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A comparative framing analysis of Edward Snowden's coverage in The New York Times and People's Daily

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**A Comparative framing analysis of Edward Snowden's coverage in The New York Times
and People's Daily**

by

Wentao Chu

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE,

Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

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2015

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine whether different countries employed different news framing of the Snowden controversy. It also aims to understand how media coverage is influenced by different countries' media systems and media sources. Edward Snowden, as an American computer technician, former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and former contractor for the National Security Agency (NSA) (Verble, 2014), leaked 1.7 million documents of secret data from the National Security Agency (NSA). The leaked documents were related to U.S. intelligence activities and partnerships with foreign allies, including some that revealed the extent of data collection from U.S. telephone records and Internet activity, and the NSA's ability to tap undersea fiber optic cables and siphon off data. This study is focusing on two different countries' elite newspapers, *The New York Times* (United States) and *The People Daily* (China). China and the U.S. hold different points of view on Snowden's actions, and this study will explore how those differences will influence the portrayals of Edward Snowden. The content analysis will also explore what news sources the two newspapers relied on and how those sources correlated affected framing and bias in news coverage. The study uses framing, indexing, and sourcing literature as its theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Two Norwegian lawmakers nominated Edward Snowden for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for revealing “the nature and technological prowess of modern surveillance” (Smith-Spark, 2014, January 29). The 30-year-old computer systems administrator involved the American government in a worldwide political scandal in 2013.

Who is Snowden?

Snowden is an American computer senior technician, former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and former contractor for the National Security Agency (NSA) (Verble, 2014). Media knew him on May 20, 2013, when Snowden brought 1.7 million documents of secret data from the NSA (the National Security Agency) to Hong Kong and delivered them to journalists Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras. On June 21, the U.S Justice Department charged Snowden with espionage. On June 23, Snowden flew from Hong Kong to Moscow. And on August 1, the Russian government granted him a one-year temporary asylum and later extended his stay. Snowden remains in Russia and he has occasionally made online appearances and interviews, such as the South by Southwest (SXSW) conference on March 10th, 2014, speaking about Internet freedom and other topics. These actions turned him into a sort of celebrity. This incident is different from others, as previous leakers always acted behind

the scenes and under the protection of anonymity. In this case, Snowden accepted journalists Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras since this incident attracted worldwide attention.

“This is not a question of somebody skulking around in the shadow. These are public issues. These are not my issues. You know, these are everybody’s issues. And I’m not afraid of you. You know, you’re not going to bully me into silence like you’ve done to everybody else. And if nobody else is going to do it, I will. And hopefully, when I’m gone, whatever you do to me, there will be somebody else who will do the same thing. It will be the sort of Internet principle of the Hydra: You know, you can stomp one person, but there’s going to be seven more of us.”

Edward Snowden in Citizenfour

Why are these documents leaked by Snowden important?

The leaked documents were related to U.S. intelligence activities and partnerships with foreign allies, including some that revealed the extent of data collection from U.S. telephone records and Internet activity, and the NSA’s ability to tap undersea fiber optic cables and siphon off data. Government officials initially said that the number of information pieces could be around 1.7 million. Snowden carefully selected these files and leaked them to The Washington Post and The Guardian. Most of them are top secret in the USA.¹

The young man from Elizabeth City, North Carolina, has turned into a hotly debated topic:

¹ For a comprehensive list of Snowden’s leaks, see Francheschi-Bicchierai (2014) at <http://mashable.com/2014/06/05/edward-snowden-revelations/>

is he a hero, or a traitor? Should he be granted amnesty or spend the rest of his life in prison? It might take months, years or decades before audiences see the real impact of this story, and his fate. As Snowden said himself, "I'm neither traitor nor hero. I'm an American." Audiences received a lot of information from the media, and this event happened in the United States; an initial look at the United States' media coverage, reveals that the Snowden is seen a whistleblower or renegade (Greenwald, MacAskill & Poitras 2013). On the other hand, in other countries the same person was met with different responses. For instance, Chinese media described him as the bravest man in the United States history (徐中强 2013).

Media framing theory was used to analyze 'the critical, qualitative and ideological perspective and the behavioral content, audience, and effects tradition' (Reese, 2001, pp. 9-10). It is also a good academic tool to understand the process of news construction involving embedded values, media representations and audience perceptions (Luther, & Zhou, 2005). In this study, generic framing was used to analyze cross-national differences of news reports about the Snowden incident. The events surrounding Snowden's action offer the ideal setting for studying framing because this incident is a global event related to many different countries, As Gitlin (1980) noted, media are influenced by many elements such as ideology, and the media always frame content in ways that can promote different definitions and understanding of issues. Edward Snowden as a leaker brought unprecedented insights into the workings of digital surveillance and thus provides a unique historical opportunity for this research. The incident prompted significant debates on a variety of topics, such as the nature of civil rights in a context of security; the accountability of government agencies and corporate intermediaries;

the transparency, use and configuration of technical infrastructures; the breadth and extent of state interference in civil life; and the role, responsibilities and limitations of journalists reporting on state activities.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether different countries employed different news framing in covering the Snowden controversy. It also aims to understand how media coverage is influenced by different countries' media systems and media sources. The Snowden incident is an important international incident. Three months after this event happened, a preliminary LexisNexis search revealed that there were more than a thousand reports covering the controversy, which attracted attention all over the world. This study is focusing on two different countries' elite newspapers, *The New York Times* (United States) and *The People Daily* (China). Previous mass communication research shows less attention to comparative, cross-cultural studies. China, as a "reforming" communist country, owns a unique media system. Hence, comparative research that contrasts a controversial character's portrayal by United States and Chinese media can help us enrich our understanding about how media coverage is influenced by countries' political ideology and international status (Gurevitch & Blumler, 2004). Furthermore, China and the U.S. hold different points of view on Snowden's actions, and this study will explore how those differences will influence the portrayals of Edward Snowden. The content analysis will also explore what news sources the two newspapers relied on and how those sources affected framing and bias in news coverage. The study uses framing, indexing, and sourcing literature as its theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Framing theory

The framing theory is suitable to explain differences in media coverage across different countries. Broadly defined, framing refers to the ways in which mass media organize and present issues and events, in terms of “patterns of presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion” (Gitlin, 1980,p.7). Goffman first developed the framing concept in his 1974 book. There are multiple ways to conceptualize framing. Neuman, Just, and Crigler give a general definition based on a constructivist perspective: “They give the story a ‘spin’... Taking into account their organizational and morality constraints, professional judgments and certain judgments about the audience” (1992, p. 120). Reese defines frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (2001,p. 11). Entman (1993) came up with a more clear and operational definition, that is “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/ or treatment recommendation” (p.52). Framing process includes frame building, frame setting and individual and societal level consequences of framing (d’Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 2000; de Vreese, 2002) in Figure .

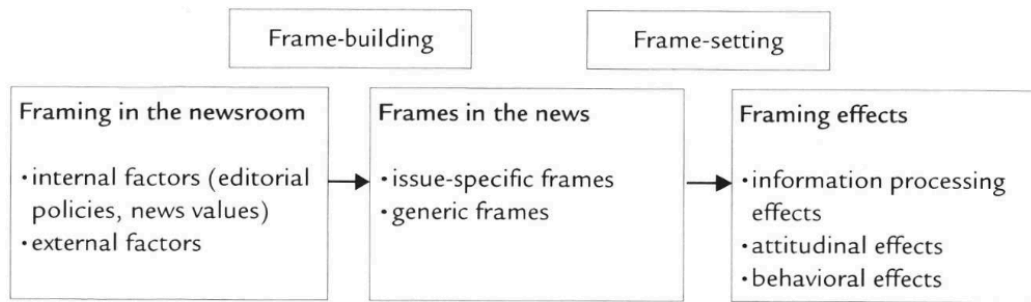


Figure: Framing processing. (De Vreese, 2005, p.52)

According to Gitlin (1980), the media are influenced by ideology and the media always frame content in ways that can promote different definitions and understanding of issues. Framing is also influenced by the national context in which journalists operate. De Vreese (1999) pointed out the differences between issue-specific news frames and generic news frames. Generic frames enable comparison between different topics, over different times and also in different cultural contexts. A cross-country comparative study in four European countries was conducted to analyze news framing. The findings indicated that journalists tend to focus more on conflict frames compared with economic consequences framing in general political and economic news (De Vreese, Jochen Peter and Holli A. Semetko, 2001). So in this study, generic frames were used to investigate differences between American and Chinese frames in the coverage of Edward Snowden controversy in different cultural backgrounds.

Clausen (2003) pointed that, in coverage of international events, journalists prefer to ‘localize’ the same news story by targeting a specific national audience. In a case study focusing on the news communication strategies regarding the coverage of the 9/11 attacks

around the world, Clausen found that journalists in different countries chose different elements in their reporting in order to fit in the local cultural framework (Clausen, 2003). For example, in Clausen's study about 9/11 reports in European, Asian and Arab newsrooms, she found that although the main themes, the news images and video footage were similar, different country newsrooms put their own national "spin" on reports to suit their audiences (Clausen, 2003).

Previous studies teased out several categories of generic frames. Political communication research focusing on analysis of elections and campaigns found that media rely heavily on strategic or horse-race framing at the expense of substantive issue frames (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Neuman et al. (1992) define news frames as "a conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information" (p.94). They explored normal frames including 'human impact', 'powerlessness', 'economics', 'moral values', and 'conflict' used by media and audiences. Han (2007) used framing analysis to compare the news coverage of Taiwan's 2004 presidential election between two mainstream websites in Mainland China, www.people.com.cn (hereafter People) and www.sina.com.cn (hereafter Sina) respectively. Four news frames, conflict, game, ideology and military consequences, were explored. The results show that Sina covered more conflict frame than People and both generic frames and issue-specific frames appeared simultaneously.

Semetko and Valkenburg's study (2000) used content analysis to examine 2601 newspaper stories and 1522 television news stories about Amsterdam meetings of European heads of state in 1997. Their study proposed five common generic frames, specifically,

'conflict', 'human interest', 'attribution of responsibility', 'morality' and 'economic consequences'. These five generic frames are explored in the present study. The results showed responsibility frame was the top one frame, followed with conflict, economic, human interest and morality frames. Furthermore, the results confirmed that the usage of frame depends on the type of media outlet and topics.

Human-interest frame

This frame “brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Cho and Gower (2006) point out that the human-interest frame has a large effect on participants’ emotional response. Neuman et al. (1992) also explored this frame and refer to it as the “human impact ” frame. Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) pointed out that the purpose of this frame is to personalize the news and make the news more emotional and attractive.

Conflict frame

Media tend to focus on conflict. It focuses on disagreements between people, groups and institutions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In conflict scenarios, framing can be used to present two processes as opposite, including through discourse use and development of the issues. Specifically, in the discourse use process, framing entails using specific words to show audiences the nature, description and tone of a situation (Putnam, & Shoemaker, 2007). Neuman et al. (1992) argue the conflict frame is one of the most common frames that have been identified in U.S. news (p. 61-62). Because of the emphasis on conflict framing, media

have been blamed for misleading audiences and for instilling political apathy as well as mistrust of political leaders and institutions (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

Morality frame

“This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of morals, social prescriptions, and religious tenets” (Seon-Kyoung, 2009, p.107). According to Neuman et al. (1992), because of the journalistic norm of objectivity, the morality frame is often used in an indirect manner, through quotations or inferences by journalists. The researchers also pointed out that the moral frame appears more in audiences’ minds instead of the content of news.

Economic consequences frame

The economic consequences frames usually focuses on the economic and financial influence of an event, which, just like conflict, has an important news value. According to Neuman et al. (1992), the economic frame is a common frame in the news. “This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, groups, organizations, or countries” (Seon-Kyoung, 2009 p. 111).

Responsibility frame

This frame is defined as “a way of attributing responsibility for [a] cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000 p. 93). Furthermore, in their study, they used content analysis to analyze 2,601 newspaper stories and 1,522 television news stories to gauge 5 news frames. One of their finding shows that serious TV programs and newspapers use more responsibility and conflict frames, whereas sensationalist media prefer using human interest frame.

2.2 News Sources

News sources have more effect on the content of news than journalists do (Berkowitz & Beach, 1993). Especially, conflict news always consists of a mix of different news sources trying to advance their agendas and their perspective on issues (Tichenor, Donohue, Olien & Clarke, 1980). Berkowitz and Beach's (1993) study proved their theory by using content analysis of three Iowa newspapers. The study results indicated that non-routine news usually needed a more diverse mix of sources than did routine newsgathering stories. Lasorsa and Reese (1990) used a 1987 crash as a case study to investigate how different news outlets use different news sources to report the same event. The results showed that *The Wall Street Journal* used more sources in general while CBS use more government sources, which focused on the cause of the crash. Molotch and Lester (1974) suggested that news was framed by the sources used the most by journalists. In Liebler and Bendix's study (1996), they also pointed out that frames of television news might be influenced by the choice of sources.

Abrajano and Singh's (2009) content analysis proved that different news sources might shape audience attitudes towards the same issue. Cozma's study (2006) suggested that readers perceived risk stories with diverse sources as more credible and interesting. Correlations between news sources, tone and framing have also been explored (Cozma, 2014). Content analysis explored the relation between framing, sourcing, and propaganda during the golden age of foreign correspondence in the United States. The results reveal that reliance on specific types of officials was significantly associated with a tone favorable to U.S. involvement in World War II.

In political news coverage, official sources are always the dominant sources (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981). “This second rule of political reporting is that sources and viewpoints are ‘indexed’ according to the magnitude and content of conflicts among key government decision makers or other players with the power to affect the development of a story” (Bennett, 1996, p.379). Bennett proposed the “indexing” hypothesis,” whereby “mass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to ‘index’ the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic” (Bennett, 1990, p.106) Althaus et al. (1996) used content analysis to revise the indexing hypothesis and they indicated that first, the “official debate” should include foreign elites; that the definition of “official-managed debate” should expand; and that even a low correlation between the U.S. official public discourse and media point of view in the news should not be neglected. They also pointed out the central point of indexing hypothesis is determine “the closeness of media discourse and debate among political elites.” This study aims to ascertain to what extent elite newspapers in China and the United States relied on the usual suspects – political elites - in their coverage of the Snowden controversy and what type of sources they opened the news gates for.

The definition of media gatekeeping was given by Shoemaker (1991). “Simply put, gatekeeping is the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day” (1991, p.12). Shoemaker (1991) distinguished five levels of gatekeeping, including: individual; routines of work; organizational; social and institutional; and social system.

Organizational routines translate in reliance on authoritative, easily-accessible news sources, At the social system level, Shoemaker (1996) added that U.S. media tend to have more European news coverage compared with African and South American events. People from same socio-cultural orientations are related more than others (Salwen & Garrison, 1989). In this study, it is expected that journalists will choose more news sources from the same socio-cultural orientation, resulting in differences in framing.

2.3 The Chinese media system and the U.S media system

There are large differences between China and the United States in many different areas, their media systems being one of them.

The press always operates under a specific social and political system. Fred Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (1956) distinguished four press models or theories. They are Authoritarian, Libertarian, Communist and Social responsibility. The U.S media operate under the assumption of media independence and freedom and are largely considered as following the social responsibility model (Lee, 2009; Choi, 2013). Under this model, objectivity is a journalistic standard highly valued, and it is expected that news coverage give voice to all stakeholders in an issue or problem without taking sides. As a media practice, objectivity comes into play in information collection, processing and dissemination. It has always been linked to freedom and equality (McQuail, 2010, p.203). However, it is hard to fit the Chinese media system into any of these four models, as the Soviet-communist theory no longer applies to it completely. Winfield and Peng (2005) mentioned in their study, “with a convolution of

the Party line and the bottom line, the Chinese media system is moving from totalitarianism to market authoritarianism.” In China, the media are an important vehicle for building national sovereignty, solidarity, and stability. According to Lee’s (2009) research, Chinese media are the news networks headquartered within the Mainland China that are owned or licensed by the Chinese Communist Party. Strictly, modern Chinese media originated in 1979, when Chinese government initiated institutional reforms and began to open its market; the market is the main factor changing the media role from Party mouthpiece to a business. Winfield and Peng study (2005) shows the Chinese media organizations have become easily influenced by marketing and, in order to have better control, the Chinese official government became to another market entrepreneur.

Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad (1998) employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to compare the framing in the U.S. and Chinese press coverage of Fourth United Nations Conference on Women and the Non-Governmental Organizations Forums in Beijing in 1995. According to the study results, U.S. media coverage focuses considerably on the criticism of Chinese communist system. In contrast, Chinese media had a strong focus on criticism of global feminist movement. As explained in the study, this contrast is caused by different dominant, elite and journalistic ideologies.

A comparison between Chinese and U.S. media systems was also the focus of Wu’s study (2006). In his study, Xinhua News Agency and Associated Press were used to compare the framing of HIV/AIDS in China. The results indicated that Associated Press over-emphasized an anti-government frame, whereas Xinhua News Agency focused on a

pro-government frame. The author argued the reasons for this difference are that Xinhua News agency needs to follow the government line and represent the government voice, attitude, perspective and action about this issue. However, the AP's reports are mostly influenced by its 'anti- communism' ideology.

Yang (2003) compared the Chinese and U.S. newspaper coverage of the air strikes on Kosovo and found different media frames in recounting the large-scale military action. The Chinese newspapers framed the air strikes as "an intervention of Yugoslavia's sovereignty and territory", whereas the US newspapers framed the air strikes as "a humanistic aid to Albanians to stop the ethnic cleansing initiated by Serbians." The present study builds on this line of cross-national research to better understand how different ideologies and press systems affect media coverage of a far-reaching news event.

Yang's (2003)'s study using framing compared the media coverage of NATO air strikes in both Chinese and U.S. media. The study analyzed news stories from People's Daily online, China Daily, the New York Times and the Washington Post. The results show that the kind of media frames the newspaper adopted was influenced by the national interest of the country. So U.S. media portrayed NATO air strikes as humanistic aid to Albanians, while Chinese media portrayed it as an intervention of Yugoslavia's sovereignty and territory.

The news frames of SARS in China and the United States were analyzed in Catherine and Zhou' s study (2005). The study drew 127 news articles from U.S. newspapers and 162 from Chinese newspapers. The results show that Chinese newspapers used the morality frame and human-interest frame more, but the responsibility frame, leadership frame and conflict

frame less than U.S. media. Given these findings, it is expected that the reports of Snowden incident in each country will reflect each government attitude. Different countries like China and the United States may portray the Edward Snowden incident through use of different frames.

The New York Times

The New York Times is an American daily newspaper published in New York, and international distribution. It has a considerable influence and great credibility in the United States. *The New York Time* has great reputation since it has won 112 Pulitzer Prizes, more than any other American newspaper. *The New York Times* won the prizes for its achievements in journalism in a large range of categories. *The New York Times* is a news leader and has large effect on other national and local newspapers. As McCombs argues, *The New York Times* often sets the agenda for other newspapers' content, a phenomenon known as inter-media agenda setting (McCombs, 2005).

The People's Daily

All Chinese media are owned by the central or local state, which has direct impact on editorial policy and personnel (Zhang, & Zhu, 2006). *People's Daily* is "an organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC)" (Luter & Richstad, 1983; Zhang, Walters, & Walters, 1999). It is published worldwide with a circulation of three to four million as of 2015. *People's Daily* not only sets the agenda of other Chinese newspapers, but it also influences broadcast media in China (Luter & Richstad, 1983).

Table1. Differences between *The New York Times* and *People's Daily*.

	The New York Times	People's Daily
Media ownership	The New York Times Company	Communist Party of China
Publisher	Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.	Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
Media system	Commercial	State-run
Press Model	Social responsibility	Soviet-communist
Goal	Profit	Voice of government
Government relationship	Neutral	Positive

The two newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The People's Daily*, were selected for this study because they are considered elite newspapers in each country and often regarded as agenda-setters for other national media, particularly for international news.

Base on the literature presented above, these hypotheses and research questions were formulated:

Hypotheses:

H1: *The New York Times* and *The People's Daily* will frame the Snowden incident differently.

H2: The tone of news reports about Snowden in U.S media is more negative than in Chinese media.

H3: The sources used to cover the Snowden incident vary across media systems.

Research question:

RQ1: Does the difference in news framing and tone of Snowden's coverage have correlation with different media sources?

CHAPTER 3

Method

3.1 Overview

In order to analyze how two countries with two distinct media systems provide different news framing of the same issue, a content analysis of news articles about Edward Snowden in both *The New York Times* (U.S) and *The People's Daily* (China) was conducted. Wimmer and Dominick (1997) argue content analysis is a traditional method used “to identify what exists” (p. 113) and also can be used “to identify trends occurring over long periods of time” or “to study societal change” (p. 113) Moreover, Riffe’s studies (1998) show that content analysis can be used to “draw inferences about meaning or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption” (p. 27-28). Media messages are manifestations of the dominant culture (Riffe et al., 1998). So in this case, content analysis is the most apt method to use.

3.2 Sampling

The population of this study consists of the complete reports about Edward Snowden in both *The New York Times* and *The People's Daily*. The sample period is from May 20st, 2013, to August 31st, 2013. This time period allows the press to cover the initial event and also the follow-up reports and developments. Specifically, the reports begin on May 20, 2013, when Snowden came to Hong Kong and began to share numerous confidential documents, and ends with the Russian government granting him a one-year asylum.

Two databases, LexisNexis and People's Daily website, were used to search published reports about Snowden incident. This study will use the English "Snowden" and Chinese "斯诺登" in each country's newspaper as the keyword and collected reports that contained the keyword in the headline and main topic. The unit of study is the individual complete news article. A total 459 of reports were found in *The New York Times* (372) and *People's Daily* (87). Since news reports are supposed to be the most objective type of content and follow traditional newsgathering standards (Chan, 1992), opinion articles including editorials, columns, and commentaries were excluded, as practiced in previous researches studies (Li, 1999; Vastag et al., 1999; Killebrew, 1999; Luther, 1999; Chan, 1992; Huang & McAdams, 1996). In this case, blogs from LexisNexis and commentaries from *People's Daily* were excluded. After that step, 252 news in *The New York Times* and 68 news stories in *People's Daily* remained in the population. Systematic sampling was used to ensure equal sample sizes; as such, every third articles in *The New York Times* population was selected (N=83) and all the articles from the *People's Daily* (68) beginning with May 20st, 2013, and ending in August 30th, 2013, were used.

Previous research has established that both *The New York Times* (U.S) and *People's Daily* (China), due to their circulation, reach, and inter-media agenda-setting effects, are representatives of elite newspapers in each country.

3.3 Operationalization of variables

In this study, several variables were measured, including generic frames, news sources and tone. Each story/news report was examined according to the code book (See Code Book in Appendix 1) and as defined below.

Generic frames

Five common generic frames were coded in both *The New York Times* and *People's Daily*, using the definitions proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). The coding was done at the paragraph level, and frames were mutually exclusive (only the dominant frame was coded). It was possible for paragraphs not to include any of the frames.

The human interest frame was measured based on the items below:

Whether a paragraph provides a human individual example or “human face” about the Edward Snowden incident.

Whether a paragraph shows or discusses individuals or groups affected by the Edward Snowden incident.

Whether a paragraph included in a personal or private expertise regarding the Edward Snowden incident.

Whether there is a mention about individual feelings related to the Edward Snowden incident.

The conflict frame was measured based on the following items:

Whether a paragraph reflected disagreements between at least two people or groups.

Whether or not a paragraph shows at least two sides of the Edward Snowden incident.

The morality frame was measured based on these following items:

Whether a paragraph includes moral judgment toward Edward Snowden related to religious, morality or social standards.

The economic consequences frame was measured based on these items:

Whether a paragraph mentioned financial costs.

Whether a paragraph mentioned economic consequences of the Edward Snowden incident.

The responsibility frame was coded if a specific paragraph discussed any of the following:

Whether a paragraph suggests that people or organization have the ability to alleviate the issue.

Whether a paragraph mentions any solution or what should people to do about the Edward Snowden incident.

Whether a paragraph mentions any people or organization that should be held accountable for the issue.

Sources

The study also explored what kind of sources reporters relied on in their coverage of the Snowden incident. As indicated by Gieber and Johnson's study in 1961, reporters heavily rely on government officials as sources to the extent that they become spokespeople for governments. Such sourcing patterns can explain the differences in news framing. Berelson defined a source as a person, group or object "in whose name a statement is made" in 1971 (p.244).

Since the Snowden's incident represented a political crisis, this study separated official

and unofficial sources. Official sources are “those speaking for individuals or organizations” (Powers & Fico, 1994, p. 4). An unofficial source is “those speaking on their own” (Powers & Fico, 1994, p. 4). In the study, sources were classified into U.S government officials, Barack Obama, Chinese government officials, Russian officials, other officials, non-government groups, experts, anonymous sources, Snowden himself, Julian Assange, local media/journalists, and other. For any other news sources not included in the 12 categories listed above or for any interesting observations, coders made notes.

Tone

When coding the tone of the articles, a positive tone was defined as expressing approving, complementary and welcoming opinions toward Snowden and his actions. Paragraphs with a positive tone usually reference specific key words, including hero or patriot. In contrast, paragraphs with a negative tone display criticism and rebuking of Edward Snowden’s behavior. Key words for the negative tone included renegade and traitor. A neutral tone exhibits no judgments of Edward Snowden’s event and illustrates the facts only. Neutral means that article doesn’t express favorability toward either side specifically. Because news reports can reflect different perspectives/tones from different sources, each paragraphs’ tone was coded and the total numbers of paragraphs with positive, negative and neutral tone were recorded.

Here are some examples of paragraphs from *The New York Times* that use typically positive or negative tone toward Snowden:

Negative: “Jeffrey Toobin, who works for both CNN and The New Yorker, called Mr. Snowden a grandiose narcissist who belongs in prison.” (Journalists go on attack (against one

another)).

Positive: “I would give him a high five and invite him to my house for dinner, said Robin Fink, 25, which is from California but has lived for about three years in Quito and volunteers for a group that advocates for women’s health issues’ ‘what he did was heroic”

3.4 Intercoder reliability

The author and one other journalism and mass communication second-year graduate student were coders. After coder training, a total of 20 articles were coded to establish intercoder reliability. In the first intercoder test, some of intercoder reliability coefficients were below acceptable range (< 0.70). After discussion, a second round of coding was conducted, and a second intercoder test were conducted; reliability coefficients tested with Krippendorff’s alpha are listed in Table 2.

Table 2.
Intercoder reliability coefficients.

Variables	KALPHA
U.S government officials	0.923
Barack Obama	0.7235
Chinese officials	0.9503
Russian officials	0.8253
Other officials	0.8902
Non-government groups	0.8844
Experts	0.8766
Anonymous sources	0.9614
Snowden himself	0.9312
Julian Assange	0.7936
Local media/ Journalists	0.8177
Other	0.8327
Tone	
Positive	0.7214
Negative	0.7153

Table 2 continued

Neutral	0.8129
News frame	
Conflict frame	0.8242
Human interest frame	0.9527
Morality frame	0.8938
Economic frame	0.8925
Responsibility frame	0.7929
Average	0.8508

CHAPTER 4

Results

In this study, Edward Snowden's incident is used as a case study to analyze and compare media coverage, mainly framing and tone, in Mainland China and U.S. elite newspapers. The content analysis also explores what news sources the two newspapers relied on and how those sources affected framing and bias in news coverage. Three hypotheses and one research question guided the data collection and analysis using SPSS.

Articles in *The New York Times* varied in length from 5 to 32 paragraphs, with an average of 16.3. *People's Daily* stories varied in length from 5 to 42 paragraphs, with an average of 14.5. So the stories were relatively similar in length.

In order to examine the media frames in the newspaper coverage of the Edward Snowden incident, the context of the political and media environment in the U.S. and China was considered and the two newspapers were compared as representatives of their respective countries and media system. Paragraph-by-paragraph analysis found that the most prevalent frames are the conflict frame ($M = 2.92$ paragraphs per story), followed by the responsibility frame ($M = 2.32$), the human-interest frame ($M = 0.86$), the morality frame ($M = 0.19$) and the economic consequences frame ($M = 0.11$).

To test the first hypothesis, which predicted differences in framing between the two newspapers, independent samples t-tests (Table 3) found no statistically significant differences in the human-interest frame between *The New York Times* ($M = 0.94$, $SD = 0.94$) and *People's*

Daily ($M = 0.78$, $SD = 0.96$), $t(142.13) = 1.03$, $p = 0.305$ and in the economic frame employed by *The New York Times* ($M = 0.07$, $SD = 0.34$) and *People's Daily* ($M = 0.15$, $SD = 0.47$), $t(120.02) = -1.1$, $p = 0.272$) However, *The New York Times* used significantly more conflict framing ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 4.15$), compared to *People's Daily* [$M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.81$, $t(116.709) = 3.360$, $p = 0.001$].

On the other hand, *People's Daily* employed more responsibility frames ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 2.00$) compared to *The New York Times* ($M = 1.72$, $SD = 2.25$), $t(147.99) = -3.44$, $p = 0.015$. And also more morality frame ($M = 0.28$, $SD = 0.54$) compared to *The New York Times* ($M = 0.10$, $SD = 0.30$), $t(99.09) = -2.49$, $p = 0.001$ (Table 3).

Table 3.

Differences in framing between *The New York Times* and *People's Daily*
Independent-samples t-tests

Frame	The New York Times		People's Daily		t	df
	M	SD	M	SD		
Conflict**	3.7711	4.14766	2.0735	1.80642	3.360**	116.71
Human interest	0.9398	0.94158	0.7794	0.95956	1.030	145.97
Morality**	0.0964	0.29691	0.2794	0.54212	-2.494**	142.13
Economic	0.0723	0.34156	0.1471	0.46568	-1.103	120.02
Responsibility**	1.7229	2.24865	2.9118	1.99802	-3.437 **	147.99

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

To test the second Hypothesis that the tone of news reports about Snowden in U.S media is more negative than in Chinese media, independent-sample t-tests were conducted. The analysis (Table 4) shows that the overall attitude was neutral across newspapers (more than 90%

of the paragraphs in each newspaper showed no bias). Independent samples t-tests found no statistically significant differences $t(67.3) = -1.256, p = \text{not significant}$ about neutral tone in *The New York Times* ($M\% = 94.27, SD = 0.85$) and *People's Daily* ($M\% = 92.68, SD = 1.63$). Conversely, these data show that *People's Daily* used significantly more positive tone ($M\% = 5.74, SD = 0.07$) than *The New York Times* ($M\% = 1.92, SD = 0.07$), $t(107.91) = -4.06, p = .000$. Likewise, *The New York Times* used more Negative tone toward Edward Snowden. ($M\% = 3.81, SD = 0.07$ compare to *People's Daily* $M\% = 1.92, SD = 0.04$), $t(127.28) = 2.51, p = 0.013$.

Table 4.

Differences in tone toward Edward Snowden in *The New York Times* and *People's Daily*. Independent samples t-tests

Frame	The New York Times		People's Daily		t	df
	M %	SD	M %	SD		
Tone Positive***	1.92	0.04237	5.74	0.06762	-4.059***	107.92
Tone Negative**	3.81	0.7047	1.57	0.03625	2.510**	127.28
Tone Neutral	94.27	0.08534	92.68	0.08283	1.157	144.76

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Some symbolic incidents happened and reported in both *The New York Times* and *People's Daily* during the Snowden controversy. On May 20th Snowden arrived in Hong Kong and publicized some secret documents in *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*. There were two stages during media cover about Edward Snowden. When this incident first appeared on

media most of the articles mentioned about who is the leaker and tries to give an explanation to why he did those behaviors. Until, he accepted an interview and choice to face to the media. Both Chinese media and the U.S. media appeared focused comment on Mr. Snowden himself and later public attention change in the effect of those documents, more discussion about the topic of privacy and the responsibility of the U.S. government shows on the media.

In terms of attribution patterns, descriptive statistics found that the most used types of sources were, in order, U.S. officials, Experts, Local media/Journalists, Russian officials and Barack Obama for *The New York Times*. *People's Daily* relied mainly on other officials, Experts, Local media/ Journalists, U.S. officials and Russian officials.

Table 5.

News source/attribution frequency in *The New York Times* and *People's Daily*.

	The New York Times	People's Daily
	Frequency	Frequency
U.S government officials	214 (24.71%)	108(14.84%)
Barack Obama	54(6.24%)	31(4.26%)
Chinese officials	9(1.04%)	4(0.55%)
Russian officials	70(8.08%)	43(5.90%)
Other officials	143(16.51%)	177(24.31%)
Non-government groups	12(1.39%)	12(1.65%)
Experts	177(20.44%)	155(21.29%)
Anonymous	2(0.23%)	6(0.82%)
Snowden himself	42(4.85%)	33(4.53%)
Julian Assange	9(1.03%)	2(0.275%)
Local media/ Journalists	121(13.97%)	154(21.15%)
Other	13(1.50%)	3(0.41%)
Total	866	728

To test the third hypothesis that predicted the sources used to cover the Snowden incident vary across media systems, independent samples t-tests were used to explore differences in

sourcing patterns between these two newspapers. Thirteen variables were measured in this study (Table 6). Only three types of sources were statistically significant. Firstly, *The New York Times* used more U.S government officials ($M = 2.58, SD = 3.02$) than *People's Daily* ($M = 1.59, SD = 1.60$). $t(129.50) = 2.58, p = 0.011$. Secondly, *People's Daily* cited more other officials ($M = 2.60, SD = 2.32$) than *The New York Times* ($M = 1.72, SD = 2.13$). $t(137.69) = -2.402, p = 0.018$. Thirdly, *People's Daily* cited more local media/ journalists ($M = 2.26, SD = 1.46$). $t(135.50) = -2.57, p = 0.011$.

Table 6.

Differences in sources used to cover the Snowden incident by *The New York Times* and *People's Daily*.

Independent-samples t-tests

	American Media		Chinese Media		t	df
	M	SD	M	SD		
U.S government officials**	2.58	3.0	1.59	1.6	2.56**	129.5
Barack Obama	0.65	1.6	0.46	0.1	0.92	140.6
Chinese officials	0.11	0.3	0.06	0.2	1.11	148.2
Russian officials	0.84	2.5	0.63	1.1	0.69	119.7
Other officials**	1.72	2.1	2.60	2.3	-2.40**	137.7
Non-Government groups	0.14	0.5	0.18	0.5	-0.38	133.5
Experts	2.13	2.5	2.28	2.2	-0.38	147.8
Anonymous	0.02	0.2	0.09	0.4	-1.24	103.1
Snowden himself	0.51	1.1	0.49	0.1	0.12	147.6
Julian Assange	0.11	0.4	0.03	0.2	1.69	117.9
Local media/ Journalists**	1.46	1.8	2.26	2.0	-2.57**	135.5
Other	0.37	1.4	0.04	0.2	1.99	85.00

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

In order to answer the research question about whether the news framing and tone of Snowden's coverage has correlation with different media sources, a series of linear regressions was used. To test the correlations in news framing, each type of significant frames (conflict frame, morality frame and responsibility frame) was used as the dependent variable. Conversely, types of sources were used as predictors (See tables 7, 8, 9). To test the correlation with tone, each type of significant tone (positive and negative) was used as depended variables. Likewise, the types of sources were predictors (See tables 10, 11).

Table 7.

Linear regression with conflict framing as dependent variable and type of sources as predictors

Sources	B	SE	t
(Constant)	2.47	0.857	1.292
All U.S. officials	0.438	0.08	5.312***
Russian officials	0.487	0.120	4.071***
Other officials	0.094	0.112	0.832
Experts	0.123	0.106	1.158
Snowden himself	0.325	0.228	1.424
Local media/ Journalists	0.063	0.132	0.482
Other	-0.036	0.220	-0.164
Newspaper	-1.214	0.498	-2.435**

Newspaper coded as NYT=1, PD=2

R = 0.587, R2 = 0.344.

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001.

Table 8.

Linear regression with morality framing as dependent variable and type of sources as predictors

Sources	B	SE	t
(Constant)	-0.016	0.128	-0.121
All U.S. officials	-0.005	0.012	-0.398
Russian officials	0.026	0.018	1.430
Other officials	-0.030	0.017	-1.762
Experts	-0.005	0.016	-0.292
Snowden himself	-0.035	0.034	-1.033
Local media/ Journalists	-0.012	0.020	-0.622
Other	-0.024	0.033	-0.734
Newspaper	0.211	0.074	2.839**

Newspaper coded as NYT=1, PD=2

R = 0.317, R² = 0.100.

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001.

Table 9.

Linear regression with responsibility framing as dependent variable and type of sources as predictors

Sources	B	SE	t
(Constant)	-0.050	0.579	-0.087
All U.S. officials	-0.084	0.056	-1.505
Russian officials	0.318	0.081	3.935***
Other officials	0.127	0.076	1.670
Experts	0.182	0.072	2.548**
Snowden himself	-0.026	0.154	-0.170
Local media/ Journalists	0.341	0.089	3.831***
Other	0.018	0.149	0.121
Newspaper	0.713	0.337	2.120**

Newspaper coded as NYT=1, PD=2

R = 0.537, R² = 0.289.

*p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001.

Tables 7, 8, and 9 show the relationship between sources and frames. U.S. officials and Barack Obama were collapsed into one variable, called *All U.S. officials*. Types of sources that

had very low numbers in both datasets, such as Chinese officials or Julian Assange, were left out of the models. As Table 7 indicates, two types of sources were found to positively correlate with the conflict frame, namely, All U.S. officials ($B = 0.438$, $SE = 0.082$, $p = .000$) and Russian officials ($B = 0.487$, $SE = 0.120$, $p = .000$). We controlled for newspaper and found a negative and significant relationship ($B = -1.214$, $SE = 0.498$, $p = 0.016$), indicating that Chinese news articles used less conflict framing than U.S. stories.

Table 8 shows that none of the sources was significantly correlated with the morality frame. Only the type of newspaper found a significant and positive relationship ($B = 0.211$, $SE = 0.074$, $p = 0.005$), indicating that Chinese news articles used more morality framing than U.S. stories. In the model, NYT is coded as 1 and PD is coded as 2.

Table 9 shows that stories citing Russian officials ($B = 0.318$, $SE = 0.081$, $p = .000$), experts ($B = 0.182$, $SE = 0.072$, $p = 0.012$), local media/ Journalists ($B = 0.341$, $SE = 0.089$, $p = .000$) and appearing in Chinese media ($B = 0.713$, $SE = 0.337$, $p = 0.036$) were positively and significantly correlated with the responsibility frame.

Tables 10 and 11 show the relationship between sources and tone toward Edward Snowden. Based on findings shown in table 10, citing Russian officials ($B = 0.009$, $SE = 0.002$, $p = .000$), other officials ($B = 0.004$, $SE = 0.002$, $p = 0.036$) and Newspaper (where NYT=1 and PD=2) ($B = 0.038$, $SE = 0.009$, $p = .000$) was positively correlated with a favorable tone.

Table 11 indicates that only one type of source predicted a negative tone toward Snowden, namely U.S. government officials ($B = 0.008$, $SE = 0.002$, $p = .000$).

Table 10.

Linear regression with positive tone as dependent variable and type of sources as predictors

Sources	B	SE	t
(Constant)	-0.043	0.016	-2.756*
All U.S. officials	.000	0.002	0.221
Russian officials	0.009	0.002	4.314***
Other officials	0.004	0.002	2.114*
Experts	0.001	0.002	0.737
Snowden himself	0.005	0.004	1.214
Local media/ Journalists	.000	0.002	-0.007
Other	0.006	0.004	1.433
Newspaper	.038	.009	4.210***

Newspaper coded as NYT=1, PD=2

$R = 0.499$, $R^2 = 0.249$.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 11.

Linear regression with negative tone as dependent variable and type of sources as predictors

Sources	B	SE	t
(Constant)	0.026	0.016	1.620
All U.S. officials	0.008	0.002	5.095***
Russian officials	-0.002	0.002	-0.734
Other officials	-0.002	0.002	-1.088
Experts	.000	0.002	0.190
Snowden himself	.000	0.004	0.042
Local media/ Journalists	0.001	0.002	0.454
Other	.0002	0.004	0.491
Newspaper	-0.012	0.009	-1.239

$R = 0.448$, $R^2 = 0.201$.

Newspaper coded as NYT=1, PD=2

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study is a comparison of representative newspapers from the United States and China. Evidence shows that there were differences in framing, tone and attribution patterns between the U.S media and the Chinese media. Reported differences in media coverage of the same event can be explained by variations in ideology, national interests, and press models, as suggested by literature. There is no absolute right or wrong way of framing; it depends on how the media want to portray a message or, in this case, an individual and the controversy surrounding his actions. Framing studies can help scholars understand how public opinion can shape by the media. This study has found that these two newspapers described the same person differently and relied on different types of sources to tell his story.

The result shows that there were differences in tone between these two countries. While both *The New York Times* and *People's Daily* tried to use a neutral tone to portray Snowden, as prescribed by journalism textbooks, the U.S. newspaper was more biased against Snowden, reflecting the country's official stance on the surveillance scandal Snowden created. In the United States, Edward Snowden as a former employee of the CIA and also a former contractor for NSA, took to another country a lot of top secrets; it is not surprising that U.S government officials held relatively conservative or more negative attitude toward Snowden and strongly condemned other countries that extended to Edward Snowden. In fact, it was the reliance on

U.S. officials that positively correlated with both an increase in negative tone and a decrease in positive tone. Also, U.S. officials were the most cited sources by the U.S. newspaper, supporting Bennett's indexing hypothesis.

The New York Times also framed the Snowden controversy more in terms of conflict, a frame that was predicted by the reliance on U.S. and Russian officials. Not surprisingly, Russian official sources also correlated with a favorable tone toward Snowden, thus marking the conflict between the United States and Russia in their attitude toward the NSA contractor.

In *People's Daily*, one of the most important Party mouthpieces in Mainland China, its attitude highly depends on the government's tone and attitude. In this event, Chinese officials kept quiet, as very few Chinese government sources made their way into the stories about Snowden. In fact, *The New York Times* cited more Chinese officials than *People's Daily* (but still very few). As a result, the news articles from *People's Daily*, not including opinion articles (editorials and columns commentaries), had a generally neutral the tone toward Snowden. The content analysis revealed the responsibility frame the most frequently adopted frame when *People's Daily* covered the Edward Snowden incident. The Chinese press focused on "Who should take the responsibility?" The responsibility frame was predicted by sources the Chinese newspaper relied heavily on, such as international officials (other than Russian or American), experts, and journalists. The conflict frame came in second after in *People's Daily*. Examples include episodes when the U.S. government argued that Edward Snowden was fed directions by the Beijing government and used as a spy to steal information from the U.S.

government. Many conflict frames used in Chinese media portrayed the U.S government as a thief crying “stop thief” and highlighted their double standard in international affairs. In their view, the U.S. government is holding on to its tie with Europe and parts of Asia, while losing economic leverage and moral authority in the rest of the world.

News sources

Researchers have emphasized the value of studying different sources cited by media (Entman, 1993), as a cornerstone routine of professional journalism that affects both media credibility and framing. As Entman (1989, p. 18) noted, “highly placed government and corporate spokespeople are the safest and easiest sources in terms of giving stories legitimacy.” That pattern was uncovered in the present study, where the most common sources adopted in *The New York Times* were U.S. officials. However, other international officials were the most frequently cited sources in *People’s Daily*, reflecting that the incident was more of a national story for U.S. media and an international story for Chinese media. There was a very interesting and surprising finding in this study related to official sources; Chinese officials were almost invisible in the coverage of the Snowden controversy. In *The New York Times*, there were only 9 paragraphs attributed to Chinese officials (including 2 from Hong Kong government). *People’s Daily* cited only Chinese officials only in 4 instances (including 1 from Hong Kong government). More precisely, the Chinese newspaper included no sources from Chinese leader or government officials -- only from Chinese spokesmen. In *The New York Times* the most cited sources were U.S. government officials, buttressing Bennett’s (2005) argument that

“Even the best journalism in the land is extremely dependent on the political messages of a small spectrum of ‘official sources’” (Bennett 2005, 117). However, In *People’s Daily* the top source is other international officials. For this sensitive topic, Chinese media shied away from relying on either Chinese or American officials. Compared to *The New York Times*, more experts and journalists were cited. In China, media are owned by either the central or the state government and must follow the Communist party and government policies. It acts as “the bridge between the party and the people” (Yin & Payne, 2004, p. 373). In the Chinese external relations policy, moderation is one of the most important policies. It is not only based on Chinese history and tradition, but also on the country’s pragmatic culture and high score in long-term orientation, as indicated by Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (2015)². Journalists in the Mainland China also engage in self-censorship, due to the political background where the government polices closely every news outlet.

Surprisingly, both news outlets relied very little (and about the same) on Edward Snowden himself as a source. Given the leaker’s elusive and controversial nature, this finding makes sense. However, from a normative standpoint, given the propensity of responsibility framing found in this study, one would expect to hear more from the person that other sources are so quick to judge – to either demonize or victimize.

² For a complete list of cultural dimensions for China, see <http://geert-hofstede.com/china.html>

The relationship between sources and frames

This study contributes to the growing body of literature showing the importance of sources and messengers to the framing of the message. Not surprisingly, a heavy reliance on U.S. government officials and Russian officials correlated with an increased propensity in conflict framing. The files leaked by Snowden were related to U.S. intelligence activities and partnerships with foreign allies, which made the U.S. government's situation embarrassing. Sources from U.S. government and President Obama tried to justify criticism from other countries. Since the Russian government accepted Snowden's application and finally agreed to give him asylum, it tended to portray Snowden in a more favorable light, an attitude that the U.S. government publicly condemned. Both U.S. and Russian government officials predicted an increase in conflict framing, reflecting the disagreements between the two nations.

For a story that raised many ethical questions, the morality frame was used very little in general and was not significantly correlated with any sources. However, surprisingly, *People's Daily* used the morality frame significantly more than *The New York Times*. This finding could be explained by the Confucian ethical tradition in China. Future studies study should further explore the propensity of this type of framing in stories where the Chinese government can both benefit (as in the Snowden case) or be hurt by the controversy under scrutiny (as the U.S. government was).

For *People's Daily*, the responsibility frame appeared with the highest frequency. Barack Obama, Russian officials, other officials and local media/journalists correlated with the responsibility frame. When this incident happened, media in both China and the United States

were paying a lot of attention to attribution of responsibility. In China, on one hand, the Chinese government wanted to distance itself from this incident and also it needed to argue with a query from the U.S government. On the other hand, with a different ideology and national interest, the Chinese government has long been critical of the United States and other Western values, like labor standards and human rights (Chan, 1998). When Snowden flew to Hong Kong and finally got asylum in Russia, media in Mainland China cited many sources from other officials, experts and local media/journalist in order to make a case that the U.S. government holds a double standard in foreign affairs and also with no doubt is behind the incident and should take full responsibility. The responsibility frame was the second most frequently used frame in *The New York Times*. Sources such as local media/ journalists and experts were asked to weigh in and provide solutions for the problem.

Tone

It is easy to understand why a positive tone was correlated with Russian officials, other officials and non-government groups. Likewise, it is not surprising that a negative relationship was found between the U.S. government and the positive tone toward Snowden. One particular episode mentioned in both the Chinese media and the U.S media is a good illustration of these correlations. When a plane carrying the Bolivian president from Moscow home was forced to land by one of the U.S. allies in Austria, amid speculation that Snowden was on board, media around the world covered this event. Both *The New York Times* and *People's Daily* cited heavily other officials and non-government groups that criticized the U.S. government and showed solidarity with both President Evo Morales and Edward Snowden, especially in

People's Daily.

On the other hand, the U.S. government was the only type of source cited that correlated with a negative tone, clearly reflecting the administration's attitude in the controversy. The U.S. media relied heavily on U.S. officials, thus advancing their agenda against Snowden.

Implications

This study is focusing on an international incident – the Edward Snowden controversy -- and compared two mainstream newspapers from Mainland China and the United States. When comparing news coverage in Chinese media and the U.S media, differences arise not from a simplistic contrast between capitalism and socialism, but also come from national interests, positions and cultures. In this case, the Edward Snowden incident involved many countries and regions. It is important to understand how globalization affects media technologies and influences media content. Also, this study offers an assessment of how political and media systems impact news construction, transmission and development. As Hallin & Mancini (2004) pointed out, “comparative analysis is valuable in social investigation, because it sensitizes us to variation and to similarity, and this can contribute powerfully to concept formation and to the refinement of our conceptual apparatus.” (p.2) Comparative research on news coverage in powerful and agenda-setting countries such as the United States and China can help us understand how well equipped global media are to make sense of dramatic, controversial, and fast-developing events and issues around the globe and whether findings of classic theories of mass communication (that tend to be U.S.-centric) stand the test of cross-cultural analysis.

Limitations and Future Research

The incident surrounding Edward Snowden's leaking of U.S. sensitive data attracted attention around the world. This content analysis included only around four months of news coverage in only two newspapers in two countries. Long-term and globe-spanning observation and data collection could provide a more accurate picture of how media systems and attribution patterns affect framing of controversial far-reaching events. Also, future studies could analyze news content in broadcast media. As mentioned before, the findings on the use of the morality frame were surprising for an incident so heavy in ethical implications. However, the collected data do not show any significant correlation between morality framing and news sources. In order to get a better understanding of how these two different media systems operate, more events associated with the United States and China should be analyzed in the future.

Besides text, further study can also explore the differences of visual framing in the news coverage between two countries. For instance, during the analysis, coders noticed that People's Daily used photos of banners calling Snowden "Hero" or demanding for his freedom or thanking him for his brave acts. This type of frame did not show up in the text, however, indicating a possible double standard. Schwalbe, Silcock and Keith (2008) used content analysis to analyze 1822 images from U.S. mainstream media from various media outlets, including television, news web, newspaper and magazine to explore how media use photos to portray the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The results of the study show that conflict frame appears first and human-interest frame appeared more after several weeks of war. Additionally,

Greenwood and Jenkins (2015) used 193 photos published in magazines to examine the visual framing of the 2011-2012 Syrian conflict. The results proved that the dominant frame was the conflict frame, but peace framing also had a large portion in the public affairs magazines.

Also, future studies could focus on editorials instead of just straight news stories, as editorials are more likely to stray from the objectivity norm and reflect the news outlets' stance on the issues of the day.

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APPENDIX

Code Book

Instruction:

1. Coder

Coder name: 1= Wentao Chu

2= Shuo Li

2. Newspaper

1= The New York Times

2= People's Daily

3. Article number:

(This refer to the pre-assigned numbers have been given to the article you are coding.)

4. Sources (count number of mentions/attributions):

1=U.S government officials

2=Barack Obama

3=Chinese officials

4=Russian officials

5=other officials

6=non-government groups

7=experts

8=anonymous sources

9=Snowden himself

10=Julian Assange

11=local media/ Journalists

12=other

7. Tone toward Snowden

1=Positive – count number of paragraphs

2=Negative - count number of paragraphs

3=Neutral - count number of paragraphs

8. Frames

News frame	Explanation	(Number of paragraphs)
Conflict frame	The paragraph mentions conflict between two people, interest groups, or countries	
Human-interest frame	The paragraph how individuals are influenced by the event and how they were involved in it. The paragraph mentions their feeling and their lives. The paragraph shows emotional feelings towards people involved in the event.	
Morality frame	The paragraph interprets an event in terms of moral prescriptions.	
Economic consequences frame	The paragraph mentions the event in terms of economic expenses or gains in the past, now or in the future.	
Responsibility frame	The paragraph mentions suggestions, solutions or urgent action, which are or will be done or have done, to the issue. The paragraph mentions an individual or group should be held responsible for the issue.	