.80%
Guanajuato	1.89%	Durango	2.13%	Tlaxcala	2.80%

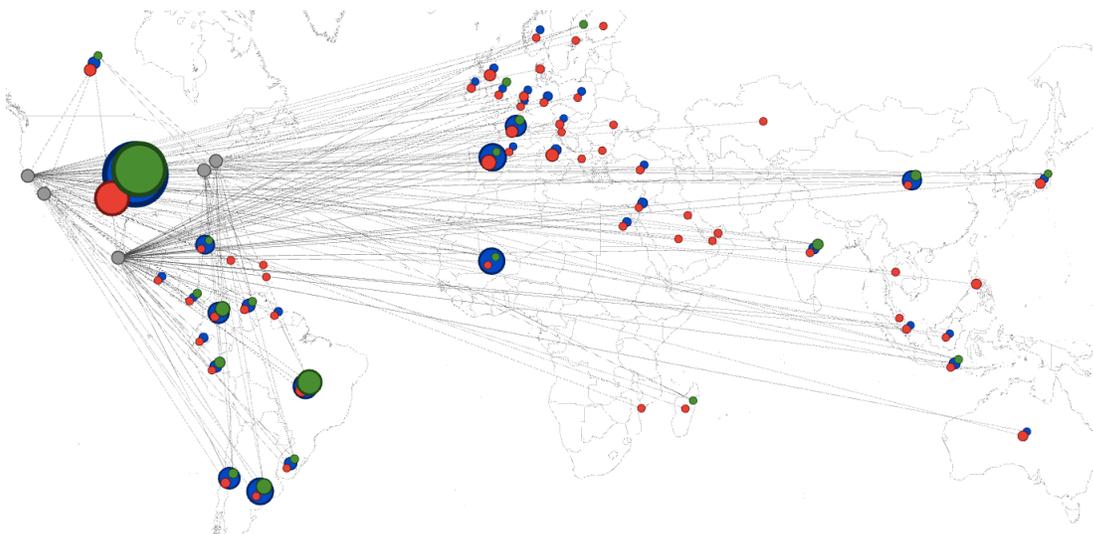


Figure 5.1

Twitter most frequent countries compared to mentions of the same places on Mexican and U.S. newspaper articles

Note: grey—news outlets and Twitter physical locations; red—locations from which users tweeted about the Mexican election; blue—frequency of places mentioned on Mexican news articles; green—frequency of places mentioned on U.S. news articles.

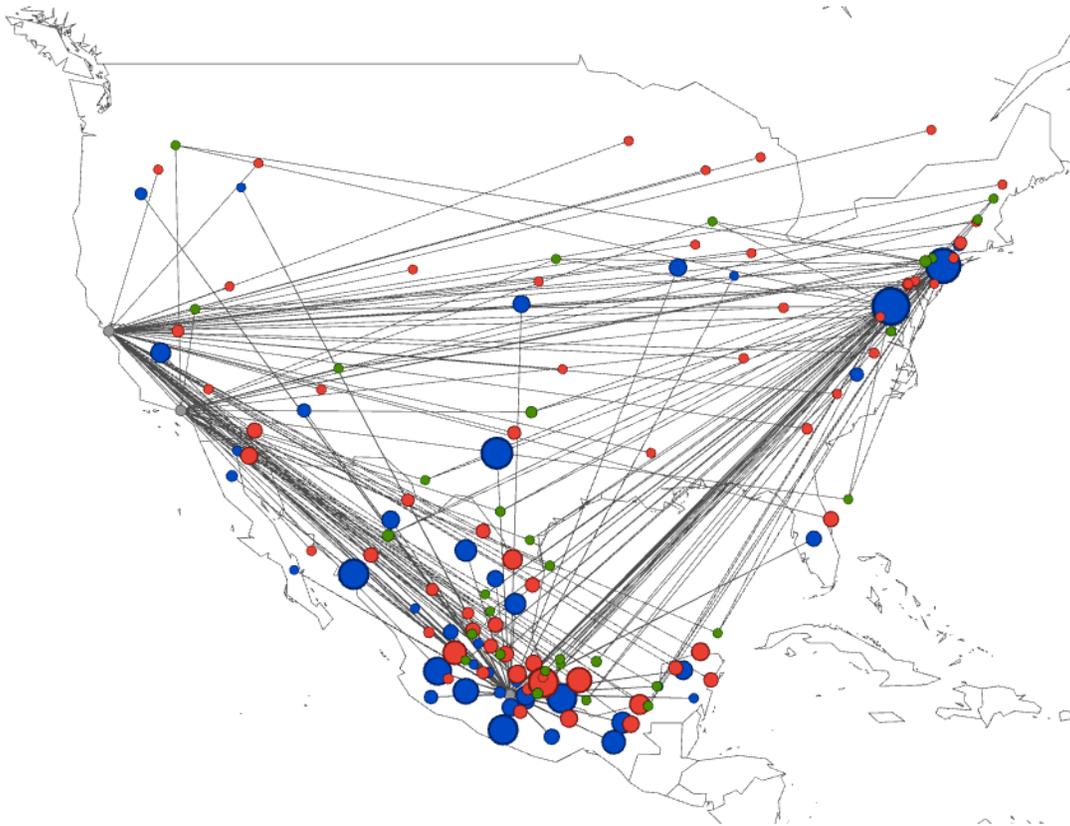


Figure 5.2

Twitter most frequent states compared to mentions of the same places on Mexican and U.S. newspaper articles

Note: grey—news outlets and Twitter physical locations; red—locations from which users tweeted about the Mexican election; blue—frequency of places mentioned on Mexican news articles; green—frequency of places mentioned on U.S. news articles.

The Social Media Discourse Disruption

The case of the 2012 Mexican presidential election was useful to explore the differences between different media platforms and systems. Social media tools successfully disrupted the natural course of the campaigns and were able to change the focus of attention of traditional news outlets. However, the disruption of social media did not happen only toward outside discourses like the ones generated by newspapers. Social media narratives also disrupted their own discourse, creating an unintelligible discourse that was not able to produce an effect beyond a strong digital activism.

Another relevant aspect to consider with this study is that frame frequencies on digital platforms like Twitter produce more diverse areas of interest than traditional media outlets. This is also natural because social media rely on the participation of thousands of individuals to generate content; users are at the same time producers and consumers of information—prosumers, as some scholars have called this dual role (Horan, 2013; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010).

In addition, it is necessary to remember that media technologies might be the object of manipulations that affect public discourse. By analyzing the random subsample of tweets to identify the different frames associated with candidates, it was possible to confirm that some of the messages crafted to support a candidate, actually had the exact same wording and were published several times by different accounts.

The fact that the Twitter database obtained from archive.org did not yield a representative sample of messages about the election written in English shows that the limitations of communicative processes are not bound only by the physicality of media technologies, but also by the social context in which public discourse is embedded. Under

this consideration, it is understandable that the vast majority of tweets were in Spanish. If all entities of the Mexican political system are socially coded in Spanish, it makes sense that the majority of messages were also in that language. In this respect, social media platforms are shaped by a combination of the public narratives generated by official institutions and the appropriation of those narratives by individuals inserted in the same social, cultural, political, and economic structures.

These results could also suggest that Mexico's demographics acted as an important driving force for media narratives during the 2012 election. Peña Nieto won in newspaper coverage, and López Obrador won on Twitter. As explained before, internet users in Mexico are mainly younger individuals. And the discourses disseminated through Twitter seem to confirm this because they were related to the #YoSoy132 social movement. If all the frames related to the Mexican youth are aggregated, they make up 14% of all messages on Twitter. In contrast, newspapers target an older population and the frames seemed to be in line with the traditional stereotypes of the Mexican social and political life: polls, corruption, and violence. This suggests that younger generations using new technologies did not have the influence to make their preferred candidate win the actual election.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

This dissertation explored the narratives produced by traditional newspapers published in Mexico and the United States, the discourses generated on social media, and the local, regional, and international networks linked to the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates. With this approach, the intention was to offer a comprehensive study that would allow a comparison among the frames distributed on traditional and digital media.

The research questions tied to this research were related to the identification of different discourse frames found in traditional and digital media, the narratives associated with each presidential candidate, and the local, regional, and international networks of candidates and media platforms alike.

The main contribution of this last chapter is to analyze the case study of this dissertation from a point of view that combines the theoretical foundation of framing theory and international communication—Chapter 1—with the content analyses produced about traditional and digital media—Chapters 2 and 3. In addition, this broad content analysis added a fourth dimension with the social network analysis introduced in Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 5 presented a comparative analysis that integrated the traditional and digital content analyses with the social network analysis. These elements comprise what this dissertation considers to be part of a comprehensive content analysis for the digital age.

This final chapter presents the general conclusions, taking into account the body of previous literature, the results and discussion sections included in this work, the limitations of the study, and possible future research on traditional and digital media in networked environments.

Content Analysis for the Digital Age

One of the main objectives of this work was to integrate the often elusive digital media information into a broad content analysis. In doing so, one of the objectives stated in Chapter 1 was to suggest a methodology that would be appropriate to examine bilingual media content in the digital age and in the Latin American context.

The complexity and the different nature of the media technologies and patterns included in this dissertation required adopting a mixed-methods approach; in addition to the quantitative computer-assisted content analysis—which was the main method—a manual qualitative content analysis was conducted in the subsamples to identify frames and other relevant communication patterns. In a way, the operationalization and procedures of this work can be understood as a multi-step design; a simplified overview of this approach can be explained with the following sequence: (1) definition of media platforms to be included in the study, (2) random samples for each media outlet obtained, (3) creation of subsamples for each media outlet—analogue and digital—(4) qualitative content analysis of the subsamples to identify common and recurrent frames and construction of the frames' dictionaries, (5) training of a computer system to identify the relevant data and frames in the entire samples, (6) computer-assisted content analysis, (7) manual exploration of results to confirm consistency and accuracy, (8) mining of social media sample to identify locations from which users posted relevant information, (9) social network analysis, (10) mining of geographic locations included in news stories, (10) a comparative study that included Chapters 2, 3, and

4. Additionally, a bilingual approach in Spanish and English to the data was norm throughout this dissertation.

The sample obtained to conduct the social media content analysis posed a serious challenge to identify the relevant data connected to the topic of this dissertation. The data presented important questions on how to handle a large amount of information to ultimately mine millions of tweets. These questions were resolved by using computer-assisted procedures that were similar to previous studies focused on machine-assisted content analysis methodology (Scharrow, 2013; Sjoovag & Stavelin, 2012), but adapted to the context of this dissertation's subject matter.

As explained in Chapter 1, content analysis is a method often used to explore communication patterns of media systems (Krippendorff, 2013). It has been largely used to analyze discourses produced by news outlets and their possible influence on public policies, attitudes, and opinions on certain areas of interest (Benson & Hallin, 2007; Qin, 2015; Wilbur & Zhang, 2014). One of the major challenges of this dissertation was to conduct a bilingual content analysis about the same topic in traditional and digital media. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was taken to adapt the operationalization of this research depending on the nature of the data (Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Van Leuven, Heinrich, & Deprez, 2015). As seen in Chapters 2 and 3, the main approach to explore content in both newspapers and social media was a computer-assisted bilingual content analysis, but prior to that stage a qualitative exploration of a subsample of the datasets was conducted to manually identify the main and most recurrent frames found in national, international, and digital discourses. Then a computer system was trained to identify the

possible presence of frames throughout the entire samples (Scharkow, 2013; Sjoavaag & Stavelin, 2012). In this sense, this study mainly took a machine-assisted approach to carry out the analysis of the complete datasets, but it required an initial qualitative categorization of the data.

Technological and storage constraints posed important questions on how deal with the thousands of news articles and the millions of tweets retrieved. In their study, Sjoavaag and Stavelin (2012) explored the methodological alternatives for conducting studies that deal with traditional and digital media. Their computer-assisted content analysis was based on the Norwegian television and online content, it included a qualitative and quantitative approach. They concluded that in this type of research there is a need to adapt content analysis according to the nature of the digital content. This is similar to what was done in this dissertation, but for the Mexican context of the presidential election. One major difference between that study and this work is the bilingual approach. For that reason, in addition to the adaptation of the methods depending on the type of media content there was a second-level adaptation that needed to be done in relation to the linguistic differences. Other studies have used content and thematic analysis in more than one language connected to online discourses; an example of this was Oltra et al.'s (2014) study that included a sample of English-, Spanish-, and Portuguese-language web documents.

The dictionary approach to computer-assisted content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013) in this study was useful to manage the databases with millions of tweets and more than two thousand news stories. The initial qualitative approach to identify frames was helpful to build the dictionary that ultimately was employed to train the computer program to identify

manually coded words and strings that were unique attributes of the candidates and the specific discursive frames attached to them.

The bilingual focus of this dissertation was a challenge because many words used in Spanish by the Mexican-newspapers did not have the same meaning in the English-language United States news articles. For that reason the manual qualitative identification of frames had to be done in subsamples divided by country and by newspaper.

Under those circumstances it was found that newspapers and Twitter content produced significantly different coverage of the 2012 Mexican presidential candidates. As was previously pointed out, candidate Peña Nieto had more coverage in Mexican and U.S. publications than the rest of the candidates, but candidate López Obrador's presence on Twitter was more extended and had a more positive framing. In the end, the fact that candidate Peña Nieto won the actual election—and is the current Mexican president—might be a confirmation that for the 2012 election audiences that consumed news from traditional media received more negative images linked to López Obrador. According to other scholars, this was the case also in television news content (Cantú et al., 2013).

One important thing to keep in mind is that the social media content analysis did not yield a significant number of tweets published in English. The majority of the messages were in Spanish. In a purely linguistic sense, this study found that the narratives produced in digital media could be considered less diverse than the discourses published by newspapers. The sample size of United States newspapers was small in comparison to the Mexican publications, and even though it is difficult to quantify the level of engagement of readers, the U.S. high-circulation newspapers create the potential to make information on the

Mexican elections available for an expanded audience that includes an important number of English-speaking readers in the United States and elites around the world (Aguayo, 1998). This is an important contrast with the content found on social media, where the very few tweets in English were sent from accounts with small numbers of followers. This would mean that interest of English-speaking users of Twitter in the Mexican election was very limited.

On the surface, social media platforms were born under the premise of communicative practices that have the capacity to challenge mass media outlets (Castells, 2012). But in the case of the 2012 Mexican presidential election the disseminated frames were culturally constrained by language barriers and a lack of cohesion of English-language networks that produced lower rates of engagement with their posts, both in terms of followers and retweets.

Despite the latter, in Spanish-written tweets it was clear that this platform to some extent fulfilled the promise of social media as useful technologies to achieve mass self-communication (Castells, 2012; Newsom & Lengel, 2012). The nature of traditional media companies is to organize, systematize, and distribute information with the specific interests of the company embedded in them (Schiller, 1981); therefore, the eight newspapers used for this study represent the vision of a limited number of people who control and manage the information to be published through those outlets. The Twitter sample, on the other hand, had 10,054 unique accounts involved in the construction of narratives around the presidential candidates. On Twitter virtually anyone with an internet connection and an e-mail account can tweet about anything they regard as relevant (Burch, Frederick, & Pegoraro, 2015). The

wider variety of recurrent frames found on Twitter—in comparison to the frames presented by newspapers—supports the idea that social media can be valuable organizational tools to consolidate alternative narratives in the public sphere (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Twitter was instrumental in the dissemination of a wider spectrum of ways to understand reality. This also suggests that a higher level of democratization on social media platforms was present in the last Mexican election context, as it has been found to be the case in other contexts (Chung & Cho, 2013). That was the case with the #YoSoy132 movement during the 2012 campaigns. This social movement organized by university students started on social media platforms—first on YouTube—as a consequence of Peña Nieto’s visit to their college. The story was replicated by traditional media news outlets and the issue became a regular topic across all news outlets analyzed in this work. In this sense, cross-platform information was important for how data flowed during the campaigns.

Framing Theory in a Multimedia Context

Framing theory has been relevant to explore media discourses as an extension of current power structures that seek to guide the public discussion of political, social, economic, and cultural issues (Wilbur & Zhang, 2014). The analysis of this kind of information was one of the main objectives of this dissertation.

Frames produced, replicated, and disseminated by news companies have been widely scrutinized from an academic point of view to understand the possible impact specific narratives have on a country’s public life (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Dixon, 2006; Gil de Zúñiga, Correa, & Valenzuela, 2012; Holt, 2013; Zamith, Pinto, & Villar, 2012). More

specifically, framing theory has been useful to explore how media content might affect political stances (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012). In this dissertation, two main frame clusters were found: those that presented candidate Peña Nieto as the most likely winner of the election, and those that expected a change in the figure of candidate López Obrador. The first type of frames was more dominant in Mexican and United States newspapers, whereas the second kind of frames were most frequently found on social media messages.

One of the main functions of news frames is to establish a connection between the public's prior knowledge about a topic—schemas—and new data—frames—to modify, reinforce, or ignore previous schemas. Then, schemas represent the cognitive structures people have created over time, and frames provide a possibility to reinterpret people's understanding of reality through new information (Entman, 2010; Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

In this sense, in newspapers the frame that included the description of polls' results was designed to encourage the narrative that Peña Nieto was going to win the presidential election. In the past, poll validity in the context of Mexican elections has been questioned and accused of being a persuasive instrument of power structures (Fierro Alvidrez, 2000). Therefore, on social media the poll-results frame was frequently linked to criticism against the companies who paid for the surveys. From a general perspective, framing selects and connects specific aspects of a story to make a particular perception of reality more salient (Entman, 2010). In this case, even though social-media users were attacking the poll results, the dissemination of Peña Nieto as the most probable winner of the election was embedded in their messages and this could be considered fuel to expand the discourse in favor of the PRI candidate.

Previous studies had also shown that the qualities included in frames that resonate better with the public could be more effective than the frequency of publication of frames that do not connect with the public (Chong & Druckman, 2007). In this dissertation, the frame where López Obrador was compared to Venezuela's late president Hugo Chávez was recurrent—populist candidate frame—but not as salient as other frames; it stated that if López Obrador won the election, Mexico would become a socialist nation and that people with money would lose everything they had worked for.

By studying national and international high-circulation media in connection to framing theory it was possible to determine the discourses other media entities were receiving. In the cascading effect (Entman, 2010), dominant media entities gather, reproduce and communicate discourses that afterward are adopted by less powerful social entities. In this dissertation there was indication of some mutual content influence between newspaper articles and social media posts; the 10 common frames found in both media formats indicate this. However, more information is required to know where those frames originated.

In conclusion, the prevalent frames found in newspaper stories included in this dissertation were oriented to help the public link the 2012 Mexican presidential campaigns with their schemas about the PRI party governments that ruled the country during the most part of the 20th century. In this sense, even if a limited number of people in the general society or among the Mexican elites decided to reinterpret their schemas with the new information provided through newspaper framing, this might have affected the power distribution in the actual election (Entman, 2010).

Media Systems and Mexican Politics

An important objective of this work was to expand the conversation about the relevance of media discourses in the construction of democratic processes in the Mexican context. And ultimately, this study was designed to contribute in the construction of Mexican democracy and the development of accountable media systems and technologies through the analysis of communicative practices.

The case of the 2012 Mexican presidential election was deemed appropriate for the purposes of this dissertation because of the complexity of the media systems involved (Ackerman, 2013), the public polarization that was displayed on social media platforms (Salgado Andrade, 2013), and because the Mexican political system has been defined in the past as an authoritarian democracy (Meyer, 2013). The country has struggled for the past three decades to build reliable and truthful governments (Hernández, 2008). Research has suggested that in the case of the 2006 presidential election the results produced fraud accusations in part because of the inconsistencies presented by the Mexican electoral system (Schedler, 2009).

The data presented in this work suggests that, despite the relevance gained by digital media in the past years, during Mexico's 2012 election the discourse produced by traditional news outlets was in closer contact with the political structures of the country. This is confirmed by the fact that in newspapers candidate Peña Nieto had an overwhelming presence; this pattern could be an indication that the Mexican political system and traditional media speak the same language. Even in the most liberal Mexican publication included in

this study—*La Jornada* (Covo-Maurice, 2002)—Peña Nieto had a significant higher number of mentions than his closest contender.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the distribution of candidate coverage seems remarkably similar to the official election results presented by the Federal Electoral Institute—now known as National Electoral Institute. In this sense, the data suggest the presence of slanted newspaper coverage in favor of Peña Nieto. Despite the assertion by media companies that they produce objective and unslanted reports, news slant is common (Entman, 2007).

And just as newspapers spoke the same language as the Mexican political system, social media users spoke a different language related to the expectation of political change and egalitarianism. In Mexico there has never been a leftist government that wasn't PRI-related. The PRI party was born as a leftist revolutionary movement with the objective of redistributing land to achieve social equality, but later on this institution adopted a center-right ideology and the revolution became just another word in the dominant party's name (Garrido, 1991).

Mexico's economy is the 12th largest in the world (World Bank, 2014). And despite this, in 2012 45% of the country's population lived in poverty (Coneval, 2015). That percentage represents 53.3 million people. In that same year, 61% of Mexicans did not have access to social security, and 74% of them didn't have access to at least one of the basic rights—education, health services, social security, housing, utilities, and food. Under those circumstances it is natural to expect some kind of social unrest. According to the results of this work, on social media López Obrador became a figure who was expected to address the inequality issues of the nation. For that reason he had a wider presence and more positive

frames attached to his candidacy. However, this did not translate into a successful election for the leftist candidate. Social media users were speaking into the air (Peters, 1999). Their narratives were powerful, but only on digital media, which in the end did not produce a winning scenario for that candidate.

For the Mexican youth in the 2012 election, social media was a land of opportunity to access self-communication technologies (Castells, 2015). A closed system of communication controlled by a few loud voices in the Mexican political system has been disrupted by the whisperings of thousands of young Mexicans. But the advantage to self-communicate seemed to be at the same time their most powerful constraint. The unstructured nature of social media fractured the discourses and, more importantly, generated clusters of users who could not reach people of different political stances. This is similar to what other scholars have found: Twitter users are rarely exposed to different ideologies; they create closed groups and mostly exchange information with other users with the same ideas (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013).

This might be one of the reasons why López Obrador's support on Twitter did not transcend beyond users' own local spheres, nor resonated with other demographics in Mexico. More specifically, for the 2012 election, Mexican Twitter users were young—60% of them were between 18 and 30 years old; they did not trust politicians; they had higher education levels than the majority of the national population; 95% of them lived in urban areas; and they were better off financially (Islas, 2012). In other words, there was a sea of distance between the privileged college students who operated on Twitter, and the 53.3 million Mexicans living in poverty.

In summary, the data in this dissertation suggests that in the context of the 2012 presidential election there were important gaps that hindered communication. There were other relevant aspects to be considered, like socioeconomic levels, infrastructure availability, access to technology, and common discourses to name some of them. Equally important is the fact that there are other factors—like poverty—that influence election results, and media cannot be considered the only discursive determinant when it comes to choosing for whom to vote.

Coverage of a Foreign Nation

In the era of the networked society it cannot be ignored that international communication can produce an impact on perceptions about foreign nations (Schwarz, 2006; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). This study indicates that coverage of a foreign nation during key political moments is worth exploring because it can offer a more complete picture of the discursive flows. Coverage of Mexico in the United States media system seems to be a rich area of research to understand how two neighboring nations—with a conflictive relationship at times—interact through media, how they produce public perceptions and frames, and what kind of topics are connected to a foreign nation.

As seen in the literature review, in 2012 there were 33.7 million people of Mexican descent living in the United States, and 11 million of those were born in Mexico (González Barrera & López, 2013). Mexico is the second largest economic partner of the U.S. after Canada. And there are more U.S. nationals living in Mexico than in any other country in the world (CIA, 2014). The deep economic, social, and cultural relationship between Mexico and

the United States made this last country an ideal place to explore a relevant international approach to Mexican issues (Aguayo, 1988; Aguirre, Rodriguez, & Simmers, 2011; Capetillo-Ponce, 2002).

In terms of media production there was a significant difference between the number of Mexican news stories and the Mexican-related articles produced in the U.S. outlets. But, of course, this tendency to have more coverage from local outlets about national issues is natural if compared to coverage of the same topic by foreign media companies.

However, the frames found in United States publications and the distribution of coverage about the candidates suggest that similar discourses were common across the four international newspapers selected for this study: candidate Peña Nieto had an overwhelming amount of coverage, and most of the stories included the frames where the PRI candidate was the clear frontrunner according to the polls and that Mexico needed to solve the violence and security issues detonated by the war on drugs policy adopted by the PAN government and Felipe Calderón—Mexico's president from 2006 to 2012.

The patterns of coverage and frames produced by United States newspapers perhaps could be explained by what other scholars have called the curve of absence (Tuñez & Guevara, 2009). This approach to news information states that the curve of absence happens when media outlets report about a specific topic and delineate a possible future trajectory; then, there is a period of silence in relation to the same topic, and after that the following stories are an update that includes the expected outcome presented in the original reports.

The study of Mexico in United States media is not new, the body of literature in this area has been growing for several decades (Halton, 2001; Johnson, 1997; Johnson, 2010;

Johnson, Davis, & Cronin, 2009; Rendón & Johnson, 2015). But even though there has been an increasing number of studies based on traditional media, at this writing there is a remarkable lack of studies about portrayals of Mexico and Mexicans on blogs, social media, or digital news sites.

In the beginning of this work it was stated that one of the major weaknesses of this type of research is the absence of studies about representations of Mexico in the U.S. through digital media. One of the objectives of this dissertation was to initiate this academic conversation. The findings on the social media analysis have been stated before, and they suggest that it is relevant to pursue research that combines traditional and digital media studies about Mexico in the United States. In this context, there were some signs of transnational audiences and that media technologies enabled Mexicans living abroad to get involved in the electoral process.

Social Network Analysis and Discursive Geographies

The results of the social network analysis show that there was an international public paying attention to the 2012 election. As seen, this could be explained by the diaspora of Spanish-speaking social media users located in foreign territories, especially in the United States. Previous studies understand this phenomenon as part of the post-national stage of mass media, where audiences are fundamentally transnational and socially attached to distant territories (Moreno Esparza, 2011).

This work defined networks as useful organizational tools to comprehend how individuals, institutions, and machines interacted with each other (Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

The social network analysis focused on the structures and individuals that helped produce messages intended to achieve a common objective shared by those who were part of the network (Castells, 2011). From that perspective, this social network analysis was part of the wider study of human interactions through mediated platforms.

This work made a case for including social network analysis along with content analysis to capture a more comprehensive picture of the object to be studied. In the past there have been efforts to integrate network and content analysis in a single body of research (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013; Xu et al., 2015); also Bruns, Highfield, and Burgess (2013) analyzed the networks produced by Twitter users who were using different languages. This dissertation integrated these elements and adapted them to the Mexican context. The social network analysis results presented in Chapter 4 suggest that this method adds a different dimension of narratives disseminated through varied media platforms based in different socioeconomic contexts. As in Himmelboim, McCreery, and Smith's (2013) study, this social network analysis defined a topology of political orientation distribution both in national and international geographies. As Choi and Park (2015) had anticipated, the visual representations allowed the construction of discursive geographies, in this case for the 2012 Mexican presidential election.

Territoriality of political issues plays an important role in defining the democratic life of a country (Hernández-Hernández, 2015). The visualization of the networks suggests that territories related to the 2012 Mexican election were concentrated in disseminating discourses linked to the two main presidential candidates. The other two contenders' networks covered significantly fewer territories.

It was not a surprise that the majority of nodes participating in the creation of social media discourses were located mostly in Mexico, and then in the United States. The same was true for the discursive geographies included in the newspaper articles. However, after those two countries, on social media most users indicated they were located in a European country, and newspaper narratives linked the Mexican election more frequently to other Latin American countries. This suggests that the comparison between Mexico and other nations with similar cultural, political, social, and economic contexts were often found in traditional publications. This may be part of the answer to why Twitter users did not link their tweets to traditional high-circulation newspapers. It suggests that newspapers and social media did not share the same audiences.

By connecting the results of the social network analysis with the content analysis it was found that narratives of U.S.-based publications depicting Mexico as a violent nation were referring specifically to the drug problems connected to the Sinaloa Cartel, a powerful drug organization that sells most of its drugs in the U.S. market.

At the regional level, this study initially was set to explore the networks distributed in the 31 Mexican States and the Federal District. But it was found that tweets coming from states located in the United States were significant too. Therefore, the conceptualization of the regional networks was redefined as the study progressed to reflect the territories of Twitter users. In this sense, geospatial analysis tied to political issues can be a valuable asset for media studies.

Limitations and Future Research

One of the main limitations of this dissertation is that it did not include data from other traditional and digital media platforms. A wider variety of formats might add a different point of view to the information presented in this study at the national, international, and digital levels.

In addition, the credibility of the Mexican electoral system has been repeatedly questioned since 1988. This type of research focused on communicative processes did not consider the weaknesses of the Mexican electoral system and it assumed that the results provided by the local electoral authority reflect in fact the actual number of votes for each candidate.

Another important limitation is that even though it has been claimed that machines can produce objective results in computer-assisted content analysis, it cannot be ignored that machines and computer software also have a certain type of subjectivity attached to them. Manual content analysis is also limited in this sense.

Regarding social media content, an important limitation is that sarcasm and other rhetorical devices are difficult to identify. Unless the user notes it, there is no certain way—human or computer-assisted—to know if a social media post includes sarcastic content. For that reason the researcher has to work under the assumption that all discourses have a literal meaning. This incapacity to identify rhetorical devices is transferred from the researcher to the computer-assisted techniques and tools.

Twitter locations are also a topic for discussion because the immense majority of users on this platform do not allow the system to access their geolocation. In most cases,

Twitter users manually provide the location; which is open to personal interpretation regarding their personal definition of *location*. Therefore, it was necessary to assume that the location manually entered by Twitter users was in fact a physical space they are actually linked to.

Also, any media content in any format can be manipulated. But social media platforms make it easy for a single person to post similar discourses from different accounts. What is more, social media accounts can be automated to generate and replicate content without any direct human interaction—*bot* accounts. The extent to which the social-media campaigns included in this study were manipulated or not by interested parties is unknown.

The bilingual content analysis also presented relevant limitations because in some cases the concepts identified to be relevant in one language did not have the same connotation in the other language.

Future research about media discourses in a political context can continue exploring alternatives to analyze democratic processes linked to national and international media systems—*analog* or *digital*—and the power structures that act through media content.

Additionally, future studies interested in manual and computer-assisted content analysis linked to social network analysis could focus on the different avenues to optimize this approach. In that case it would be helpful to integrate a wider variety of social media platforms to identify not only the differences between traditional and digital media, but also the differences between various social media platforms; the inclusion of the meta-data that accompanies the content of social media could also provide an important insight. Technical knowledge is often needed to extract this data, for that reason it is also important to continue

developing a social sciences and humanities approach to facilitate researchers with access to datasets originated in digital media. Another area of research interest could be to conduct a longitudinal study on the role of traditional and digital media during future Mexican elections. In this sense, it would be useful to include TV news content as part of the narratives of traditional media.

And finally, it would be interesting to use a similar research design to analyze the case of presidential elections in other countries. It might be the case that the media and discourse patterns found in this dissertation are transferable to other cases.

Media and Power Structures

“The best succinct definition of power”—says Entman (2007) while paraphrasing Nagel (1975)—“is the ability to get others to do what one wants” (p. 165). This dissertation dealt with the concept of news from the perspective that any mediated content is not reality, but a representation of what a specific entity understands to be *their* reality (Carey, 2009; Gutiérrez Vidrio, 2010). All interpretations—machine and human—of information are generated based on the subject’s background and an apparent assimilation of perceived data that reaches the public in incomplete pieces. Thus, every attempt to describe reality is based on a fragmented interpretation of the environment our senses and machines are able to perceive. Under that premise journalism was born as a way to monetize unique views of the world. For that reason, mediated communication practices in the news industry are fueled by dominant structures that intend to perpetuate, modify, or eliminate certain narratives that are connected

to their interpretation of what reality *is or should* look like. Despite what many journalists believe, decision-making bias is a human condition that affects news reports (Entman, 2010).

This idea is supported by the technological evolution of the news industry. Throughout history—from oral cultures, writing, the printing press, electricity, the telegraph, cinema, radio, satellites, television, and digital media—the news industry has operated under the same premise: to be an influential and authoritative voice that is able to impose a view of the surrounding world with the objective of becoming an economic and political power.

For the most part of mediated communication history, media companies gained respect and popularity, which gave them the possibility to create, disseminate, and establish information discourses framed by the media owners' own ideologies. Then, under those circumstances the voice of a few individuals had the potential to establish a hegemonic structure over the masses (Hall, 1982). This is still true today, but digital media have modified the position of many people around the world in relation to media discourses.

With the affordances of digital media, individuals with access to new technologies have the ability to decide if they want to be consumers or producers of information (Horan, 2013; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010), they can switch from one position to the other, or even become consumers and producers at the same time. In a highly networked environment each person has the ability to self-disseminate their own views or recirculate existing discourses. This does not mean that there are no dominant narratives anymore or that media companies have no leverage to determine public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972); it means that the complex exchange of information between individuals has become even more intricate with

millions of people and machines producing, consuming, and disseminating competing narratives.

The reality portrayed through media technologies—either analog or digital—is not a static object; it constantly changes. But if some content characteristics stay the same over time and across multiple outlets, then it can be stated that the dominant narratives are the result of a bias encouraged by power structures. This was the case of the 2012 Mexican presidential election. Whether those narratives were encouraged by power structures related to economic flows or to social aspirations remains to be studied.

Cantú et al. (2013) had previously noted that López Obrador was the most successful candidate among urban young population with higher education levels, and that this was the public that watched less television as source for political information during the campaigns (p. 265). López Obrador's support on social media was the largest, and this candidate was also associated with more positive frames and hashtags. Peña Nieto, who as explained before received a significantly larger percentage of coverage in Mexican and U.S. newspapers, was the candidate who took home most of the votes during election day. Social media narratives, on the other hand, were unable to propel their favorite candidate—López Obrador—to win the election. Digital media may appear to be borderless, but the boundaries of new media are related to access to technology, infrastructure availability, and socioeconomic status of user demographics.

It would be far-fetched to say that traditional media companies chose who was going to be president of Mexico—there are other important factors for people to decide for whom to vote, like personal relations (Cantú et al., 2013), but in the battle of narratives produced by

social media users and national and international newspapers, it might be suggested that in this context traditional media won the communication battle. Part of that is because Mexico's access to internet services is limited, poverty is still very extensive, and education levels are predominantly low. Thus, it can be said that the educated and young social media users did not have the rhetorical exigence (Bitzer, 1968) on their side. According to the data, Twitter users were clear—they did not want Peña Nieto to become president—but the distribution of power in the Mexican media system did not allow them to be persuasive enough. Newspapers, on the other hand, never doubted that Peña Nieto would become Mexico's president and they were not afraid to frame it that way.

In light of this dissertation, it can be suggested that the 2012 Mexican presidential election was more than a regular democratic process. It was a generational clash. It was also a display of force between the college-educated against the middle school-educated population, and the other way around. But most importantly for the communication perspective, it was a battle between media technologies.

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