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THE MEDIA IS A FUNHOUSE MIRROR: COMPARING ECONOMIC INTERACTION ISSUES IN THE U.S. AND CHINESE MEDIA

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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ABSTRACT

This project studied the differences between mainstream news reporting in the U.S. and China. I employed content analysis to analyze the major features of 427 news reports about the economic interaction between the two countries. The research focused on the key media frames in the two sets of news media, the factors that shaped these media frames, and the real meanings behind those reports. The study found both similarities and differences. The two sets of media showed significant differences in their reporting of news and events about economic issues in terms of the selection of topics, and the discourse used, and at the ideological level. However, somewhat surprisingly, the overall pattern of reporting in practice was similar. Both were very selective in their news stories and news frames, focusing only on certain aspects of events and facts, and intentionally ignoring other aspects. They tended to report stories consistent with the foreign and economic policy of their host countries, and to select facts that favor their own country's policies and interests. Therefore, the U.S. and Chinese media both act like a funhouse mirror that reveals the overall images of our world albeit with somewhat distorted facts.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since my arrival in the U.S. in August 2011, I have noticed many significant differences in the U.S. news coverage of my home country, China, and in the ways that news reports were constructed. I found that, even when reporting the same news, related to China or not, Chinese and American media usually focus on very different topics and utilize very different ways of reporting. My undergraduate training in journalism prepared me with the knowledge that the media is not an absolutely objective channel for information. News reports are unavoidably affected by economic factors, governmental influence and the individual backgrounds of the reporters and editors. However, the differences were so great that I decided to begin this research project.

Statement of the problem

I selected two of the most influential newspapers in the U.S., *the New York Times* and *the Wall Street Journal*, and three influential newspapers from China, *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, *the People's Daily* and *the Global Times*, as the target newspapers. I used content analysis and selected more than four hundred news articles related to the economic relationship between the two countries. I attempted to achieve two main objectives. The first was to determine which media frames were used to describe the economic interaction. I hoped I could find out their differences and put the media biases on the table. My second goal was to explore the key factors that led to the construction of those media frames and to find the real messages behind those news reports.

My research questions were: what are the similarities and differences between the dominant Chinese and US news reports about the economic interaction between the two countries? What are the media frames? What are the underlying meanings of these media frames?

Why should the academic community care about this research?

I think the academic community would care about this research for several reasons. First of all, although we live in a globalized world, most people still cannot conveniently communicate with their counterparts from the other side of the world due to cultural, linguistic and technological barriers, and some other real-life difficulties. The news media thus assume even greater importance as channels to circulate information and shape public opinion. News media provide an important platform for learning about international issues. Although citizens must be highly critical of the news provided, and aware of its shortcomings, the news media remain an important source of information about international relations. In addition, national governments and global corporations try to secure positive news coverage to influence people's views around the world and attempt to achieve and/or maintain political and economic dominance. Reading the news critically allows us to better understand the goals, policies and actions of national governments and global corporations.

Secondly, this research touches on the relationship between two of the largest economies in the world. I think people of good will from both countries are willing to learn more about the other country. The U.S. and China are perceived as two major powers, whose opinions and actions are very influential and will affect future world

patterns. China, as a rising economic and political power, has gained much more attention than before on the international stage, and many people consider China as the most likely candidate to become the next superpower. Therefore the western world cannot afford to ignore the economic strength and influence of China.

The U.S. and China, as two major powers, are competing in many ways. They both consider the other nation as their biggest competitor. But their economic systems, cultures, ideologies, governing ideals and styles are different. Issues about the economic interactions between those two countries, including trade disputes, the currency exchange rate, and the economic relationship are all very hot topics in recent years. During the recent U.S. presidential debate about foreign policy, the Sino-US economic interaction was raised as an important topic, which demonstrated the significance of the relationship between these two largest economies. However, since the mode of Chinese economic success is not consistent with the America-led world economic status quo, this mode is presenting an alternative way and challenge to the current world economy order. China emphasizes the role of the state in economy while the U.S. promotes the neoliberal economic system. This research examined some of the hottest economic disputes between the U.S. and China in recent years and digs out the underlying reasons for these disputes.

In addition, these two major powers are both trying to expand their global influence. Although the U.S. is the sole global super power while China is attempting to expand its soft power in recent years to pursue more interests around the world. In short, the timing is right to conduct my proposed type of research, and that is meaningful for scholars in both countries as well as other parts of the world.

Lastly, I am conducting interdisciplinary research that involves media studies, the U.S.-China economic issues, international affairs and political science. The media provides an important domain in which to look at the political intentions regarding international economic interactions, as well as the public opinion from a specific society. I hope this research will provide a unique angle, through reading news reports, to investigate economic interaction issues.

I wish that my paper could make some contributions to the academic community. First of all, there are few existing comparative studies of Chinese and the U.S. news media. Most of the previous studies were conducted several years ago, and are not likely to be applicable to current situations. None of those studies focused on the Sino-US economic relationship. Second of all, because of the absence of up to date research, many recent political, economic and social factors that affect news reports have not been considered or analyzed. When I conducted my study, I took the recent political, economic and social dynamics into consideration. I hope my research could fill some of the abovementioned gaps in the literature.

Theoretical framework

The important theoretical frameworks in this research are media framing and the agenda-setting role of media. Many scholars have pointed out that framing is selection and salience to highlight some aspects of facts and exclude other aspects (Entman, 1993 & Gitlin 1980). The concept of framing is meaningful because it offers an alternative to the old "objectivity and bias" theory (Tankard, 2001). In addition, some scholars have highlighted the agenda-setting role of the media. Media are influenced by government

agendas and, in turn, the news media can play an agenda-setting role in world politics. Most noticeably, the media make some aspects of reports more salient in order to influence public opinion, maintain the status quo and favor the powerful elites (Herman & Chomsky, 1992).

This research also touched on several other theories about globalization, such as Harvey's new imperialism theory, which discussed that the reason of the U.S. introducing capitalist-style economic system and financial institutions to the entire world is to accumulate capital; Bunker & Ciccantell's theory about systemic cycle of accumulation in the world economy, which suggested that the goal of any superpower establishing a series of political and economic systems is to more easily extract resources worldwide to further secure its dominant status; and Joseph Nye's soft power theory about utilizing attraction and co-option as a mean of persuasion to expand a country's interest. These theories potentially help us understand why both the U.S. and China are sticking to their own successful experience and established economic systems, and are trying to expand those to the rest of world to maintain or pursue their dominant economic status. According to those global capital accumulation theories, the differences in the economic systems and principles between the U.S. and China are the root reasons for their economic disputes.

Organization of study

Chapter 2 is a literature review of academic works including the agenda-setting role of media, the concept of media framing, the media systems and economic systems in

the U.S. and China; and US-China relations. I also review the previous comparative studies of US-China news reports.

Chapter 3 discusses methodology including why I chose the content analysis, my target media, the time period of my research, and the specific research steps.

Chapter 4 is the study results. This chapter discusses the main study results, including the key media frames, the main information sources and signifiers.

In Chapter 5, I explore the principal similarities and differences between these two sets of news media, and especially the key factors that shaped those media frames and their real messages.

In Chapter 6, I summarize all my study results and interpretations; my contributions to the academic community, the limitations of this research, and recommendations for future studies.

Overview of the research

Based on my observation, the U.S and Chinese news reports do not fully follow the philosophy of objectivity in reporting. Through professional selection and display of news issues, the news reports make some aspects prominent, and they usually frame the news according to the political, economic and ideological needs of their own national political and economic elites. Therefore, even though the U.S. and Chinese media operate under different systems, they actually share similar practices. Neither is objective or fair in reporting; the two sets of media are more likely to report events they or their governments approve to justify their own country's policies.

My research is designed to find out the media frames of the two sets of media to learn the differences behind the stands on some specific issues from these two major powers. I intend to explore the factors that shape these media frames. I also try to interpret the underlying meanings for the establishment of certain media frames from the political, economic, social and ideological perspectives. I hope that a good understanding of the root reasons of those differences can help us better grasp the concepts of economic interdependence, as well as political and ideological conflicts in the globalization process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

  I began this research project when I observed the tremendous differences between the news reports in China and the U.S.; news reports often took opposite perspectives on the same events. I decided to conduct a content analysis of mainstream news sources in the U.S. and China. After a review of the kinds of news stories covered in both national news media, I decided to focus on the economic interactions between the two countries, as this topic is not only continually in the news, but very important for international relations. I then decided to conduct a content analysis of five news media organizations, *the New York Times* and *the Wall Street Journal* in the U.S. and *the Xinhua News Agency, the People's Daily* and *the Global Times* in China. My research goal was to compare the different media frames in news media in these two countries, within a wider discussion of the political, economic and ideological contexts.

  This is an interdisciplinary research project that draws from media studies, global political economy and international studies. Below, I examine several related academic works that have informed this report. I begin by discussing the different economic systems in the U.S. and China; and Sino-America relations, to state the importance of choosing this theme. Then I explore the importance of media, the significance of the news media in setting political agendas of national governments (and especially the concept of media framing), and the different media systems. Finally, I review the previous literature of comparative studies of Sino-US news reports.

Economic systems in the U.S. and China

Since my target news reports are Sino-US economic issues related, it is worthwhile to take a look at the economic systems in these two countries. Although both countries claim that they operate a market economy, there are many differences at the theoretical, policy and practical levels, with the U.S. running a neoliberal economic system and China having more state controls.

The U.S. economic system and the spread of neoliberalism

Since the late 1970s, the U.S. government has followed neoliberal policies, achieving great economic success in the second half of the 1990s. Neoliberalism refers to economic liberalization, including free trade and open markets, privatization of government resources, infrastructure, institutions and services, deregulation of rules governing private corporations, including the media, and measures which enhance the role of the private commercial sector (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). During this same period the U.S. has been aggressively promoting neoliberalism throughout the world, via its own agencies, as well as the Washington-led international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank (WB).

A famous case is "the Washington Consensus", which is considered by many scholars as a neoliberal manifesto (Marangos, 2009). In 1989, three Washington D.C.-based institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the U.S. Treasury Department, held a seminar designed to provide Latin American countries with a set of economic reform policies. John Williamson (1990) proposed "the

Washington Consensus", a 10-point reform program for economic development for Latin America. The Washington Consensus's policies included privatization of state enterprises, limited government intervention, promotion of trade and financial liberalization, and therefore significant cuts in social, health and educational spending, public employment and public infrastructure. However, the Washington Consensus and neoliberalism experienced a series of setbacks in many countries, especially in Latin America and Eastern Europe, leading to a lot of questioning. As a result, the Washington consensus began to meet challengers, among which "the Beijing Consensus", representing the success of Chinese economic mode, emerged as an influential idea.

Before discussing the Chinese model, it is important to understand why the U.S. government would want to introduce the neoliberal economic system and especially neoliberal international financial institutions to the whole world. Harvey (2003) suggested in his book *The New Imperialism* that in the processes of capital accumulation, it is the intention of the U.S. to bring capitalist-style economic development to the rest of the world. The U.S., as a representative of new imperialism, used its economic power and the world international financial institutions controlled by it to expand its market to further accumulate capital. These financial institutions, such as the IMF, WB and WTO, have contributed to the process of endless capital accumulation globally. In the book *Globalization and the Race for Resources*, Bunker and Ciccantell (2006) pointed out that in order to become or maintain a superpower status, a country needed to establish a series of political and economic systems to ensure they get resources faster and easier than other countries. This requires new techniques, including financial tools, political processes, and organizational forms. Neoliberalism can be considered as one such technique to maintain

the superpower status of the U.S. Other scholars, such as Duménil and Lévy (2011) characterize neoliberalism as western ideology with an economic mask. And the U.S. wants to use it to establish global financial hegemony.

The Chinese economic system and its quest for soft power

In 1992, at the 14th national congress of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese leadership decided to shift from the centrally planned economy and to establish the so-called socialist market economy system. There are two big differences between the U.S. and Chinese market systems. The first one is the ownership structure. China is dominated by a public economy, which includes the state-owned economy and collectively owned economy (Zhang, 2010). In contrast, the U.S. government still plays a vital role in the national economy, a central feature of the U.S. economy is the economic freedom afforded to the private sector by allowing the private sector to make the majority of economic decisions in determining the direction and scale of what the U.S. economy produces (Heritage Foundation, 2012). The second difference is that the Chinese government still plays a large role in the planning and operation of all parts of the economy. State-owned large enterprises (SOE) still control some of the vital sectors of primary, secondary and tertiary manufacture, and the financial sector. In addition the Chinese state still controls much of the social reproduction, that is the policies and provisions for the population, from birth, to training, education, and social regulation and support of labor (Zhang, 2010). In contrast, in the neoliberal model in the U.S. there is very little direct government intervention in planning of the manufacturing, service or financial sectors. Instead the major role of the national government is to actively promote

trade and financial liberalization. China takes an alternative way, still emphasizing the role of government regulation. Therefore, economic development is largely guided by central government policies in China.

In the past 30 years of economic development, China has never fully accepted the idea of neoliberalism or unquestioningly accepted the advice from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund. Instead, the Chinese government has practiced policies in line with their own national conditions (Scott, 2010). The Chinese government emphasizes macro-control and pays attention to the guiding role of government in economic activities. Ramo (2004) has summarized the Chinese experience of economic system innovations and raised the concept of "the Beijing Consensus", which is considered as a competing ideology with the Washington Consensus. The Beijing Consensus interprets China's economic growth as a function of innovations in the state sector, including close financial controls, state ownership of firms, and political controls in favor of economic growth. Although many Chinese scholars do not completely agree with the suggestion that the Beijing Consensus summarized Chinese experiences, they all acknowledge that China has never fully followed the principles of neoliberalism or the Washington Consensus and has taken a different path in establishing its economic system.

Therefore, some scholars believe that China's economic success challenges the conventional U.S. theories about the most appropriate development strategies and the role of the state. And some International relations theorists point out that the rising power usually uses force to change the international system to suit its interests (Ding, 2010).

Different from the practice of the U.S., spreading neoliberal economic system in the world, China is pursuing soft power to expand its interests with its own way. Nye (2004) first promoted the concept of soft power, which means instead of using coercion or force, a state may wield attraction and co-option as a means of persuasion. Since China is still a developing country and a rising power, the hard power of China is largely behind that of the U.S. It is unrealistic to expect China to challenge the dominant international order overnight. In addition, China needs a stable domestic environment and a peaceful international circumstance to develop its economy (Li &Worm, 2011). Therefore, the intention of China is to expand its soft power—the ability of its ideas and values to shape the world through attraction and agenda-setting—to fit its interests and pursue a peaceful rise (Ding, 2010).

In recent years, Chinese leaders have focused on soft power to facilitate a peaceful rise. The Chinese Communist Party has gradually adopted a soft power global strategy. The Chinese scholar, Men (2007) suggested that China has invested in several sources, such as culture, political values, foreign policies, economic development model and international image, to pursue its soft power. Another scholar Ding (2000) pointed out that Beijing has implemented a series of charm offensives in its diplomacy to generate an international platform for Beijing to share its opinions on key international issues, that will propel China's rise to the status quo power. In addition, China utilizes media as a key channel to facilitate the expansion of its soft power by sending out its message to promote its culture and values and explain its foreign policy and economic model (Fijalkowski, 2011). For example, *the Chinese central TV station* and *the Xinhua News Agency* have established branches around the world.

Trade policies and currency exchange policies in the U.S. and China

One of the important economic practices affecting global trade is the system of currency exchange. U.S. trade policy and exchange-rate policy is influenced by and consistent with neoliberalism. As a supporter of trade liberalization and a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the U.S. has not only signed many Trade and Investment Framework Agreements at the regional and international levels, which are often precursors to free trade agreements (Jackson, 2007). The U.S. has also adopted a floating exchange rate system, in which the global capitalist market dictates the exchange rate.

In China, the policy of national level macro-control also operates in the field of trade and exchange rate policies. Before joining the WTO, the main feature of Chinese trade policy was rewarding Chinese exports and restricting imports. In 2001, in order to join the WTO, China made some concessions and promised to gradually reform its trade policy. The main concessions included reduction of import tariffs, elimination of export subsidies, more transparency of trade policy, protection of intellectual property rights, opening up service industries, and reduction of restrictions on foreign investment (Peng, 1999). After becoming a member of the WTO, China implemented a managed free trade policy. China took a more moderate export promotion policy, using various means such as import tariffs, anti-dumping, and government procurement to protect the domestic industry, and providing export tax rebates and subsidies to encourage exports. In recent years, due to more frequent trade disputes, the Chinese trade policy has become more neutral (Wei & Zhang, 2004). The three main features of the Chinese exchange rate

policy are the floating exchange rate based on market supply; a managed exchange rate according to the dynamics of trade balance; and the avoidance of focusing on the bilateral exchange rate of any specific currency (The people's bank of China, 2010). To sum up, it is easy to see that both the trade and exchange rate policies are all government-managed in China.

In summary, the economic systems and trade and exchange rate policies in the U.S. and China are vastly different in many ways. The United States and China both believe in their own successful, yet different, experiences and operate under inconsistent economic ideals.

The U.S.-China relationship

Many scholars believe that the Sino-American relationship is currently one of the most important international diplomatic relationships. This relationship is always complex and constantly changing since the two major powers are competing over the economy, political influence, and ideology. Moscher's view might be representative; he suggested that the U.S. relationship with China could be characterized as a "love-hate" dilemma (Mosher, 1990). On one hand, since China entered the global capitalist economy in 1979, the economic rise of China has made the interdependent relationship between China and the U.S. more significant. Sino-American relations are developing faster because of the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the greater international responsibilities China has taken in recent years. China is now the second largest trading partner for the U.S. Total Sino-American trade increased 100 times since the establishment of diplomatic relations. The economic cooperation will go further between

the U.S. and China in the future. Chinese scholars have pointed out that the fast economic growth in China has encouraged the U.S. to recognize the deep interweaving benefits of the two nations in economic, trade and security interests (Peng, 2007).

On the other hand, the competition between these two global powers has become intense in recent years. Many view China as the likeliest candidate to attain superpower status. The fast growth of China, and related issues, has received a great deal of attention in the U.S. For example, China holds more than three trillion U.S.-dollar international reserves, equivalent to 5% of the global GDP and just shy of the entire market cap of the U.S. Dow Jones equity index (Emerging Markets Monitor, 2011). Another point worth mentioning is that many U.S. officials believe that the U.S is too dependent on Chinese imports. The continuous U.S. trade deficits reveal an ongoing U.S. de-industrialization in favor of Chinese industrialization. China's trade policies ''are serving to hollow out the U.S. manufacturing base''(Liew, 2010).

Therefore, many American scholars see China as one of the most important foreign issues the U.S. has to deal with in the future. According to a survey of 1,112 faculties of international relations in American universities and colleges, international terrorism (50%), proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (45%), and the rise of China (40%) were listed as the three most important foreign policy issues that the U.S. must face in the next ten years (Maliniak; Oakes; Peterson; & Tierney, 2007). Although China has always claimed that it is a peace lover and will never seek global dominance, and the Chinese government usually proclaims its willingness for peaceful coexistence with the United States, some theorists point out that a new rising power always disrupts the international system as it poses threats to the status quo.

If both powers see each other as their biggest competitor and imaginary enemy, the tension between the two sides will be high. In the meantime, their growing interdependence forces both countries to keep the power relation in balance. As Morgenthau (1985) pointed out, "a nation whose foreign policy aims at acquiring more power than it actually has, through a reversal of existing power relations—whose foreign policy, in other words, seeks a favorable change in power status—pursues a policy of imperialism". All in all, the complex relations and important status of both sides will definitely be reflected in news reporting.

The significance of media in shaping public opinion

Although the world has become more interconnected through the process of globalization, most ordinary people do not have the opportunity to travel around the globe to experience everyday life and activities in other countries. Even for those who do, cultural and linguistic barriers often hinder their understanding. Thus, most scholars acknowledge the significance of media as a channel to help people open their eyes and shape their ideas. In the 1920s, Lippman (1922) argued that people gain knowledge beyond their own experience and reach through the news media, which serves as a window for audiences to understand the world. "Mass media and journalists play an essential role in shaping public opinion, connecting events occurring in the world with the images of these events in people's minds". In the early 1970s, McQuail (1972) pointed out that audiences' understanding of social functions and world affairs comes primarily from news organizations. In the early 1980s, Perry (1985) conducted an experimental study showing that respondents relied largely on the news stories they read

to make inferences about other nations rather than from what they already knew about those nations. From those past studies, it is safe for us to conclude that the media interpretations of news events heavily influence people's views.

The information provided by media has always been processed. In U.S. professional journalism theory, the most important values in reporting are neutrality and objectivity (Robert, 2004). Any subjective and biased expression and opinions should be absolutely abandoned. Chinese academics hold similar perspectives regarding journalism; the most commonly used news concept in China is 'reporting the recently happened facts' and the most recognized features of news reporting are objectivity and facticity (Lei, 1997). However, most academics agree that these standards are only ideals. Said (1997) pointed out that everyone is both a private ego and a member of society, with affiliations of every sort linking him or her to that society. No interpretations about human society can be completely original. Therefore, in reality, journalists, operate under the influence of many different factors, from the larger political and economic conditions which shape their work, to the professional protocols, and their individual life experiences which affect the entire process of news reporting,

Thus, most scholars do not view news media as objective channels that provide the audience with neutral information, but as professional organizations that send out selected, salient news. Many recent studies have shown that the dominant media sets the public agenda, decides what should be considered important, and which aspects are salient. Entman (1993), for example, argued that "media discourse is not an objective or an unbiased transcript of reality, but rather it is loaded with selected frames or salient aspects of a perceived reality". McCombs (2004) indicated that mass media has the

ability to establish issue salience among the public through professional selection and display of news issues. The media communicate a host of salience cues for the public to organize and decide the importance of these issues, and, further form the initial stage of public opinion.

In addition, when a government or politician needs political support from the masses, manipulating public opinion through news media is an effective way to gain public support. Ellul (1973) suggested that propaganda is a technique for gaining the growing powers. Through the mass media of communication, the government and any other political groups attempt to spread their ideas to lead the public to a desired action. Entman and Page (1993) stressed that "the biases will more likely embed in politically related reports. Politicians seeking support are thus compelled to compete with each other and with journalists over news frames".

Media framing theory

Media framing theory is a valuable method to study media coverage and bias. Goffman (1974) was the first to propose the concept of framing. He pointed out that the news message is shaped and contextualized by journalists and highlighted the role of individual journalists in news reporting. Tankard (2001) extended this idea more clearly into media studies. He argued that the concept of framing is meaningful because it offers an alternative to the old "objectivity and bias" paradigm to examine media discourses; it helps explain mass communication effects and provides valuable suggestions for communication practitioners. Gitlin (1980) pointed out that media frames highlight certain aspects and exclude others of a story by "selection, emphasis and exclusion".

Entman (1993) suggested that framing essentially involves selection and salience. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". In addition, the media framing theory is also useful for comparative news research. This theory provides us with a new angle and tool to study the way that news reporting is constructed. As media researcher Hall (2000) noted, "framing is a useful tool to examine the characteristics of media coverage".

News media and foreign policy

The relationship between foreign policy and news media in an individual country is quite complex. One set of media scholars have studied the agenda setting role of the media. They suggest that news media are influenced by government agendas and, in turn, the news media can play an agenda-setting role in world politics. Regardless of the form of government, national news media derive their stories primarily from official government sources to decide what to report and how to report (Hanson, 2008). Herman and Chomsky (1992) have pointed out that the propaganda function of national media is an important aspect of the media's overall function to serve the interests of dominant elite. They used case studies of the unbalanced news coverage in the U.S. media to demonstrate the effort from the media to maintain the status quo and favor the powerful elites in both domestic and international issues.

Scholars applying agenda setting to international news coverage have found a strong correlation between the salience of foreign affairs in the media and the salience of foreign affairs for the domestic public. Tiffen (1999) argued that media coverage of international affairs has often been an extension of domestic political controversies and agendas, and has allowed government interests and outlooks to dominate. Nimmo (1978) noted that in terms of news coverage of foreign policies, the government influenced the media's coverage of a story, from whether it was written at all, to how it was written.

Why would the news media try to frame international issues? Some enlightening theories help explain this phenomenon. Gramsci (1971) proposed a concept of hegemony, which suggested that dominant groups use moral and intellectual leadership to control or influence subordinate groups to further secure their dominant status. Media is one of the most useful instruments for influencing people's ideas and therefore critical to hegemonic power, powerful countries use their media to justify their behaviors and get support in the international community. Hanson (2008) maintained that information is power; and public diplomacy is important for promoting national interests by informing and influencing people around the world. Since, in the current world, more people are eager to gain access to more information, the media of all kinds, as information platforms, undertake a significant responsibility in influencing world politics.

Therefore we could conclude that the media is usually tightly connected with the dominant groups, and functions as a useful tool to serve the interests of the elites. It is common practice for the news media to frame some events to make certain aspects salient and influence public opinion. Furthermore, the news media can play an agenda-setting

role in world politics. Gramsci's hegemony theory and Hanson's argument help us explain the reasons and motivations of the media to frame international issues.

The media systems in the U.S. and China

In this part, I would like to review the media systems in the U.S. and China, because differences in those areas affect the coverage in topic related news reports. A good understanding of these differences provides a better context for comparing news reports. Most people believe that the explanation for the different behavior in reporting is because the Chinese mainstream media organizations are state-owned and directly controlled by the Chinese Communist Party while the U.S. media operate freely and independently from the government. However, through reviewing literature, I found that the reality is not that simple.

Zhao (2008) has demonstrated that there is a fusion of political control and market imperative in the contemporary Chinese media. The formation and development of China's contemporary media system paralleled the founding and growth of the Chinese Communist Party. The structure and organization of the Chinese media was partially the result of the design from the Chinese Communist Party to integrate the press within the Party structure. There are a large number of mainstream media organizations that are directly controlled by the Communist party in China. Two of my target newspapers, *the People's Daily* and *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, belong to this category. These mainstream media organizations are established and managed at four levels of government- national, provincial, municipal and county, and are expected to follow the central and local governmental policies and instructions from the publicity ministry, and

are usually not allowed to conduct trans-regional reports. Most of the journalists in mainstream media get their salary directly from the government (Xie, 2011).

However, the dynamics of Chinese media have changed significantly in the last three decades since China has adopted market-oriented media reform. Many urban commercial media outlets have emerged and have changed the dominant status of mainstream newspapers. These urban commercial media organizations are financially independent of the government, and the governmental control towards these media is looser. They can report more entertainment news, social news and critical news, news genres which rarely appear in the government-controlled media. But these urban commercial media still are not permitted to completely deviate from the instructions of the publicity ministry (Zhou, 2009).

Compared to the U.S. media, censorship is still very strict in China. Jiang and Hao (2010) claim that the Chinese Communist Party has the final say when politically sensitive issues become news. "Diplomacy is one of the areas that the party is unwilling to subject to media criticism". The publicity ministry of China maintains a strict standard in monitoring major events, especially those regarding social stability, ethnic unity and national security. Mainstream media needs to be highly consistent with the tone from the central government in expressing and justifying the stands of the Chinese government and Chinese interest-related issues.

Although the U.S. media is independent from the government, it is governed by the conditions of the capitalist market. Until the mid 19th century, the U.S. press system was highly partisan. With the rise of the penny press in New York, a new model of commercial media began, which depended on advertising to survive (Robert, 2004).

Since then, advertising revenue has become a troublesome source of control in the U.S. media (Kumar, 1968).

Professional journalism representing political neutrality, nonpartisanship and objectivity arose in the early part of the 20th century. However, due to the high entry barriers established by the dominant commercial media organizations, it is difficult for the independent media to succeed (Robert, 2004). The control of the media by a few corporations has only been intensified since then. Currently a small number of corporations dominate the entire media industry in the U.S. Those parent corporations have great control over the media (Kumar, 1968). All in all, the dominant media companies in the United States are part of large transnational corporations, owned and controlled by very wealthy boards and individuals, whose first interests are profit, and not quality journalism. Although there are many small independent news sources, across all media platforms, it is very difficult for them to get their views distributed as the channels are controlled, for the most part, by the large global players.

Furthermore, U.S. media organizations have very close relationships to the national government. First, government branches like the Pentagon and the White House are significant sources of valuable information (Kumar, 1968). If a journalist writes an unfavorable story about the government, access to further interviews or information sources might be blocked, and thus most news reporters try to stay cooperative and are less willing to write pieces that challenge the government. In addition, due to the corporate disinvestment in news, in part because of the economic downturn, many thousands of journalists have been laid off, and foreign news bureau closed. Many news agencies are even more dependent on government sources to cover their stories.

Due to the above mentioned economic and political conditions affecting news media and the practices of journalists, the majority of U.S. news reports about foreign affairs are framed through a pro-Washington government lens. It is rare to see reports critical of U.S. government foreign policies or of the practices of individual U.S. corporations. And they seldom challenge the system of neo-liberal capitalism. Herman and McChesney (1997) pointed out that the U.S. media serves the interests of the elites who make policies, while the interests of the majority of the population have been largely neglected. These profit-driven media corporations dominate the global media industry and further serve the elite groups worldwide. Stork and Flanders (1996) pointed out that the U.S.media "routinely purvey news from the perspective of the government, especially in the case of foreign news. When it comes to foreign matters, the media report what goes on in the world as what the White House says."

We can see that the relationship between the government and the dominant media in these two countries are different. The control of media by the Chinese government is more direct and strict. The Chinese media organizations can seldom challenge the authority of government. If they disobey the orders from the government, the media organizations and media workers would face unfavorable consequences or even punishments. In contrast, governmental influence in the U.S. is relatively indirect and subtle, but the U.S. media are nevertheless heavily influenced by the political and economic elites. The White House and wealthy companies have significant influence on news reporting, especially foreign news reporting to favor the interests of their elite groups in the world. It is reasonable to assume that different media systems would result in different news reporting. However, that is not the case for news reporting between the

U.S. and China. Scholars, such as Jiang and Hao (2010), claimed in their study "although *the People's Daily* and *the New York Times* operate in different political and media environments with different journalistic traditions and orientations, they were not significantly different in expressing journalistic bias."

Existing US-China comparative studies

Entman (1993) suggested that comparative studies of news media in different countries can help locate the inevitable news frames or other news judgments journalists make in constructing the reality for readers. "Frames are likely to come into sharp focus when similar news stories are compared through contrasting media contexts". However, in this case, several problems exist in comparative research between the U.S. and China. First, there are very limited studies that compare news coverage in China and the U.S. Few have studied the U.S.-China economic issue, and fewer still have conducted content analyses of news reporting about economic topics. Third, most researchers failed to analyze the real political intentions behind the news reports. In the following part, I will examine several previous comparative media studies that focus on the differences in news reporting between the U.S. and China.

Jiang and Hao (2010) from Singapore conducted a case study of the media bias in reports covering international conflicts. They compared coverage from *the People's Daily* and *the New York Times* about the 2001 incident, in which a US surveillance plane collided with a Chinese fighter plane off China's coast. They provided very detailed information about how they interpreted this event and conducted a very good analysis of the linguistic differences. This study showed that, despite the differences between the two

newspapers in terms of their political and media environments and journalistic traditions, there was no significant difference in one crucial aspect. Both news organizations clearly showed a national bias in supporting their country's stance. Jiang and Hao (2010) concluded that both newspapers were echoing their own government's stand, effectively facilitating the implementation of the diplomatic and political agenda of their national government. They believed that the differences between the U.S. and Chinese news organizations could be partly attributed to the fact that they used different news sources. More importantly, they argued that the differences reflected a blind patriotism, and that the different values and ideologies, such as "anticommunism" in the U.S., and "anti-imperialism" and "anti-hegemony" in China, were the real reasons behind this type of media bias. Although those factors might be the deepest conflicts between the two countries, this view had a somewhat simplistic tendency because it only touched on the ideological differences embedded in the reports from a quite generic and broad perspective and did not consider the dynamics of the current international environment.

Li (2009) conducted a comparative study of coverage from *the New York Times* and *the China Daily* of two events, the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in 1999 and the U.S.-China air collision in 2001. She used critical discourse analysis (discourse, style and genre) to explore how both sides constructed national identity to strengthen their positions. Her results showed that both sides used different discursive ways to favor their own national interests. Her study illustrated the complex discursive constructions, but did not analyze the reasons behind them.

Jin (2009) considered the framing technique in a comparison of the news coverage of the 2003 Iraq War in three countries: US, China and India. She mainly

focused on the attitudes towards that war adopted by the three national governments. She pointed out that the anti-war attitude was more obvious in the Chinese news media while the U.S. news media were more concerned with the economic consequences. She maintained that ethnocentrism was an influential factor in war news. Although this article highlighted an important factor, ethnocentrism, it provided little analysis of the political reasons behind that factor.

Huang and Fahmy (2011) compared the photographic coverage of the 2008 anti-China/Olympic demonstrations in Chinese and US newspapers. They found that the U.S. newspapers visually portrayed a more pro-Tibetan independence slant and the Chinese newspapers visually portrayed a more pro-Chinese government slant. Furthermore, the U.S. newspapers portrayed the anti-China demonstrators as non-violent while the Chinese newspapers portrayed them as violent. Their analysis of the visual element is very important, as it is usually the most attractive part in the newspaper, and many audiences only view the pictures and read the news headlines. The authors pointed out that the differences between the U.S. and China on this subject mainly arose from their distinct policies regarding Tibet. However, the authors did not take into account the factors that shaped policies regarding Tibet.

Two other case studies focused on the U.S. news reports about Chinese leaders and the state visits of Chinese leaders to America. The first case study conducted by Liu (2009) examined and compared the coverage during Chinese former president Xiannian Li's visit to the U.S. in 1985, and President Jintao Hu's visit in 2006. The main findings were that the images of China and the overall attitude towards China presented in American newspapers had become significantly more negative. "The dramatic economic

change of China resulted in growing concerns in the American public and such concerns have been accordingly reflected in American media." Law (2009) did a content analysis of the portrayal of Chinese state leaders in the U.S. media. The analysis showed that the images of Chinese political leaders had not improved very much in the past three decades even though China had achieved tremendous economic progress. Although these two papers provided analysis of the U.S. media, they did not compare the coverage in the Chinese media. They informed me, however, that the media frames from the U.S. media would probably show negative emotion because of the increasing concern in the U.S. about the economic rise of China.

There have been surprisingly few studies similar to mine. First, most of the previous works focused on political conflicts and not on economic issues. I would argue, however, that direct military or political confrontations have become rare in this globalized world while economic disputes are playing a leading role in contemporary international relations. Second, the existing studies employed either content analysis or discourse analysis, but none considered media frames as an important variable. Those studies may have missed valuable information the media frame might bring, and an opportunity to investigate the common features of a large number of news reports. Third, some of the studies provided detailed research about the differences between the U.S. and Chinese news media, yet did not analyze the reasons for those disparities. Some articles simply summarized the differences between the U.S. and Chinese news reports due to divergences in ideology and foreign policies.

Nevertheless, from all the previous studies I draw the following three points: first, all the studies found that huge differences exist in news reports in the U.S. and China;

second, there is clear evidence of national biases; lastly, the international news reports not only played an agenda-setting role, but also favored their own national government and showed a negative attitude toward the other side.

Conclusion

My research project draws on the scholarly literature in media studies, journalism and political science.

First, I reviewed the different economic structures in the U.S. and China, and the Sino-US relationship to gain broader background knowledge about my research topic. The two countries have become increasingly interdependent economically. However, given that they are global political competitors, with each promoting a different economic agenda, the relationship is often conflicted.

Second, I found that many scholars, across disciplines, have affirmed that the national media play an essential role in shaping public opinions. Those studies demonstrated that there are many differences between the media systems in the U.S. and China. The media organizations from both sides operate under different media systems. However, both news systems operate with a nationalistic journalistic bias, and sometimes engage in negative and emotional portrayals of the other country. These previous studies have provided me with a solid theoretical basis for my study.

Lastly, building on previous comparative work, I have found that the concept of media frame is the most valuable tool for me to explore the underlying messages the target media organizations want to convey. In addition, there were very few comparative studies of US-China, and none focused on the economic differences between these two

major powers. Most previous studies failed to analyze the reasons for biased news reports. I hope that my study can fill these gaps a little bit.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

My thesis is a cross-national comparison of the political, economic and ideological meanings of news reporting. I am specifically concerned with the vast differences in news reporting about the same events in the U.S. and Chinese dominate news media. My research study thus compares several hundred news reports about the U.S.-China economic interaction in the dominant news media in both countries in order to try to figure out the real stories those news reports are intending to convey. I chose content analysis as it is a suitable research methodology to compare and analyze the news reports from both countries.

Methodology: content analysis

I employed content analysis for my research because it is a better method to quantify salient features of whole samples. This kind of research methodology was first developed by scholars who intended to use scientific ways to study humanities and social science questions. Content analysis is kind of like a measurement. Berelson (1952) described content analysis as: "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". When you want to study the salience towards a particular perspective, content analysis is a good method to reach your research goal by studying the frequency with which certain kinds of stories occur in the press (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007).

In addition, people gradually realized that this method was a good means to investigate the symbolic arenas of mass culture, especially the influence of propaganda (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007). In general, this methodology is widely used across the social sciences, humanity, media and cultural studies.

Some scholars pointed out that the purpose of content analysis is to quantify salient and manifest features of a large number of texts, and the statistics are used to make broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007).

The benefits and limitations of content analysis

The advantages of content analysis are quite obvious. Content analysis can be viewed as a form of measurement. Employing this kind of research method can help researchers find out the frequency of certain kinds of stories occurring in the reports, or the degree in which they are slanted towards a particular perspective within a high frequency of occurrence (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007). In addition, content analysis is suitable for studying a large number of texts, and finding out their common features. In my research, content analysis is a good method to analyze what the investigated reports intend to convey and find out common features of these reports. For example, content analysis can be used to understand the major media frames of different news organizations for the same news topics.

Content analysis also has its own limitations. First, this methodology is not suitable for studying "deep" questions in textual and discursive forms, because it focuses on the aggregated meaning across texts and tends to skate over complex and varied

process of meaning-making within texts (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007). Therefore, content analysis also means that research is conducted on the article level, and not much focus is placed on textual and discursive levels. In addition, researchers who want to employ content analysis need to define their concerns and raise hypothesis in a quantifiable way and prepare to get results in a numerical form. Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook (1959) argued that heavy quantitative content analysis results in a somewhat arbitrary limitation in the field by excluding all accounts of communications that are not in the form of numbers as well as those that may lose meaning if reduced to a numeric form. This also suggests the possible troubles I may encounter in my own research. I had to think carefully about how to accurately quantify variables and what I wanted to count. How to maintain objectivity and accuracy in a quantifying process was a challenging task.

Why is content analysis better than other methods

In the phase of research design, I took into consideration two other methods, discourse analysis and qualitative interviews. However, I finally dropped these two methods because were considered ineffective and undoable for this study. Discourse analysis examines the linguistic devices in articles used to convey stands and opinions. I dropped discourse analysis for two main reasons. First, the discourse analysis mainly focuses on the linguistic parts of the articles. Although discourse analysis might be helpful to investigate how news reports interpret events in detail, my research is more interested in the broader questions of themes and media frames of the target news reports. Furthermore, granted that discourse analysis would be useful and valuable for the

analysis of a single article, I wanted to investigate the larger patterns over a longer period of time. As there are more than four hundred articles in my corpus, it would be very difficult to conduct a thorough discourse analysis of all these articles. I considered singling out several articles as representative to analyze. At first, I attempted to extract some representative articles from my sample. However, after I skimmed all the reports, I found it was impossible to decide which articles were more representative than others. In order to avoid inaccuracy, I decide not to use discourse analysis.

Interviewing is one of the most common and valuable research methods that give us access to the observation of others. Through interviewing, we can learn what people perceive and how they interpret their perceptions (Stuart, 1994). However, in my research, interviewing would have been less efficient and more difficult to conduct. First, I believed that journalists have already put the most important and valuable information and opinions from their perspective in the reports. Therefore, studying their work is a more direct way to get data than interviewing the authors of those reports. Second, the approach of interviewing journalists was not very consistent with my research purpose because I was trying to figure out the political, economic and ideological meanings of these reports, not analyzing intentions or political beliefs of specific journalists. In addition, interviewing might require a lot of time in contacting these journalists one by one and dealing with incomplete feedback.

Target media and news reports

I selected five dominant news media sites. I chose print media because they still exert a powerful social influence. Their very ubiquity, coupled with intensity of usage,

public attention and political influence, should generate an intrinsic interest among social scientists (Bell, 1991). In addition, from an operational perspective, one can find more archives of print media than visual news reports, making print media more tangible and accessible. In my original plan, the target media were *the New York Times,* and *the Wall Street Journal* from the U.S.*,* and *the Xinhua News Agency* and *the People's Daily* from China.

However, in the implementation phase, I found some problems with the Chinese target media. *The Xinhua News agency* is a very authoritative and official media in China, which makes it a great target for my research. The problem was that I had some difficulties accessing archives from *the Xinhua News Agency* because *Xinhua* send out its news to every news organization through an internal system. I gained temporary access to that system through my internship and learned that this system only keeps news reports for one week. Therefore, it was difficult for an individual researcher like me to get the entire data archives to conduct my research. Thus I developed an alternative plan - *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph*. Since *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* is the only daily newspaper published by the news agency, logically, *the Xinhua Agency* should publish everything they consider most important on this newspaper. However, after further investigating, I found that *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* does not have a strong focus on international issues, and this newspaper did not have much coverage about the U.S.-China economic interaction related issue. Therefore, *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* may not contribute too much information for my research.

In order to add to my research samples, I included another Chinese newspaper, *the Global Times*, which has a strong focus on international issues. *The Global Times*,

affiliated to *the People's Daily*, differentiates itself from other Chinese newspapers because it gives more clear and direct opinions about Chinese foreign policy, and has a big influence on Chinese readers on foreign issues. It is one of a very few profitable official newspapers in China and not financially dependent on governmental support. Therefore, this newspaper was a very good choice to add. Finally, I selected *the New York Times,* and *the Wall Street Journal* from the U.S. and *The Global Times*, *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* and *the People's Daily* from China.

After selecting the target newspapers, I decided on the criteria for selecting news reports and then identified the relevant news reports from my target news media. In terms of genre, I elected to include news reports and published commentaries as my research subjects. I chose to focus on three related topics concerning the Sino-America economic relationship, that is, trade between the two countries, the currency exchange, and more general attitudes towards economic competition and cooperation. I skimmed all the news reports covering the subject of the Sino-America economic interaction and confirmed that those three topics are the most significant issues. Furthermore, these three economic issues are closely linked and it was sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other. For example, many U.S. news reports claimed that China controlled its currency to boost exports and thus hurt the U.S. economy, this kind of claim in the U.S. newspapers touched on all the three issues I am investigating. In addition, only the news reports covering a clearly defined trade issue, currency issue, and/or economic competition/cooperation issue were finally included in this research.

Time period of selected news reports

Selecting an appropriate time period for this research is very important because it directly affects the range of research materials and my study finding. Therefore, I initially selected two possible starting time points of significance for US-China economic interactions. The first one was the year 2006, when China displaced Japan as the country with the largest trade surplus with the U.S. (Liew, 2010). My second choice was 2011; on February 14, 2011, China officially surpassed Japan and became the world's second-largest economy, with a total of 2010 GDP. Comparing these two turning points, I believed 2011 had more symbolic meanings; it signified that the U.S. and China were formally the world's two largest economies and that China had replaced Japan in the minds of many Americans as the country that posed the greatest challenge to America's economic superiority (Liew, 2010). In addition, 2011 marked a time when the economic competition between these two major powers became more obvious, and trade disputes more frequent. In addition, my review of the literature revealed that the majority of previous comparative studies of news reports had been conducted several years ago. Thus in order to make my research up to date, studying news reports after 2011 would better serve my research purpose. Last but not least, I took into consideration the absolute number of sample articles that was practicable for a single researcher. As a general rule, the bigger a content sample, the better. However, practical constraints need to be appreciated and studying all the news reports since 2006 would be too much for me to conduct from a realistic standpoint. Therefore through careful consideration, I decided that the time period for the study would be the 19 months from January 1st 2011 to July 31st 2012.

Specific research methods

The specific procedures of my research included the following steps: sampling and data-building, variables-determining and counting, and data analysis.

Sampling and data-building

At the beginning of the study, defining the total range of content I want to make inferences about (selecting appropriate 'population' for the research) is the commonly recognized first step (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007). In other words, I needed to build an adequate and reasonable database for my research first. Therefore, the first step of data-building of this research required a useful sampling strategy. Instead of random sampling, I initially tried to use a commonly used way, which is selecting appropriate news reports according to a certain time period, for instance, 30 days before and after a certain important event. However, I quickly found that the abovementioned way might be inefficient due to the fact that too many topic related events happened between the U.S. and China. Eventually, I adopted whole samples into consideration so that I would not miss any important news reports; and analyzing the total number of articles was doable.

The next measure was to collect all the news reports. Due to the limitations of data accessing, I decided to get data through different ways - collecting Chinese News data from paper news and the U.S. news data from electronic archives. First, I used the electronic database from my school library (University of San Francisco) to check all the relevant news reports. I inputted all the possible topic-related keyword combinations, such as the U.S. + China + (trade, currency or economic competition), and downloaded

the articles the system provided. Then I skimmed these articles to determine whether or not these reports were truly topic related. All the reports clearly covering trade issues, currency issues and/or economic competition/cooperation were singled out and included in the final samples. When collecting news pieces from Chinese newspapers, I took advantage of my internship at Xinhua Daily. The press has a reference room where all the important Chinese periodicals can be found. However, there was no electronic database; all the newspapers were kept and stored in paper form. Therefore, I read through all the target newspapers in the selected time period and took images of the qualified news reports.

After data building, the final sample was 427 articles in total, in which 193 came from the two US publications, and the remaining 234 from the three Chinese news sources. I considered the total number of samples sufficient and representative because in the latter part of counting, I found newly added articles no longer brought new information. That means the database has reached the saturation point. In terms of sampling strategy, there is another method for content analysis. The idea here is that you begin by selecting a small but relevant and homogeneous corpus, analyze it and on the basis of your finding select again. More material is added up to the point when, following the law of diminishing returns, new data no longer yield up new representations. The corpus can then be said to have reached 'saturation' (Bauer & Aarts 2000). Although this strategy was not adopted in the first stage, the concept of this strategy coincidentally helped prove the total amount of study samples was adequate.

Variables-determining and counting

Deciding variables and counting is an important step that needs carefully planning. Generally, how to select valuable variables and how to count should be designed in order to answer my research questions. In practice, people usually take into account two kinds of variables. The first one is demographic variables, referring to the frequency of occurrence, author, section, page number and word count. This kind of basic information shows us the degree of importance from the perspective of the media organization. An example would be whether the editor put a certain kind of article on the front or inside page. The second one is substantive variables, which includes information sources (where the information comes from?); experts (whose knowledge is privileged?); signifiers (the words which portray certain subjects); and interpretative dimensions such as media frames (these measures focus on the 'themes' of coverage: what is an issue seen to be about?) (Deacon; Pickering; Golding; Murdock, 2007).

Originally six variables were considered for each news report, including the section, page number, and word count; and three substantive variables - media frames, signifiers, and information sources. However, since the Chinese News data come from photocopies of the printed-out source and the U.S. News data from an electronic news service, the section, page number, and word count are impossible to compare. Therefore, only the three substantive variables were counted. These three variables are important because they reveal the way the meaning of the story was constructed, and the language used, as well as the authority/relationship with official or unofficial sources. These three aspects are key to the salience of the report, and allow us to analyze the intended meaning, and which aspects they choose to cover. Next, I will give a brief description of each variable and how I counted them.

Media frame is the most important variable for this research. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). I first carefully read through all the news reports and singled out the qualified possible media frames. Next, I took note of each time the same frame appeared in the investigated news reports. Then I counted how many times the frames appeared. The media frames were then ranked according to frequency from high to low.

Information sources are the authorities consulted or cited by the reporters, such as officials, scholars, businessmen, corporations, news organizations or any other organizations (such as NGOs). The variable of information sources is useful to reveal which sources are considered official channels, and which groups are privileged as experts. This variable helps us to determine whether these news reports equally cite information and perspectives from both nations, and which societal groups are privileged as authorities. The information sources were simply counted numerically according to the different categories.

Signifiers are descriptive words or phrases that reveal the underlying sentiments of the two sides toward each other. In this study, I have recorded the descriptive adjectives and verbs used to portray the other nation. For example, the descriptive words towards China and its activity and policy in the U.S. newspapers were recorded. A common example of such a signifier in the U.S. news reports of Chinese policy is "unfair". I simply counted all these signifiers to summarize which words or phrases were used to describe the other nation.

Conclusion

Through careful consideration, I chose content analysis as the most suitable method because it could reveal the larger characteristics of a large number of news reports over an extended period of time. And three variables, media frame, information source and signifier, are counted to reveal the common features of my sample. Those characteristics would help me figure out the most significant opinions and stances from the U.S. and China in the economic interaction issue, therefore making the results from my study most representative and relevant. And my target media organizations are *the New York Times,* and *the Wall Street Journal* from the U.S. and *The Global Times*, *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* and *the People's Daily* from China. I would focus on the news reports from Jan 1st 2011 to Jul 31st 2012. In addition, in all the implementing steps, including the News media source selection, study time period selection, sample building and variables counting, I prioritized the accuracy of this study. I believe that the design of the methods for this study and the implementation of those processes have helped me answer the questions I raised for my thesis.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY RESULTS

Introduction

My preliminary search of the news coverage of the U.S.-China economic interactions during the study period returned nearly 800 news articles which indicated that the economic interactions between China and the U.S. had gained considerable attention from the mainstream news media. After skimming through all these articles, I finally selected 427 articles as my final sample. I employed content analysis to examine the common features of these dominant news reports about Sino-U.S economic relations. And I selected articles from five of the most important news media of each country, *the People's Daily, the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* and *the Global Times* in China; and *the New York Times*, and *the Wall Street Journal* in United States during the period January 1st, 2011 to July 31st, 2012. After selecting the most appropriate articles, I counted the three variables: media frame, information sources and signifiers.

My study focused on three inter-related issues concerning the economic relationships between China and the United States. The first issue, trade, included the hottest debated topics in the past two years, such as the U.S. trade deficit with China, the export quota of rare earth metals from China, and the dispute over the solar panel industry. The second issue, currency, was primarily about the exchange rate of the Chinese Yuan or RMB. Finally, at a more macro-level, the third issue concerned the very different ways that the U.S. and China discuss economic competition and cooperation.

The quantity and selection of news reports

In the nineteen-month period, the Chinese newspaper archives and the U.S. electronic archives provided a large number of relevant news reports. However, not all of these news reports could be used as target samples. First, *the Global Times* was the only publication in the targeted Chinese news media organizations that focuses on international issues; it has a special section called "attention to China" which consists exclusively of translated foreign news articles about China-related issues. In this section, most translated reports are opinion articles from other country's newspapers, and do not represent the stance or opinions of *the Global Times*. Therefore all 78 articles from this section were dropped because they were not representative of the newspaper's editorial position. Although these articles were removed from the sample, the existence of this section alone tells us that the Chinese media paid attention to the perspectives from the rest of world.

In addition, in the remaining 700 plus articles, I removed those that did not explicitly deal with the topics considered such as trade, currency or economic competition and economic cooperation. The final sample includes 427 articles. Among those 427 news articles, a common conclusion was that some hot topics caught more attention than others. In the category of trade, both the U.S. media and Chinese media mainly focused on the following three topics: trade imbalance, rare earth metals exported from China and Chinese state subsidies. In the category of the currency issue, both sides were focused on the exchange rate of the Chinese currency. In the last category, economic competition and cooperation, both sides reported the U.S.-China state visits and leader speeches, in which economic interaction was the hottest topic. Both sets of

media also published many opinion articles about how to compete or cooperate with each other. The specific numbers of different issues reported from the five news organizations are shown in the following table:

Table 1: The numbers of news reports.

Media Organization	Trade	Currency	Economic Competition/ Cooperation	Total
The Wall Street Journal	54	31	16	101
The New York Times	38	23	31	92
The Global Times	36	4	62	102
The People's Daily	28	6	44	78
The Xinhua Daily Telegraph	12	12	30	54
Total	168	76	183	427

There are apparent differences in the quantity and selection of news topics. First, the difference in the number of reports in each category is obvious. We can see from the Table 1 that the number of trade and currency related reports (146 out of 193) in the U.S. media is greater than in the Chinese news media (98 out of 234). *The Wall Street Journal* has 54 reports on the trade issue, the most compared to any of the other four news organizations. *The Xinhua Daily Telegraph* reported the least trade related news; it only had 12 articles in that category. In the category of currency issue, the U.S. media included 54 articles discussing the Chinese currency. The exchange rate of the Yuan was also included in the Chinese news media. However there were far fewer articles, only 22. Despite including one less U.S. media organization than those from China, the U.S. media presented many more articles in the categories of trade and currency issues.

In contrast, the Chinese news media had far more reports about economic cooperation than their U.S. counterparts. There were 136 such articles in the Chinese newspapers compared to 47 news reports in this category in the U.S. newspapers. There were considerably more articles in the Chinese newspapers that discussed ways to cooperate with the U.S. and how to respond strategically to the U.S. policies. The Chinese news reports also contained more articles about the state visits and the annual Sino-US strategic and economic dialog. The total number of articles from each category indicates that the Chinese newspapers are more likely to report economic competition and cooperation issues and the U.S. media are more interested in trade and currency issues.

Variable 1: Media frames

Trade issue

In the category of trade, I took note of 12 possible media frames which all appeared multiple times in the news reports from the two U.S. media organizations, ranked by frequency from high to low in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency of media frames of the trade issue in the U.S. news media

Rank	Total	NYT	WSJ	Media Frames
1	24	11	13	Chinese manufacturers enjoy state subsidies to boost export and dominate an industry.
2	19	6	13	Artificially undervalued Chinese currency unfairly helps Chinese exports, which causes large US trade deficits and job loss.
3	14	3	11	The fierce competition from China causes job losses in the U.S.
4	10	6	4	The U.S. politicians are getting tough on China for election.
4	10	3	7	China restricts rare earth metals export mainly to boost prices. China does not truly want to protect the natural resources as they claimed.
6	9	2	7	Washington has long pushed China to let its currency appreciate in order to address its persistent trade deficit with China.
6	9	2	7	The punitive tariffs the U.S. has placed on Chinese products only let American pay more and won't be helpful to US manufacturers.
8	7	4	3	The high trade barriers indicate protectionism from China.
8	7	6	1	China's restriction on rare earth export violates WTO rules.
10	5	3	2	The U.S. should hold China accountable for unfair trade practices.
10	5	0	5	China does not play by the rules. China should adhere to international economic and business standards.
12	4	0	4	The U.S. and China should cooperate to lower trade barriers, not start a trade war.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and *the New York Times* (NYT)

Table 2 indicates the major media frames about China-U.S. trade in the two selected U.S. news media. *The Wall Street Journal* had 54 reports; and *the New York Times* had 38. The most oft-used frame was that the Chinese state subsidy (mostly in the solar panel industry) helps China boost exports and has led to Chinese dominance in one particular industry. This frame appeared 24 times in total. The second and third most numerous frames were the exchange rate of Chinese currency and the fierce competition of China, with 19 and 14 occurrences respectively. These reports pointed out that the two

issues caused a significant negative impact, such as job loss, to the U.S. economy. Two other media frames emerged 10 times each --the tough reaction from US officials and China's restriction on the rare earth metals export quota. The U.S. newspapers also discussed some other issues, such as how the high Chinese trade barriers are protectionist; how China's restriction on rare earth violates the WTO rules; how the WTO should hold China accountable for unfair trade practices; and how China should adhere to international economic and business standards. The two newspapers did not show a significant difference in the total number of articles relating to trade. However, there were two media frames that showed up only in *the Wall Street Journal*, that China should adhere to international economic and business standards and that the U.S. and China should cooperate to lower trade barriers.

I selected 13 media frames from the Chinese newspapers in the category of trade, ranked by the occurrence frequency from high to low in Table 3.

There are fewer trade issue related media frames from *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* than *the Global Times* and *the People's Daily* because *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* has much less coverage of this issue. The most common media frame was that the U.S. leaders are playing the "China card" in order to get elected; this frame appeared 27 times.

The second most common frame, repeated 19 times, was that the U.S. and China should strengthen economic cooperation. The following two commonly published media frames both showed up 15 times were actually linked to the refusal of the U.S Government to allow Chinese companies to purchase U.S. firms. These articles mainly

complained about the restrictions the U.S. has placed on Chinese companies and further accused the U.S. of protectionism.

Table 3: Frequency of the media frames of the trade issue in Chinese news media

Rank	Total	XH	GT	PD	Media frames
1	27	2	14	11	The U.S. leaders are playing the "China card" to win the Nov. election.
2	19	4	7	8	The two sides should strengthen economic cooperation to achieve a win-win situation
3	15	1	12	2	The U.S. restricts the Chinese investment because of national security and intellectual property right concern.
3	15	2	6	7	China accuses the U.S. of protectionism.
5	11	0	2	9	The U.S. politicizes trade issue.
6	9	1	5	3	The U.S. should loosen high-tech export restrictions to China.
6	9	1	4	4	The U.S. actually benefits from the economic development of China. China contributes to the U.S. economy.
8	8	3	2	3	The U.S is provocative to start a trade war.
9	6	0	2	4	The American people have anti-Chinese products sentiment because they believe "Made in China" causes job losses.
9	6	4	1	1	The global rare earth metal supply chain is unreasonable.
11	5	0	3	2	For trade dispute, China should fight back/take revenge to protect China's benefits.
11	5	1	3	1	The U.S. should acknowledge China's market economy status.
13	4	2	1	1	Chinese companies are treated unfairly in the U.S.

The People's Daily (PD), *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* (XH) and *the Global Times* (GT)

In the remaining media frames, the Chinese newspapers mainly criticized the U.S. for the unfair treatment that Chinese firms received in the U.S. These news stories focused on the restrictions and unfair treatments that the U.S. Government placed on investments from Chinese companies. The Chinese news media accused the U.S. government of intervention in business, and playing the "national security" card as an excuse, especially in the Huawei case. Huawei, a Chinese high tech company, was not

permitted to purchase a U.S. company called 3leaf whose main business is offering server virtualization solutions. The U.S. government publicly stated that Huawei was a potential military threat because it was founded by a Chinese ex-military officer. Huawei denied that accusation and claimed that it is a completely private enterprise. Although these complaints from Chinese newspapers were not worded in such strong language as their American counterparts' accusations toward China, they revealed the dissatisfaction of the three Chinese newspapers towards the U.S. government. Significantly, at the same time as the U.S. news reports accused China of state intervention, the Chinese newspapers criticized the U.S. government for the same reason. Although they talked about different cases, both sets of national news media criticized the other country's government for erecting trade barriers, and for trade protectionist practices.

Nevertheless, on one occasion, both sets of national media reached a surprising agreement in their reports about trade. The most common media frame in the Chinese news media, getting tough on China for the purposes of the national election, was also found in the U.S. newspapers (Table 2 rank 4). However, that was the only time that there was a common news frame in each set of national news media in my research.

Currency issue

The media frames in the U.S. media regarding the currency issue were not consistent in *the New York Times* and *the Wall Street Journal*. Some of the frames only appeared in one of the newspapers. In Table 4 below, 5 media frames for *the Wall Street Journal* and *the New York Times* are ranked by the frequency of their occurrence from high to low.

Table 4: Frequency of currency media frames in the U.S. news media

Rank	Total	NYT	WSJ	Media frames
1	28	18	10	Artificially undervalued Chinese currency unfairly helps Chinese exporters, which causes large US trade deficits and job loss.
2	12	5	7	The Chinese government tightly controls (Wall Street Journal) or manipulates (New York Times) its currency.
3	7	0	7	The Yuan is less undervalued today than it was a few years ago.
4	6	6	0	Allowing Chinese currency to rise faster would be the most effective way to head off its inflation.
5	5	5	0	China's currency policies would hurt the world economy.

An important issue discussed in *the Wall Street Journal* and *the New York Times* was whether the Chinese currency had been artificially undervalued. Most of the news reports are focused on the exchange rate of the Chinese Yuan. Because of that, only 5 significant media frames were counted, much fewer than the frames in the trade issue. Furthermore, some media frames under this category were similar to frames in the trade issue category because currency and trade issues are closely linked. Many U.S. news reports maintained that the Chinese government depreciated the Chinese currency to boost exports. Therefore, when they reported trade conflicts between the two sides, they always mentioned the exchange rate of RMB, and vice versa. So we can see that the most common media frame in this part also appeared in trade issue.

Although the most common media frame was the same in both U.S. media outlets, there were significant differences in the coverage. Most telling, which is not directly discernible in Table 4, was the fact that the shared media frame, which pins the blame for the U.S. trade deficit on an undervalued Yuan, is found in less than 33% (10 out of 31) of *the Wall Street Journal* articles and yet 78% (18 out of 23) in *the New York Times* pieces.

Instead, *the Wall Street Journal* pointed out that the Chinese Government has actually allowed the Yuan to rise in value. *The Wall Street Journal* cited official figures from both sides on the exchange rate of the Chinese currency to point out that the Yuan was undervalued; but also mentioned that the Yuan has appreciated in value. In terms of the specific language, *the Wall Street Journal* used the word "control" (the currency rate) while *the New York Times* used "manipulate", a much stronger and more negatively connoted word. *The New York Times* also used two singular media frames, these were allowing Chinese currency to rise faster would be the most effective way to cool off Chinese inflation; and China's currency policies hurt the world economy.

In the three Chinese newspapers, the currency issue was reported with five frames, ranked by the frequency as follows (See Table 5).

Table 5: Frequency of media frames about currency rates in Chinese news media

Rank	Total	XH	GT	PD	Media frames
1	15	9	2	4	U.S. accusation of Yuan being undervalued does not make sense. The U.S. politicizes currency issue.
1	15	7	2	6	Forced appreciation of the Yuan by the U.S. would hurt both sides.
3	8	4	2	2	The U.S. leaders are playing the "China card" to win the Nov. election.
4	5	3	1	1	China accused the U.S. of protectionism.
5	4	4	0	0	China is the scapegoat of American bad economy.

The Xinhua Daily Telegraph published more articles related to the currency issue than *the Global Times* and *the People's Daily*; and used more media frames to do so. There was a significant difference in the coverage in the Chinese newspapers compared to the U.S. news reports. The main U.S. media frame was that the Chinese government was controlling its currency to boost exports and consequently hurt the U.S. economy. The Chinese newspapers all refuted this accusation, discussing instead why the U.S. has accused the Chinese Government of doing so. The two most common media frames both

appeared 15 times, that is that the U.S. accusation of Yuan being undervalued does not make sense; and forcing the appreciation of the Yuan would hurt both nations. In addition, the Chinese newspapers also criticized U.S. officials for using China as a scapegoat to cover its economic failure in recent years in order to win the national election.

Economic competition and cooperation issue

There were 5 major media frames in this category in the two U.S. media.

Table 6: Frequency of media frames of economic competition and cooperation issue in the U.S. news media.

Rank	Total	NYT	WSJ	Media Frames
1	16	12	4	Artificially undervalued Chinese currency unfairly helps Chinese exporters, which causes large US trade deficits and job loss.
2	11	6	5	The U.S. presses China for market access.
2	11	8	3	Competition between US and China is inevitable. The U.S. is concerned about the rise of China.
4	8	5	3	China should respect intellectual property right.
4	8	5	3	Chinese regulations openly favor Chinese companies over foreign ones.

The most common frame here also appeared in the previous section about the currency issue. However, there were also news reports which touched on other issues rarely mentioned in the trade and currency issue, including intellectual property, limited access to the Chinese market and unfair Chinese regulations. Most significantly, the U.S. media frames tend to define the U.S.-China economic relationship in terms of competition.

In contrast, *the People's Daily* and *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* had surprisingly similar media frames about economic relations between the two countries, with the Global Times differing. *The People's Daily* and *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* mainly

focused on the economic relationship and how to cooperate with U.S. in the future, while the Global Times had more articles talking about the economic tension between these two nations. So the media frames are counted separately in this part. There are 8 media frames from *the People's Daily* and *the Xinhua Daily*. And *the Global Times* has 5 media frames.

Table 7: Frequency of media frames for economic competition and cooperation issue in *the People's Daily* (PD) and *Xinhua Daily Telegraph* (XH)

Rank	Total	XH	PD	Media Frames
1	57	29	28	The U.S. and China should treat each other with mutual respect and trust to achieve a win-win situation.
2	21	10	11	The U.S. and China should contribute to the recovery of world economy together.
3	14	8	6	Frictions and disputes existed between China and the United States are normal.
4	10	3	7	China and the United States is not a zero-sum relationship.
4	10	4	6	The U.S. actually benefits from the economic development of China. China contributes to the U.S. economy.
6	7	4	3	China and the United States should create a new type of relation.
7	6	2	4	The U.S. leaders are playing the "China card" to win the Nov. election.
8	4	3	1	Pushing Yuan appreciation cannot solve trade imbalance between the U.S. and China.

Table 8: Frequency of media frames of economic competition and cooperation issue in *the Global Times* (GT).

Rank	GT	Media Frames
1	19	The U.S. is concerned about the rise of China and afraid of being surpassed by China.
2	12	The U.S. and China should treat each other with mutual respect and trust, to achieve a win-win situation.
3	6	The Chinese people should face the challenges from the United States with self-confidence.
4	5	The strong anti-China forces in the United States want to contain China.
4	5	The U.S. leaders are playing the "China card" to win the Nov. election.

We can see clear differences in the Chinese news media between the media frames emphasizing economic competition versus those frames emphasizing cooperation. In *the People's Daily* and *Xinhua*, the media frames are friendlier and more moderate; the most oft-used media frame was asking for mutual respect and achieving a win-win situation with the next in importance being that the two countries undertake the task of promoting recovery of the world economy together and downplay the disputes. Many Chinese reports agree that since the Sino-American trade volume is huge, it would impact the future of the Asia-Pacific region and the world economy. The Sino-US economic and trade relation is an extremely complex project, therefore trying to mutually respect each other and establish an effective communication mechanism would benefit both sides and achieve a win-win situation.

Although the majority of media frames from these articles in *the People's Daily* and *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* look positive and friendly, it's important to notice that most of these friendly reports (43 out of 57 with this frame) were published in the short time periods when President Hu visited the U.S., and during the annual China-US strategic and economic dialog, during which officials discuss a wide range of economic policies and major international economic issues. This dialogue is held alternately in the capitals of the two countries. The most important national political leaders attend this dialog, such as Hu Jintao, Barack Obama, Timothy Geithner and Wang Qishan. During these two short time periods, a large number of new reports promoting cooperation appeared. This phenomenon was quite obvious in all three Chinese newspapers, and especially in *the People's Daily* and *Xinhua.* Even for *the Global Times*, whose media

frames were usually less friendly towards the U.S., there was an abrupt shift towards cooperation during those time periods.

During other time periods, *the Global Times* frames discussed the fierce competition between the two countries; it reported more concern and containment from the U.S., and what China should do to win the economic race with the U.S. Their choice of media frames was more aggressive, than *the People's Daily* and *the Xinhua Telegraph Daily*. *The Global Times* blatantly publish their opinions and rarely used diplomatic expressions like the two other Chinese newspapers. This trend can be easily observed from reading the article titles of *the Global Times*, such as "the U.S. and China, better off being fake friends than real enemies" (Published on Jan 6th 2011); "China can not be as incompetent as the U.S." (Published on Aug 8th 2011); and "the U.S. takes advantage of Chinese companies" (Published on Jan 16th 2011).

Of course, the U.S. newspapers also reported these important state visits. But the number of reports was fewer. Although several U.S. news reports also showed support for cooperation, there were far fewer times that this frame supporting cooperation was used. In the U.S. media and *the Global Times*, there were far more media frames about competition. For example, the U.S. media reported that competition between US and China is inevitable, and *the Global Times* called for facing the challenge from the United States. And both the two U.S. media and *the Global Times* reported that the U.S. is concerned about the rise of China.

Media frames in the entire sample

In order to find the most significant messages these newspapers convey, I summarized the five biggest media frames in the entire sample. The total frequency might exceed the sum of the numbers in previous tables, because the previous tables only listed the top ranked media frames; some media frames were ranked so low that they were not listed.

Table 9: The five biggest media frames in the U.S. media.

Rank	Frequency	Media Frames
1	63	Artificially undervalued Chinese currency unfairly helps Chinese exports, which causes large US trade deficits and job loss.
2	32	Chinese manufacturers enjoy state subsidies to boost export and dominate an industry.
3	14	The fierce competition from China causes factory closing and job loss.
4	11	Competition between US and China is inevitable. The U.S. is concerned about the rise of China
4	11	The U.S. presses China for market access.

Table 10: The five biggest media frames in the Chinese media.

Rank	Frequency	Media frames
1	69	The U.S. and China should treat each other with mutual respect and trust to achieve a win-win situation.
2	46	The U.S. leaders are playing the "China card" to win the Nov. election.
2	22	The U.S. and China should contribute to the recovery of world economy together.
4	21	The U.S. is concerned about the rise of China and afraid of being surpassed by China.
4	21	China accused the U.S. of protectionism.

From the above two tables, we can find considerable commonalities. The two national press sets rarely mentioned their own national contribution to these problems and instead complained tirelessly about the other nation causing problems. The U.S. media frames mainly complained about the exchange rate of the Yuan helping Chinese exports,

Chinese state-subsidies, and limited market access; while the Chinese newspapers criticized the U.S. for playing the "China card" to win the national election and accused the U.S. government of trade protectionism. The Chinese and the U.S. news organizations operate under different media systems; nevertheless their media frames were surprisingly similar in these respects. The main difference was that the Chinese media promoted the cooperation concept a bit more, and even that difference was due to the need to paint a friendly environment for President Hu's visit to the U.S.

Variable 2: Information sources

In news reporting, journalists usually consult with and cite certain information sources, such as officials, scholars, businessmen, corporations, other news organizations, and citizens' or civil society organizations. These important information sources were counted numerically according to the different categories to determine who are considered as experts and whose ideas and discourses are considered the most important.

There were 4 major categories of information sources, state officials (politicians and bureaucrats), scholars, corporations (businessmen, company, industry association), and media organizations (newspapers, journals, TV stations). Each major category was divided into three sub-categories based on the nationality of the source. The Other countries category included nations other than China and the U.S. The total categories are 13, including a category called 'others'. Some individual information sources with the highest citations were counted separately because I decided to highlight those specific information sources, mostly officials and scholars, which were considered as the most

important ones. The following tables show the total number of each category in both sets

of national media.

Table 11: the information sources in the U.S. media.

	No.		No.		No.
Chinese Officials	78	The U.S. Officials	160	Other countries' Officials	8
Chinese Scholars	35	The U.S. Scholars	98	Other countries' Scholars	17
Chinese Corporations	21	The U.S. Corporations	82	Other countries' Corporations	0
Chinese Media Organization	8	The U.S. Media Organization	4	Other countries' Media Organizations	1
Others	15				

Table 12: the information sources in Chinese media

	No.		No.		No.
Chinese Officials	74	The U.S. Officials	138	Other countries' Officials	9
Chinese Scholars	90	The U.S. Scholars	98	Other countries' Scholars	27
Chinese Corporations	31	The U.S. Corporations	29	Other countries' Corporations	0
Chinese Media Organization	2	The U.S. Media Organization	164	Other countries' Media Organizations	203
Others	17				

First of all, the author found that in reporting economic issues, the reporters only

consulted the opinions of elite groups. The most frequently consulted information sources

in these reports are officials, scholars, and corporations. Neither the U.S. nor Chinese

newspapers cited information from common citizens or civil society organizations or

NGOs.

Secondly, the Chinese media cited significantly more foreign media sources than

the U.S media did. The three Chinese newspapers cited the U.S. media 164 times and 203

times from other country's new media, such as *Reuters, Agence France-Presse, the Economist, the Financial Times, Yomiuri Shimbun* and so on. In contrast, the U.S. media rarely sourced media organizations outside of the U.S. In addition, although both sets of media used officials and scholars as stable information sources, more U.S. officials and scholars were regularly cited by both the U.S. and Chinese media, with the U.S. press far less likely to cite Chinese and other country's officials and scholars. This observation provides a perfect example demonstrating the important role of media in establishing hegemony.

China was more likely to cite opinions and ideas from other countries, including the U.S. This data may show that China is more willing to listen to the voice from the rest of the world, or that the Chinese news media cares more about the views of other countries than the U.S. news media. This phenomenon is consistent with Chinese culture in which "saving face" or maintaining people's reputation is very important; therefore Chinese people usually care about other people's opinions more than themselves to avoid "losing face" in front of others. This cultural phenomenon was reflected in the Chinese news reporting. For example, a news report appeared on the front page of *the Global Time* on April 27th 2011 called "Is it possible for China to surpass the U.S. in five years?" This article reported a prediction from the IMF that China probably would exceed the U.S. economically by 2016. This report did not analyze the reliability of this prediction from an economic angle; instead cited opinions from 10 foreign media to reveal the reactions of other countries.

In addition, the author also took note of the most frequently cited individuals from both the U.S. and Chinese media, shown in the following two tables.

Table 13: The most cited individual sources in the U.S. media

Name	Title	No.
Barack Obama	The president of the U.S.	12
Timothy Geithner	United States Secretary of the Treasury	20
Ron Kirk	United States Trade Representative	7
Eswar Prasad	Professor of Trade Policy at Cornell University. Former head of the IMF's China division.	17
Mitt Romney	Nominee of the Republican Party for the 2012 presidential election	12

Table 14: The most cited individual sources in Chinese media

Name	Title	No.
Hu Jingtao	The former president of China	20
Xi Jinping	President of China	5
Shen Danyang	Spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce of China	8
Barack Obama	The president of the U.S.	15
Timothy Geithner	United States Secretary of the Treasury	7
Mitt Romney	Nominee of the Republican Party for President of the United States in the 2012 election	11
Zbigniew Brzezinski	Polish American political scientist, geostrategist, and statesman who served as United States National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981.	6

Unsurprisingly, the political leaders of China and the United States and several scholars are the major information sources in both sets of news media. Secondly, although the Chinese news media cited U.S. officials, politicians and advisors as individual information sources *the Wall street journal* and *the New York times* rarely cited Chinese leaders. Third, the Chinese media cited Mr. Brzezinski several times, possibly because Brzezinski's perspectives are more consistent with the Chinese newspapers' media frames. According to *the Global Times*, Brzezinski raised some arguments about the Sino-U.S. economic relationship, such as the U.S has to get used to the economic rise of China quickly; and the U.S. should not demonize China or wish China bad luck. These arguments showed some degree of criticism towards the U.S. That

is precisely why the Chinese media, especially *the Global Times,* are more willing to cite this kind of scholar.

Variable 3: Signifiers

There were few signifiers in the news reports. In the past, descriptive words suggesting stereotypes towards each other appeared more regularly. For instance, when the American media talked about China in the 20th century, the use of ideological and stereotypical words like "red China" or "communist China" was quite common. Similarly, many Chinese were used to saying "imperialist America" instead of just "America". These stereotypical words did not appear in the sample, suggesting that national media news treat the other country with a more rational and progressive attitude, but also shows a more professional manner from both sides in reporting. Of course, there were some signifiers used. The New York Times used the word "unfair" more than 10 times to describe the policy and behavior of China, especially when they talked about the Chinese state subsidy and currency policy. In addition, they used "cheating" five times to portray the conduct of China; and "aggressive", "illegal" and "unreliable" were also used two or three times.

In contrast, in the Chinese newspapers, the most commonly used signifiers were "hegemony/hegemonic" which appeared five times, mainly from *the People's Daily* and *the Global Times*. "Selfish", "manic" and a Chinese idiom "损人不利己" (meaning hurting others while not benefiting itself; pointless) were used two or three times in those two newspapers. The verbs with negative connotations used by the Chinese newspapers to describe the U.S. were "abuse" and "override", both of which appeared three times in

the sample. Although there were some negative signifiers, the overall frequency was quite low. So all in all, there were no strong negative signifiers found from either side.

To sum up, this chapter illustrates the main study results of the research, including the numbers of news reports, the specific media frames, the most cited information sources, and the signifiers. From this chapter, we could get a clear idea about the main features of the target news reports. And in the next chapter, I will try to interpret the results from political, economic and ideological perspectives.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The main goals of this chapter are to further explore the features of the media frames used in the samples of news articles about the U.S.-Sino economic relationship. I then analyze some of the political, economic and ideological reasons behind those frames. As the study focuses on news reports related to the interactions between the two largest economies in the world, analyzing the underlying meaning of news reports is important to understand the current political, cultural and power struggles. .

This chapter includes discussion of the five main findings. The first discussion topic is about the similarities at the operational level between the two sets of media organizations, as they both pointed out significant issues about the other country. The second to fifth discussion topics discuss the differences at the case, topic, discourse and ideological levels. The five main discussion topics are listed as follows:

1) The most commonly used media frames in each set of national news reports revealed significant economic issues affecting the other country.

2) Although some of the news frames were similar across national news media, most of the topics covered within each frame issue were distinctly different.

3) The Chinese news reports emphasized the larger macro issues of cross-national and global economic relationships. In contrast, the U.S. media focused on specific, substantial policy differences affecting trade, and finance.

4) Many media frames found in Chinese newspapers were opposite to the U.S. media frames.

5) In the Chinese newspapers, the most common media frame promoted cross-national cooperation. In contrast, most of the news frames in the U.S. media promoted economic competition.

More specifically, through drawing out the abovementioned five study findings, we can conclude that the U.S. and Chinese media have several similarities and differences. Although the two sets of newspapers have lots of differences at the case, topic, discourse and ideological level, they share some common features at the actual operational level. They both tended to report cases that justified their own national government's policies and behaviors, they both provided investigative reports of the problems in the other country's economy; with very little reporting about the explanations the other country's government gave to explain their problems, or their perspective on the disputes. As a result of this combination of one country's national media mirroring the others' domestic economic problems, while not providing the other country's point of view or ignoring certain aspects of facts, the two sets of media appear like funhouse mirrors that illustrate the distorted facts in our world.

1. The similarities of reporting: digging out significant issues of the counterpart
Chinese state-managed capitalism

The first finding was that the most common media frames were those that revealed significant domestic economic issues in the other country. For example, the majority of media frames concerning trade in the U.S. newspapers discussed three topics, the Chinese state subsidy, the Chinese state controlled and undervalued currency, and the

rare earth export quota implemented by the Chinese government. In the category of economic competition and cooperation issue, the restrictions to access to the Chinese market and the "unfair" treatment of foreign companies by the Chinese government had extensive coverage.

All of these frames encapsulate one argument, that the Chinese state controlled economic model or state-led capitalism presents a huge challenge to the economic order of the western world, and more specifically, to the rule setter, the U.S, as the dominant partner in the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and other international financial and economic institutions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the U.S. state has adopted a neoliberal economic system, which downplays the role of government and instead privileges the capitalist market and especially financial capital. In contrast, China has always stressed macro-management by the state. This big difference in the two approaches to the economic system is one of the root reasons for the intense economic disputes in recent years. Since the U.S. has embraced the neoliberal economic system and promotes the concept of less government and less regulation, the Chinese system of state-management or state-led economy is not considered positively and is instead viewed as a violation of existing rules and of the principle of fairness in the U.S.

However, the philosophy of governance in China is different. The Chinese government believes they are responsible for guiding economic activities so as to avoid shortsightedness and irresponsibility of the market (Ran, 2003). In China, the idea of state subsidy or state-management does not carry any negative meaning. In addition, China has many state-owned large enterprises that dominate vital sectors, such as oil, power, transportation and banking and these state-owned enterprises are becoming quite

powerful (Yang, & Bai, 2003). Thus, when American multinational companies enter in to the Chinese market, they sometimes have to compete with Chinese state-backed or state-led companies, and many of the U.S. companies are very unhappy with this arrangement. The U.S. news media tends to support US corporate interests, and thus one of the primary news frames is to underscore how Chinese regulations openly favor Chinese companies over foreign ones (Table 6 rank 4). That is the reason why many of the U.S. media frames are shaped by this kind of dissatisfaction toward Chinese governmental interference.

What we see in the news frame is an ideological bias. The unique economic system and management philosophy adopted by the Beijing Government are different from the U.S. system, and pose one of the biggest challenges for both Beijing and Washington. Harvey (2003) and most other scholars have noted that the U.S. is not only the rules setter but also the biggest beneficiary of the current global economic system. The rule makers or world leaders gain enormous economic benefits from setting economic rules favoring themselves. Within the current set-up of the international financial institutions not every country has the ability to operate equally; only the older superpowers and their closest allies have decision-making and bargaining power. The economic rise of China depends on operating within a different economic system and challenges the current global capitalist system. Therefore, an important task for the Washington Government now is to persuade or force the Beijing Government to stick to the established rules. Accusing Beijing of not playing by the rules and punishing Beijing, such as placing heavy tariffs on Chinese products, are important means to secure the superpower status of the U.S. In this process, the U.S. media are instrumental in helping the U.S. government justify its policies and actions by repeatedly accusing China for the

issues like Chinese state subsidy, state managed currency, unfair treatment to foreign companies and the policies that violate the WTO/IMF rules. The U.S. media convey the kind of messages that paint all Chinese economic policies as harmful to the world economy, and sugarcoat the current economic world system and financial institutions as just and fair for all the players. According to Herman and Chomsky (1992) in Chapter 2, an important function of the media is to serve the interests of the dominant elites to maintain the status quo in both the domestic and international levels. Thus, we could conclude that, on this point, the U.S. news media is helping the U.S. to maintain the status quo in the current world economic system and the established rules to further secure the interests of the U.S., especially those of the elites groups or multinational corporations in the U.S.

Similarly, in the chapter 2, we learned that Beijing intends to expand its soft power to the rest of the world. *The Chinese central TV station*, the *Xinhua News Agency*; and *the People's Daily* have established branches all over the world. One of the main tasks of those branches is to introduce the successful Chinese economic development model to the rest of world. Chinese media hopes to spread the ideas that Chinese economic model/experiences are useful and inspirational to other countries (especially when the world economy is on shaky grounds); and that China is a reliable and dependable country for the development of the world economy. Thus, I would argue that Beijing will not abandon its own established and tried economic structure to completely follow the U.S. rules. In addition, if Beijing can reset the current order and establish a new order favoring itself, it is possible for China to develop fast economically and become a superpower comparable to the U.S.

However, for Beijing, the challenge is bigger. To change the established world economic order is not an easy task. The international community, and especially the dominant states that are close allies of the U.S., will not accept Beijing's refusal to follow all of the established rules. On the other hand, it is highly unlikely for the international community to accept a new order that favors Beijing any time soon. Therefore, unless Beijing is able to change the rules, learning to respect the current world economic order and trying to balance between the world order and its own interests are the most pressing issues for China in the near future. All in all, the media frames help us see one thing clearly and that is that Beijing and Washington do not play by the same rules. Looking at the big picture, I would assume that the overall economic disputes will last for long time.

The "China Card" and the punitive tariffs

The second most common media frame in the Chinese news media is that U.S. leaders played the "China card" in order to win their national election. (Table 3 rank1; Table 5 rank 3; Table 7 rank 7; Table 8 rank 4; Table 10 rank 2) The U.S. media also touched on this (Table 2 rank4). This news frame underscores a problem of the political system in the U.S. The presidential, House and Senate candidates treat national elections as a top priority, and do everything they can to win. Sometimes the actions or positions they take are not the best choices for the country, but are only taken to get votes. The Chinese newspapers expressed their views on this topic in very sarcastic ways. For example, *the Global Times* had a report called "Obama asked for the fair treatment from China" in July 7th 2012. This article reported the history of former president Clinton, who criticized China a lot in his presidential campaign, but then became a supporter of

China's accession to the WTO; while the current president Obama called for boycotting the Beijing Olympics, and then was pleased to be the guest of the opening ceremony. Thus all those "getting tough on China" gestures were only a formality to help the candidates get elected, and not rational political decisions.

In Table 2 from the previous chapter, we can see that a media frame in the U.S. media is that the punitive tariffs the U.S. placed on Chinese products only causes Americans to pay more and will not be helpful to US manufacturers. Some Chinese scholars acknowledged that the punitive tariffs placed on Chinese products would indeed hurt Chinese industry. But only a few jobs would go back to the U.S. (Huang; Zhu; Li, 2010). Instead most of the manufacturing jobs would go to places with even lower pay and less regulation, such as Vietnam and Thailand, who would thus be the real beneficiaries of these "getting tough on China policies". And the real purpose of these heavy tariffs is to make the U.S. politicians appear tough on China to get votes from those not-well-informed voters. The direct impact of these policies on the United States is that the U.S. consumers have to pay more for the same products.

2. Topic difference in reporting: the ignorance and salience of topics

The second finding is that the way each national news media covered the same issue was very different. Certain topics only gained attention from media in one country and were ignored by the media in the other country. In most cases, the two sets of newspapers only covered cases they actually approved or agreed with in their reporting. A common practice of the opposite national media is to treat certain topics as unpopular

ones, rarely mentioning them or burying them in back pages where fewer people would notice.

Topics such as the restricted access to certain Chinese markets and the protection of intellectual property rights only appeared in the U.S. media (Table 6 rank 2 &4) with little coverage in the Chinese media. In the Chinese news reports, you could only find a brief reference to market access and intellectual property issues. For example, in a long report from *the People's Daily* about the U.S.-China annual strategic and economic dialogue on May 13th 2011, only one sentence "The U.S. hoped China to improve the protection of intellectual property rights" was randomly included without any further explanations. The news report did not give any further information about why did the U.S. had claims and what was China's response to this issue.

On the other hand, the refusal of the U.S. to allow a Chinese company to take over a U.S. firm was only emphasized in the Chinese news reports (Table 3 rank 6). Out of 76 trade issue related reports in Chinese newspapers, there were 10 articles about the denial to allow the Chinese purchase. That is compared to 1 related article out of 92 in the category of trade issue from the U.S. news reports. This data clearly reflects the different attitude of the two national news media towards this topic. The news media from each country tirelessly complained about the unfair treatment their own country got and conveniently ignored the complaints from the other country. The most interesting thing is that both sides used this biased news coverage to accuse the other side of trade protectionism (Table 2 rank 8; Table 3 rank 3; Table 5 rank 4; Table 10, rank 4) and criticize the unfair treatment their own country's companies got from the other side (Table 3 rank 13, Table 6 rank 4).

Therefore, I would conclude that both national news media show a tendency to intentionally focus on some topics and ignore other topics. In such biased news coverage, both national news media make their own country look more just and allow the other side to appear at fault.

3. Issue difference in reporting: different focuses from the two sides

The third finding is about the difference between the news media at the issue level. In Table 1 from the previous chapter, the numbers of news reports in each category indicated that the Chinese news reports emphasized the value of economic cooperation. In contrast, the U.S. media reported on more specific operational topics in the trade and currency issues. Compared to the U.S. newspapers, with only 47 articles covering this topic, there were 136 economic cooperation-related articles in the Chinese newspapers. Therefore, I argue that the Chinese media take a more macroscopic value- oriented frame while the U.S. media more specific, pragmatic issues. The differences of media frames in the issue of economic competition versus cooperation can further strength this argument. The author found that the Chinese newspapers tried to analyze the Sino-U.S. relationship from various angles and promoted many ideas from the macro level, such as the U.S. and China should treat each other with mutual respect (Table 7 rank 1; Table 8 rank 2); both sides should work together to contribute to the recovery of world economy (Table 7 rank 2); and both sides should create a new type of relation (Table 7 rank 6). In addition, the media frames in Chinese newspapers also pointed out the tension between these two economic entities from a global perspective, such as the U.S. is concerned about the rise of China (Table 8 rank 1); China should face the challenges from the U.S. (Table 8 rank

3); and the U.S. wants to contain China (Table 8 rank 4). In contrast, we can see that the majority of media frames from U.S. media in this category still talked about some specific issues, such as Chinese market access (Table 6 rank 2), intellectual property in China (Table 6 rank 4), and unfair Chinese regulations (Table 6 rank 4). Most of the media frames in Chinese newspapers rarely touched on the substance of the disputes and focused instead on a broader macro-value perspective while the U.S media had articles about specific complaints.

From the above-mentioned data, there might be some cultural differences in the discourse of both sides. I would argue that the way of thinking and the approaches between Chinese and Americans are sometimes incompatible. One of the most important differences might be that Chinese people are used to thinking from a macro, and sometimes not so pragmatic or instrumental level and tend to ignore some of the details, which people in the U.S. consider important. In contrast, the U.S reports discussed more specific substantive issues.

Professor Graham and Lam (2003) once argued that Chinese discuss all issues simultaneously in an apparently haphazard order emphasizing the whole package over any particular details. This contrasts with the more linear and instrumental approach of the U.S. people\. Chinese scholars Ren and Liang (2008) pointed out that the most prominent feature of Chinese people is their combination of holistic thinking and intuition, and their lack of the capacity of critical thinking or logical reasoning. Chinese people generally believe that the overall situation is more important than the details because they assume if you can understand the overall situation, then you could most likely handle specific issues. In contrast, the U.S. people mostly adopt the approaches

described in the mid-range theory first developed by Merton. They concentrate on measurable aspects of social reality that can be studied as separate phenomena, rather than attempting to explain the entire social world. This could explain why people in the U.S. pay more attention to details and substantial matters that can be measured (Merton, 1968). Therefore, it is no surprise to find more Chinese reports talking about the strategic level of competition and cooperation, while the U.S. newspapers wrote more about specific trade or currency issues.

4. Discursive difference in reporting: the arguments between the U.S. and China

The fourth finding showed that many media frames in Chinese newspapers were opposite to the corresponding U.S. media frames. On the discourse level, it seems like the U.S. media and Chinese media were arguing with each other. The most common media frame in the U.S. media is about artificially undervalued Chinese currency unfairly helping Chinese exports, and causing large trade deficits and job loss (Table 2 rank 2; Table 4 rank 1; Table 6 rank 1; Table 9, rank 1). Because this frame seems to be the most prominent accusation of the U.S. toward China, several Chinese news reports responded to it. The Chinese newspapers pointed out that the U.S. government politicized the trade issue and currency issue. For them, the accusation of Yuan being undervalued does not make sense (Table 3 rank 5; Table 5 rank 1). The forced appreciation of the Yuan by the U.S. would hurt both sides (Table 5 rank 2). The Chinese newspapers fought back further and claimed that the U.S. actually benefited from the economic development of China (Table 3 rank 6), and that China is used as a scapegoat to pin the blame on the bad economy of the U.S. (Table 5 rank 5).

The U.S. newspapers also argued that the competition between the U.S. and China is inevitable (Table 6 rank 2). However, *the People's Daily and* the *Xinhua Daily Telegraph* argued that China and the U.S. is not a zero-sum relationship (Table 7, rank 4). And *the Global Times* responded that the Chinese people should face the challenges from the U.S. with self-confidence (Table 8 rank 3).

Another example of opposite news frames was seen in the issue of rare earth metals. Several U.S. news reports accused China of restricting rare earth metals export to boost prices (Table 2 rank 4), and thus violated WTO rules (Table 2 rank 8). In their response, the Chinese news reports refuted that the global rare earth metal supply chain is unreasonable (Table 3 rank 9). The Chinese media argued that since extracting rare earth is difficult and harmful to the environment, setting export quota is fair and reasonable. In addition, when the two sides mentioned the rare earth reserves of China, they emphasized different aspects. The U.S. reports argued that China's control of more than 90% of the current global supply of rare-earth metals means that China can control the price. In every rare earth related Chinese news report, however, it was mentioned that China only had 40% of the detected world rare earth reserves, but supply 90% of the market with low price. According to those Chinese reports, since rare earth mining would damage the environment, the supply chain is unfair; and China had the right to re-evaluate rare earth medals and made some restrictions on export. The center of the issue was the U.S. part focused on the number, 90%, while China kept repeating another number, 40%. Both sides used different aspects of data and kept arguing with each other.

5. Ideological difference in reporting: competition or cooperation?

In the economic competition and cooperation category, the most common media frames in the Chinese newspapers promoted cooperation, arguing, for example, that the U.S. and China should achieve a "win-win situation" (Table 7 rank 1; Table 8 rank 2) and that both sides should work together to "contribute to the recovery of world economy "(Table 7, rank 2). The U.S. newspapers, however, emphasized competition between the U.S. and China (Table 6 rank 2). Below I explore the ideological differences in order to explain why the two sets of news media had different agendas on this issue.

Why would the two sets of news media promote different perspectives about the Sino-U.S. economic relationship? I would argue that the ideological differences account for this phenomena. In Chinese culture, the denotative meanings "cooperation" and "competition" are similar to those in English. Although these two words are both neutral in Chinese, the connotation of cooperation in Chinese society sounds friendlier than competition because cooperation means peacefully coexisting and nobody being harmed. This philosophy of cooperation is more consistent with the Chinese Confucian culture that promotes moderation. In contrast, the concept of competition for Chinese is viewed as a zero-sum relationship. The word "competition" implies an aggressive attitude and being too aggressive is not encouraged in traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, in the two diplomatic time periods, Chinese president Hu's visit to the U.S. on January 18th 2011 and the annual strategic and economic dialogue, the Chinese news reports stressed U.S.-China cooperation and working towards a win-win. At that time, the publicity ministry probably gave instructions to the news organizations to follow. Although I was not able to get any internal materials in China, the large number of friendly reports suggests that it was the design of the publicity ministry to see positive and friendly

reports. No matter whether the cooperation concept in reports was promoted by the journalists spontaneously or the result of the instructions from the publicity ministry, the fact that this concept appeared in the abovementioned two important diplomatic time periods showed a friendly diplomatic signal from China.

In contrast, there were more media frames promoting competition in the U.S. media. Unlike Chinese culture, competition is accepted as an important part of the American economic culture (International Information Programs, 2012), especially under neo-liberalism, where the market and market competition is elevated; many Americans believe that competition is a creative force (Pfeffer, 1978). Therefore, the U.S. news media paints the relationship between the two countries this way. In addition, it could be said that acknowledging the competition with China is proof of the recognition and respect that the U.S. has for the economic rise of China. In the meantime, since there is a "world's view of China" section in *the Global Times*, some Chinese media certainly picked up this type of attitude from the U.S. media toward China. *The Global Times* undoubtedly noticed this "competition promoting" media frames in the U.S. In response, certain media frames from *the Global Times* claimed that the U.S. is concerned about the rise of China and calling for China to directly face the challenges from the U.S.

Furthermore, the "cooperation" media frame also made us think about the close ties between the two countries in the context of globalization. Both nations are economically interdependent. Neither nation can withstand the economic collapse of their counterpart because no country is immune from the economic globalization. The export-driven economic model of China is dependent on selling to U.S. consumers, and cannot withstand unlimited shrinking of the U.S. market. Many Chinese people criticized their

government for buying too many U.S. Treasury bonds to support the U.S. economy. But if the U.S. economy collapses, Chinese exports will be severely damaged and the overall Chinese economy might experience a serious recession. Similarly, with its 1.3 billion people, China is potentially the largest market and the biggest opportunity for U.S. export-oriented corporations. In addition, it is difficult to find another place as good for manufacture as China with its excellent infrastructure and low-wage labor. In Ohmae's (1996) *The End of National State*, he summarized the strategies of modern multinational corporations; "these companies were no longer shaped and conditioned by reasons of state, but, rather, by the desire -and the need- to serve attractive markets wherever they exist and to tap attractive pools of resources wherever they sit." Therefore, the media frame promoting cooperation was not just a diplomatic or friendly gesture, but also indicated the interdependent relationship between the U.S. and China. And another interpretation for promoting cooperation is China is at an obvious disadvantage in many ways, in military power, innovation capacity and cultural influence; in order to avoid a direct confrontation with the United States, China must be more willing to act in a cooperative and peaceful manner.

On the other hand, since the world's resources are limited, the capitalist globalization process inevitably leads to competition and even conflicts. Above we have seen that the U.S. newspapers claimed that competition between two sides is inevitable (Table 6 rank 2). The media frames of *the Global Times* sounded a little bit intense, such as the U.S. was afraid of being surpassed by China (Table 8 rank 1) and intended to contain China (Table 8 rank 3). Actually, there is always a paradox in the process of economic globalization: as the process of global economy integration pushes forward, the

global market not only brings interdependence but also exacerbates competition worldwide. Therefore, it is not unusual to see that the first and second largest economies in the world view each other as the biggest competitor and try to win in this race.

In this globalized world, how should a nation deal with other powers? Should different nations cooperate or compete? Hxow can we cooperate or compete? It is probably impossible to find correct answers. This issue is not just between China and the United States. This is a problem all countries and groups need to face.

Conclusion

Although media in the U.S. and China operate under different systems, they have many commonalities. Each set of media works diligently to document the problems of the other nation and to find proof for their statements. Since they only emphasize some cases and some aspects and ignore other aspects and cases, it is like looking at a fun house mirror when one looks into the interpretation from the media. Some of the facts are exaggerated; some of the facts are dismissed or ignored. A reader can learn a lot about the overall picture; but it is distorted. However, we can still look into this fun house mirror to get some clues. If one state is interested in knowing its own problems, it could take a look at the counterpart's newspapers, which worked hard to investigate and reveal problems of this country. For example, the U.S. media pointed out that China does not play by the established rules, while China believed that the U.S. political system had some problems that potentially could allow Americans make wrong judgments.

The two sets of media also had many differences at the topic level, issue level, discourse level, and ideological level. First, both sets of newspapers only used cases they

already approved or agreed with in reporting to justify their own country's stance. Second, the U.S. newspapers had more specific trade and currency issue related reports while the Chinese newspapers emphasized on cooperation. Third, on some issues, the media frames of two sides were different and looked like they were arguing with each other. Fourth, due to ideological differences, the Chinese media frames promoted cooperation concept while the U.S. media frames talked about competition more.

In addition, the media frames also revealed the challenges the world is facing. The relationship between the U.S. and China is representative of all international relations. Every country in the world network faces the same challenge, how to cooperate or compete with other states? This dilemma is one of the most important themes of the future world power network.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this last chapter, I will first review what we already know from the literature. Then I will conclude my study results and my interpretations and the contributions of this research. In addition, I will summarize the limitations of my research and give some suggestions for future studies.

Summary of the research

This comparative study about the U.S. and Chinese news media stemmed from my curiosity about why there were such different news reports of the same events and issues in the two countries. The main focus of the research was to analyze the key frames used by those media outlets in order to look deeper into the larger messages carried in these news stories.

Through reviewing the literature, I learned that the U.S. has adopted a neoliberal economic system that privileges the capitalist market and downplays the role of government. They have been actively promoting neoliberalism to the entire world since the early 1980s, including via the pages of the dominant news media. In contrast, China has established a socialist market economic system in which the state government plays an important role in the economy, which they promote via the state-operated news media. In addition, the Sino-U.S relationship is so complicated that it could be described as a "love-hate" dilemma. The recent Sino-US economic tensions come from reasons like the Chinese holding of a large amount of U.S.-dollar based international reserves and the continuous trade deficits between the two sides. As the economic relations between

China and the U.S. further develop, the tensions between these two powers are becoming intense, and some of this conflict is being waged in the pages of each country's news media.

In the literature review, I further learned that the relationship between foreign policy and news media is quite complicated. The news media usually plays an agenda-setting role in world politics. Many scholars agree that the news media are used by governments, corporations and other interest groups to maintain the political and economic status quo and to expand their interests around the world, and that the media have definitely had an important influence on world politics as well as with individual citizens. Furthermore, the U.S. and Chinese newspapers operate under very different media systems. The Chinese news organizations are more directly and tightly controlled by the Chinese government. In contrast, the U.S. media are heavily influenced by the needs of a handful of wealthy global corporations. In addition, although there is a very strong ideology of a free press independent of the state, US global news reporting is very heavily influenced by the national government. These two different media systems are critical sectors within distinct economic systems.

Many researchers agreed that the news media is not an objective platform for messages because it is loaded with selective frames or salient aspects of a perceived reality. Scholars have agreed that studying media frames is a useful way to examine the characteristics of media coverage, and locate the saliencies, selections and biases from news reports. After an examination of several comparative studies, I only found a small number that compared news reports in the U.S. and China; most of which focused on political issues. In addition to the limited number, there were several other limitations to

the available comparative studies. Few studied the critical US-China economic relationship that is not only crucially important in itself but has a major bearing on political relations between the two countries and with the rest of the world. Few provided any systematic content analysis of economic issues; and few researchers analyzed the deeper political, economic, cultural and ideological meanings behind the news reports.

My research strove to examine the background to the news reporting about the economic relationship between the two countries. I employed content analysis as a methodology that allows for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of news reports. I included 427 news reports in total from the five selected news media, and analyzed their news frames as the most important variable. The most common news frames in the two U.S. newspapers concerned how China's behavior negatively impacted the U.S., from how the artificial undervaluing of Chinese currency unfairly helps Chinese exports, and causes large US trade deficits and job loss; Chinese manufacturers' enjoyment of state subsidies artificially boosts exports and limits global competition; to fierce competition from China causes U.S. factory closings and job loss. U.S. pressure on China for market access was another important news frame. Finally, and more generally, there were news frames considering how the U.S. is concerned about the rise of China and competition between the U.S. and China is inevitable.

In contrast, some of the most common media frames from the Chinese media were much more conciliatory: that the U.S. and China should treat each other with mutual respect and trust to achieve a win-win situation; and that the U.S. and China should contribute to the recovery of world economy together. Nevertheless, there were also more critical news frames, such as how US leaders are playing the "China card" to win the

Nov. election; how the U.S. is concerned about the rise of China and afraid of being surpassed by China; and how the U.S. is guilty of protectionism.

Through examining all these media frames, I found some noticeable similarities and differences between the two sets of media. Overall, I found that there are significant similarities in their media practices even though they operate under different media systems. Each set of news media operates with a strong nationalist bias, and works diligently to complain or blame the other country for economic problems, searches for proof of their statements, and largely ignores their own country's contribution to problems. Both sets of national media select stories and report events with which they agreed, with and provided no coverage of other aspects with the result that their news coverage tends to justify the policies and actions of their own countries.

I've titled this thesis "The Funhouse Mirror". I have chosen this title because a reading of the news media leads to a distorted reflection of certain aspects, facts or cases; exaggerating some aspects and minimizing or making invisible other aspects. However, one can still look into these fun house mirrors to diagnose problems, except in reverse. If one wanted to find out about the other country, you could get some clues from its counterpart's news media, as they work very hard to investigate and shine a light on their competitor's problems. For example, the U.S. media constantly point out that Chinese style state-led capitalism is a major problem for the established world economic institutions in the U.S. and internationally. And the Chinese news media argued that the U.S. electoral system is ineffective, and has just become political entertainment to get votes.

There were many differences between the two sets of news media in their topic and issue preferences, discourse choices, and ideology. First, some news topics were only reported from one country's media. Both media sets reported more cases they agreed with to justify their own country's stance. Second, this study found that Chinese media organizations were more interested in reporting or analyzing the economic interactions of the two sides at the macro level and rarely touched on substances, while the U.S. news media paid more attention to a case by case report on the specifics of trade and currency issues. Third, the two nation's news media are telling very different stories to their own readers. This research found that the main media frames are substantially different. Sometimes it looked like the two sets of media were arguing with each other. For example, the U.S. newspapers accused China of artificially keeping the Chinese currency undervalued and using state subsidies to aid Chinese exports and jeopardize the U.S. economy, while the Chinese new media reported on how it is the U.S. which is actually benefiting from the economic rise of China. Fourth, due to ideological differences, the two sets of national media highlighted very different perspectives on their economic relationships. The US news reports showed concerns about the economic rise of China and pointed out that the competition between the two countries is inevitable. The U.S. media are more willing to talk about competition because in the U.S., the concept of competition is an important part to drive innovation. In comparison, the Chinese news media talked more about mutual cooperation than competition because in Chinese culture the concept of cooperation sounds friendlier and innocuous. This cooperation concept appeared frequently in several important diplomatic periods, which further proved that

the Chinese government intended to use the "cooperation" idea to convey a friendly message.

I also counted two other variables, information source and signifier. The main findings from those two variables showed that the Chinese newspapers are more willing to cite other countries' opinions, unlike the U.S. media, which care significantly less about opinions from outside the U.S. In addition, the two sets of news media both cited elites groups as their most important information sources, such as government officials, scholars and corporations and rarely consulted the NGOs or any other citizens' organizations.

In terms of signifiers, although both sides occasionally used some negative words to describe their counterpart, this phenomenon was not prominent.

All in all, I hope my research provides some useful and specific data about news reports related to the U.S.-China economic interaction issues; and reveals the similarities and differences between two sets of media and these media's behavior in reporting.

Limitations

This comparative study summarized and analyzed the main media frames in the U.S.-Chinese economic interaction related news reports in five news media organizations between the U.S. and China from January 2011 to July 2012, and attempted to reveal the larger political, economic and ideological meanings of those reports. However, there were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was related to the sample. My original plan did not work because I could not find a way to gain access to Xinhua Agency's database, from which I could conveniently access most mainstream voice of

China. Unfortunately, although *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* is the only daily newspaper of *the Xinhua Agency*, its news coverage is more focused on domestic news. Therefore, *the Xinhua Daily Telegraph* was not a good target newspaper for my research as it simply repeated what I got from *the People's Daily*. I eventually decided to use *the Global Times* to add to my database. However, that resulted in an unequal number of media outlets from the two countries, as I then had two news organizations from the U.S., and three from China. The U.S. data was collected from electronic databases through keyword searches. However, although I tried a large number of possible keyword combinations there is still a possibility that I missed some articles that should have been included in my sample. In addition, because I searched the U.S. news media on line, I was unable to collect data on the page number, and section.

The second limitation was that this research was not without some subjective bias. Although I tried to be as accurate, transparent and consistent as possible, subjective judgment in selection and classification of the news frames was inevitable, and the data set is probably not completely replicable by another researcher or group of researchers.

The third limitation is that the study was conducted by a single researcher in a short time period. Therefore, I have to take into consideration the feasibility of the study in the entire process. I finally took content analysis which allows me to analyze a large amount of data and see larger patterns. However, as I mentioned in previous chapters, other research methods, such as discourse analysis and interviews, were considered. Those two research methods both require a lot of time and effort. If several researchers were working as a team over a longer time period, these two methods would be feasible, more interesting data could be collected, and the quality of this study would be

heightened. Specifically, interviews would bring a lot of information about how the journalists shape the media frames, and would enable me to analyze the reasons behind these news reports from a different angle.

The fourth limitation is that the author was not able to take TV media into consideration because of the limited research time, and insufficient video access. I thus had to leave out news media that have a tremendous influence in the contemporary world. Most existing comparative studies have had the same problem as TV news is more difficult to collect and record, and costs lots of time and energy to analyze.

Recommendations for future research

Based on the results of this research, the author has several recommendations for future studies. Obviously, future studies could plan to work on the abovementioned limitations in a revised research design and implementation. First, future researchers could better estimate what resources are available and suitable for the research. Different resources could lead to different results. Therefore, if knowing the kind of data that was suitable and accessible would save lots of time and energy and possibly increase the accuracy of one's data. In addition, a future project that involved several researchers could provide a significant advantage. Then the project could take into account more variables and collect a larger sample size, which would bring more interesting results. Furthermore, a good way to minimize subjectivity might be to set all standards before conducting research.

Second, a further study could use different research methodology and research subject to fill the gap for current academic work. For example, interviews would provide

a way to check the results of the content analysis against how journalist themselves interpret their own news production. In addition, future content analyses should consider TV news since it has become a much more important medium for individual viewers, governments and corporate spokespeople alike. Future research that could interview journalists, and analyze video news effectively could be very useful to dig out the important reasons behind media frames and make the study more comprehensive.

Third, future studies could compare news reports about the same issues from countries other than the U.S. and China. It is possible that there are less news reports about the U.S.-China economic interactions from media in other countries. And the sample collection process would be more challenging since the researcher might need to gain access to more news sources and be fluent in more than just English and Chinese. However, it would be interesting to find out what kind of issues are determined news-worthy from a third party country, and if there are any significant media frames from those reports.

Contributions of this research

I think this research made contributions to the academic community in many ways. First, this research interprets one of the most important issues in Sino-US relations. Through this research, we could see some dominant ideas and opinions toward the economic interaction issues in both the U.S. and China. The main variable, media frame, offers us a clear image about the opinions and stances on the Sino-U.S. economic issues from the dominant media organizations in both nations. Although these media frames were not always completely consistent with their government stances, they still reveal the

positions of those governments, since these dominant media were all heavily influenced by their respective governments. I am trying to argue that the underlying reason for the increasingly more frequent economic disputes in recent years is the differences of economic model between the U.S. and China.

Since these two major powers want to maintain or pursue the dominant status in this world through capitalist globalization, establishing their own economic model in favor of themselves would be critical. Plus, the cultural and ideological differences are embedded in the current economic model disparities. Therefore, it is difficult for either of the two major powers to totally abandon their own model and follow their counterpart's lead. In this sense, the economic disputes will probably last for a long time. This research provides a unique and quick way to grasp the hottest economic disputes, claims, accusations, existing problems and economic relationships between the two sides in recent years. It might be helpful for the two nations to better understand their counterpart's claim and to think about ways to ease the economic tension.

In addition, the media frames also indicated that the relation between the U.S. and China is representative of all international relations. Every country in the world network has to think about how to cooperate or compete with other states. The globalization process not only brings us economic interdependence but also intense worldwide competition.

Second, this research could contribute to journalism in general. Through carefully comparisons, this research provides specific information about the similarities of two sets of media at the practical level and reveals four main differences in their specific reporting process. These media operate with a strong nationalist bias, and work diligently to only

highlight problems in the other country for economic problems and ignore their own domestic contribution to those problems. This research helps people to see the salience, selection and bias of news reporting from both sides, even though they operate under different media and political systems. Therefore, I've titled this thesis "the media is a funhouse mirror" to point out that the media usually convey distorted information to the audience. I believe that the results from this research could potentially help journalists reflect on the problems embedded in news reporting; and more importantly, to re-think how to achieve the goals of professional journalism, how to improve the quality of reporting and how to covey information objectively. This study also encourages and reminds media audiences to be critical when reading information provided by the news media.

Third, I hope this research could encourage future researcher to use content analysis in media studies. This research proved that content analysis is a very suitable methodology to reveal the common features of a large number of texts. And using media frame as a variable successfully revealed the salience and selection in news reporting. Future studies could consider building on the experience using this same research method to get desirable results.

All in all, I hope that this research would fill the academic gap a little from the above-mentioned ways and provide some valuable information for Sino-US relation studies, journalism and content analysis.

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