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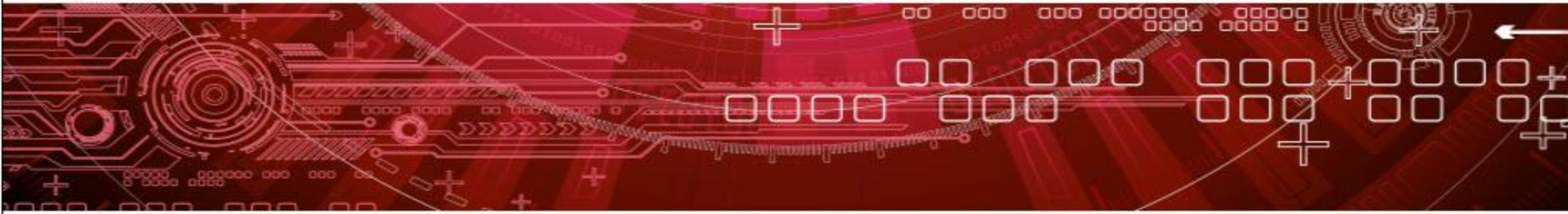

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Sex Trafficking in Thai Media: A Content Analysis of Issue Framing

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Understanding how news media frame sex trafficking in Thailand, a country with high levels of trafficking and an understudied media landscape, has strong implications for how the public and policy makers understand and respond to the issue. This quantitative content analysis examined 15 years of trafficking coverage in five English-language Thai newspapers and found a focus on female victims, official sources and crime frames, with a lack of discussion of risk factors, solutions and high-profile criminals. In doing so, this study illuminates a problematic and tightly controlled Thai media landscape.

Keywords: sex trafficking, Thailand, content analysis, framing

In 2011, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof live tweeted a brothel raid in Cambodia, posting tweets such as, "Girls are rescued, but still very scared. Youngest looks about 13" and "I've been told to rush out of town for safety. That's what I'm doing now" (Nash, 2011, para. 10). Critics were quick to condemn Kristof for the tweets, asking questions such as, "When a *New York Times* columnist live tweets a Cambodia brothel raid, who benefits—the women or the reporter?" (Carmon, 2011, para. 1). Kristof is not alone. Journalists on the "humanitarian beat" regularly receive criticism for sensationalizing or misrepresenting issues (Ahmadu, 2000; Khazaleh, 2010). However, relatively little scholarly attention has been given to the framing of human rights journalism to be able to speak to the accuracy of these criticisms. This is problematic given the multitude of human rights violations that occur around the world (International Labor Organization, 2008), and the possible implications of coverage on how audiences understand and respond to the issues. One globally prevalent human rights abuse in which media coverage has been criticized for sensationalism is sex trafficking (De Shalit, Heynen, & van der Meulen, 2014). As defined by the United Nations (2000), sex trafficking is

> the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation. (Art. 3, para. A)

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Sex trafficking is a problem in all corners of the globe, but is especially so in Thailand (U.S. Department of State, 2014). Given that prevalence and a lack of research on Southeast Asian media landscapes, this study focused on Thai news coverage of sex trafficking. This research expands our understandings of media framing in the context of human rights reporting and the Thai media system.

Sex Trafficking in Thailand

Although the Thai government's efforts to fight sex trafficking are gradually increasing, as a whole, the government tends to minimize the issue, making it difficult to collect reliable data on the scope of the problem (Sorajjakool, 2013). Specific statistics are unknown, but according to the U.S. Department of State's 2015 *Trafficking in Persons* (TIP) report, Thailand is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking to occur, much of which is sex trafficking.

Fully understanding why sex trafficking occurs can be challenging. There exist competing ideologies regarding sex work in Thailand and globally. One school of thought focuses on supporting sex workers' rights, views prostitution as legitimate work, and fights to see it regulated in much the same way as other industries (Chew, 2012; Friedman-Rudovsky, 2016). On the other end of the spectrum is an abolitionist movement that is based "on the moral rejection of prostitution and defines prostitution per se as abuse and prostitutes as victims to be rescued and rehabilitated" (Chew, 2012, p. 73). Some sex workers do not view themselves as victims; rather, they participate in commercial sex work because of the economic opportunities they derive from it (Sorajjakool, 2013), making them consenting prostitutes. Some sex workers do so because they have no other means to make a living wage, and others are deceived, coerced, or forced through the use of physical and/or psychological violence or threats of violence, making them victims of trafficking, by many laws (Sorajjakool, 2013).

One thing that both camps tend to agree on, however, is that sex work and sex trafficking are often due to poverty and a lack of opportunities. Girls often engage in sex work to help subsidize their family's income, largely because of gender inequalities that result in girls being seen as expendable, and laws and law enforcement, as well as some cultural and traditional contexts that provide them unequal protection (Sarkar, 2011). This is especially the case with children from Northern Thailand's ethnic minority communities (Sarkar, 2011).

One aspect that puts these populations at increased risk of being trafficked is that approximately half of the population of Thailand's ethnic minority communities is thought to be "stateless" (Lynch, 2005). Most individuals in ethnic minority communities were born in Thailand, and one or both of their parents were born in Thailand, so they are legally eligible for citizenship (Park, Tanagho, & Gaudette, 2009). However, in practice, discrimination against these ethnic minorities is common, and the Thai government often does not recognize their citizenship or provide them the documentation necessary to access health care and education, and move freely around the country (Park et al., 2009). This institutionalized racism increases the risk factors for an individual being vulnerable to trafficking, specifically due to poverty and a lack of education (Becker, 2008). Additionally, in the case of a crisis situation or urgent need for money, the presence of such risk factors may make it more difficult for a person to deal with the newly arisen

situation and as a result, they may be more willing to migrate and/or be susceptible to trafficking (van Waas, Rijken, Gramatikov, & Brennan, 2015).

In 2008, Thailand passed a comprehensive anti-trafficking law that criminally prohibits all forms of trafficking, including sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2014). However, there are reports of officials protecting brothels from raids and inspections as well as officials who have "colluded with traffickers; used information from victim interviews to weaken cases; and engaged in commercial sex acts with child trafficking victims" (U.S. Department of State, 2014, para. 4). Given this, in 2014 and 2015, the U.S. State Department listed Thailand as a Tier 3 country, the lowest ranking in the department's annual *Trafficking in Persons* report, which indicates insufficient anti-trafficking efforts and puts Thailand at risk of economic sanctions (U.S. Department of State, 2014, 2015).

Thailand: History, Culture, and Media

The complexities that surround the topic of sex trafficking in Thailand, and the government's response to the issue, can only fully be understood within the context of the country's history, culture, and political landscape, which, in turn, influence the media landscape. Thailand had a bloodless coup in 1932, which led to a constitutional monarchy (Marshall, 2014). Since then, Thailand has experienced several rounds of political turmoil, including a military coup in 2006 that ousted then Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat and which was followed by large-scale antigovernment street protests from 2008 to 2010 (CIA, 2014). In 2011, Thaksin's youngest sister, Yingluck Chinnawat, was elected prime minister (Marshall, 2014). In May 2014 Yingluck was removed from office and the Royal Thai Army staged a coup against the caretaker government (CIA, 2014). This fluctuating political environment brings about challenges for understanding the media landscape.

There are 17 Bangkok-based daily newspapers, six terrestrial channels, hundreds of cable and satellite channels, 204 AM and 334 FM radio stations, and approximately 4,000 community radio stations (Plotnick, 2013). Social media also has a large and growing presence. As of February 2014, Thailand had an estimated 24 million Facebook users (Sakawee, 2014) and two of the top 10 most "Instagrammed" locations of 2013 were in Bangkok (Instagram, 2014). However, despite an array of media platforms, little scholarly attention has been given to Thai media systems. In 1965, John Mitchell published one of the first known English-language works analyzing Thai media and concluded, "Possibly the first thing a student of Thai journalism learns is this: Not very much is known about it" (p. 87). Not much has changed in that regard since 1965.

One thing we do know is that the Thai government is said to have an "obsession with secrecy" to ensure that the country's three main pillars—religion, nation and monarch—remain strong (Chongkittavorn, 2001, p. 179). Attempts are made to keep all government-held information private and limit open debate. Thailand's wide-reaching defamation laws have been called "draconian" and "oppressive" (Asia Forum, 2005, p. 57). Individuals and businesses file defamation suits against the media at alarmingly high rates (Asia Forum, 2005). In fact, plaintiffs regularly file defamation cases with claims for "exorbitant damages that, if awarded, would completely bankrupt a newspaper publisher" in order to silence dissent (Asia Forum, 2005, p. 81). In 2013, there were reports of "trafficking-related complicity by

Thai civilian and navy personnel in crimes" involving the exploitation of Rohingya asylum seekers (U.S. Department of State, 2014, p. 374). Although this is primarily labor trafficking, not sex trafficking, the Thai navy filed defamation charges against two journalists in Thailand, potentially resulting in five years of jail time for each journalist (U.S. Department of State, 2014). After global attention turned to the case, both journalists were acquitted in 2015 (Amnesty International, 2015).

In addition to broad defamation laws, strict lese majeste laws prevent criticism of the royal family (Streckfuss, 2011) and today, the ruling junta (Sabur, 2015). In recent years there has been an increase in lese majeste cases. Before the 2006 coup there was an average of five lese majeste cases each year, but since 2006 there have been more than 400 cases (Horn, 2011). This demonstrates the use of the law as a weapon for silencing criticism and public debate. Thai journalists practice rigid self-censorship on anything even mildly critical of the monarchy (Freedom House, 2013; Rojanaphruk, 2010). Thailand was ranked 134 out of 180 countries in the 2015 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index (Reporters Without Borders, 2015).

In addition to legal mechanisms of press control, a number of sociocultural and political factors underscore the repressive Thai media landscape. Thailand is a hierarchical culture; access to information is based on whom you know. In accordance with Buddhism, many Thais believe that all living things are in a hierarchy based on merit and power (Hanks, 1962). The hierarchy plays a significant role in the media, determining who has access to information and what stories get reported. "The Thai press is said to reflect the hierarchism which was such a pervasive feature of Thai society. Only *phu yai* (senior people) counted; ordinary people were irrelevant, unmentioned and voiceless" (McCargo, 2000, p. 239).

Political instability in Thailand plays a significant role in Thai press freedom. Although Thailand has had a constitutional monarchy since 1932, it has experienced continued political instability, and at the time of this study was under the power of a military dictatorship. All of these social and political elements fuse together to result in a tightly controlled media landscape that has severe implications for how human rights abuses such as sex trafficking get discussed.

Media Framing

More than half a century ago, Harold Lasswell (1948) suggested that the functions of media systems, in general, are to survey the environment, correlate responses and mobilize responses, and to transmit cultural legacies. Many of these functions can be done through the presence of various frames in a media text. It has been suggested that frames are the result of commonly accepted cultural ideologies. Such frames can dominate news coverage for long periods (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009) or they change with time, and reframing can occur any time a situation presents incongruent information and more plausible explanations emerge for why something appears the way that it does (Goffman, 1974).

Despite their ability to change throughout time, frames are believed to have four key functions: define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). As such, this study aims to explore how the frames in sex trafficking stories define the problem and discuss solutions.

Media and Sex Trafficking

Although research on the linkage between mass media and sex trafficking is in its infancy, scholars have begun to turn their attention to the topic, albeit largely limited to Western media. A 2012 content analysis of newspaper coverage of human trafficking in Canada, England, and the U. S. found that coverage relied on official sources, described criminal activity as the primary cause of trafficking, and lacked the voices of victims (Gulati, 2012). More recent research analyzed sex trafficking coverage in major U.S. newspapers and determined that stories were primarily framed as a crime issue, portrayed as episodic rather than thematic, suggested few remedies and focused on the opinions of official sources (Johnston, Friedman, & Sobel, 2015). However, a separate study of sex trafficking coverage in U.S. newspapers revealed that more types of voices and more causes and solutions were present in coverage that included transnational references to trafficking (Johnston, Friedman, & Shafer, 2012).

A comparative study of human trafficking news stories in the U.S., India, and Thailand found that coverage increased and was more localized after the launch of a large-scale anti-trafficking initiative (Sobel, 2014). Another work found that sex trafficking representations in newspaper coverage in the former Soviet Republics focused on female victims and used gendered language to perpetuate societal beliefs about patriarchy (Sobel, 2015b). However, as a whole, there remains a lack of attention given to sex trafficking coverage from non-Western media contexts. As such, this study posed the following exploratory research questions:

RQ1: How often did Thai newspapers cover sex trafficking from September 1999 through September 2014?

RQ2: In what ways did newspapers define sex trafficking and offer solutions?

Method

This study used quantitative content analysis to examine news frames present in sex trafficking-related stories in five English-language newspapers in Thailand from September 1999–September 2014. Thailand was selected for this study because of the prevalence of sex trafficking and the understudied media landscape. The study was set in the perspective of previous research by Johnston et al. (2015) within the framework of Entman's (1993) four-part frame typology.

Research Design

English-language newspapers were selected because their audiences are often the educated, elite policy makers, NGOs, and diplomats, so they are likely to be the decision makers with regard to anti-trafficking efforts and legislation. This study analyzed coverage in the two largest English-language daily newspapers in Thailand, *The Nation* and *Bangkok Post,* as well as three weekly, regional newspapers from areas outside of Bangkok: *Pattaya Mail*, *Phuket Gazette,* and *Chiang Rai Times.*

Bangkok Post has a daily circulation of approximately 75,000 (ePaper Catalog, 2012). Its major shareholders include the Chirathivat family and GMM Grammy (Gruppe, 2010). *The Nation* has a circulation that ranges from 60,000 to 80,000, and it is the flagship publication of the Nation Multimedia Group (Sutthisripok, Bain, Stats, Chaban, & Holland, 2006). While *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* are both English-language dailies, they are staffed differently. *Bangkok Post* was founded by an American editor in 1946 and is staffed with a mix of foreigners and Thais, and *The Nation,* established in 1971, is directed and staffed predominantly by Thais (Prado, 2010). It has been argued that *The Nation* tends to be more critical of the government and is better at reporting local events in comparison to *Bangkok Post*, which is said to provide a more *farang* (the Thai word for foreigner) or "internationalist" view (Prado, 2010).

The three regional newspapers, *Pattaya Mail*, *Phuket Gazette,* and *Chiang Rai Times* are smaller English-language weekly newspapers. *Pattaya Mail* has a circulation of approximately 5,000 and focuses primarily on local news in and around Pattaya, a beach resort located on the Gulf of Thailand (Francomasia, 2011). *Phuket Gazette* is the island of Phuket's largest English newspaper, with a circulation of 25,000–35,000, depending on the season, and more than 80% of the local newspaper readership market (International Property Show, n.d.). *Chiang Rai Times* covers local events in the Northern part of Thailand (Chiang Rai Times, n.d.). It is meaningful to analyze Bangkok-based and regional newspapers to understand the similarities and differences in how sex trafficking is presented to audiences in different social, cultural, linguistic, and economic environments.

The 15-year timeframe enabled a longitudinal analysis to be conducted around a number of anti-trafficking initiatives as the topic has emerged in recent years. For *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*, a census was used; all of the sex trafficking-related articles in the 15-year time period were analyzed. For the three regional papers, all available articles were analyzed.

Archives for *The Nation* were retrieved from LexisNexis using the search terms *sex trafficking*, *human trafficking*, *sex slavery*, *prostitution*, *solicitation*, and *flesh trade*, returning 936 articles. Search terms were chosen after reading numerous sex trafficking articles in each newspaper and using the terminology featured in the stories to ensure all relevant articles were included. Archives for *Bangkok Post* were retrieved from a number of sources. Archives from November 19, 2012, to September 1, 2014, were retrieved from LexisNexis using the same search terms, resulting in 374 articles. For articles before November 19, 2012, a search was conducted in ProQuest, which returned 661 indices. Articles from these indices were then retrieved from microfilm archives at the Center for Research Library's Global Resources Network. The Center's microfilm archive is missing a few articles according to the ProQuest index (114 articles), so missing articles were retrieved via interlibrary loan, totaling, 1,149 *Bangkok Post* articles.

For the regional papers, Google was used to search the sites of each newspaper according to the same search terms. These Google results were compared against archive searches on each newspaper's website to ensure that as many articles were retrieved as possible. The search resulted in 106 articles from *Pattaya Mail*, 41 from *Phuket Gazette,* and 86 from *Chiang Rai Times.* In total, 2,318 articles were retrieved. However, although analysis of articles from *The Nation* and *Bangkok Post* was comprehensive over the 15–year time period, analysis of the three regional newspapers was likely not all-inclusive. With unreliable archives for the regional newspapers, it is possible that some articles were missed. However, it

is worthwhile to analyze the available articles to gain a more complete appreciation of how the issue is presented to audiences in different regions. The difficulty in obtaining the articles demonstrated the challenges inherent in studying Thai media and likely why there has not been more research in this area, but does not diminish the need for such work.

Coding Instrument and Measures

Entman (1993) rationalized that the most important functions of frames are the problem definition and remedy suggestion phases, so this study focused on those two elements and aimed to determine how Thai newspapers defined the problem of sex trafficking and what, if any, remedies they suggested.

Initially, each article was read to determine whether it specified the type of trafficking that occurred. In Thailand, the term *human trafficking* is often used to refer to an array of exploitative situations, one of which is sex trafficking. If the article was not about sex trafficking, it was not analyzed any further. After creating a collection of sex trafficking-focused articles, a codebook was adapted from Johnston et al. (2015).

To better understand how the problem was defined, stories were first coded for type of article, whether sex trafficking was discussed in conjunction with any other form(s) of human trafficking, age(s) of trafficked person(s), terminology used to describe the trafficked individual, and gender of the trafficked individual. Articles were also analyzed for whether they referenced statelessness or ethnic minority communities, an international aspect of trafficking, Buddhism or the monarchy, as well as what the dominant frame of the article was, whether the article portrayed sex trafficking as an isolated incident or recurring problem, and what sources were cited. Finally, articles were coded for whether they suggested a remedy for lessening the prevalence of sex trafficking, and if so, what that solution was.

Furthermore, given that the adapted codebook was initially created for analysis of Western media content, all articles were read qualitatively to tease out underlying messages, themes, and frames that can contextualize the quantitative findings. This allowed for unpacking of arguments and ideologies in a more meticulous way to ensure that all important elements of the story were noted.

Intercoder Reliability

Using Krippendorff's alpha, intercoder reliability between two trained coders was assessed on a randomly selected 10% sample (N = 232) of articles: article type (.96), type(s) of trafficking (.91), age (.93), phrase describing trafficked individual (.89), gender (.92), stateless (.92), ethnic minority (.88), international trafficking (.91), Buddhism (.96), monarch (.93), dominant frame (.86), timeframe (.91), cite official source in Thailand (.92), cite official source outside Thailand (.89), cite advocate (.85), cite victim (.91), cite trafficker (.90), cite witness (.86), cite news outlet (.92), cite other (.86), punish individual doing sex acts (.87), punish traffickers (.81), punish purchasers (.94), policy change(s) (.85), creation of advocacy programs (.86), other remedies (.82).

Findings

Amount of News Coverage

After removing the articles that did not focus on sex trafficking, *The Nation* was reduced from 936 to 115, *Bangkok Post* from 1,149 to 116, *Chiang Rai Times* from 86 to 33, *Pattaya Mail* from 106 to 35, and *Phuket Gazette* from 41 to 20. Out of 2,318 articles, only 13.76% of articles (319 articles) focused on sex trafficking. The majority of articles reported on labor trafficking, specifically in the fishing industry, indicating that labor trafficking is another significant problem in the country. This study focused specifically on commercial sexual exploitation, so only the articles that clearly reported on sex trafficking were further analyzed.

Overall, the amount of coverage of sex trafficking in all five newspapers increased over time, with the largest increase in 2013. When peaks and valleys did occur in coverage, they were fairly similar across newspapers. Figure 1 shows that *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* had slight increases from 2000–2004, but notably escalated coverage starting in 2010. Across all newspapers, 2013 was a big year for sex trafficking coverage with each newspaper featuring some of their highest amounts.

Although archives for the three regional papers are not comprehensive, this research found the first story about sex trafficking in *The Nation* in 1997. *Bangkok Post* followed suit two years later with its first story in 1999; *Phuket Gazette* did so in 2002, *Pattaya Mail* in 2005, and *Chiang Rai Times* in 2011. There were no articles about the topic in any of the newspapers in 2008, which is ironic because in that year Thailand enacted its first comprehensive anti-trafficking law. It is possible that articles about this law did not focus specifically on sex trafficking or it took time for the ramifications of the law to turn into newsworthy angles.

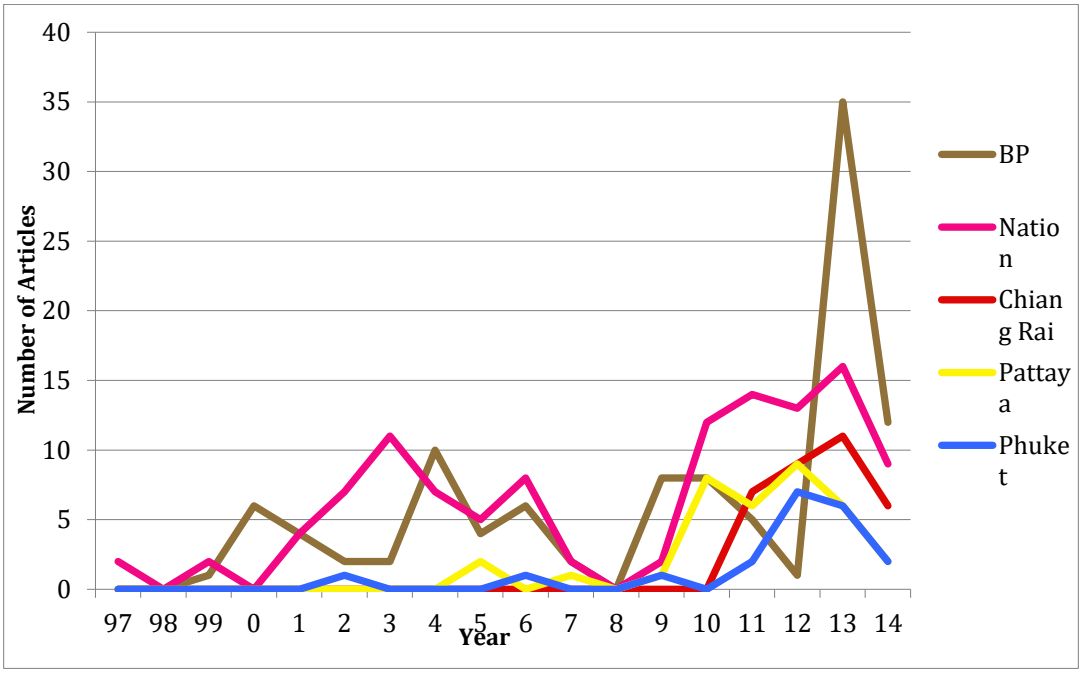

Figure 1. Difference in number of articles over time, by publication.

Given the small number of articles in each of the regional newspapers as well as the aim of this study to understand coverage as a whole, data from the three regional newspapers were aggregated into one regional variable for the remainder of analysis, totaling 88 articles.

Framing Techniques: Article Type and Terminology Used

A good place to start when analyzing media framing is to consider what type of article the content is packaged as (a news story, a feature story, an editorial, etc.). Feature stories or op-eds may offer a wider array of perspectives than are traditionally seen in news stories. Almost two-thirds (71.2%) of analyzed articles were news stories, followed by feature stories, which accounted for almost one fifth of articles (17.2%). Rarely did newspapers carry editorials about sex trafficking. *The Nation* had the highest percentage of editorials, but in only 9.6% of articles.

Another element of a story that can contribute to understanding the issue is whether the article was framed episodically or thematically. Overall, slightly more articles discussed sex trafficking as a recurring problem (thematically, 50.5%), but still almost half suggested it as an isolated incident (episodically, 49.5%). The regional newspapers featured thematic framing in 34.1% of articles, *Bangkok Post* did so in 58.6%, and *The Nation* did so in 54.8% of articles.

Furthermore, how trafficking victims, traffickers, and sex purchasers are identified can also influence the framing of a story. For example, the term(s) used to describe trafficked individuals may influence how audiences perceive that person's level of responsibility. However, data revealed that no term notably stuck out as being used most commonly. Overall, 26.3% of articles referred to trafficked individuals as "victims," 24.5% said "prostitutes," 21.6% used some other word or phrase (such as "the girls"), and 32.0% wrote about sex trafficking broadly without mentioning a specific person. *Bangkok Post* featured the highest percentage of articles that referred to the trafficked individual as a victim as well as articles that referred to the trafficked person as a prostitute, with 37.9% and 43.1%, respectively. *The Nation* and the regional newspapers featured more articles that did not mention a specific individual than any descriptive phrase. No article described the trafficked individual as a survivor. In addition to the variation in diction used to identify a trafficked person, a vast array of phrases were used to describe the topic of sex trafficking, as can be seen in the following qualitative examples: human trade ("Upper North people-smugglers," 2013), to flesh trade (Jinakul, 2004), to vice trade (Hutasingh, 2000), to schoolgirl prostitution (Akkrabal, 2004).

The news stories tended to not distinguish between consenting prostitution and sex trafficking, and the concepts were frequently used interchangeably in the same article. These stories would commonly discuss an arrest by the human trafficking police, but give no further indication as to whether the individual(s) involved were actually trafficked or consensual sex workers. This mixing of phrases makes it difficult to understand what sex trafficking is and who is consenting.

When broadening analyses of how labels were presented and specific individuals were talked about, the qualitative read of the articles found that while all papers typically withheld the name of the victim (with a few exceptions), differences were observed in how other players in the trafficking scenario were identified. *Bangkok Post* identified a trafficker by name if he or she was not a prominent public official, as can be seen in "The [victim], whose name has been withheld, provided police with enough evidence to arrest and charge Jirapat Ramlee, 53, a senior teacher at Nong Bua Wittayayon School . . . with human trafficking" (Ngamkham, 2009, para. 2). However, the paper did not name a government official involved in a trafficking case when he was a prominent figure, but named less prominent individuals in the same article: "One suspect, an unnamed former secretary to a Phichit MP, was arrested and released on bail on Tuesday night, said Pol Col Santirak Intharakhao. . . . Three other men who are also accused of having paid for sex with the two girls, aged 13 and 14, were identified as Sophon, 40, Pramote, 35, and Jet, 40. . . . The former aide, Mr. Sophon and Mr. Jet have been released on bail" ("Four men charged in child sex scandal," 2010, para. 3–6). This lack of naming, in conjunction with the diversity of terms used to identify trafficked individuals and trafficking situations, results in a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible.

Framing Techniques: Age, Gender, and Status of Trafficked Persons

Another way to think about how the framing of a story defines the problem is to consider more specific identifying information. Who gets talked about in a sex trafficking story, in terms of age and gender, can paint a picture for audiences about who this issue most directly impacts. However, more important than such demographic descriptors is how the victims are labeled in terms of their social status and whether they *belong* in society.

First, when analyzing the age of the victim(s) in the news reports, almost one third of stories talked about the issue generally without discussing a specific trafficked person. Of articles that did mention a trafficked individual, more articles discussed children (37.6%) than adults (14.4%). The national and regional newspapers were similar in how they reported on the age of trafficked individuals: most commonly featured stories about only children, with each doing so in 34.8% to 40.9% of articles, followed by stories that did not mention a specific individual, in 27.3% to 28.7% of articles, then stories discussing both minors and adults, in 18.1% to 20.9% of stories, and finally, stories that focused solely on adult victims, which were seen in 13.6% to 15.5% of articles.

Another way of understanding how stories discuss who gets trafficked is to consider the victim's gender. Articles overwhelmingly wrote about female victims. Table 1 data reveal that the regional newspapers reported on male victims more frequently than the national newspapers, but still in only 5.7% of stories. It was rare that articles discussed transgendered individuals or "ladyboys," but the national newspapers did so most frequently.

Table 1 further illustrates the prevalence of other defining characteristics that contribute to how articles defined who is trafficked. Discussions of statelessness and membership in an ethnic minority community can indicate the individual's perceived social status. Despite the prevalence of stateless victims in sex trafficking literature, none of the newspapers commonly identified trafficked individuals as stateless.

Oftentimes, stateless individuals are members of ethnic minority communities, making it worth analyzing whether articles discussed these populations, which can further contribute to understandings of trafficked people's place in society. Table 1 further reveals that while sex trafficking was discussed in relation to ethnic minorities slightly more often than statelessness, it was still rare across all newspapers. The national papers discussed ethnic minority communities most frequently, both in approximately 13% of analyzed articles.

Table 1. Differences in Gender, Statelessness, and Ethnic Minority Mentions.

	BP *N* = 116	Nation *N* = 115	Regional *N* = 88	Total *N* = 319
Differences in gender of trafficked person, by publication (%). χ^2 = 16.84, *df* = 8, *p* < .05.				
Male	3 (2.6)	1 (0.9)	5 (5.7)	9 (2.8)
Female	69 (59.5)	56 (48.7)	51 (58.0)	176 (55.2)
Other (i.e., "ladyboy")	9 (7.8)	4 (3.5)	1 (1.1)	14 (4.4)
Both	3 (2.6)	7 (6.1)	6 (6.8)	16 (5.0)
No gender ment.	32 (27.6)	47 (40.9)	25 (28.4)	104 (32.6)
Differences in presence of stateless mentioned, by publication (%). χ^2 = 5.80, *df* = 2, *p* = .05.				
	10 (8.6)	2 (1.7)	4 (4.5)	16 (5.0)
Differences in presence of ethnic minority mentioned, by publication (%). χ^2 = .622, *df* = 2, *ns.*				
	16 (13.8)	15 (13.0)	9 (10.2)	40 (12.5)

Framing Techniques: What Issues Are Identified as Connected to Trafficking?

In addition to defining *who* is trafficked, considering how the stories frame the issue in conjunction with more established ideas can help us better understand how the topic is presented. Oftentimes people tend to think about sex trafficking as happening "over there," meaning, it happens in communities outside of their own (De Chesnay, 2013). Such a notion could be seen in this analysis, as both national newspapers discussed sex trafficking as an international issue in more than half of stories. The regional newspapers discussed sex trafficking as an international issue in 47.7% of articles, making it less common than in the national outlets, but still a prevalent frame. Furthermore, literature continually points to the prominence of the monarchy and Buddhism in Thailand. However, sex trafficking was never discussed in relation to the monarchy, which is unsurprising given the strict lese majeste laws, and was very seldom discussed in the context of Buddhism (in only 0.6% of articles).

Another way that sex trafficking could be tied to different ideas is by presenting it in conjunction with other forms of human trafficking. However, sex trafficking was infrequently discussed in relation to other forms of human trafficking. In the rare cases when it was, all newspapers primarily reported on labor trafficking in the fishing industry.

Another central aspect of understanding these stories is the dominant frame in which the issue is presented. Each of the news outlets predominantly reported on sex trafficking as a crime issue (overall 47% of articles). The regional newspapers featured crime-focused stories in the highest percentage (68.2%) of articles and *Bangkok Post* did so in the lowest percentage (36.2%), but still dominantly framed the issue as crime related. After crime, a noteworthy number of stories were framed as human rights abuses (10.2%–25%) and policy/legislation matters (4.5%–22.6%). The national newspapers featured notably higher percentages of policy-focused and human rights-focused stories than the regional newspapers; however, both types of stories paled in comparison to crime-focused stories. In all newspapers, sex trafficking was rarely reported on as a public health concern, a societal problem (such as an eyesore or increased pedestrian or car congestion on roads) or relating to morality or economics.

Framing Techniques: Sources Cited

Another important way that stories can frame the topic is through the use of specific sources and the enabling of some perspectives to be represented while omitting others. A notable similarity that emerged across all newspapers was the clear absence of the voices of victims. The newspaper that cited victims most frequently was *Bangkok Post*, in 11.2% of stories, compared with *The Nation,* which did so the least (2.6%). All newspapers most commonly cited official sources from within Thailand, almost to the exclusion of all others. When considering officials from inside and outside the country, regional newspapers cited official sources in 82.9% of stories, *Bangkok Post* did so in 77.6% and the *Nation* did so in 63.4% of articles. The next most commonly cited type of source was advocates/NGO staffers (in 23%–33% of all articles). When considering all articles as a whole, witnesses/nonexperts were cited more commonly than victims were.

When diving deeper into what these official sources were quoted as saying, a hero police theme emerged. For example, an arguably unnecessarily heavy focus on police work can be seen in the following:

> After hearing the victim's statements, the detective team investigated the madams . . . The police then went to arrest the madams. . . . At the scene, police discovered that Ms. Notira had just procured a Middle East customer to purchase services from the victim. The police also found many other victims, and seized their passports to prevent them from escaping. ("Three Uzbekistan women arrested for trafficking Uzbekistan girls," 2012, para. 9–11)

This "patting on the back," so to speak, of the police work being done to stop trafficking is fitting given the high numbers of crime stories that focus on the work of the police to conduct raids and make arrests. Additionally, by focusing on details of the police work, attention is deflected away from victims and traffickers.

Framing Techniques: Remedies Suggested

In the context of social issues, providing solutions is one of the most important functions of frames (Entman, 1993). Table 2 indicates that overall, almost two-thirds of articles did not suggest a remedy for curbing sex trafficking. *Bangkok Post* featured the highest percentage of stories that did present a remedy, with just under half of articles, and regional newspapers did so the least in just over one-quarter of articles. Of the articles that did suggest a solution, the most common option was "other," which largely focused on raising awareness of the dangers of trafficking. The second most commonly suggested remedy was the need for policy changes, which was discussed more in the national newspapers than the regionals. *Bangkok Post* was the only newspaper to suggest increased punishments for the trafficker, but did so in less than 2% of articles. The regional outlets may have taken a more localized approach as they most commonly suggested the creation of organizations that care for victims, but such a recommendation was made in only approximately 10% of stories.

Table 2. Differences in Presence of Remedies, by Publication (%).

	BP *N* = 116	Nation *N* = 115	Regional *N* = 88	Total *N* = 319
Punish trafficker χ^2 = 3.52, *df* = 2, *ns.*				
	2 (1.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.6)
Policy change χ^2 = 2.43, 2 *df* = 2, *n.s.*				
	17 (14.7)	19 (16.5)	8 (9.1)	44 (13.8)
Creation of advocacy and care programs χ^2 = 10.88, *df* = 2, *p* < .01				
	13 (11.2)	1 (0.9)	9 (10.2)	23 (7.2)
Other χ^2 = *2.86, df* = 2,*ns.*				
	31 (26.7)	24 (20.9)	15 (17.0)	70 (21.9)
No remedy χ^2 = 11.44, *df* = 2, *p* < .01				
	59 (50.9)	73 (63.5)	65 (73.9)	197 (61.8)

Note. No article suggested punishing the individual, trafficker, or sex buyer.

Discussion and Conclusion

Many of these findings lend support to previous framing research regarding journalistic conventions influencing story topic and sources cited (Iyengar, 1991). This study found a notable number of stories that featured episodic framing. Episodic frames focus on the immediate incident and give little

context about underlying issues, while thematic frames focus on the big picture to help audiences view the issue in a broader context and may lend themselves more to notions of collective responsibility (Iyengar, 1991). Data from this study, as a whole, point to the need for more thematic and contextualized reporting on sex trafficking. However, the national newspapers featured more thematic frames than the regional newspapers, suggesting a more contextualized view of the problem in urban areas.

The role of sources in framing is another important topic in this analysis as well as of previous scholars (Andsager & Powers, 1999; Nacos, 1994). A study of American AIDS reporting, which certainly may incongruously apply in Thailand, found that when cited, government officials were more likely to provide a sense of reassurance (Colby & Cook, 1991). This could explain the "hero police" narrative and the overwhelming focus on official sources, in the sense that the police were demonstrating their handling of the problem and the public need not worry.

Additionally, this study found that coverage suggested few remedies and concentrated on crime-focused stories. Both of those findings, as well as the focus on official sources, are consistent with previous research of sex trafficking coverage, suggesting that framing of the issue is similar in Thailand and Western countries (Johnston et al., 2012; Johnston et al., 2015). Moreover, these findings taken in conjunction with framing studies of other human rights abuses such as female genital cutting (Sobel, 2015a) and interethnic conflict (Lai Fong & Ishak, 2012) could shed light on how human rights journalism functions: largely episodic, regularly cites official sources, lacks victims' voices, and focuses on crime or conflict frames.

This study also revealed that coverage primarily reported on female victims, with a notable lack of stories about sex-trafficked boys. Although some people believe that there exist fewer male sex trafficking victims (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2014), and therefore coverage would be a reflection of the actual trafficking landscape, it could also be seen as problematic because of conventional notions of sexuality and gender. Scholars have argued that men and boys are left out of sex trade discussions because they are portrayed as having more knowledge of what they are doing and are regularly depicted as the victimizer rather than the victimized (Dennis, 2008). On the other hand, however, this focus on female victims lends support to Baker's (2013) argument that U.S. media and policy discourses surrounding sex trafficking focus on a rescue narrative, which reinforces traditional beliefs about gender, sexuality, and patriarchy. Although this study cannot pinpoint a causal link, it suggests the possibility that such a focus on female victims could perpetuate similar notions of gender in Thailand.

In addition to the lack of boys discussed, articles omitted considerations of statelessness or ethnic minority communities—elements of the story that can describe one's social status. The United Nations (2006) noted, "A significant number of children residing in Thailand remain stateless . . . which renders them vulnerable to abuse, trafficking and exploitation" (para. 33). However, it is unsurprising that such populations were not more prevalent in coverage given that they are likely not considered worthy of media attention. Laswell's (1948) typology works in many countries because the national cultures are based in a norm of helping the helpless and shining a light into dark corners. In a system such as Thailand's, with deep class divisions that are institutionalized and maintained by corrupt officials and powerful people, those in power likely do not want to see trafficking treated in a way that reveals what is

truly happening. Officials may portray trafficking (deliberately and subtly) in ways that reinforce the class dimension: The girls have no other means of survival, many are willing prostitutes, and so forth. As long as trafficking is framed in those terms, the ethnic dimension is not highlighted. If media cooperate in such framing, they are not performing the surveillance and mobilization functions of Laswell (1948); rather, they are helping to maintain the status quo.

Furthermore, the heavy focus on crime frames suggests that sex trafficking is reported on in the context of criminal justice. Research on criminal justice frames has revealed that such frames are common in coverage of a wide range of topics and can result in misperceptions about the subject and have limited effects on policy decisions (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2005). In the context of the 1999 school shooting at Columbine High School, despite a large amount of media attention, Birkland and Lawrence (2009) found that coverage "caused little political learning (i.e., learning about how to make effective arguments in the policy process) because the frames chosen by journalists and advocates were largely preexisting frames" (p. 1422). In our study, it could be argued that because of the continued reliance on crime-focused frames, this coverage is unlikely to impact antitrafficking policy. A wider array of frames, specifically those that are not commonly used in coverage of other topics (such as human rights or morality frames), are likely needed for trafficking stories to positively influence policy decisions. This suggestion is supported by Baker's (2013) argument that traditional criminal justice-focused approaches to combating sex trafficking (that being victims rescued and traffickers prosecuted) are inadequate. Rather, public policy must focus on systemic changes and address "how trafficking is rooted in political, economic, and social conditions" (Baker, 2013, para. 58). Thai news media have the potential to help change the trafficking conversation to focus more on systemic causes, but a wider array of frames are needed to do so. If media do not challenge the trafficking that continues because of institutionalized racism and they continue to report mostly frames that maintain it, they are part of the problem and not the solution.

This study illuminates important aspects of the Thai media landscape. Findings point to the dominance of crime-focused frames and a reliance on official sources. While these news elements are not unique to Thailand, when they are understood in conjunction with the notion that identities of criminals (in this case, traffickers) are withheld if he or she is a prominent individual in society, a more problematic media system emerges. When news stories are crime focused and only include the voices of officials, the media are likely to serve the purpose of strengthening the authoritative structure of Thai society, thus, preventing democratic development. Bronstein (2005) suggested that frames evolve over time and can be reformatted by journalists or their sources to parallel the current social and political environment. The repressive Thai political environment could explain the controlled media content, so it is necessary to evolve politically so that journalists and sources can follow suit.

Although this research revealed unique findings, it has several limitations. First, only English newspapers were analyzed, which could give a skewed impression of how the issue was represented. Thai-language publications might give less attention to sex trafficking altogether because of their appeal to a different readership; English news sources might be more likely to cover it given the international pressure Thailand has recently received. Also, the findings cannot be generalized to all English-language news sources in Thailand. It would be worthwhile to analyze print, broadcast, and social media coverage

in different languages. In that same vein, it is necessary to analyze media representations of labor trafficking and other human rights abuses both in Thailand and abroad. Additionally, future research analyzing the positionality of journalists writing about human rights abuses would be highly beneficial. Finally, and most significantly, this study was set in the perspective of Western-centric scholarship both with the theoretical framework and much of the literature. Attempts were made to mitigate this shortcoming by including Thai works whenever possible, but there is no denying this study's dependence on hegemonic scholarship. International communication researchers need to continually work toward lessening the reliance on Western ways of thinking. Findings from this study could be considered a starting point with which future work could apply non-Western theories to better understand the Thai media landscape and human rights reporting.

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Greater Work-Related Stress Among Chinese Media Workers in the Context of Media Transformation: Specific Stressors and Coping Strategies

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A steady rise in unexpected deaths of Chinese media workers from 2011 to 2015 highlights a new social problem. Content analysis of official reports about these deaths reveals the contribution of work-related stress and media transformation. Moreover, surveys and in-depth interviews with 147 Chinese media workers demonstrate that 11 factors related to the current media transformation may magnify work-related stress. These factors stem from characteristics of media transformation, such as the crisis in journalism, the expansion of information and communication technologies, ideological control, and the reorganization of management. This article focuses on newly emerging and Chinese-specific stressors, revealing how media transformation increases stress and causes anxiety. In addition, the article suggests specific coping strategies in the Chinese context.

Keywords: work-related stress, Chinese media transformation, stressors, anxiety, coping strategies

From April 28 to May 27, 2014, six Chinese media workers, most of whom were senior executives, committed suicide because of work-related stress; their average age was 44 years. A further investigation found that the officially reported unexpected deaths of media workers as a result of suicides or acute diseases during all of 2014 amounted to more than 17, which is an increase from seven in 2011,

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eight in 2012, and 11 in 2013, at an average age of younger than 45 years (see Figure 1).[2] The steady rise in the number of deaths from 2011 to 2015 is verified by the latest occurrence of nine unexpected deaths of workers at an average age of 39 years within 60 days from May to June 2016, according to Xinhua News Agency (Shang, 2016). This is such a new phenomenon in China that it has become a social problem that needs special attention from both researchers and practitioners. Based on facts and official information about the extreme cases of deaths from 2011 to 2015, a detailed content analysis reveals two critical factors contributing to the suicides or diseases: work-related stress and ongoing media transformation.

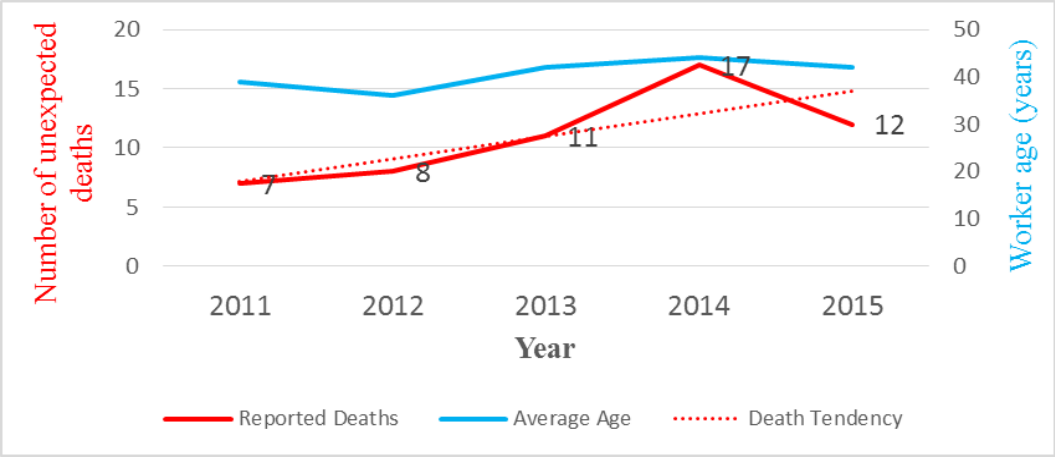

Figure 1. Officially reported unexpected deaths of Chinese media workers, 2011–2015.

A 2010 survey conducted by the Psychology Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences found that 80% of Chinese media workers suffered from severe stress (Wen, Gao, & Li, 2010). Four years later, an investigation led by People.cn of 30 media agencies demonstrated that the rate of stressed employees rose to 90% (Zhang, 2014). In addition to stress, sleep and marriage problems among media workers might also be more serious than they are in other industries. The Chinese Sleeping Index Report in 2015 revealed that media workers had the poorest quality of sleep out of 10 main occupations; the media workers were described as "getting up earlier than roosters and going to sleep later than dogs" (Xin & Gu, 2015, para. 2). Similarly, the latest Chinese Love and Marriage Report indicates that journalists were the most "unwanted" professionals in love and marriage because they were "too busy to date" (Baihe, 2015).

[2] An *unexpected death* refers to a death that comes without warning, especially when the person is not expected to die in a certain way (such as by suicide or because of an acute disease like a heart attack) or at an early age. *Officially reported* means that news reports, bulletins, or messages were released by official newspapers, obituaries, or social media accounts such as Weibo (China's equivalent of Twitter) and WeChat (a communicating mobile app). The statistical data in Figure 1 were gathered by all means available, yet are still only the tip of the iceberg because of news suppression and selection.

When it comes to media transformation, heated arguments and debates among academics and practitioners concentrate mainly on whether and how to transform media as well as the possible effects of the transformation; little attention is given to how the transformation influences media workers, especially their mental health (Stevenson, 2014). After all, it is the media workers who are the leaders, participants, and stakeholders of the ongoing transformation. *Media transformation* in this article refers to transforming the media function, structure, ownership, and management from the "Chinese Communist Party-state's mouthpiece and propaganda tools to multifunctional media" (Shao, Lu, & Hao, 2016, p. 34); from "traditional media to traditional-and-new media convergence" (p. 34); from "state-owned to half private" (p. 37); and from "government agencies to market-oriented enterprises" (p. 29). Investigations into the cases of unexpected deaths since 2011 have revealed that changes brought about by media transformation—such as the crisis in journalism, the expanding impact of information and communications technologies (ICTs), faster work pace, and heavier workload—are closely related to the suicides and anxiety among media workers.

Media workers have been suffering from stress for ages (MacDonald, Saliba, Hodgins, & Ovington, 2016). At present, this mental health problem might have some connection with the ongoing transformation in the media industry, since work-related stress seems more serious and easily goes beyond the physical and mental limits of media workers, leading to a spate of suicides and tragedies. Three questions are pertinent: Is stress among media workers higher in the current context of Chinese media transformation? What are the specific stressors? How can workers best cope with work-related stress in this context? To address these questions, this research used a comprehensive theoretical framework examining (1) stress in terms of concepts, theories, and newsroom stressors and (2) the context and effects of the Chinese media transformation. Next, we conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with 147 Chinese media workers. This research became the basis of a discussion of the newly emerging and Chinese-specific stressors and an exploration of the particular coping strategies.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Stress: Concepts, Theories, and Newsroom Stressors

Stress-Related Concepts

Stress has been defined by Jones (2016) as "the way our bodies react physically, emotionally, mentally, and behaviorally to any change in the status quo" (p. 3). Anxiety can be defined as "an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, and worry" (Spielberger, 1972, p. 482). These two common concepts of mental health share most of the same physical and psychological symptoms and are often used interchangeably in academic literature and daily conversation (Holmes, 2014). Whereas most acute stress stems from external situations and can be handled, a lot of anxiety results from internal fear and cannot be avoided (Lerner, 2005).

Work-Related Stress Theories

Given that stress can be tackled, its causes and coping strategies for it are the focus of much research (National Institute of Mental Health, 2014). Generally, several theoretical frameworks can be applied for an analysis of work-related stress. The job demand-control model (Karasek, 1979) has dominated research on occupational stress for the past 30 years (Häusser, Mojzisch, Niesel, & Schulz-Hardt, 2010). Other developments, such as the person-environment fit model (Lennon, French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1984) and the effort–reward imbalance theory (Siegrist, 1996), also can explain work-related stress from different perspectives at both individual and organizational levels. However, because these models might not reflect universal values or inclusive theories (Chuang, Hsu, Wang, & Judge, 2015), we need to refer to the specificity of the media industry and the unique features of a Chinese context.

Newsroom Stressors

Regarding work-related stress in the media industry, Wines (1986) proposed the term "newsroom burnout" (p. 34) to identify the stress in journalism as early as 1986 and believed it contributed to early deaths. In the 1990s and 2000s, a number of researchers pointed out that the majority of media workers they surveyed were stressed and suffered typical symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, sleeping disorders, and heart attacks (MacDonald et al., 2016). Based on a content analysis of books and articles written by early media workers, Fedler (2004) concluded that nine factors were primarily responsible for work-related stress: "(1) reputation and its consequences, (2) sacrifice and compromise of news ideals, (3) grueling physical and mental demands, (4) long and irregular hours, (5) poverty, (6) intense competition, (7) insecurity, (8) the calamities witnessed, (9) treatment by colleagues" (p. 82). These factors revealed a comprehensive overview of stress sources for traditional media workers.

In new media, the situation is no better. According to *The New York Times*, the fast pace and intense pressure have led to substantial turnover in digital media organizations, and "burnout starts younger" (Peters, 2011, p. B1) than it does in print journalism. Interviews at BBC regional newsrooms revealed that the spread of "multiskilling," which means working with varied media technologies, in media-convergence newsrooms could "add to stresses on journalists, and affect quality of output" (Wallace, 2013, p. 99). In Finnish newsrooms, older journalists "struggled hard to hold on to their professional values" (Nikunen, 2014, p. 868) during the move toward convergent media characterized by speed and technological skills. Therefore, new variables, such as faster pace, technological multiskills, and media convergence—which are brought about by ICTs—should be added to the traditional nine factors to investigate current newsroom stressors. The specificity and uniqueness of Chinese culture and context also should be taken into consideration in an examination of Chinese newsroom stress.

Chinese Media Transformation: Context and Effects

Context

A historical examination of Chinese media transformation touches on key issues of contemporary politics, ideology, economy, and technology in China, because media transformation is both a causal factor

and a resulting outcome of Chinese reform (Shao et al., 2016). Adopting the "party-state vs. market" paradigm, which was the "dominant framework" (Akhavan-Majid, 2004, p. 553) for analyzing Chinese media transformation and reform, Chu (1994) found that the media industry had always struggled "between change and continuity in ideology, structure, and operation" (p. 4) in the 1942, 1945, and 1956 media reforms since the party's propaganda system was established. According to Zhang (2011), after 1978, when China adopted the policy of reform and opening up comprehensively, media transformation in China could be "divided into three stages known as marketization, conglomeration, and capitalization" (p. 38) which started from the late 1970s, mid-1990s, and 2003, respectively. The first two were mainly driven by commercialization and globalization, respectively, and the ongoing transformation since 2003 is "fundamentally driven by the advances in ICTs, and regulated by political and ideological control" (p. 77).

As for the global context of the ongoing transformation, the crisis facing journalism looms large, with its contours summarized as follows by Zelizer (2015):

> Economically, old business models are in a free fall while new alternatives have not yet solidified a pathway to recovery. Morally, scandals and violations of ethical behavior keep public trust in the news media at all-time lows. Occupationally, the traditional view of what journalism should be—objective, detached, balanced—no longer holds. And technologically, the rise and entrenchment of digital media make most explicit what journalism has always tried to keep in its background—its problems with authoritative storytelling, separation from the public, reluctant response to calls for transparency, cozying up to officialdom. (p. 894)

The general result is "the disappearing of many old and well-established news outlets, the dismissal of many reporters, decrease in circulation and audience" (Mancini, 2013, p. 133). "This squeeze on traditional news outlets and their journalists has resulted in the deterioration of journalism quality" (Van der Haak, Parks, & Castells, 2012, p. 2925).

In this global context, the regional circumstance surrounding the Chinese media is even worse, with a 41.14% decrease in total newspaper sales volume during 2015, a 35.4% decrease in advertising revenues, and a wave of press bankruptcy and dismissals of journalists (Cui, 2016). Meanwhile, ICTs (especially mobiles) have become almost ubiquitous in China (Qiu, 2014). By the middle of 2016, mobile-phone Internet users reached 656 million, and the digital news audience amounted to 579 million, increasing by 5.9% and 8.8%, respectively, from 2015 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2016).

In addition to the fall of journalism and the rise of ICTs, the Chinese media has "specific features which are closely in step with the nation's basic political, social system, and ideology" (Sparks & Reading, 1994, p. 245). Hannah (2013) identifies three key variables of the full media transformation in the post-Communist world: "the level of economic and structural development, the strength of the Communist legacy, and the level of governmental intervention" (p. 647). This conclusion reminds us of one distinguishable feature of media transformation in China: that the government "has a vast network of

ideological control over the content of media" (Fung, 2016, p. 3007), and this control "will continue to shape the media policies in order to maintain its strength of legacy" (Zhang, 2011, p. 158).

Effects

Macroscopically, in addition to facing the same challenges as Western countries in terms of the crisis in journalism, the media in China confront specific or unique obstacles in the current transformational process, such as "the inherent contradictions of media attributes, the administrative segmentation of the media market, and the lack of press freedom" (Shao et al., 2016, p. 27). There are also new kinds of censorship and governmental intervention due to political and ideological control in the digital age (Zhang, 2011) and "strict propaganda restrictions even in commercialized media" (Lin, 2004, p. 118). At the micro level, however, the effects of media transformation on the individual worker—such as work-related stress, anxiety, and excessive workload—are seldom discussed by academicians or practitioners.

On all accounts, given the complexity and specificity of the Chinese context and media, "media transformation does not lend itself to analysis by the application of a single theory or framework" (Zhang, 2011, p. 11). Therefore, previous theoretical frameworks such as the job demand-control model, the person-environment fit model, the effort–reward imbalance theory, and Fedler's nine-factor theory were used comprehensively, together with specific features of the Chinese media transformation, to analyze newly emerging stressors and coping strategies. In sum, we have applied a combinational framework of stress versus media transformation to offer a comprehensive interpretation of Chinese media workers' stress. This is the main goal of the research.

Method

We conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with Chinese media workers from 31 media outlets.[3] A three-step research approach was used:

First, self-administered questionnaires were distributed in both paper and electronic form (1) to gather information on gender, media types, working years, professional positions, and further contacts; (2) to clearly determine whether respondents felt stressed at work (yes/no) and the symptoms and frequency if they did feel stressed; and (3) to invite the respondents for in-depth interviews.

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted by taking notes with those who reported feeling stressed (those who said yes) in the (first step) questionnaires to find out (1) whether and, if so, how the current media transformation increased their stress; (2) what their stressors were; and (3) what coping strategies they used. The three main interview questions were as follows:

[3] The 31 media outlets are composed of 12 newspapers, 10 magazines, five news websites, two social media, a news app, and a publishing press, most of which are based in Hubei Province. All the media outlets are experiencing a transformational process, both tactically and strategically, just like other media in China.

Q1: *Does the current media transformation (transforming media functions, structure and management, etc.) have some connection with your stress at work? Does it increase your stress?*

Q2: *What are the causes for your stress at work? Do the new changes in the media industry and ICTs (crisis in journalism, expanding impact of ICTs, etc.) bring new pressure or stress, and how?*

Q3: *What do you usually do to cope with stress at work?*

Third, data reduction and thematic analysis were applied. First, all the answers, comments, and suggestions from interviewees were collected, analyzed, and summarized. Key points, prominent themes, critical comments, and crucial examples were extracted from the text and were identified and classified into three categories—(1) *yes or no* (whether the media transformation increases stress), (2) *stressors*, and (3) *coping strategies*—targeting the three key questions, respectively. The frequency of each theme or factor was also calculated.

In the first step, questionnaires were distributed at random. In the second step of interviews, we tried to balance interviewees' genders, media-working years, and professional positions to ensure the reliability and validity of the data and information. Questions in both surveys and interviews were revised through pilot tests.

Data Collection and Analysis

From June 2, 2014, to May 1, 2016, we distributed about 200 paper questionnaires and online questionnaires posted in QQ and WeChat groups to Chinese media workers, yielding 147 completed questionnaires.[4] Among the 147 respondents, 122 selected media workers were successfully interviewed. With the three key questions fully discussed and data carefully analyzed, the following results were gathered from surveys and interviews.

In the surveys, when asked to give an unambiguous answer about whether they feel stressed at work, all the survey respondents (100%, N = 147) said yes. Meanwhile, 13.6% (20 respondents) thought their working pressures were high but acceptable, and 86.4% (127 respondents) felt stressed at work at least twice a week and would like to be able to cope with it (see Figure 2). This result was consistent with previous research concerning newsroom burnout and work-related stress, indicating an increase in stress.

[4] QQ is a Chinese instant messaging software with 1 billion registered users in 80 countries. WeChat is a communicating mobile app with more than 1 billion created accounts. Online questionnaires were posted in QQ and WeChat groups where media workers throughout the country gathered via QQ and WeChat accounts, getting e-copies of feedback. Interviews were conducted mainly face-to-face, supplemented by online ones via QQ and WeChat messengers.

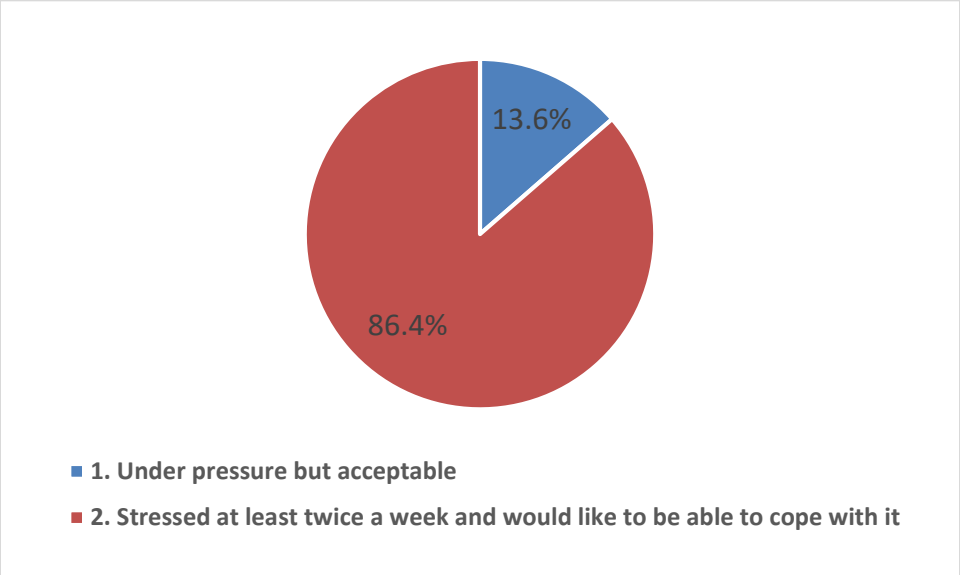

Figure 2. All survey respondents (N = 147) feel stressed at work; 13.6% of respondents (N = 20) feel a high but acceptable level of stress, and 86.4% of respondents (N = 127) feel stressed at work at least twice a week and would like to be able to cope with it.

In the interviews, the ratio of male to female interviewees and the ratio of traditional to new media were generally consistent with the industry as a whole. The average length of time working in media of the 122 interviewees was 19 years. So most of them have experienced the current transformation of the Chinese media industry from the very beginning since 2003 (Zhang, 2011) and have witnessed the arrival of new ICTs as well as the crisis in journalism (see Table 1). From these perspectives, the sample can be somewhat representative.

Table 1. Details of the 122 Interviewees.

Types	Group 1	Group 2	Note
Forms of media they work in	Traditional (*n* = 69)	New (*n* = 53)	Interviewees in both media
Gender	Male (*n* = 83)	Female (*n* = 39)	Interviewees of both genders
Working years	<13 years (*n* = 65)	≥13 years (*n* = 57)	Average 19 years
Others	Random acquaintances and strangers		Ensure reliability

In the interviews, when asked whether they have been experiencing greater work pressure during the process of media transformation since around 2003, 11% (13 interviewees) said there seemed to be no difference, 10% (12 interviewees) thought it was hard to say except for more work and less pay, and 79% (97 interviewees) admitted their work pressures had become greater (see Figure 3). These responses can be viewed as evidence that the current media transformation magnifies work-related stress.

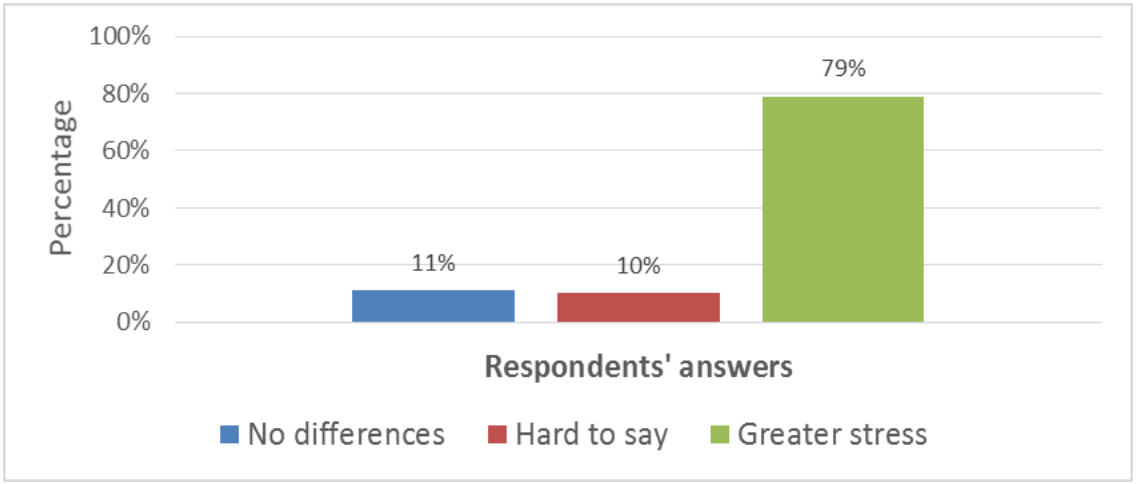

Figure 3. The current media transformation has increased the work pressure of most of the 122 interviewees.

In the interviews, when asked about their stressors, 101 out of 122 interviewees talked about their own perceptions. Some of them mentioned multiple causes of stress; the other 21 respondents either did not reply or thought the stressors were hard to identify. By summarizing and classifying the answers, we found that seven issues were mentioned most often: decrease in salary and wage inequality (mentioned by 41.6%); faster work pace and heavier workload (36.6%); potential of dismissal or job insecurity (35.6%); governmental intervention and content censorship (35.6%); changeable and stricter standards for performance appraisals (29.7%); intense competition inside and outside the organization (21.8%); and a sacrifice of professionalism due to media audience's habit of speed and fragmented reading (19.8%) (see Table 2). Interviewees also offered four other causes of stress: lack of freedom of the press; technological multiskills; online public opinion; and calamities they witnessed. These four were not frequently mentioned and are relatively new. All 11 factors stem from some features of the current media transformation—that is, the crisis in journalism, the impact of ICTs, ideological control, a transforming management, and increasing emergency incidents.

Table 2. Stressors and Their Percentages According to the Interviewees (N = 101).

No.	Stressor	*n*	%	Characteristic of the media transformation
1	Decrease in salary and wage inequality	42	41.6	Crisis in journalism
2	Faster work pace and heavier workload	37	36.6	Impact of ICTs
3	Potential of dismissal or job insecurity	36	35.6	Crisis in journalism
4	Government intervention, content censorship, or news suppression	36	35.6	Political and ideological control
5	Changeable and stricter standards for performance appraisals	30	29.7	Transforming management
6	Intense competition inside and outside the organization	22	21.8	Impact of ICTs
7	A sacrifice of professionalism due to speed and fragmented reading	20	19.8	Crisis in journalism
8	Lack of press freedom	8	7.9	Political and ideological control
9	Technological multiskills	5	5.0	Impact of ICTs
10	Online violence, such as Internet users' insults, and privacy intrusion due to coverage	3	3.0	Impact of ICTs
11	The calamities witnessed, such as earthquakes, explosions, terrorist attacks, and shipwrecks	2	2.0	Increasing emergency incidents

These data are convincing evidence for the need to explore the connection between the current media transformation and media workers' work-related stress. Research findings concluded from these results and illustrated by interviewees' answers are discussed in detail in the next section.

Research Findings

Based on the results and data, there are sound arguments for five findings.

Argument 1

The majority of media workers feel stressed at work in the present context of media transformation. Compared with the traditional nine-factor theory, we have identified two newly emerging stressors (the crisis in journalism and the impact of ICTs) and two Chinese-specific stressors (ideological control and transforming management).

First, the "change–react" definition of stress states that it is a mental or psychological reaction to any change in the status quo (Jones, 2016). Transformation is one of the biggest changes in Chinese journalism today. China is also struggling with dramatic and fundamental social transformation (Guthrie, 2012). According to this change–react theory, a significant transformation in the industry can create or exacerbate stress among media workers. Moreover, respondents' close-ended answers in the surveys (100% and 86.4%) support this argument.

Second, the traditional nine factors described by Fedler (2004) and mentioned earlier are West-oriented and outdated. By contrast, 11 main factors were mentioned by 101 interviewees in the present research, including some special or new factors, such as changeable performance appraisals, a sacrifice of professionalism, lack of freedom of the press, technological multiskills, and online public opinion. All 11 of these newly reported factors result mainly from four characteristics of the current media transformation: a crisis in journalism, advances in ICTs, political and ideological control, and a transforming management (see Table 2). The first two characteristics are newly emerging stressors, whereas the last two are Chinese-specific. The person-environment fit model (Lennon et al., 1984), defined as the degree to which individual and environmental characteristics match, indicates that stress is related to the level of fit of a person's abilities, needs, and demands from the environment and the resources it supplies. Crisis in journalism means a decline in journalism resources, such as salary and numbers of jobs available. Meanwhile, advances in ICTs, ideological control, and a transforming management all exert higher physical and mental demands on media workers. A lower level of fit implies greater stress. From this perspective, the argument is also supported.

Generally, each stressor or factor may trigger some degree of stress or anxiety—for example, the two newly emerging stressors can lead to identity and occupational anxiety, whereas the two Chinese-specific stressors can result in ideological and value anxiety. Typically, all stressors or factors play comprehensive roles together in magnifying the perceived stress.

Argument 2

The two newly emerging stressors can lead to some common anxieties in both Western countries and China, such as identity anxiety due to the crisis in journalism and occupational anxiety due to the impact of ICTs.

Identity Anxiety Due to the Crisis in Journalism

Global journalism is experiencing "a journey without map" because of crisis. In the United States, most journalists even see journalism going in the "wrong direction" (Willnat & Weaver, 2014, p. 3). This uncertain direction of transformation seems to exacerbate media workers' anxiety, because happiness

results from comparison and fear from aimlessness. One interviewee named Nie K,[5] who worked as a managing editor of a news magazine, described the aimless fear like this:

> On one hand, traditional media surely feel the situation is grim and they have to transform; on the other hand, they just don't know how to change, where to turn. The pressure of their plight is strengthened when they simply turn to new media. New media can be replaced quickly by newer media, let alone to think about its profit model, its pros and cons.

Su Z L, an executive editor with 23 years of media work experience, explained how this sense of uncertainty could spread anxiety and stress among his colleagues:

> The winter of the press, the gloom surrounding the profession and its future, falling circulation and advertisement . . . are the daily topics of media workers. A loss of identity, an unknown direction, and an uncertain future will unavoidably exacerbate infectious negative emotions, filling the newsroom with stress and anxiety. This is extremely terrible for a man in his forties, like me.

Identity in this context refers to "the roles, and social group memberships that define who a person is" (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012, p. 69), and the person who proudly speaks of his profession and answers the question of "Who are you?" with his job's title identifies himself with his job (Goffman, 2009). Nevertheless, individuals may suffer from identity anxiety and crisis brought about by profound and irreversible changes (Huskinson & Stein, 2014). In a fundamental crisis and transformation of global journalism, therefore, media workers suffer from identity anxiety especially when they try to look ahead but can only see a gloomy future.

Occupational Anxiety Due to the Impact of ICTs

While identity anxiety prevails in traditional media, occupational anxiety permeates new media. Advances in ICTs bring the new media, and the result is a faster work pace and heavier workload, especially long and irregular hours, which contributes to occupational anxiety. For instance, Zhai Y P, director of a news app, depicted the change from traditional to new media during the transformation:

> After traditional media are transformed to new media, the working time of 24/7 becomes prevalent. Our working pace is compressed from a monthly, weekly, daily publishing process into hour, minute, or even second units, because what we are dealing with now is not periodic press or publications but the ever-updating websites, news apps, and official social media accounts.

[5] The names of the interviewees throughout are semi-anonymous with their family name and the initial letter of given names. Names which are not sensitive information in this research have been semi-structured like this to distinguish, yet not to identify, the individual interviewee.

Many workers at the new media frontier like Zhai need to refresh the electronic screen around the clock. In the new media environment, the workday extends to night, while the work pace gets faster and faster, making media workers always on call. Zhai's colleague Ma X J disclosed their working schedule: "Only in our news app's headline column, there are 24-hour continuous updates and tweets. Breaking news is often released around 2 or 3 a.m. in early mornings. My colleague and I operate it in shifts day and night." Obviously, the work time is highly fragmented. Particularly, with the rise of the mobile Internet, media workers who have been online for 24 hours a day often experience "eating disorders," "irregular sleep," and "work pressure," and they "become physically and mentally exhausted," according to Chen and Li, editors of an official news website.

Furthermore, online public opinion in the form of audience interaction and feedback, which is a new stressor brought about by digital media according to the interviewees, can be another cause of occupational anxiety. Because of online public opinion, an executive chief editor named Zhai X B and his colleagues experienced occupational anxiety throughout the process of "news gathering, writing and releasing":

> We are under pressure when no good news is released. However, the pressure is even greater when we have pieces of valuable news released and spread broadly online, being afraid of offending government officials, afraid of flaws and errors in the coverage, afraid of arousing public opinion, afraid of causing grave consequences, afraid of bringing in online insults from the Internet audience, afraid of privacy intrusion by radical Web users.

In addition, occupational anxiety includes ethical anxiety. According to some interviewees, the pursuit of speed and timeliness inevitably leads to difficulties and mistakes in verifying the news source and its accuracy. Information overload makes it difficult to capture the truth, and, ultimately, "unconsciously fake news" is produced (Luo Y C, a managing editor for more than 15 years). This might cause ethical anxiety among media workers who pursue news ideals.

Argument 3

Compared with Western countries, Chinese media workers also suffer some special or unique anxieties owing to two Chinese-specific stressors: ideological anxiety due to ideological control and value anxiety due to transforming management.

Ideological Anxiety Due to Ideological Control

After examining the party-state's ideological and political censorship in journalism, Zhang (2011) points out that many Chinese media, be they commercial, professional, or political, tend to make use of the party-state's ideological and political needs to further their own economic interests, which is "unique and most challenging" (p. 191). In this case, however, the conflicts between ideological control and the rules of communication and the needs of the audience rise sharply in the context of commercialization and globalization. This example is given by a TV program director, Zhang X L:

> In the 2016 Spring Festival TV Galas, endorsed by the Ministry of Culture and censored in person by top leaders in charge of propaganda and ideology, the government has simply found the best opportunity to convey ideological and propaganda messages to the widest audience. But in the face of marketization and commercialization, the 2016 Galas hosted by the state-owned CCTV was heavily criticized as "a propaganda disaster" and was protested in various ways by a worldwide audience for the lack of novelty value in the gala shows. Finally, all the blame has been put on the staff of CCTV.

Moreover, there seems to be little autonomy for media workers to meet the needs of the audience and rules of communication because of content censorship. In the newsroom, frequent withdrawal of significant news and reports is common practice due to such censorship or news suppression.

Sometimes, the government can even directly intervene in the operation of the media, whose ownership is becoming half public and half private, for political and economic reasons, but takes little responsibility for its decision. For instance, Shao G S, who has 22 years of media work experience, shared this observation:

> On October 28, 2013, under the direct leadership of CCP Shanghai Committee, Shanghai's two leading press groups, Jiefang Daily Group and Wenhui-Xinmin United Press Group, merged to establish China's biggest newspaper company, Shanghai United Media Group. This consolidation was widely thought to aim at driving growth and fortifying ideological control in response to the trend of media transformation.

Essentially, the objective of this kind of consolidation is not to expand but to shrink in the media market. First, the number of newspapers and jobs is reduced because of a decrease in total budget after the merger. Second, there is a redistribution of resources within the new group. The redistribution, however, is driven not by the market but by the governmental power. Thus, talents and resources would flow from the group's highly marketized newspapers, such as *Oriental Morning Post* and *Shanghai Morning Post*, into the official party newspapers, such as *Jiefang Daily* and *Wenhui Daily*. As a result, the more competitive newspapers lose their advantages (Chen, 2013). It is said that the well-known *Oriental Morning Post* will cease publication on January 1, 2017 (Zhou, 2016). This can be seen as evidence of an unsuccessful merger. According to *The New York Times*, a number of similar consolidations led by the party or government in Shanghai and throughout the country over the past 10 years have mostly turned out to be fruitless (Chen, 2013).

The job demand-control model (Karasek, 1979) states that work-related stress increases when high job demands in the form of workload or skill requirements are coupled with lack of control over decision making. Therefore, ideological control, censorship, and multidimensional ownership in the transformational process would increase media workers' stress considerably.

Value Anxiety Due to Transforming Ownership and Management

Since the ownership of Chinese media has been changing from totally state-owned to half public and half private (Shao et al., 2016), the management team appointed by the government usually have political identity and official titles; new employees do not have such status and are only supported by labor contracts. As a result, value conflicts appear between higher and lower staff. According to Huang Y M, who has 23 years of media experience and now is a chief designer, "being public institutions, media outlets nowadays are managed like private enterprises. Leaders pursue greater political power and a higher official title, while employees prefer better income and welfare." It is this difference that causes conflicts of value and interest between management teams and employees. Li Q, a newspaper journalist, summarized the conflicts as follows:

> It is hard to make profit in a declining market, particularly when some want the media to serve the government and others want to serve the audience and customers. And when there is eventually profit, some want to turn over more of it to the government and get promoted in political status, while others want to keep more of it in order to increase income and improve welfare.

Due to their multidimensional ownership and the supreme policy of placing news agencies under government supervision, much of the profit earned by media is handed over to the local or central government. By doing this, some managing leaders gain higher political identity at the expense of most employees' income and welfare. Contradictions between them will become irreconcilable, which causes anxiety on both sides. From a global perspective, the average annual income of Chinese media workers, taking journalists as an example, is roughly one-fifth that of journalists in the United States and the United Kingdom and only one-seventh that of journalists in Japan (QMP, 2015; see Figure 4). According to the effort–reward imbalance model (Siegrist, 1996), when employees make efforts for which they do not feel rewarded, it creates a stressful imbalance. With greater efforts but less rewards, media workers would inevitably suffer stress and anxiety because of conflicting values.

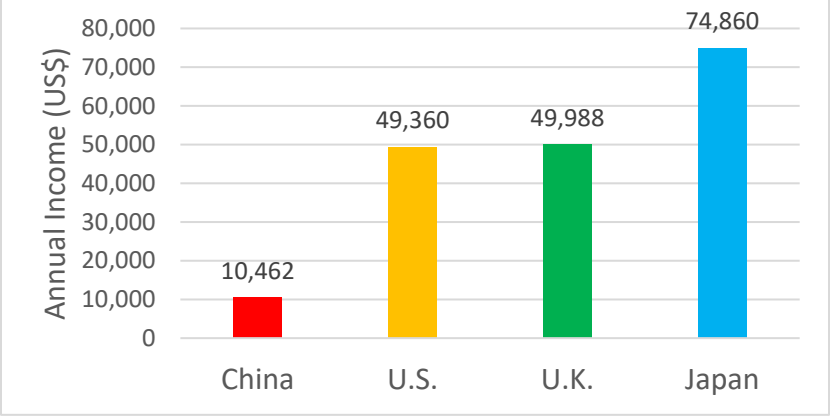

Figure 4. The average annual income of journalists in four nations in 2015.

Argument 4

Since both newly emerging and Chinese-specific stressors are often intertwined and play comprehensive roles, the current media transformation makes work-related stress greater than ever before.

In the context of the crisis in global journalism and developments in ICTs, a transforming media structure and management, coupled with ideological control, magnifies the work-related stress by strengthening the traditional stressors and creating new kinds of stress and anxiety. The open-ended responses by interviewees (79%) support this argument of increased levels of work-related stress and anxiety.

According to an interviewee named Zhao H S, an editor-in-chief with 28 years of media experience, a prevalent model dictates that "transformation increases competition, competition promotes quantification, and quantification magnifies tension." Typically, when more traditional media are heading toward the new media frontier, the competition among them has become more intense. In this case, while the previous performance appraisal of earning work points by publishing news shows no change, the media practitioner's work has been required to adapt to developments in digital media and communication technologies (Xia, 2013). Because of rapid technological development, the concepts, models, methods, and channels of communication processes in digital media keep changing. As a result, in addition to the work points measured by the amount of news published, the numbers of news reprints, clicks, Web hits, page views, and netizen comments and the degree of news scarcity have all become parts of quantitative performance appraisals. A news editor, Wang C, evaluated one of the standards:

> To pay by views and clicks seems a reasonable way, brought by new technology, of inspiring authors and connecting readers. But it will diminish the value of our news and lead to sensationalism eventually. This is a frustrating ethical issue.

Zhou P, a journalist for 12 years, described the ever-changing standards he had experienced:

> Journalists' performance was initially evaluated based on the number of news reports published; and then plus a news rating system; then plus a comprehensive measuring standard including the number of forwards by other media, especially news apps; then plus the scarcity of news sources; and, very recently, in order to win over the media competition, a committee assessing the most valueless news has been established. If some journalist's news is judged as valueless, it would be a great damage to his performance.

In many cases, the changing performance appraisal standards resulted in complaints from interviewees: "there are upper income limits yet no lower limits"; "the person who achieves the least points compared with his peer colleagues in the performance evaluation will be laid off from his position"; sometimes "you can hardly know how much you can get because rules, positions, and standards change all the time" (Xu J, Wang Y T, and He Q, art designers). Furthermore, similar changeable performance

appraisals are widely adopted throughout Chinese media outlets to keep pace with advances in ICTs. According to the change–react model (Jones, 2016), ever-expanding technological development and ever-changing standards for performance appraisals will undoubtedly increase work-related stress among media workers by generating a lasting sense of tension.

Argument 5

In the Chinese context, coping strategies arising from the interviews can be applied socially, organizationally, and personally.

Socially, what we need urgently is legitimate protection of the right to work and rights in work. With the continuous innovation of ICTs, especially artificial intelligence, and precise standardization of media management, the work of media workers has trended toward despecialization and deskilling to some extent, becoming more and more substitutable (Xia & Li, 2016). Like other common laborers, media workers today are in a weak bargaining position in labor relations. They need to be protected from unfair dismissal, arbitrary pay cuts, low wages, long and irregular working hours, and a sense of insecurity and uncertainty in life and work, thereby ensuring a long-term sustainable development of the whole industry.

Organizationally, a classified media management and standardized personnel system is extremely necessary in the current Chinese media industry. Confucius said, "Anxiety lies in inequality rather than scarcity." The existing Chinese policy of placing news outlets under government supervision and the prevailing Western principle of news resources allocated by market should be applied separately to different media, ensuring a fair and reasonable income distribution and reducing conflicts of value and interest between leaders and employees. As two former editors-in-chief suggest: "This requires a clear management distinction between official media teams and market-oriented media groups based on which official media are to act as mouthpieces for the party-state and market-oriented media to fully compete in the market" (Jiang Z S, more than 30 years, former president and editor-in-chief). And "a professional personnel system of value-created, performance-oriented, skill-based assessment ought to be established and implemented" (Cai H D, former general manager and editor-in-chief). These basic initiatives are particularly important in a transforming context.

Individual efforts can be made to relieve stress. Although this article mostly focuses on the external causes and solutions to media workers' stress and anxiety, the problem is still very much an internal one that can be addressed via workers' self-adjustment, self-regulation, and self-decompression. Three key issues mentioned frequently by our interviewees could be valuable, especially in Chinese culture: (1) identify and follow your core values, even regarding news ideals; (2) mix in pleasures and diversify your income; (3) get personal, organizational, and social support. Some interviewees also recommended learning from workers in other industries.

Discussion

The five arguments in our research findings contribute to previous research to some degree. The first argument not only provides new convincing evidence for the fact that the majority of media workers are suffering work-related stress but points out the relationship between this stress and the current media transformation, identifying the newly emerging and Chinese-specific stressors by comparing them with Fedler's previous nine-factor theory. The second argument mainly focuses on how the two newly emerging stressors, the crisis in journalism and the impact of ICTs, strengthen common stress and anxiety, such as identity and occupational anxiety. The third argument primarily concentrates on how the two Chinese-specific stressors, ideological control and transforming management, trigger special or unique stress such as ideological and value anxiety. The fourth argument indicates that all the stressors, both newly emerging and Chinese-specific ones, tend to play roles comprehensively, not separately or singly, which makes the work-related stress greater than ever before. The last argument proposes some specific solutions that arise from this particular research and the Chinese context. All these findings, enriched by detailed information obtained from the interviewees, have responded to the three research questions.

However, regarding the first argument, the question concerning work-related stress in connection with media transformation was directly introduced by the researchers, not provided by open answers from interviewees. Although the questions were open-ended and semistructured, being prone to bias was a limitation of this research. Another bias seemed to lie in the answers by respondents to the questionnaire: when asked to give an unambiguous answer about whether they felt stressed at work, all respondents (100%, N = 147) said yes. Faced with a crisis in journalism, the respondents were prone to give a biased complaint rather than an objective response. Therefore, more efforts should be made to minimize the bias from both the interviewers and interviewees in research method and design.

Overall, the present study provides a new theoretical framework for analyzing media transformation by examining the mental health of its leaders instead of exploring media transformation's significance, direction, or possible outcome. Specifically, rather than adopt the usual party-state-versus-society or party-state-versus-market framework, the study endorses a more human-oriented perspective.[6] It might deepen our understanding of not only the influence of media reform and transformation but the sacredness of the life and dignity of humans in the context of social change and technology expansion.

Regarding this social problem, another critical problem arises: Compared with workers in other social arenas or industries, do media workers endure greater stress in the context of the current social transformation and ICT advancement? Or do they simply make more complaints and appeals because they

[6] The human-oriented perspective, which prioritizes people's needs, desires, and conditions over the development of an organization, industry, or even the nation as a whole, was first introduced by the ancient Chinese politician and thinker Guan Zhong (723–645 BC). This was during the Spring and Autumn Period, and emphasized the fundamental position and status of humans. The human-oriented perspective was later extensively advocated by Chinese thinkers such as Mencius, Jia Yi, and Zhang Dai, and Western philosophers such as Protagoras, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx. Now it is widely used as a term in management and psychology (Zhang & Fang, 2004).

have the power and access to speak in public? This problem, which can be another limitation of present study and a direction of future research, may offer a profound understanding of social transformation as well as critical thinking about technological advances.

Conclusion

"All media are extensions of our human bodies, senses, and minds"—McLuhan (1994, p. 116) made this argument half a century ago. New media, nevertheless, can also imprison human bodies and minds. New changes, such as the crisis in journalism, feeding the need for speed and technological multiskills, or even the rise of robot journalism, have been mixing with old relationships such as ethical anxiety and calamities witnessed, leading to widespread mental health problems and even tragedies. This issue becomes such a serious social problem that the transforming media industry has destroyed some of its best people, yet there is no way to calculate the exact number. Some media workers have collapsed, and others have become sleepless, unwanted in relationships, alcoholics or drug addicts; still others have died young, sometimes by suicide. For professionals to defend themselves in a changing world of technological explosion, we must gain a deeper understanding of this social problem.

By conducting surveys and in-depth interviews, this study examines the relationship between work-related stress and the current media transformation, which are the two critical factors contributing to the social problem. Research findings demonstrate that the current media transformation could magnify work-related stress, and 11 intensively reported factors, which stem from four social environmental stressors, are revealed. The study also explores the specific coping strategies mentioned by the interviewees.

Particularly, instead of the typical party-state-versus-market framework, the study endorses a more human-oriented perspective to analyze the hotly debated media transformation by examining the mental health of its representatives. Although prone to bias in methodology, the study helps us better understand the special or unique challenges that Chinese media workers face as the current transformation deepens. It also provides comprehensive proposals for Chinese media workers to defend themselves in the context of the crisis in journalism, compounded by technological explosion. Given the complexity of Chinese media transformation, we do not expect that this problem will be easily solved. With these proposals, however, we do believe that a pursuit of economic and social benefits on the basis of fair and reasonable income distribution, a pursuit of news ideals on the basis of strong occupational security, and a pursuit of sound media transformation on the basis of solid talent pools will pull many media workers out of stress and increase their courage to embrace future changes.

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Journalism's Deep Memory: Cold War Mindedness and Coverage of Islamic State

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This article considers the coverage of and by Islamic State in conjunction with a mind-set established during the Cold War. It illustrates the degree to which U.S. journalism shapes coverage of Islamic State via interpretive tenets from the Cold War era as well as Islamic State's use of the same tenets in coverage of itself. The article raises questions about the deep memory structures that undergird U.S. news and about their travel to distant, unexpected, and often dissonant locations.

Keywords: journalism, memory, Cold War, Islamic State

Collective memory's redo of the past for present aims has always been about more than just remembering, with tasks associated with identity formation, power consolidation, and community building at the fore when invoking the past. But what happens when memory's agents strategically fixate on patterns of action and understanding that do not reflect how people think they engage with others? This is what has happened with one kind of memory in U.S. journalism—that of the Cold War—as replayed in one kind of current coverage—that associated with Islamic State. Coverage of and from Islamic State follows clear tenets set in place during the Cold War, raising questions about the deep memory structures that undergird U.S. news and about their travel to distant, unexpected, and often dissonant locations.

On Collective Memory and Journalism

Collective memory's role has been readily hailed for providing a kind of history-in-motion, one that reconfigures rather than retrieves information, sees the past in the present rather than as colonized and separate, and unabashedly refracts events and issues through a subjective, particular lens rather than an objective, universal one (Halbwachs, 1952/1992). With vast and intricate memory work accomplished

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all the time by institutional settings that have little to do with memory per se—like politics, law, and education—memory silently and strategically permeates collective life, allowing individuals in such institutions to impact engagement with the present by tweaking how and what about the past is remembered.

Journalism is no exception to these circumstances, although it constitutes an odd vehicle of memory (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014). Known most obviously for its play to the immediate, instantaneous, and topical, the news provides a first record of events, which is supposed to turn to others like historians for more prolonged engagement. Memory, aligned with subjectivity, emotions, and the imagination, is not expected to surface in the news, and journalism's affiliation with a certain kind of modernity—in which expectations about growing the so-called civilized world depend on rational, present-oriented journalism—makes this worse.

The tension this creates grows because collective memory pops up when it is least expected. Rearranging group loyalties at will and providing clear cues for what's worth defending and preserving—what Susan Sontag (2003) called "collective instruction" (p. 84)—is not linear, logical, or rational. Instead, it represents only parts of the past and rarely displays fidelity to its so-called true features (Zelizer, 1995). This work consequently makes odd bedfellows of disparate events and issues, constituting, as John Gillis (1994) once noted, "tools we think with, not things we think about" (p. 5). News coverage thus expertly blends references to old and new, remembered and experienced, familiar and strange in ways that make the distinction between past and present less relevant than ever before. It is no surprise, then, that journalists look backward all the time, despite the fact that doing so goes against the grain of what they are expected to do.

Looking backward takes on different forms across the news, although the reliance on memory tends to spike when journalists need to make sense of crisis and the instability of its unfolding events and issues. As they struggle, not always successfully, to situate what is happening in a larger frame, they engage in "double time" (Zelizer, 1993), which allows them to speak in both present and past, connecting the here and now with a certain there and then and fastening in place strategic memory work. Thus, *The New York Times* speaks of "watching Iraq, seeing Vietnam" (Whitney, 2003), whereas a *TIME* magazine cover depicts a Depression-era bread line under the title "The New Hard Times" (2008).

This makes even journalism's most prosaic memory displays intentional and potentially suspect. Rewrites, revisits to old events, and commemorative or anniversary journalism all work because they provide stability at the level of shared meanings, even if the information itself is skewed or wrong. Thus, when journalists build analogies, comparisons, or yardsticks between seemingly dissimilar events and issues from past and present, it is worth noting what has been included and excluded because they are cues to what strategically lies underneath.

Moreover, such forms, as Grusin´s (2010) work on premediation has shown, often inject the past–present relation with a futurist orientation, particularly when crisis is involved. Papacharissi (2014) elaborated on the anticipatory affective activity on social media that helps shape an event at its inception, whereas Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Neiger (2015) showed how temporal orientation is creatively managed

across new and old media. All demonstrate that events are regularly shaped in systematic ways before they take on a recognizable shape as news stories.

Although these obvious mnemonic forms underscore how much journalism looks backward, its less obvious forms deserve a closer look. This is where one finds the deep-seated parallels used all the time to shape the news. In this regard, Cold War mindedness, the mind-set that accompanied the Cold War, becomes relevant. Although it is one among many such deep memories undergirding the news, its contents fit current circumstances particularly well.

The Persistence of Cold War Mindedness

Cold War mindedness offered a way of making sense of nearly five decades of enmity between the United States and the Soviet Union.[2] Relying largely on journalism's involvement, it capitalized on the fact that the public knew little of foreign affairs and would be slow to challenge journalistic claims. As journalists were subjected to loyalty oaths, special favors in exchange for sympathetic coverage, subtle censorship and red-line edits on news copy, ties between U.S. government officials and journalists cohered around a recognition of U.S. exceptionalism, with journalists often becoming eager spokespeople for those in power. As the trade journal *Editor and Publisher* avowed in 1948, "American newspapermen are Americans first and newspapermen second" (Security Problem, 1948, p. 36).

Cold War mindedness constituted a stance on the world that was driven by homogeneity and conformity. Its dissemination rode on acts of compliance, deception, stereotypy, black-and-white thinking, polarization, simplification, and demonization that produced a worldview with distinct characteristics. As Daniel Boorstin then observed, the United States could accommodate only one enemy at a time, and the more clearly it was able to distinguish itself from its nemesis, the better equipped it would be to carry out its aims. Most U.S. citizens, wrote Boorstin (1960, p. 36), understood the Russians by "lump[ing] bolshevism with anarchism, syndicalism, socialism, free love, atheism and other unfamiliar notions into a single explosive parcel." It reflected "a center of poverty, oppression, misery, aristocracy and decadence" (p. 24). By extension, the United States was seen in polar opposite terms that celebrated its exemplary nature.

Cold War mindedness thus rode upon a packet of simple and mutually supportive interpretive tenets that strategically encouraged individuals to make sense of the period in particular ways. More far-reaching and deep-seated than either a simple interpretive frame or social construction, these tenets were pulled together to drive social engagement across the board, producing acquiescent politics, rigid family structures, firmly marked gender roles, uniform standards of fashion, and homogeneous popular culture.

[2] This study is taken from a book-length project analyzing the establishment of a Cold War mind-set in mainstream U.S. news media during the Cold War's formative years (1947–1962). The project tracks the mind-set's dimensions and maintenance in coverage over time, particularly its importation into coverage of multiple post–Cold War conflicts. Islamic State constitutes one example. For this article, media relays by Islamic State from 2014 to the present were analyzed alongside the analysis of U.S. media relays during the same time period.

In news, it involved conforming to a particular narrative view of the world that relied on accepting certain strategic notions of enemy formation, abiding by specific expectations of public action during conflict, and upholding carefully crafted attitudes about war (Zelizer, 2016a). Together, the dimensions of the deep structure that resulted worked to contextualize, rationalize, and support the claims of the Cold War mind-set, helping to explain how, in Dallas Smythe and Hugh Wilson's (1968) words, a "system designed for the free expression of opinion accepted a cold war propaganda rhetoric out of touch with the free world" (p. 67).

Unseen War Is Real

One central support for Cold War mindedness is the idea that war does not have to be visible to be believed. Fostering the notion that unseen war is real if enough people with power will it so, invisible war was central to the Cold War's sustenance as a way of making sense of the world. Limited to the U.S./USSR nexus and by definition sidestepping the various physical conflicts raging across Asia during the same time period, Cold War mindedness wrestled with the fact that there was no obvious war to be had—no battles, wounded, corpses, or concrete physical skirmishes between the United States and the Soviet Union—just an information campaign that took place largely through the media. Coined by one journalist, Herbert Swope, and given wide circulation by another, Walter Lippmann (1947), the Cold War was less a war than a label or an idea. Journalists of the time thus needed to imagine war to signal its existence to the public, constructing into being conflict that could not be shown through journalism's obvious tools of information relay.

The symbolic dimensions of an unseen war, what Mary Kaldor (1990) called "the imaginary war," thus took flight. Phrases such as "the iron curtain" and "containment" signaled a blocking of the free flow of information, whereas "the Soviet bloc" or "the evil empire" connoted imperviousness to the West, enhanced when juxtaposed with the moral clarity of a phrase such as "the free world." As the plural pronouns *we* and *our* peppered news discourse, amorphous descriptors like "communist infiltration," "counterinsurgency," "sphere of influence," and "power vacuum" offered little understanding of the human impact of the actions being discussed. Images in the news reflected similar parameters: In July 1948, *Life*'s coverage of the Berlin blockade featured a two-page city map, with an illustrated barrier at its western boundary alongside the caption "Blockade of Berlin is shown symbolically in this map, with American, British and French sectors enclosed within an imaginary wall" (Hughes, 1948, pp. 72–73). The fact that *Life* imagined into existence a Berlin wall some 13 years before it was erected speaks to imagination's potency in lending clarity to the Cold War's ambiguous cues.

Unseen war's persistence—consonant with Foucault's (1977) elaboration of Jeremy Bentham's notion of the panopticon and the unseen acts of surveillance, control, and punishment that displaced medieval spectacles of suffering—had multiple long-lasting effects on journalism: It encouraged simplicity, muddied the factual landscape, and invited a conceptual foundationalism that drove the formula for coverage of later conflicts. Although the struggle for the "minds of men" had obvious vehicles—Voice of America and Radio Free Europe—it had less obvious ones, too. The very necessity of imagining war depended on all of U.S. journalism's ready participation, so much so that the very idea of information relay became grounded in a repair to what could not be seen. It is no surprise, then, that its specter helped describe struggles as wide ranging as the Israeli–Lebanese conflict of 1982, the 1983 U.S. invasion

of Grenada, and the 1989 U.S.–Panama conflict, where officials in each case restricted access to military operations and made war's imagination critical to its reception and public support. Reporters learned that what they "could not see they imagined" (Adler, 1991, p. 408).

Cold War mindedness did not disappear when the Cold War ended in 1989. Instead, it went underground, surfacing over time as an available interpretive frame for multiple crises in search of meaning. It is here that it has functioned as deep memory, even though it now involves terrains of a different geographic, political, and symbolic order. Ranging across struggles for human rights, the economic order, the environment, world health, and population control, among others, multiple conflicts have been willed into existence via unseen war and its assists—smart bombs, drone attacks, digital monitoring, collateral damage, and virtual war.

Even when conflict is real, its journalistic treatment can make it seem less so. Thus, U.S. TV coverage of the 1991 Gulf War looked like a Nintendo game with unmanned live cameras and computer-driven graphics, but no depicted war (Zelizer, 1992). The 2003 U.S. war on Iraq was described as a "see-no-evil" unseen war (Kamiya, 2005), whereas the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey prompted one journalist to tweet whether the absence of television meant that the coup had failed or that "in 21st century you don't need to capture TV anymore?" (Pfeffer, 2016, para. 1).

It is no surprise, then, that Cold War mindedness—complicated by the lingering trauma associated with Vietnam, revived after 9/11, disrupted by the 2003 war on Iraq—has surfaced in conflicts involving the United States both explicitly and implicitly since 1989. Much of this has involved the former object of U.S. enmity: In 2008, *TIME* magazine called then-budding tensions with Russia "a new cold war," depicting a masked Russian soldier raising his fist on its front cover ("How to Stop," 2008) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. "How to Stop a New Cold War" (2008).

From the 2010s on, more direct comparisons prevailed across enterprises such as *The New York Times*, the Brookings Institution, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *The Nation* (Bittner, 2016; Charap & Shapiro, 2014; Soergel, 2016; Vanden Heuvel, 2016). Other "enemies"—Cuba or Islamic terrorists in Mumbai—received similar journalistic treatment, but much recent attention has focused on enmity in the Middle East. As *The New York Times* said of building tensions with Iran, "what worked in the Cold War will work with the mullahs" (Sanger, 2010, p. WK3). Or, in *Al Jazeera*'s view, "For Washington, Iran is the ideal regional enemy. If it had not existed, the Pentagon would have created something close" (Bishara, 2010, para. 20).

The repair to Cold War mindedness has experienced a revival due to current information and military environments, which highlight the coexistence of hierarchical and networked structures of meaning (Ronfeldt & Arquila, 2001). The combination of irregular warfare and information technology constitutes what Arquila and Ronfeldt labeled "netwar"—modes of conflict that stop short of total war, but whose combatants organize, strategize, and communicate along network lines that are "'largely about 'knowledge'—about who knows what, when, where, and why, and about how secure a society, military, or other actor is regarding its knowledge of itself and its adversaries" (Arquila & Ronfeldt, 1996, p. 4).

This fusion of conflict's informational and physical dimensions offers conditions for information relay that are well suited to the deep contents of the Cold War mind-set. As Ronfeldt and Arquila (2001) argued, effective networks require "a grounded expression of people's experiences, interests and values" (para. 63), communicating a sense of identity, belonging, cause, purpose, and mission. Cold War mindedness provides one such script for collective action, where it "can help keep people connected in a network whose looseness makes it difficult to prevent defection" (Ronfeldt & Arquila, 2001, para. 64).

Thus, it is no surprise that invoking Cold War mindedness also happens unexpectedly, in media systems from afar. Although not the only way of making sense of the news, most recently it has surfaced in the coverage associated with Islamic State, including both U.S. news outlets old and new alongside Islamic State's relays of itself.

Cold War Redux: U.S. Versus Islamic State

Although the activities of Islamic State go far beyond the United States, the primacy of U.S. media efforts in the global flow of news warrants particular attention when considering the media and Islamic State. In that the West's "primary concern in the [Middle East] has always been containment: of Soviet ambition, of Arab radicalism, of both Sunni and Shia Islamism, of Iraq and Iran, of the 'axis of resistance'" (Harling & Birke, 2015, para. 17), the reliance of these aims on media activity invites a parallel with the Cold War. Labeled "magical thinking" (Shatz, 2015), U.S. engagement with Islamic State is unlike that of the Cold War in that Islamic State's war is real and incurs casualties and damages, but both its information component and responses to it are central to its capacity for action. In this regard, media coverage of and by Islamic State—both its internal and external media activity—offers a classic example of Cold War mindedness.

According to insurgency scholar Neville Bolt (2012), current media engagement between those for and against Islamic State exemplifies "the weight of the media [turning] against the media" (p. 24) in an intense struggle for information dominance. As the United States and Islamic State engage in the irregular and largely information-driven battles of "open online warfare, on a battlefield chosen by . . . jihadist[s]" (Fisher, 2015, para. 6), they find themselves in an environment enriched by Cold War tenets. With netwar encouraging both sides to pursue strategic aims online and off-line, the current environment rides upon information's successful delivery via individuals whose ideological positions are expected to be consonant with official aims. This makes facilitators of information relay strategically instrumental: "The media people are more important than the soldiers" (quoted in Miller & Mekhennet, 2015, p. A1), noted one former Islamic State media operative. As a BBC correspondent said of Western journalists, filtering information about Islamic State is not "just a case of doing challenging journalism—a good thing—but of demonstrating appropriate moral outrage. We had to show which side we were on" (Wood, 2016, para. 45).

U.S. Coverage

On the U.S. side, repairing to Cold War mindedness has helped journalists take on their role as warriors in an information war. U.S. information efforts—hailed, like those of other Western nations, as stopgap measures that "maintain a foothold . . . until there can be greater . . . military involvement" (Cobain, Ross, Evans, & Mahmood, 2016, para. 10)—have focused on "deploying mostly symbolic tools" (Harling & Birke, 2015, para. 28). Under the motto "media is more than half the battle" (Allendorfer & Herring, 2015, para. 4), the official efforts of agencies like the U.S. State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications—emblematized by the "Think Again Turn Away" campaign and its ill-fated 2015 film *Welcome to Islamic State Land*—have been less than successful. Intent on what U.S. deputy defense secretary Robert Work called "dropping cyberbombs" (quoted in Sanger, 2016, p. A1), U.S. government officials thus repeatedly call on the media for assistance. In U.S. President Barack Obama's view,

> The media needs to help in this . . . how we report on this has to maintain perspective and not empower in any way these terrorist organizations or elevate them in ways that make it easier for them to recruit or make them stronger. (quoted in Borchers, 2015, para. 3)

Although Obama's responses to Islamic State have fostered multiple critiques—a *New York Post* cover (see Figure 2) showed him blindfolded ("Islamic Terror," 2015)—the need for media involvement has been ongoing.

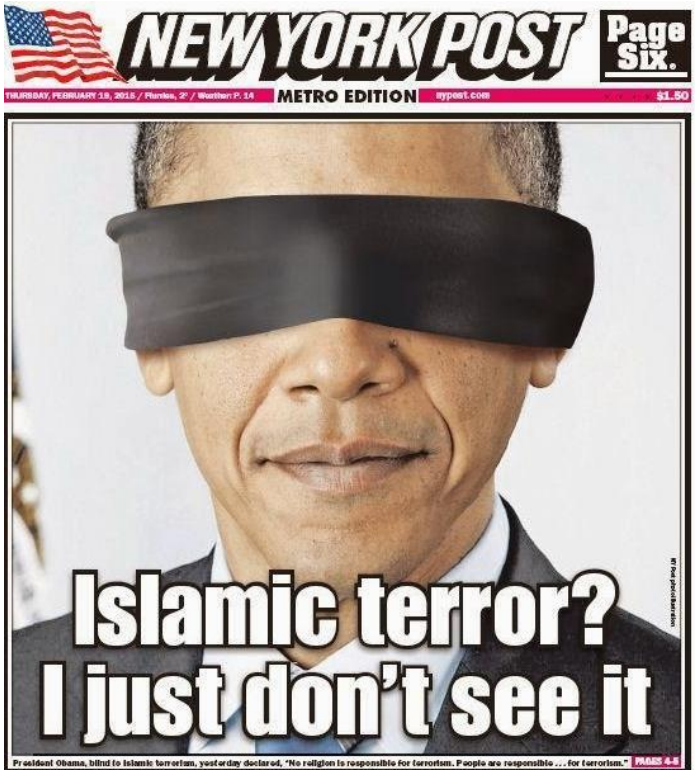

Figure 2. "Islamic Terror?" (2015).

It is thus no surprise that FBI director James Comey described Islamic State media units as "military targets" (Miller & Mekhennet, 2015), with the Cold War parallel cited repeatedly by both government officials and media outlets: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry pronounced the Cold War a simple version of the fight against Islamic State (Taylor, 2015), whereas *Huffington Post* labeled the group "today's Cold War Moscow" after an attack on an Orlando nightclub ("Orlando Shows," 2016). Even the much-discussed March 2016 video reappearance of Islamic State captive British photographer John Cantlie was used to focus on the conflict's reduction to a media kiosk's bombing in Mosul, Iraq: Despite massive expenditures, he observed sarcastically, the United States "has begun targeting not tanks, not trucks, not even the mujahedeen but Islamic State media kiosks" ("British Journalist," 2016). As predicted by early discussions of netwar, media outlets thus remain central to the prosecution of activities between Islamic State and the United States.

Much like U.S. policy, U.S. coverage of Islamic State has been anything but consistent. As officials have gone back and forth in terms of how much coverage they deem effective and at which point it becomes more beneficial to Islamic State than to the free flow of information, journalists have largely swayed with their changing evaluations. Sometimes the media "followed the group's every move and, at times, breathlessly reported the group's growth and progress" (Fryer-Biggs, 2015, para. 5). Other times,

information was conspicuously absent, as the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists noted:

> In late 2013, when 30 journalists were missing in Syria, there was virtually no coverage of the problem, little public awareness that Islamic State fighters were actively searching for journalists and humanitarian workers to abduct, and less recognition of the rise of a group that has now emerged as a serious international security threat. (Simon, 2014, para. 2)

Along the way, news outlets entertained and then either embraced or rejected different kinds of news-making strategies—media blackouts, self-censoring or withholding certain information, developing alternative news sources, increasing a reliance on local stringers.

No definitive journalistic strategy exists across news outlets. Even when counterpropaganda efforts were announced by U.S. officials in early 2016, there was little media buy-in: *The Washington Post* described them as "more like shuffling the deck chairs rather than introducing new, proven strategies," and a meeting with executives of new media outlets—YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft—produced the clear message that they did not share official U.S. government aims (Miller & DeYoung, 2016).

In part, the unevenness of U.S. media efforts in covering Islamic State has had to do with the fact that most U.S. journalists have had little to no access to territory under Islamic State's control. A lack of ready availability to sources of information other than those supplied by Islamic State has meant the absence of a reliable, independent journalistic enterprise in the areas under the group's control. As BBC correspondent Paul Wood (2016) noted, "in a civil war, information, like humanitarian aid, is rarely neutral. ISIS understood that. They did not want Western journalists in Syria" (para. 9). Thus, when Islamic State operatives regularly bypass conventional media outlets—"ISIS fighters," said one news executive, "do not give interviews. They speak directly into the camera" (quoted in Simon & Libby, 2015, para. 9)—or engage in their own information distribution on social media, U.S. media outlets have revealed no clear strategy in dealing with them.

Nonetheless, knowledge remains the path to victory in this environment—what Google legal chief David Drummond called "the better way" (quoted in Flynn, 2016). Waging an information war extends from the most conventional news platforms—*The New York Times* and CNN—to the most marginal—VICE News, Vocativ, Mashable, and BuzzFeed. Even Anonymous declared its own war on Islamic State under the moniker OpISIS. Often the weight of attention provided by media outlets has been different from that displayed on other kinds of news stories: For instance, as legacy news outlets scaled back on Islamic State coverage due to budgetary and safety issues, "newer news organizations . . . [expanded] their mandate to fill the void" (Moses, 2014, para. 2).

Regardless of the fluctuations in coverage, the tone adopted by U.S. media outlets has been largely uniform. Headlines repeatedly underscore the value of information, assuring the U.S. public that

media outlets are providing what is needed. *The Atlantic* considered "What ISIS Really Wants" (Wood, 2015), whereas *Newsweek* asked "Can ISIS Take Down Washington?" (Stein, 2016) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. "What ISIS Really Wants" (2015) and "Can ISIS Take Down Washington?" (2016).

With expected regularity, CNN, MSNBC, and Vox each separately claimed to offer "everything you need to know about" Islamic State (Beauchamp, 2015; Green & Thompson, 2015; Kohlmann, 2015), afterward providing updates on what was considered imperative information for the moment. The centrality of the Cold War parallel in this environment reached new heights in August 2016, when U.S. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump announced his plan to fight Islamic State: As he called for political intelligence screening of would-be immigrants to the United States, CNN ran the headline, "For Trump, Cold War = ISIS" (Collinson, 2016) (see Figure 4).

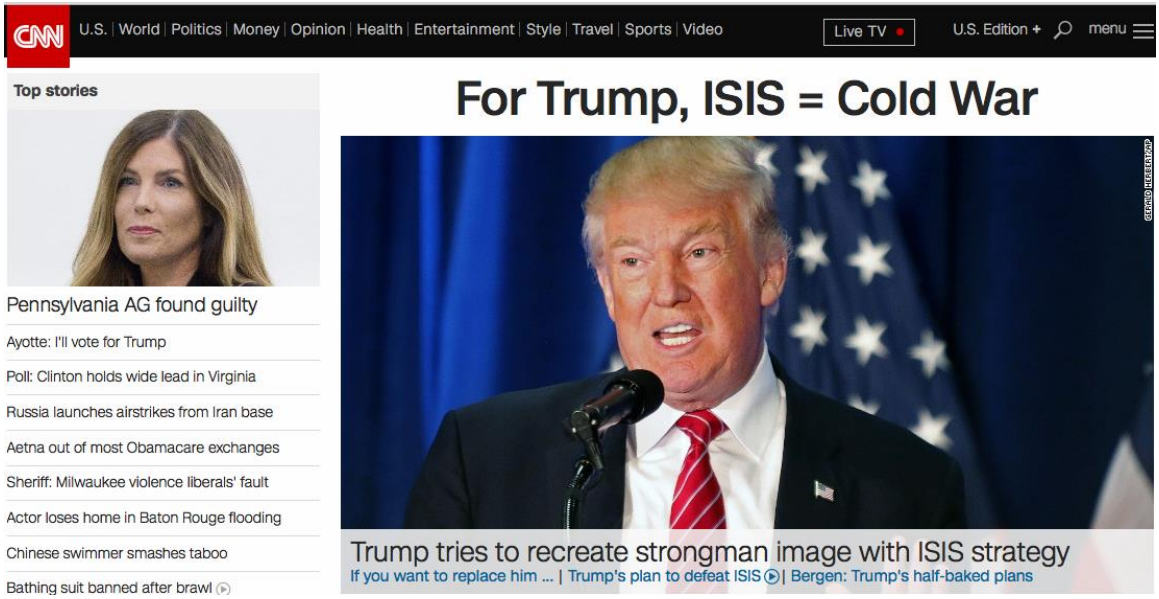

Figure 4. "For Trump, ISIS = Cold War" (Collinson, 2016).

Realistic relays have not necessarily been part of the picture of U.S. coverage. Instead, as evident during the Cold War, "the worse things get, the more we seem willing to describe things as we wish they might be rather than as they are" (Harling & Birke, 2015, para. 5). The speculation and imagination associated with unseen war thus prevail.

Examples abound: CNN featured a close-up of a Michigan Muslim woman in its video about Islamic State recruitment, although she was unconnected to the group (Rodriguez, 2016). The appellation of the "Iraqi army" referenced what was in effect "a worn-down collection of abused and often corrupt men who fled as the Islamic State advanced" (Harling & Birke, 2015, para. 5). A column in *The Washington Post* (see Figure 5) suggested that Halloween costumes be used to fight Islamic State (Moyer, 2014). NBC affixed a Defense Ministry video of an unnamed site's bombing to a story that it said was about fleeing Islamic State fighters (Bruton, 2016).

Figure 5. "ISIS Halloween Costumes Are What We Need" (Moyer, 2014).

Even VICE News played to an unseen and largely imagined war when it screened video it had obtained from the head-cam of a dead IS fighter (*What It's Really Like*, 2016). Showing the fighters in disarray, the found footage was described as shot in northern Iraq before the fighter died while battling Kurdish troops in March 2016. VICE News advertised the video as "unlike IS propaganda" because it showed "chaos, panic and the fighters retreating."

The video is telling in that it was exemplary of how U.S. journalists typically respond to the group, using unseen war to their interpretive advantage. Although it portrayed only a small unit of Islamic State fighters, its depiction of disorganization was generalized into verbal accounts of the group's broader ineptitude. Filled with sporadic battle scenes and hesitant responses to them—in one scene, a fighter shouted at another to grab a rocket, but was met with hesitation and repeated questions—much of the video showed the fighters struggling to figure out how to use different kinds of weapons and fighting

among themselves as they clumsily fashioned a response to incoming fire. The fear, panic, and confusion that they exhibited thus generated a pronounced sense of disarray.

Although it remains unclear how much generalization is possible from what the footage showed, the absence of alternative footage enhanced its stand-in value for understanding a largely unseen war. Thus, as the video was disseminated and replayed, news outlets focused on the story of Islamic State's general ineptness. Detail targeted the sources of its ineffectuality by both comparing the film with the group's official relays and by evaluating the depicted conditions for battle:

> Far from the videos produced by the Islamic State extolling the glory of their fighters, the headcam footage shows stress, confusion, and ultimately defeat. It also highlights the obvious lack of training and preparation on the part of ISIS. (Galbreath, 2016, para. 4)

The Washington Post carefully focused on the fighters' lack of experience and training, but nonetheless opined that "it is remarkable . . . how disorganized the small team is, given that the assault was probably planned" (Gibbons-Neff, 2016, para. 6). *Gawker* touted the film as more authentic than the Islamic State relays that "take the form of glamorous propaganda" (O'Connor, 2016, para. 2), whereas *Vocativ*, displaying a tweet calling the fighters "a hot mess," titled its discussion of the film "the one video ISIS doesn't want you to see" (Kavanaugh, 2016). After the fact, the video was widely lampooned on Twitter, where it was said to be the "true face" of Islamic State (Kavanaugh, 2016).

Across U.S. platforms, then, a single depiction of a set of bungled actions on the part of an Islamic State fighter unit was presumed representative of a war whose small battles had largely eclipsed depiction. Emblematic of how U.S. media outlets have used the suggestibility of unseen war to tweak coverage of Islamic State, their ensuing interpretations fit a larger story of the group's inevitable defeat.

Orientation of U.S. coverage to the idea that unseen war is real has thus rendered its coverage of Islamic State far more familiar than it might otherwise have been. As the *Columbia Journalism Review* noted almost two years ago, "[U.S.] media have focused on threats at home and abroad, while invoking the comforting myth of America's military prowess" and accommodating "official, often anonymous sources" and a "startling lack of evidence" (Colhoun, 2014, para. 2). No wonder that it titled its discussion "Why ISIS Coverage Sounds Familiar" (see Figure 6).

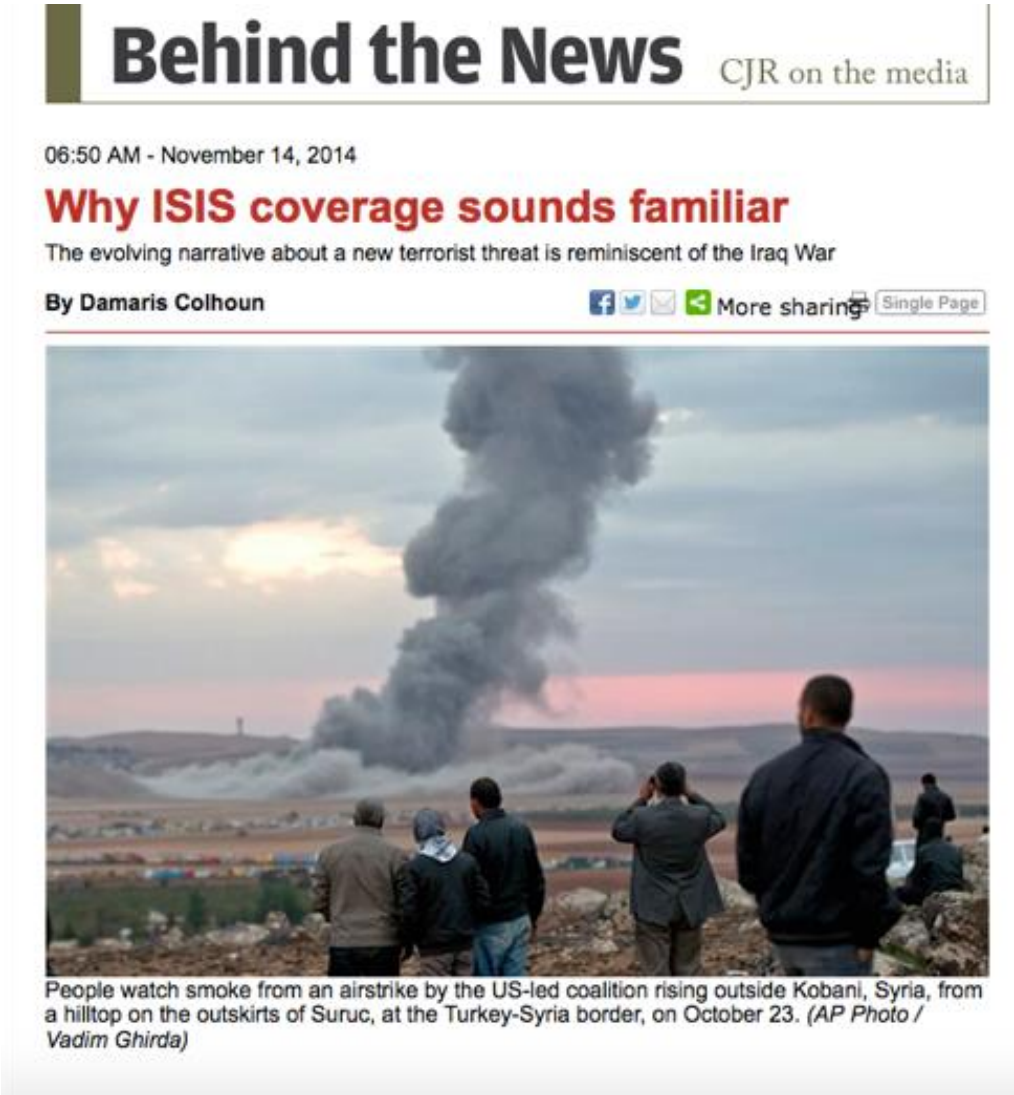

Figure 6. "Why ISIS Coverage Sounds Familiar" (Colhoun, 2014).

Islamic State Coverage

Although these parameters describe a media apparatus squarely positioned on the other side of the continuum from that of Islamic State, in fact Islamic State's coverage of itself follows interpretive cues similar to those found across U.S. media outlets. Like U.S. journalism, this media apparatus demonizes the other side, depends on media involvement to spread its message forcefully across enemy territory, and does not need to show war to instill belief and support for its prosecution. Run by a strong investment in "the phantasmagorical" (Harling & Birke, 2015), Islamic State's mediated activity is generated via a

huge media apparatus, which relies on tight production and loose dissemination (Miller & Mekhennet, 2015): "The war," said one Islamic State loyalist, "is not only in the field but also in the media" (quoted in Lynch & Weiss, 2016, para. 7), and the group's supporters are warned about keeping the "battlefield of Twitter and Facebook" energized and occupied (Shiloach, 2016).

Islamic State, said by one observer to "play the media like a violin" (Kaufman, 2015, para. 3), has built an apparatus intent on winning the information war. It operates from a number of interconnected media hubs—al-Furqan Media, al-Hayat Media, Ajnad Media, and al-l'tisam Media—as well as the news agency A'maq and provincial media offices, where efforts are coordinated, but so decentralized that provincial outlets are estimated to provide 78% of Islamic State's official releases (Zelin, 2015). Dependent on a vast, changing, and growing repertoire of outlets—Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, Kik, Soundcloud, and Ask.fm, among others—its multiplatform approach composes a "swarmcast" that utilizes resilience, speed, and agility in attaining netwar's objectives (Fisher, 2015): Members of the group change directions like a swarm of bees and are able to "swarm and disperse, penetrate and disrupt, as well as elude and evade" (Ronfeldt & Arquila, 2001, para. 2). Largely user curated and inspired by peer-to-peer sharing (Klausen, 2015), the network fosters continued content dissemination by repeatedly reconfiguring its dispersed suppliers and helping them reorganize operationally along networked lines.

Supplied in close to real time, Islamic State's content is plentiful. Conservative estimates put at least 3 videos, 15 photographic essays, and multilingual radio reports in production daily, as well as *nashids*—jihadist music sung a cappella—and feature films (Winter, 2015). Moreover, no less than 88% of its relays are visual in nature (Zelin, 2015).

By most accounts, this media activity is polished. Combining familiarity with Western cultural tropes, social media know-how, and a sophisticated mix of slick editing skills—involving cutaways, music, voice-overs, sound effects, and instant video retrieval—Islamic State provides what one observer early on called a mix of "new-media savvy and medieval savagery" (Sella, 2014). Relays that are "choreographed and carefully edited" assume the "innocently mediating, objective status of a news item" (Harmansah, 2015, p. 172), with little attention paid to their staged or theatrical dimensions. Entrenched in cultural references that resound in the West, Islamic State's media relays call to mind video games like *Call of Duty* as easily as they mimic films like *Natural Born Killers* (Dettmer, 2014; Kang, 2014). In *The Guardian*'s view:

> Virtually every frame has been treated. The color is so saturated, the combatants appear to glow with light. Explosions are lingered over in super slow motion. There are effects giving the feel of TV footage or old photographs. Transitions between clips are sheets of flame and blinding flashes. Graphics fly across the screen. Sonorous, auto-tuned chanting and cacophonous gunfire reverberate on the soundtrack. (Rose, 2014, para. 8)

Revealing "professional-caliber attention to lighting, sound and camera positioning," those behind Islamic State cameras are meticulously trained "in how to do filming. How to mix footage. How to get the right voice and tone in interviews" (Miller & Mekhennet, 2015, p. A1). One former cameraman recalled that an

execution he had filmed "wasn't run by the executioner. It's the media guy who says when they are ready" (quoted in Miller & Mekhennet, 2015, p. A1). Although some observers declared a "noticeable decline in quality" by 2016, in August of that year the Edinburgh International Television Festival nonetheless featured a debate on "what lessons can [Islamic State] teach broadcasters, brands and government?" (Burrell, 2015, para. 8).

Much like the media activity on the U.S. side, Islamic State's apparatus depends on the imagination, in which orienting to what cannot be seen emblematizes what one analysis called the "the best way to compensate for real-world limits" (Harling & Birke, 2015, para. 1). An emphasis on unseen war thus permeates much of Islamic State's output. Its relays show Islamic State fighters, but usually in masks or with faces pixilated from the images (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. "This Is Our Call of Duty" (Hall, 2014).

Its glossy magazine *Dabiq* shows sweeping battlefield victories, often more aspired to than real: The magazine's fifth issue, "Remaining and Expanding" (2014), detailed Islamic State's plan for expansion across the Arabian Peninsula rather than the chaos of retreating fighters shown with VICE News. Often such relays are connected to eschatological scenes of redemption, embodied by a Twitter app titled, "Dawn of Glad Tidings." *Dabiq*'s second issue, for example, focused on "The Flood" (2014) of the biblical Old Testament, proclaiming Islamic State as the "ark" while predicting the end of civilization (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. "Remaining and Expanding" (2014) and "The Flood" (2014).

Media relays confirm that "life is good in the Islamic State's caliphate: flowers are blooming, industry is booming, and the conquest of Rome is (still) looming" (Winter, 2016, para. 3). Audiences are told of a conquering and united Islam, that in one view "works all the better the less versed in Islamic culture [the] audience actually is" (Harling & Birke, 2015, para. 3). Relays thus skirt the facts that do not fit the message, an omission in keeping with memory work, but dependent on accepting that one does not need to see war to admit its occurrence.

One example of unseen war can be found in *Flames of War*, the first full-length documentary produced by Islamic State in 2014 to connect itself to the historic Muslim caliphate. Like much of Islamic State's media output, the 55-minute film portrays the group as an agent of change by splicing together images of reality and fantasy, rational and irrational, unusual and commonplace—through visual intercuts using slow motion, skilled editing, high-quality images, and music—at the heart of a story about military conquest, terror, and moral policing. Juxtaposing old press conference footage of U.S. presidents George Bush and Barack Obama with accusations of the U.S. government's deceitful nature, the film centers on Islamic State's rise within Syria. Featuring idyllic desert scenes, depictions of victorious battles, and close-ups of fighters using various kinds of weapons, *Flames of War* ends with a mass execution of Syrian soldiers in President Bashar al-Assad's army.

The film's 52-second trailer, widely distributed in advance of the film, highlighted its central themes (Al Hayat Media Center, 2014). The trailer opens to U.S. troops under attack by Islamic State, shows scenes of flames engulfing President Obama and the White House, and closes with the words "Flames of War: Fighting Has Just Begun," followed by the phrase "Coming Soon."

In much the same way that U.S. media outlets used VICE News's display of inept behavior to highlight Islamic State's general weakness, those tracking Islamic State's media apparatus as a sign of its

growing authority acknowledged the film's capacity to portend the group's power. Its message to followers, opined one Associated Press reporter, was that they "can wage holy war, exact revenge on those seen as oppressing Muslims and help build a just society based on divine law" (Batrawy, 2014, para. 21). *Al Jazeera* saw the film as essentially a call to war with the United States (Al-Gharbi, 2014). One academic analysis argued that the film's main purpose was "to recruit supporters to the ISIS cause by portraying the group in a positive light—its glorious mission, military successes and the (purported) good it has done for the people of Iraq and Syria" (Allendorfer & Herring, 2015, para. 27).

Not surprisingly, U.S. media outlets belittled *Flames of War*: VICE News called it "yet another push of propaganda" (Ruble, 2014, para.1), and the *New York Daily News* said it portrayed "its quest for jihad as a blockbuster action film . . . more like a Hollywood movie trailer than terrorist intimidation" (Wagner, 2014, para. 2). One reporter scoffed at its presumed high quality, noting a "disquieting naivete in the Western response . . . [reflecting] amazement and surprise that the group could put out video" (Lennard, 2014, para. 7). Left undepicted, and largely undiscussed, were multiple actions and their effects that did not fit the view Islamic State wanted to promote of itself in the film and were not mentioned by viewers. And yet the unseen dimensions of Islamic State's war hovered in the background, silent cues complicating interpretations of what was shown.

Paradoxically, Islamic State's reliance on unseen war in its media relays involves a partial reliance on spectacle. Its orientation to "propaganda of the deed" (Bolt, 2012), used to counter what Islamic State calls the West's "deceptive media halo" (Naji, 2004/2006, p. 17), fosters an engagement in acts of culture jamming designed to expose the limited power of Western media (DeBord, 1967/1994). Becoming the platform through which the group can "proclaim and reinforce the rules it lives by" (Feffer, 2015, para. 23), this focus on spectacle allows Islamic State to "stay on the front page and at the top of a social media stream" (Logue, 2015, para. 15). Thus, it choreographs spectacle to "allure sympathizers and patrons, recruit further fanatics, humiliate local communities while annihilating their sense of heritage, and offend the humanitarian West" (Harmansah, 2015, p. 175). Accomplished via the mediated staging of brutal events, displays like bulldozing archeological sites and beheadings are examples of "about to die" moments that mimic the Western media's ambivalence about the practice (Zelizer, 2010, 2016b). These displays are considered an integral part of the group's mobilizing and revolutionary efforts.

Much of Islamic State's mediated activity, albeit stylized, is not theatrical, violent, or spectacular. Brutal violence, according to a study by Winter (2015), is estimated to compose only 2% of its mediated relays (Coker & Flynn, 2015). Rather, Islamic State wants to promote itself as a functioning state and "to show normalcy within the territory it controls" (Zelin, 2015), with 52% of its relays focusing on quality-of-life issues (Coker & Flynn, 2015). Such nonviolent, nonspectacular images, often "left wholly ignored" by Western media, engage in the "regular depiction of things like markets, service provision and agriculture" (Winter, 2015, p. 32). Relays showing Islamic State fighters embracing kittens or eating candy bars "aim to communicate the message that, while strictly Islamic, ISIS stands for promoting the welfare of people, not murdering them" (Farwell, 2014, p. 50). Thus, *Dabiq* (see Figure 9) regularly treats audiences to images of individuals receiving health care, nurturing children, building infrastructures and engaging in a productive commercial life—offering what one observer labeled a "perfectly functioning society where Muslims live happily in accordance with their Islamic principles" (Williams, 2016, para. 14).

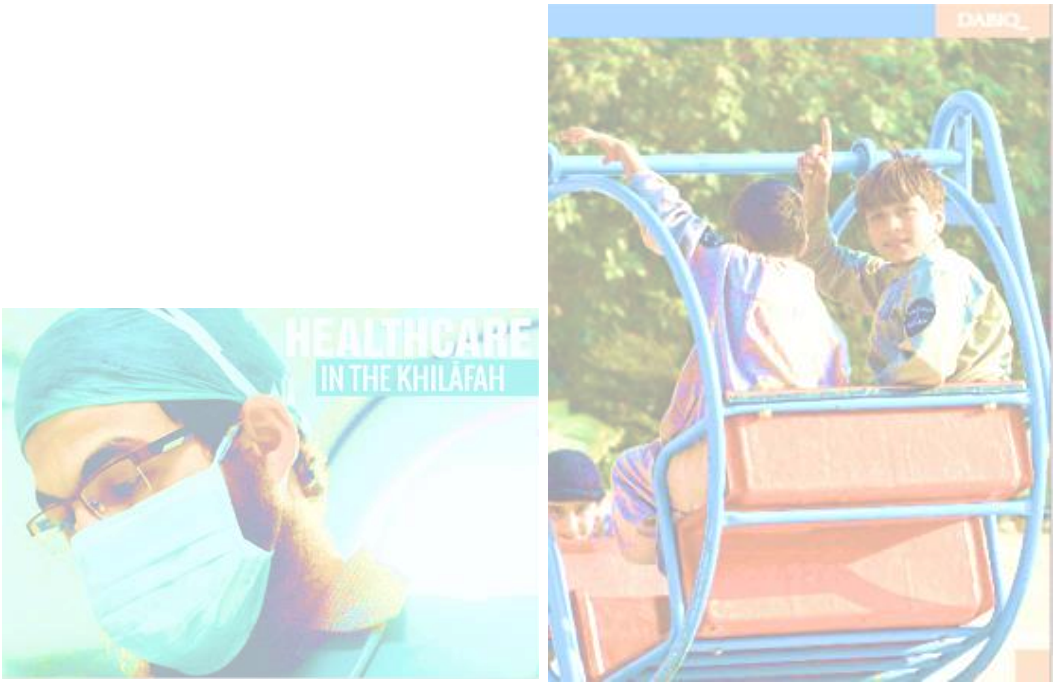

Figure 9. "They Plot and Allah Plots" (2015).

At the same time, Islamic State's off-line media activity is also extensive. Radio and the press remain key dimensions of its apparatus. One formerly annual newsletter—*al-Naba'*—is now issued weekly, whereas al-Bayan Radio broadcasts 24/7, offering news bulletins, history lessons, on-air fatwas, and call-in medical clinics from central Libya to eastern Iraq. Media kiosks double as open-air cinemas and publishing houses for materials to be screened or shared on USB sticks. Described at length by analyst Charlie Winter (2016), this

> offline media strategy has, for a long time, been almost totally obscured by the world's fixation on its online equivalent . . . [allowing] Islamic State to extend its reach, infiltrate its message into remote regions with no online infrastructure, and sustain a constant information presence in population centers. (Winter, 2016, paras. 5, 7)

Islamic State's use of spectacle thus comprises a message used for particular audiences, but one that accounts for only a small part of the textured Islamic State media environment. Called a "red herring," the focus on brutal spectacle has "fatally derailed mainstream understanding of the organization and its appeal" (Winter, 2015, p. 7).

When Absence Equals Excess

Against this background, the notion of unseen war helps explain more fully how Islamic State relays work. Scholars as wide ranging as Jakobson (1960) and Barthes (1977) have contended that the absence of a phenomenon plays the same role as its excess, suggesting that, from a structural perspective, war's invisibility functions much like its hypervisibility. Both offset attention to the more textured activity unfolding in the middle.

Not only does absenting war's fuller depiction enforce a tighter and more controlled public response; it also fosters imaginative and erroneous ways of thinking about ensuing conflict. As *The Atlantic* noted in discussing what it called Islamic State's "weaponization" of journalism:

> Nuance is everything. . . . Its terrorism is not going anywhere. If the response to it continues to be characterized by hype and inflammatory ignorance, we are only encouraging [its] efforts. (Winter & Ingram, 2016, para. 15)

Unseen war thus achieves its impact in predictable and routinized ways. Although current engagement between the United States and Islamic State in many ways follows the tenets of netwar, the dynamic link between what is and is not shown suggests that entrenched parameters of invisibility play a vital role in war's prosecution.

Evidence surfaces across Islamic State activity. First, as with all authoritarian regimes, Islamic State strategically leaves many aspects of its activity invisible. Where it can, it censors information, controls the Internet, bans satellite dishes, and cuts off competing radio stations (Winter, 2016). "Acutely aware of the power of information," noted one BBC correspondent, Islamic State goes "to great lengths to control it" (Wood, 2016, para. 36). In other words, in areas under its control, it operates an information monopoly that makes—and keeps—unseen much about the war that is unfolding.

Second, Islamic State keeps afloat viable support narratives for those under its rule. Its narrative promotes a tale of victory, state building, and redemption (Stern & Berger, 2015). Largely unremarked in current media discussions has been the vast number of Arabic-language videos with no translation, whose material offsets the bias created by focusing on the small number of English-language relays—less than 7% of all media output (Zelin, 2015). In the larger corpus of Arabic-language videos, a multidimensional play to an alternative way of life remains central to the media apparatus, with most relays focused on the idealized restoration of normal life. Bolstered by references to piety, benevolence, belonging, education, health care, social welfare, and a transformative future, in such a landscape utopianism is "arguably the broadest and most important theme" (Winter, 2015, p. 28). All other narratives cumulatively support it as "the *only* constant" (Winter, 2016), rendering even the depiction of seemingly banal activities like fishing or sheep cleaning as singularly oriented to utopian living.

Third, Islamic State uses unseen war to stoke panic. The media act as a "force multiplier to make it appear active in many locations even though most of its activities are in Iraq and Syria" (Zelin, 2015, para. 2). Although Islamic State does "not attempt to cover up war crimes but to trumpet them" (Wood,

2016, para. 37), it does so in strategic ways. Two recent examples bear this out: After the Brussels attacks in March 2016, Islamic State supporters tweeted fictitiously of several bombs placed at the European Commission (Flynn, 2016). Less effective was a social media campaign in the summer of 2016 that accidentally revealed the locations of Islamic State social media posters in various European cities (Frenkel, 2016).

Each of these strategies should be very familiar to those in step with U.S. journalism, for they are part of the way that Cold War mindedness drives U.S. news. But what is peculiar here is its perseverance as the deep memory for mediating Islamic State's own media activity. Although Cold War mindedness is not the only deep structure undergirding its media apparatus, Islamic State mimics the cues by which the global flow of news, largely led by U.S. media, tends to unfold. This suggests that the minds behind Islamic State's media apparatus are not as far from the longstanding platforms of the U.S. media landscape as assumed.

Keeping war unseen through extensive media activity is a paradox, but a telling one. Although *The Washington Post* wrote not long ago that "in its propaganda war against ISIS, the U.S. tried to play by the enemy's rules" (Miller & Higham, 2015), this analysis suggests the opposite: Islamic State is playing at least in part by U.S. media rules, following a mnemonic pattern set in place long ago. In this regard, it exhibits not only new media savvy but also old media logics. Significantly, these old media logics are of U.S. origin. A U.S. mnemonic structure thus partly runs the news not only about Islamic State but also by Islamic State.

Conclusion

How does this discussion enhance an understanding of collective memory in the news? The coverage of and by Islamic State and its powerful consonance with Cold War mindedness suggest multiple mnemonic conventions: Memory lurks in unusual places, it emerges when least expected, and it creates clusters of disparate events, even when doing so fosters troubling comparisons. This suggests that the real power of journalism, particularly in crisis, may be in connecting events backward, not forward.

At stake here are the depths to which journalism's memory work extends in shaping contemporary engagement with the world. In ways that are deeply invisible, collective memory gives form to news events and issues that a priori settles what is worth knowing and in which way. There is a need to more fully recognize its contours, understand its relevance, and check its development when its cues feel awry.

Soren Kierkegaard (1843/1997) wrote long ago that living forward depends on understanding backward. That can be the case only when one recognizes how much and how often our looks backward block our understanding of what occurs in the here and now.

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How Sociocultural Context Matters in Self-Presentation: A Comparison of U.S. and Chinese Profiles on Jack'd, a Mobile Dating App for Men Who Have Sex With Men

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Theorizing profiles on mobile dating applications (apps) as self-presentation, this study examines how men who have sex with men (MSM) presented themselves on Jack'd, a dating app tailored to this population. This research takes a cross-cultural perspective by comparing 204 profiles from the United States and 204 profiles from China. The results show that Chinese MSM were less likely to show their faces on Jack'd than American MSM because of the stronger stigma of homosexuality in China. In addition, the average number of relational goals mentioned by Chinese MSM was smaller than that mentioned by American MSM, supporting the low- and high-context cultural difference. However, more Chinese MSM mentioned looking for relationships specifically, suggesting that they seem to regard Jack'd as a non-romance-seeking platform and have to make their goals explicit. Sex was not often mentioned as the relational goal in both countries, implying "slut-shaming" is in force. This study demonstrates the value of examining online self-presentation of MSM to understand sociocultural differences between the United States and China regarding homosexuality.

Keywords: mobile dating app, men who have sex with men, gay, self-presentation, cross-cultural, China, United States, stigma, high-context, low-context

Sexual minorities have been making friends, looking for romance, and seeking sex online since the early age of the Internet. With advancements in mobile technologies, applications (apps) running on smartphones were developed to provide an even more convenient platform for sexual minorities to connect with one another. Using the global positioning system receivers built into many smartphones, Grindr, the first mobile dating app for men who have sex with men (MSM), was released in 2009. It enables users to discover other MSM who are physically nearby, changing the networking scene of this community because it makes "invisible" members visible (Gudelunas, 2012).

Many location-based dating apps for MSM share a similar interface. Once a user logs onto the app, he sees an array of photographs, each representing a different user nearby. From left to right and top to bottom, these photos are arranged according to the distance between the users. A text-based profile of each user, the "bio," is available by clicking the photo. This profile usually includes the user's

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age, weight, height, and ethnicity, plus a short self-introduction. Users can exchange text messages, photos, and geo-information via the app.

This study considers profiles on mobile dating apps as a type of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). Similar to dating website users, app users have to present themselves in such a way as to create a certain impression in others' minds (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). As Miller (2015a) points out, little is known about how MSM present themselves on these dating apps. Moreover, a majority of the studies on dating apps for MSM were conducted in the United States (e.g., Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; Brubaker, Ananny, & Crawford, 2014; Chan, 2016; Crooks, 2013; Gudelunas, 2012; Landovitz et al., 2013; Miller, 2015a, 2015b; Rice et al., 2012; Roth, 2014; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014). Few paid attention to the cross-cultural aspect of this global phenomenon. Therefore, this study examines how MSM present themselves on Jack'd, a mobile dating app that operates internationally. Through comparing profiles created by American and Chinese MSM, this study explores the sociocultural forces that shape MSM online self-presentation, shedding light not only on the online self-presentation of MSM but also on the differences and similarities between the two cultures.

Literature Review

Selective Self-Presentation in Computer-Mediated Communication

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) discusses in the way in which people construct and maintain their public image through interactions. Using a dramatic metaphor, he distinguishes "front stage," where various kinds of "expressive equipment" are available for "actors" to use for their performance, and "backstage," where "actors" learn, practice, and refine their performance and express part of themselves that their audience may not accept. A self-presentation, therefore, is a product appearing on the front stage, consisting of what is "given" (i.e., communicated deliberately) and "given off" (i.e., communicated unintentionally).

In conventional face-to-face settings, people manage their impression through a combination of verbal and nonverbal cues (E. E. Jones & Pittman, 1982). In computer-mediated communication (CMC), users are also motivated to use whatever cues that are available to manage their image (Walther, 1992). Walther's (1996) hyperpersonal CMC model suggests that CMC users draw on the unique interface and characteristics that CMC provides to enhance their self-presentation. Four features of CMC particularly facilitate CMC users to selectively present themselves in a preferential way (Walther, 2007). First, because of its asynchronous nature, CMC is always editable. Users change and polish whatever they have written before the message is sent or made available to the public. Second, CMC users can spend more time to construct and refine their messages without creating social awkwardness. Third, because CMC users are usually physically apart, they can hide their involuntary cues that may indicate undesirable attitude or affect. Last, users in CMC do not need to attend to the environment and manage their nonverbal cues. This allows them to concentrate their cognitive effort to the message production. The hyperpersonal CMC model, therefore, suggests mobile dating apps provide a platform of selective self-presentation for their users.

Online Self-Presentation of Gay Men and MSM

Gonzales and Meyers (1993) argue that studying sexual minorities by analyzing the personal ads they post is an ecologically valid method due to its unobtrusive nature. Various studies were conducted to examine how gay men and MSM present themselves in personal ads in magazines and newspapers (Deaux & Hanna, 1984; Epel, Spanakos, Kasl-Godley, & Brownell, 1996; Hatala & Prehodka, 1996; Reige-Laner & Kamel, 1977). Moving from traditional media to the Internet, Gudelunas (2005) analyzed the personal ads posted by gay men and lesbian women on a Web portal called PlanetOut. He found that people from large cities were more likely to self-identify as gay, lesbian, or queer than those from small towns. People from small towns were also less likely to post a photo in their personal ads. Gudelunas pointed out that being identified as gay or lesbian in a small community might have negative consequences in job security and housing.

Mobile dating apps also provide the gay community with a viable alternative to reaching others. Fitzpatrick, Birnholtz, and Brubaker (2015) studied the relationship between personal disclosure—whether a user shows his face—and social disclosure—whether he shares his personal information—on Grindr. The team collected 25,365 profiles mechanically from the app. Their logistic analysis showed that users who were younger, had a higher body mass index, did not disclose their race, or were looking for friends or relationships were more likely to show their face. The researchers argue that youth is an important asset in determining attractiveness on this platform. App users with a higher body mass index may prefer cropping out their "bulky" body and showing only their face. One's race is often determinable from a photo; therefore, those who show their face may not have to disclose their race. Finally, the researchers suggest that app users looking for more lasting relationships, such as friendships and romance, prefer to individualize themselves by showing a face photo.

Examining profiles on Jack'd across the world, Miller (2015a) found that masculinity was valued by app users either describing themselves as masculine or physically fit or posting shirtless photos. App users who noted their masculine traits or fitness tended not to post photos including their face. Therefore, there was a trade-off between posting shirtless photos and photos with a face. In addition, Miller noted that Asian MSM tended not to disclose their desired sexual position. He argues that these profiles were mainly collected from Asian countries where homosexuality is illegal, such as Singapore. Thus, to protect themselves, app users in these countries may choose not to include sexual elements on their profiles. Following Fitzpatrick et al. (2015), Gudelunas (2005), and Miller (2015a), this study considers profiles on mobile dating apps as self-presentation that MSM curate for their audience (Goffman, 1959). In particular, the user's photo is the most dominant element in this type of self-presentation. Mowlabocus (2010) calls the online profile "an externalizing of the interior" (p. 92). He argues that embodiment is key to gay digital communication because the relationship between the digital body and the real body is constructed through gaze. Whether the app users post a "face-pic" or a shirtless torso, this indicates how he wishes to be viewed by others. The first research question asks:

RQ1: How do American and Chinese MSM present themselves photographically on Jack'd?

Stigma of Homosexuality in Modern China

In China, homosexuality has had negative connotations since the Qing Dynasty. It was once associated with the weakening of national power (Jeffreys & Yu, 2015). When the Communist Party of China (CPC) founded modern China in 1949, no law criminalized same-sex practices. However, if people were found to engage in these activities, they would be sanctioned by the party and workplace (Davis & Friedman, 2014). It was not until 1978 that male same-sex practices were put under the umbrella term, "hooliganism," constituting a criminal offense. In the medical realm, homosexuality was also pathologized in the second edition of the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders* in 1989. The year 1986 marked the first AIDS case in China; since then, China had blamed AIDS as a downside of becoming liberal. Even in late 1980s, homosexuality was associated with the capitalist class (Li, 2014). With the stigmatization of homosexuality, MSM living their adult lives during the 1980s could not express their sexual desires and orientation openly (Li, 2006).

A critical change happened in 1997, when the law against male homosexuality was abolished. The 2001 *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders* also removed homosexuality as an illness. Since 1992, many nongovernment organizations that promote HIV prevention among the gay community were set up with the endorsement of the CPC (Kong, 2011; Wei, 2015). In 2014, there were more than 300 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organizations in China (Davis & Friedman, 2014). Nevertheless, Kong (2011) reminded us that, these measures did not mean that the party-state completely legalized homosexuality. For example, the current marriage law made no room for same-sex marriage; the Beijing Queer Film Festival in 2001 was cancelled at the last minute by Beijing University (Kong, 2011). In fact, activities organized by LGBT organizations were occasionally stopped by police, and their members were harassed or detained (Davis & Friedman, 2014).

The current status of homosexuality in China is complicated. On the one hand, the party-state has loosened its regulation of sexual behaviors between consenting adults in private spaces; on the other hand, homosexuality is not officially endorsed. Moreover, Li (2006) argues that the strongest sanction against homosexuality todays does not come from the party-state but from the family. Parental expectations for marriage and grandchildren have hindered the development of positive gay and lesbian identities (Hu & Wang, 2013). The gay community in China also criticizes itself (Zheng, 2015). This social stigma may make MSM in China less comfortable with disclosing their personal identity on dating apps. Therefore, this study has the following hypothesis:

H1: On Jack'd, fewer MSM in China reveal their faces than MSM in the United States.

Difference in Communication Styles Between China and the United States

Apart from photographs, written statements about relational goals are also important "expressive equipment" available in the front stage of Jack'd that users can make use of to create and manage their image (Goffman, 1959). Intercultural scholars have been keen to identify critical differences between cultures that may influence communication styles (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Lim & Giles, 2007). Hall's (1976) differentiation between low- and high-context culture is one of the most influential

theoretical frameworks in conceptualizing cultural differences between East and West. Although, this contexting model is not without critiques (see Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010), it has been shown to still be relevant in the context of international communication (Cardon, 2008). In a low-context culture such as the United States, fewer social norms are imposed on individuals; therefore, people tend to express themselves more directly and explicitly. In contrast, in a high-context culture such as China, a stable social hierarchy from which people can derive meanings exists; therefore, people are more likely to communicate in an implicit and simplified manner.

Empirical studies have confirmed this culture difference in communication styles. In terms of emotional expressions, Caldwell-Harris, Kronrod, and Yang (2013) found that Chinese students were less likely to express the feeling of love than American students. Moreover, although American students felt more comfortable saying "I love you" to parents than to romantic partners, the opposite was true for Chinese students. The authors explained that in a high-context culture like China, the expression of love to parents was less important because of the stable parent–child relationship, but voluntary romantic relationships required maintenance by saying "I love you." Culture also influences the expression of gratitude. Bello, Brandau-Brown, Zhang, and Ragsdale (2010) found that their U.S. participants expressed significantly more appreciation than their Chinese participants and tended to use direct, verbal methods.

Extrapolating this implicitness to the scenario of networking apps, Chinese MSM may be less likely to explicitly identify particular relational goals, assuming their goals are implied in the context of the apps. Therefore, this study has the following hypothesis:

H2: MSM in China mention fewer relational goals on Jack'd than MSM in the United States.

Method

Platform

Following Miller (2015a), profiles from Jack'd, a mobile dating app tailored for MSM, were collected. Jack'd was chosen for two reasons. First, it is a popular app in both the United States and China. At the time of the research, Grindr was blocked in China. Blued, Grindr's Chinese counterpart, was not popular among American MSM. Therefore, Jack'd was a better platform for collecting profiles. Another unique function of Jack'd made this app a stronger candidate for research purposes: Grindr only allows users to locate others who are physically nearby, whereas Jack'd allows a user to type in the name of a city and search for MSM in that place (see Figure 1). This function enabled the research team to gather geographically diverse samples from the United States and China.

Data Collection

A total of 408 profiles were collected from Jack'd from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. on the same Friday in June 2014. Keeping this temporal dimension constant is crucial because relational goals and the choice of photos may change depending on the time of the day. Geographically diverse samples of profiles from the

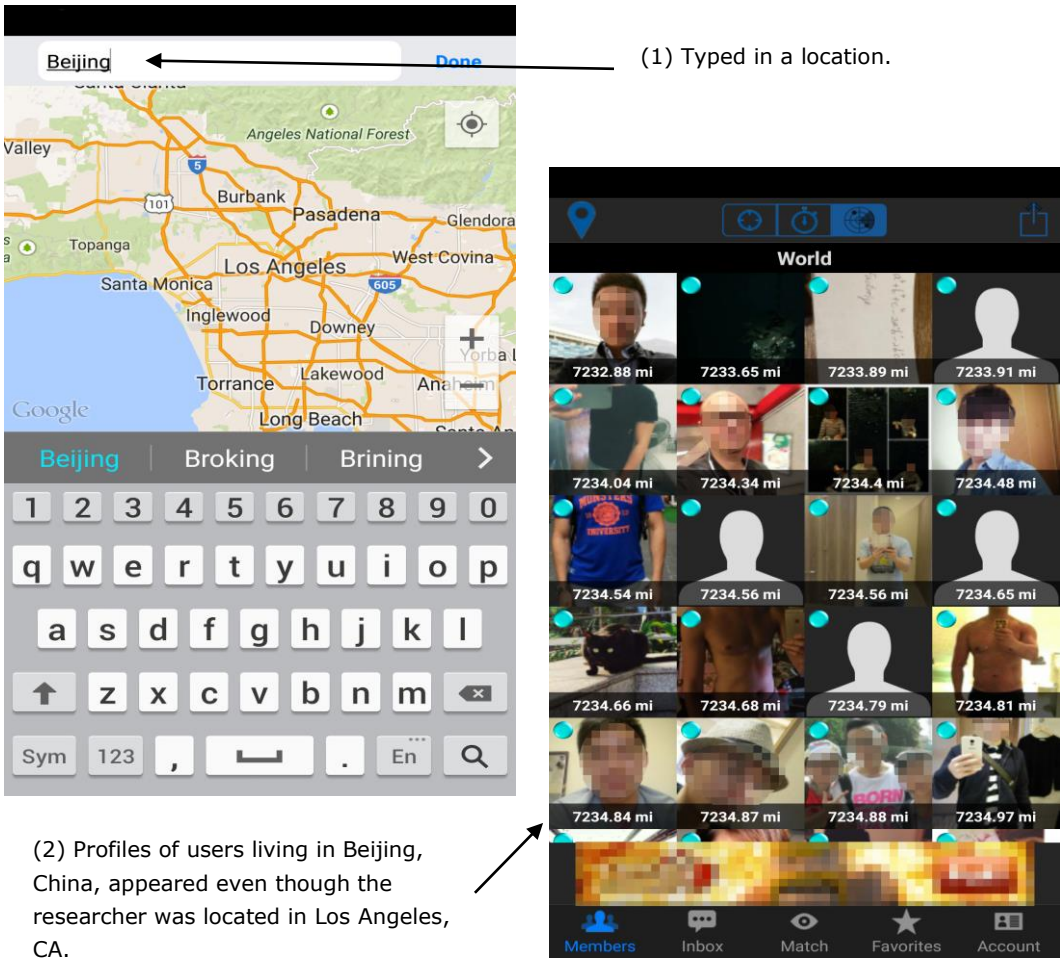

Figure 1. Using the location function of Jack'd to locate profiles in different cities across the United States and China.

United States and China were collected. For the U.S. sample, the research team logged onto Jack'd and typed in the most populated city in each of the 50 states and Washington, DC[1] In each city, four profiles were randomly selected from the first 20 profiles appearing on the app (by default, a maximum of 20

[1] This is based on the 2010 United States Census (http://www.census.gov/2010census/).

profiles are displayed on the screen at a time).[2] This added up to 204 profiles collected from the United States. In the case of China, following the same procedure, six profiles were collected from the most populated city in each of the 27 provinces and autonomous regions, four direct-controlled municipalities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing), two Special Administrative Regions (Hong Kong and Macau), and the largest city in Taiwan.[3] This yielded another 204 profiles. These 408 profiles were screen-captured and used as data for analysis. It is acknowledged that the sample only consisted of profiles from large cities. Gudelunas's (2005) study of personal ads on PlanetOut found that people from small towns were less likely to post a photo. He attributed this phenomenon to a stronger stigma associated with homosexuality in rural areas than in urban regions. Therefore, results of this study cannot be generalized to the whole countries.

Coding Protocol

A content analysis was conducted in this study. A content analysis is a systematic technique for identifying the characteristics of a message. Following Berelson (1952), the profiles were coded for their manifest content, but not their latent meanings. The unit of analysis was each profile.

Photographs. Jack'd allows users to post up to three photos. Each photo was coded according to whether it showed a recognizable face, a headless torso with clothes, a headless torso without clothes, human body parts without a recognizable face and torso, nonhuman objects, or a celebrity/model (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015).

Relational goals. Profiles were coded as either *mentioning* or *not mentioning* each of the following three definite relational goals: friends (including chat and networking), sex, relationships (including dates; Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). Apart from these three definite goals, the profiles were also coded as either *mentioning* or *not mentioning* any "ambiguous" goal. This includes app users mentioning looking for "fun" or "a good time" and using phrases that hinted at diverse sexual or relational possibilities, such as "no agenda," "everything goes," and "see where it goes." As Birnholtz, Fitzpatrick, Handel, and Brubaker (2014) pointed out, "fun" is a coded word for casual sex, but it may also literally means activities that are fun. Phrases such as "no agenda" could mean that the app users welcome any activities or any kinds of relationships, whether sex partners, romantic partners, or simply friends.

Procedure and Intercoder Reliability

To ensure cultural sensitivity and coding reliability, a bicultural coding team was employed. The principal researcher of this study (gay identified, culturally Chinese, and living in the United States) developed the coding protocol. He trained an American male colleague (a gay-identified PhD candidate)

[2] In Billings, Montana, only 16 profiles showed up; therefore, only three profiles were randomly selected from this city. The fourth profile was selected from Montana's second most populated city, Missoula.

[3] This is based on the 2010 Population Census of the People's Republic of China (http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjcbw/201303/t20130318_451531.html).

and a Chinese male colleague (a gay-identified PhD holder) on this coding protocol. The principal researcher first coded 40 U.S. profiles and 40 Chinese profiles (about 20% of the total number of profiles). Then, the American second coder double-coded the 40 U.S. profiles, and the Chinese second coder double-coded the 40 Chinese profiles independent of the principal researcher.

Krippendorff's α was used for assessing intercoder reliability because it accounts for both observed disagreement and disagreement due to chance; it also allows for multiple coders (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). The intercoder reliability for all variables was acceptable: the first photo, .98; the second photo, .96; the third photo, .94; friends, .91; sex, .94; relationships, .95; ambiguous goal, .84. Based on the coding protocol, the second coders independently coded the remaining profiles.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

In the U.S. sample, 33.8% reported as White; 32.4%, Black; 10.8%, Mixed; 9.8%, Latino; 9.3%, Asian; 3.4%, Other; and 0.5%, Middle Eastern. No one reported himself as Pacific Islander. The median age was 25 years (IQR = 21–30 years, range = 18–99 years), the median height was 5 ft 10 in (1.78 m; IQR = 5 ft 8 in to 6 ft [1.73–1.83 m], range = 1 ft to 6 ft 6 in [0.30–1.98 m]), and the median weight was 165 lb (74.84 kg; IQR = 145–185 lb [65.77–83.91 kg], range = 10–283 lb [4.54–128.37 kg]).[4] In the Chinese sample, a majority (99.0%) self-reported as Asian. Only 0.5% reported as Mixed, and another 0.5% reported as Pacific Islander. The Chinese sample had a median age of 26 years (IQR = 23–29 years, range = 18–99 years), a median height of 5 ft 8 in (1.73 m; IQR = 5 ft 7 in to 5 ft 10 in [1.70–1.78 m], range = 11 in to 8 ft [0.28–2.13 m]), and a median weight of 143 lb (64.86 kg; IQR = 132–154 lb [59.87–69.85 kg], range = 11–264 lb [4.99–119.75 kg]).

Answering Research Question

RQ1 asked how American and Chinese MSM presented themselves photographically on Jack'd. Two aspects were explored. First of all, the number of profiles having at least one photo showing a particular type of image was counted. Table 1 shows the counts for the U.S. and Chinese samples, respectively. In the U.S. sample, 64.2% of the users had revealed their face. The number of users who uploaded their headless torso image was 11.3%. Another 10.8% of the users showed at least one photo of their body parts without a clear face or a torso. In short, more people were comfortable in showing their face than their shirtless torso. A similar, yet not exact, pattern is observed in the Chinese sample. More users were willing to show their face (36.8%) than their shirtless torso (5.4%). However, more users included a photo that shows their other body parts (17.6%) than their shirtless torso.

[4] All users reported their age, height, and weight. Although some people reported an age, height, or weight that apparently fell outside of a reasonable range (e.g., 99 years old, 1 ft 8 in, 10 lb), it was less certain whether 72 years old, 7 ft 2 in, or 99 lb were truths or lies. Given that there was no objective way to determine the authenticity of the information, the information was retained. To avoid the influence of extreme values, medians but not means were reported.

Table 1. Photographic Self-Presentation in Jack'd Profiles.

	At least one photo (%)	
	United States	**China**
Showing	**(*n* = 204)**	**(*n* = 204)**
A recognizable face	64.2	36.8
A headless, shirtless torso	11.3	5.4
A headless, clothed torso	5.4	7.8
Human body parts besides a face or torso	10.8	17.6
Nonhuman objects	8.8	25.5
Celebrity/model	0.5	7.4
Blank	56.9	72.1

The first photo of each profile is more significant because it is the first photo displayed to others. A user can first show his face in the first photo and subsequently includes other kinds of images as the second or third photos in his profile, or a user can first show his torso and then reveal his face in the second or third photo. The second aspect of photographic self-presentation explored here is how users make use of this affordance. As Table 2 shows, in the U.S. sample, nearly three quarters (74.0%) of the users whose first photo was a face-pic (n = 128) also uploaded another face-pic as their second or third photo. Very few users (6.3%) showed a headless, shirtless torso in their second or third photos after they have revealed their face in the first photo. Looking at the second column of Table 2, the majority (83.3%) of users whose first photo was a headless, shirtless torso (n = 12) left at least one of the second and third photo spaces blank (and 75% left *both* spaces blank). Among those who uploaded an image as their second or third photo, only 16.7% included at least one face-pic and another 16.7% included another headless torso image.

Table 2. Photographic Self-Presentation of the Second and Third Photos in the U.S. Sample.

	At least one of the second and third photo spaces (%)	
Showing	**First photo shows a recognizable face (*n* = 128)**	**First photo shows a headless, shirtless torso (*n* = 12)**
A recognizable face	74.0	16.7
A headless, shirtless torso	6.3	16.7
A headless, clothed torso	7.1	0.0
Human body parts besides a face or torso	7.1	0.0
Nonhuman objects	1.6	0.0
Celebrity/model	0.0	0.0
Blank	38.6	83.3

In the Chinese sample (see Table 3), for those who uploaded a face-pic in the first photo (*n* = 67), more than half (59.7%) also showed another face-pic in the second or third photo. No one included a headless, shirtless torso image as their second or third photo. In contrast, 20% of the users whose first photo was their headless, shirtless torso (*n* = 10) uploaded another torso image as their second or third photo. The majority of them (90%) left at least one of the second and third photo spaces blank (and 70% left *both* spaces blank).

Table 3. Photographic Self-Presentation of the Second and Third Photos in the Chinese Sample.

	At least one of the second and third photo spaces (%)	
Showing	**First photo shows a recognizable face (*n* = 67)**	**First photo shows a headless, shirtless torso (*n* = 10)**
A recognizable face	59.7	10.0
A headless, shirtless torso	0.0	20.0
A headless, clothed torso	6.0	0.0
Human body parts besides a face or torso	11.9	0.0
Nonhuman objects	10.4	0.0
Celebrity/model	0.0	0.0
Blank	46.3	90.0

Hypotheses Testing

H1 hypothesized that fewer MSM in China revealed their face than MSM in the United States. The numbers of U.S. and Chinese profiles that had at least one photo showing a face were compared. In the U.S. sample, 64.2% of the profiles had at least one face photo, whereas in the Chinese sample, only 36.8% had at least one face photo. The chi-square test showed that this difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 30.75$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, no cells having expected counts less than 5). H1 was supported, indicating that American MSM were overrepresented in profiles that had at least one face-pic and that Chinese MSM were underrepresented.

H2 hypothesized that Chinese MSM mentioned fewer relational goals than American MSM. An index of relational goals was computed by summing the four goal variables. A *t* test was conducted to compare the average number of relational goals mentioned by American and Chinese MSM. The Levene's test indicated that equal variance was not assumed ($F = 13.03$, $p < .001$). The *t* test showed that that the average number of goals mentioned by American MSM ($M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.79$) was significantly higher than that mentioned by Chinese MSM ($M = 0.43$, $SD = 0.63$), $t(387) = 2.37$, $p < .01$. H2 was supported. This result is suggestive of the effect of culture on mentioning relational goals.

Further probing was conducted into the occurrence of each goal in the profiles. Four independent chi-square tests were run to examine whether American MSM mentioned more of each goal than their Chinese counterparts. As Table 4 shows, significantly more American MSM mentioned seeking friends and stated an ambiguous goal, but significantly more Chinese MSM mentioned looking for relationships. No difference was found in mentioning seeking sex.

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests for Mention of Relational Goals in Jack'd Profiles of American and Chinese Men Who Have Sex With Men.

Goals	**United States *n* = 204 (%)**	**China *n* = 204 (%)**	**Chi-Square (All *df* = 1)**
Friends	22.5	14.2	4.72*
Sex	10.8	7.8	1.05†
Relationships	7.4	14.2	4.99*
Ambiguous goal	18.6	6.4	14.01***

Note. No cells had expected count less than 5.
*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.
†Not significant.

Discussion

This research examined how MSM presented themselves on a mobile dating app, Jack'd. Scholars have analyzed personal ads posted by gay men and lesbians in magazines or on the Internet as self-presentation. The recent research by Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) and Miller (2015a) extended this approach to the study of profiles on Grindr and Jack'd, respectively. However, these studies focused on platforms in

the United States and on the U.S. population. Building on the cross-cultural research tradition, this study enriched the scholarship of self-presentation by examining whether the stigma of homosexuality and low- and high-context cultures influence profiles created by American and Chinese MSM.

Either Face or Torso, Not Both

Mobile dating apps are visual driven (Birnholtz et al., 2014). When a user logs onto an app, he can immediately see a series of photos. Therefore, photos are critical in this space. Although some MSM choose to show off their handsome faces or their fit torsos to attract eyeballs, some prefer to remain completely anonymous, posting nonhuman photos or leaving the space blank. The first part of the answer to RQ1 looked at overall photographic self-presentation by Jack'd users.

In discussing the use of online gay chat rooms in the pre-app era, R. H. Jones (2005) identified the norm of exchanging photos. A face-pic, together with age, race, relationships sought, and sexual role, forms a holistic package from which a person decides if further interaction is desired. Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) also regards a face-pic as personal disclosure because a face is biologically unique and is used to differentiate people. In this study, profiles with a face-pic are the most common photographic self-presentation in both U.S. and Chinese samples. Unlike the interviewees in R. H. Jones (2005), the profile owners reveal their face before any interaction. This is partly due to the increasing acceptance of homosexuality in the past decade in both countries; therefore, current app users are more willing to reveal their personal identity. Besides, by posting a face-pic, users also convey the message that they are looking for noncasual relationships. Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) found that Grindr users who mentioned looking for friendships or romantic relationships tended to show their face on their profiles.

Approximately 10% of the U.S. profiles and 5% of the Chinese profiles had at least one photo showing a headless, shirtless torso. Tziallas (2015) offered an insightful interpretation to these kinds of sexually explicit photos. He argues that creating and uploading sexual images to mobile dating apps is a type of do-it-yourself "pornification." Through this kind of self-pornification, users are rewarded by experiencing erotic chats and receiving nude images from others. Chan and Tsang (2014) also found that exposing one's body on social media is intrinsically rewarding to people who have a narcissistic tendency. Mowlabocus (2010) suggested that these sexually explicit images simultaneously serve as the "narcissistic gaze of the subject" and "the voyeuristic gaze of the Other" (p. 94). If revealing one's shirtless torso implies looking for casual sex, the data here suggests that fewer people on Jack'd, in both the United States and China, present themselves as seeking sex than seeking relationships.

On Grindr, the first mobile dating app for MSM, users have to choose between showing their face or their torso because only one photo can be uploaded. However, Jack'd allows up to three photos. The architecture creates no trade-off between showing a face and showing a torso. The second part of the answer to RQ1 explored whether Jack'd users used this affordance to display their face and torso in their profile. The answer is negative. The statistics in both samples show that users who revealed their face in the first photo uploaded even more face-pics than torso images as their second or third photo. If a face-pic represents a more intimate kind of disclosure, the users who have posted a face-pic are those who are motivated to establish meaningful relationships with others; therefore, it makes sense for them to upload

even more face-pics to their profiles. Cassidy (2013) found that Gaydar users distanced themselves from being associated with sex seeking by uploading only lifestyle photos.

In contrast, users who showed their shirtless torso in the first photo were not interested in including any face-pics. In fact, most of them left other photo spaces blank. Based on uncertainty management theory (Brashers, 2001), Corriero and Tong (2016) found that Grindr users seeking sex tended to demand *more* uncertainty about other Grindr users and therefore carried out less information-seeking behavior. As information-seeking and self-disclosure are reciprocal (Dindia, 2002), seeking out less information about others implies giving out less information to others. This may explain why users who posted a headless, shirtless torso—implying they are looking for casual sex—in their first photo did not even bother revealing their face and left other photo spaces blank. These people may simply be interested in anonymous sex.

Stigma of Homosexuality and Maintaining Anonymity in China

This study shows that 64.2% of the U.S. profiles had at least one photo showing a face, but only 36.8% of the Chinese profiles had at least one such photo. The percentage in the U.S. profiles was closer to what Fitzpatrick et al. (2015) observed on Grindr. The gap between the U.S. and Chinese profiles is consistent with the argument that a stronger stigma toward homosexuality exists in China (Wu, 2003). In her ethnography of gay men living in Dalian, a city in northeast China, Zheng (2015) found that many gay men strongly identified with heterosexual masculinity and aligned "their individual desires with the national desire of heteronormativity" (p. 143). Being associated with homosexuality is detrimental to one's family and career.

This sociocultural discrepancy between the United States and China results in a sharp difference in the significance of having a face-pic online. In Western gay urban online culture, having a face-pic is essential. Mowlabocus (2010) writes,

> The face-pic articulates the issues of self-identification, honesty and integrity and many users value this form of self-representation most highly, not least because they see it as validating profile; to many it is an act of investment and confirmation that can never be afforded a faceless profile. (p. 103)

So, a face-pic signifies authenticity and pride in the West. Nevertheless, in China, given the ambiguous policy toward homosexuality and the social sanction against being gay (Li, 2006), revealing one's identity on mobile dating apps such as Jack'd is a risky act. This study did not investigate whether a face-pic will be exchanged in later interaction, but the apparent absence of a face-pic on the app may further discourage users to reveal their face.

Goal Expression in Different Cultures

Communication scholars have pointed out that people look for various types of relationships on mobile dating apps (Gudelunas, 2012; Miller, 2015a; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014). This study explores

how cultural differences affect the kinds of goals that are expressed on the dating profiles. China, a high-context culture, is characterized by subtlety and implicitness in communication. In contrast, the United States, a low-context culture, is characterized by explicit communication (Hall, 1976). The results show that the average number of relational goals mentioned by Chinese MSM was smaller than that mentioned by American MSM, supporting this contexting hypothesis (Cardon, 2008). Probably, Chinese MSM believe their relational goals can be communicated through the photos they post and through conversations later. For example, in one Chinese profile, the user wrote, "I have been together with my bf for almost three years. we love and cherish each other. Expecting to know you the kind and nice you [*sic*]." No goals were explicitly stated at all; however, the user, apart from admitting he had a boyfriend, also uploaded three headless, shirtless torso images, suggesting that he was looking for casual sex.

Interestingly, more Chinese MSM mentioned seeking relationships than American MSM. Interpreting this result with the high- and low-context cultural framework, Chinese MSM seem to regard Jack'd as a non-romance-seeking platform. Therefore, when it comes to seeking relationships, Chinese users have to make their goals clear and explicit.

Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the number of American MSM and that of Chinese MSM that seek sex. This is surprising as the result goes against the perception that the West is more sexually liberal than the East. However, as Rubin (1993) powerfully argues, even in the West, "sex is presumed guilty until proven innocent" (p. 11). The strong sex negativity perpetuated in the Western culture sets up a structural valuation of sex acts that places casual sex toward the lower end of the hierarchy. "Slut shaming" is common in the American gay community. Birnholtz et al. (2014), for example, found that fewer profiles from college towns mentioned sex-related goals than profiles from cities. They suggest this difference is due to "the concerns around slut shaming and community that are likely more prevalent in college environments or smaller communities" (p. 9). Therefore, looking for casual sex is also stigmatized in the United States, effectively limiting users to state that their goal is sex and to post their shirtless torso image.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, although it captured profiles from various cities in China and the United States, the profiles were not a true random sample. In particular, profiles from small cities and towns were ignored. Given that people from rural China are more conservative about homosexuality (Koo et al., 2014), future research can examine whether this urban–rural discrepancy in disclosing one's face found in Gudelunas (2005) exists among Chinese MSM.

Second, as Livingstone (2003) points out, cross-national research struggles between adopting a universal measurement and contextualizing meanings. This study is not perfect in making a cross-national comparison. The face value of terms such as "fun" and "let's see what happens" in Chinese and in English were taken without exploring the possible connotative differences. Future research can consider the so-called backstage of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). Interviewing MSM on their rationale behind what they present and why they choose some terms instead of others can provide an in-depth understanding of the relationship between motivations and culture.

It should be noted that queer and postcolonial scholars have made extensive critiques of the social construction of Asian male bodies as effeminate and inferior under the gaze of white men (e.g., Hoang, 2014; Lim, 2013). Although this study acknowledges this critique, it did not consider race for the reason that it concerns profiles created by Chinese MSM living in China. It is very likely that the main audience of these Chinese MSM is other Chinese MSM who are in the immediate vicinity (Birnholtz et al., 2014; Blackwell et al., 2015). This is sharply different from Chinese American MSM living in the United States who aim to connect with American MSM of other races. Therefore, the postcolonial critique does not apply to this study. Nevertheless, further study can explore how the self-presentation of Chinese MSM is affected by the globally circulating images of white gay men.

As one of the first studies to empirically compare self-presentation of MSM in two countries, this study considers profiles created by Jack'd users as a Goffman-type self-presentation (1959). Photographs and written statements about the relational goals are two important "expressive equipment" that users can use to create and manage their image. Results show that sociocultural environment does play an influential role in self-presentation on mobile dating apps. First, more Chinese MSM chose to remain anonymous on Jack'd than their U.S. counterparts. Second, although Chinese MSM mentioned fewer relational goals than American MSM, more Chinese mentioned looking for relationships than their U.S. counterparts. Both the photographic and written elements suggest sex seeking is discouraged in both countries. This study demonstrates the usefulness in studying online self-presentation of MSM. As Gonzales and Meyers (1993) suggest, such an unobtrusive approach is capable of providing ecological valid observations. It is also particularly useful to reach marginalized communities (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2013; Child, Low, McCormick, & Cocciarella, 1996)—in this case, MSM in China.

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Reanchoring an Ancient, Emergent Superpower: The 2010 Shanghai Expo, National Identity, and Public Memory

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From May through October, 2010, Shanghai hosted the 41st World Expo. Amid China's contemporary ascendancy, this event provided a valuable glimpse into the country's sociopolitical circumstances and communicative dynamics. Employing public memory as the theoretical framework to examine this national spectacle, I argue that the Chinese government executed a publicity campaign to construct its national identity as an ancient, emergent superpower by deploying historical resources for political legitimation and ideological recognition. Such memorial invocations betrayed China's rhetorical (con)quest to reanchor its communist leadership as historically continuous, ideologically inevitable, and culturally indigenous. Moreover, the tension between official assertions and public reactions not only reveals the Chinese government's political, ideological, and communicative contradictions but illuminates the contested crucible of Chinese national identity, public memory, and sociopolitical discourse.

Keywords: Shanghai Expo, public memory, national identity, rhetorical criticism, Chinese ascendancy

From May 1 to October 31, 2010, the 41st World Expo was held in Shanghai, China, a historically evocative and culturally stylish metropolis which marked its "comeback as a major world city after decades of spartan industrialism following the 1949 communist revolution" (Bodeen, 2010, para. 1). Through the Expo's 159-year history, the 2010 Shanghai event proved exemplary and even unsurpassable, highlighting an unprecedented number of participating countries, organizations, journalists, and spectators from around the world. Yet the Expo's implications extend still further: As the largest Expo, which attracted 73 million visitors (plus 82.3 million virtual visitors to its portal Expo Shanghai Online), it is the first time that this traditionally industrialized countries' proprietary party was hosted by a developing country. In effect, at this "biggest, most expensive expo since the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London" (Kurtenbach, 2010a, para. 2), the Chinese government choreographed not just the "greatest show on earth" in the Expo's history (Moore, 2010, para. 1) but a massive publicity campaign at this "elaborate nation branding event" (Minter, 2010, para. 3).

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While global observations from a myriad of political, economic, social, and cultural perspectives have proliferated, little attention has been devoted to the public memory dynamics of this event, especially how it historically intersected Chinese national identity from a communicative standpoint. Such an interrogation is important because this Expo intimately involves what Michael Bruner (2002) would call "a never-ending and politically consequential rhetorical struggle over national identity" (p. 1). In part, such a research blank lies in the broad range of exhibitionary artifacts China presented for this occasion, which pose conceptual challenges and methodological difficulties for theoretical encapsulation and analytical interpretation. As Michael McGee (1990) suggests, amid "the fragmentation of contemporary culture," communicative discourse "ceases to be what it is whenever parts of it are taken 'out of context'," and thus assumes more textual contingency (p. 283). To unpack such artifactual complexity, I approach this communicative event from a public memory vantage point to accommodate its textual diversity while integrating its thematic continuity. Through a memorially oriented rhetorical examination of this publicity event, I seek to explicate the Chinese government's communicative imperatives, memorial intervention, and identity configuration.

Conceptually, the analytical cogency of a public memory approach to this national spectacle is legitimated by the fact that the Shanghai Expo, constituted by its diverse exhibitionary artifacts, closely implicates Chinese historical heritage, cultural tradition, and collective consciousness. Moreover, since public memory has become "an important part of any examination of contemporary society's main problems and tensions" (Misztal, 2003, p. 8), this event can function as a significant barometer of the host nation's politico-ideological circumstances, historico-cultural foundation, and national perception. Thus, a public memory–centered investigation into the Shanghai Expo will produce, as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1994) diagnoses of collective remembrance's indexical power, an "especially rich reservoir of data, with their high degree of articulation of different framing principles making for analytically easy access" (p. 67). This is particularly meaningful for national identity dissection, because the latter is essentially "assembled out of available historical resources and incessantly negotiated between state and public representatives offering competing accounts of national character" (Bruner, 2002, p. 3). Consequently, an in-depth memorial scrutiny can yield valuable insights into "the inherent contradictions of a social system" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 14), not least its momentous national identity construction.

Through a rhetorical inquiry into the public memory dimension of the Shanghai Expo, particularly two of its most representative artifacts, I argue that, by hosting this global event, the Chinese government executed a grand publicity campaign to construct China's national identity as an ancient, emergent superpower. To this end, the Chinese authorities deliberately deployed historico-cultural resources to evoke public remembrances in pursuit of political legitimation and ideological recognition. Moreover, the Chinese government's historical representation and memorial invocation betrayed its rhetorical (con)quest to reanchor its communist leadership as historically continuous, ideologically inevitable, and culturally indigenous. However, the tension between official hegemonic assertions and public alternative reactions not only reveals the Chinese government's political, ideological, and communicative contradictions but illuminates the contested crucible of Chinese national identity, public memory, and sociopolitical discourse.

The World Expo and National Identity

Originating from French tradition of national exhibition, the first World Expo, known as "The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations," was held at the Crystal Palace, London, in 1851. Though its governing body—the Bureau International des Expositions (International Exhibitions Bureau)—came about belatedly in 1928, the Expo has evolved dramatically in thematic content, national presentation, and global impact. Thematically, the Expo has undergone three distinct stages over its one-and-a-half-century history, tracing a distinct shift from hard power to soft power in host countries' and cities' presentation (Hughes, 2012): The first stage (1851–1938) highlighted international trade, industrial prowess, and technological innovation; the second stage (1939–1987) underlined social tradition and cultural value; the third stage (1988–present) has transcended industrial-commercial achievement and sociocultural heritage to national branding of prosperity and dynamism.

In modern times, when national image has emerged to become a strategic asset in a country's soft power arsenal, and when the Expo provides a major window on a country's aggregate strengths, the Expo has offered one of the most powerful global avenues for national promotion, metropolitan-economic visibility, and politico-ideological publicity through exhibitionary signification: The 1851 London Great Exhibition marked the advent of the Industrial Revolution; the 1939 New York World Fair established the Big Apple's global preeminence; and the 1970 Osaka Expo confirmed Japan's renaissance as an industrial power. Unlike their Western cosmopolitan counterparts, which have taken their global status for granted, Asian nations have particularly yearned for the Expo's communicative power in reshaping national identity—rather like hosting the Olympics to catapult their national status via evoking a "modern hybridity . . . as a syncretism of cutting-edge modern technological industry anchored in the rich cultural histories and civilization of the East" (Collins, 2008, p. 186). This is especially true for a historically vicissitudinous country like China, which had endured a century of national shame at the hands of Western powers since the mid-19th century. As a result, its national psyche has been not only intensely "driven by a sense of national grievance over perceived humiliations . . . but also by growing an even arrogant self-confidence" (Brzezinski, 2006, p. 4).

Moreover, the Expo's global ethos is unusually appealing for the Chinese communist government whose politico-ideological dogmatism has long constrained its leverage to pitch national persona through globally recognized channels. Patently, the Expo afforded an especially kairotic outlet for the Chinese authorities to pursue their politico-ideological agenda and symbolic-rhetorical ambition over national identity construction.

National Identity and Public Memory

As a philosophical issue, identity has haunted human communities in their pursuit of self-knowledge and self-location throughout history (Bloom, 1990; Poole, 1999). If the nation, like individuals, is "the culmination of a past full of efforts, sacrifices, and devotion, going back a long way," Ernest Renan (2006) argues, then "the cult of our forefathers is the most legitimate of all, for they have made us what we are" (p. 165). Having evolved from the Western context, the construct of national identity has been broadly conceived as multidimensional, signifying "bonds of solidarity among members of communities

united by shared memories, myths and traditions" (Smith, 1991, p. 15). Such inclusive, consensual multidimensionality has rendered national identity "a flexible and persistent force in modern life and politics . . . to combine effectively with other powerful ideologies and movements" (Smith, 1991, p. 15) while providing an importantly symptomatic indicator of a country's underlying circumstances and fundamental contradictions.

This is especially true since the 19th century, when modern nation-states, in the face of a splintered social fabric, declining cultural traditions, and drastic political tumults, increasingly resorted to "invented traditions" to reclaim their historical continuity and political legitimacy in order to transform themselves into "an imagined political community" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). Through formalization and ritualization, "invented traditions" conduce to nation building via "symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities," "legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority," and "inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 9). All these dynamic operations cannot function without impinging on memory, for national identity "is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity" (Gillis, 1996, p. 3). Hence, national identities, alongside public remembrance, are "not things we think about, but things we think with" (Gillis, 1996, p. 5).

In unpacking national identity's sociopolitical functions, public remembrance offers a crucial entry point, particularly when the nation as the definitive mnemonic community predicates its vital continuity on "the vision of a suitable past and a believable future" (Misztal, 2003, p. 7). As public memory "enacts and gives substance to the group's identity, its present conditions and its vision of the future" (Misztal, 2003, p. 7), public recollection hence becomes politically consequential, ideologically instrumental, and socially revelatory, not just for politicians and nationalists but for social critics, cultural researchers, and communication scholars.

Thus, as one of the most prominent global occasions for national branding via publicity execution, the World Expo, from a public memory perspective, provides a paradigmatic case to interrogate symbolic transaction and rhetorical contestation over national identity between official sponsors and public spectators.

National Identity and Public Memory From a Communicative Perspective

Communication scholars have long observed memory's primordial significance underpinning human interaction since ancient Greece (Kennedy, 1998). In contemporary times, when memory studies in a multitude of disciplines has undergone ontological, epistemological, and sociological shifts (Halbwachs, 1992; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, 2011) and when "the appreciation of memory as habit is displaced by one of memory as representation" (Hutton, 1993, p. 16), communication scholars have productively reconceptualized memory's public texture and communicative potency as historicity and particularity (Browne, 1995), as collectivity and indeterminacy (Zelizer, 1995), and as consensuality and consubstantiality (Jasinski, 2001). Essentially, being "an art interested in the ways symbols are employed to induce cooperation, achieve understanding, contest understanding, and offer dissent," Kendall Phillips (2004) points out, rhetoric has always been "deeply steeped in a concern for public memories" (p. 3). In

fact, he underlines, "in a very real sense, to speak of memory in this way is to speak of a highly rhetorical process" (p. 2).

Therefore, I deploy public memory as the theoretical framework to unravel the Shanghai Expo and elucidate how public remembrances surrounding this event "attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories" (Phillips, 2004, p. 3). Given that theory and method in humanities-centered communicative inquiry are conceptually co-constitutive and analytically holistic, rhetorical interpretation and critical analysis are inherently "heuristic," "pedagogic," and "moral" (Brummett, 1984, p. 103). Thus, complemented with cognate multidisciplinary scholarship, a rhetorical intersection with public memory can fruitfully provide a range of conceptual dialectics and analytical heuristics over national events, especially ceremonial productions constituted by sociopolitical configuration, historical presentation, and identity construction.

First, a rhetorical excavation into public memory highlights a semiotic interpretation revelatory of a nation's sociopolitical circumstances. Generally, the past remains dormant until some dramatic issue disrupts its politico-societal equilibrium and entails national reflection and historical revision. Public memory, when conceived by the official authorities from a presentist orientation or by the vernacular public from an experiential standpoint, discloses how historical resources and symbolic formations are competitively marshaled toward conjuring up specific imaginings of historical experiences. Barry Schwartz (1996) specifies such function as "a model of society" that embodies "its needs, problems, fears, mentality, and aspirations" (p. 908). Being "part of culture's meaning-making apparatus," collective recollection hence "establishes an image of the world so compelling as to render meaningful its deepest perplexities" (Schwartz, 2000, p. 17). As such, public remembrance operates as "a symbolic structure in which the reality of the community's inner life could be rendered more explicit and more comprehensible than it would have been otherwise" (Schwartz, Zerubavel, Barnett, & Steiner, 1986, p. 160). Inevitably, public memory becomes symbolically intertwined with and rhetorically indexical of the character of a nation's identity, especially its political realities and social conditions.

Second, a rhetorical inquiry of public memory reveals a prescriptive regime indicative of a nation's political orthodoxy and ideological hegemony. If "all symbolism harbors the curse of mediacy" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 7), then public memory, fashioned from a society's historico-cultural heritage and symbolic-rhetorical resources, cannot resonate with its subscribers without invoking primitive appeals of idealism and exemplarity. As "the form of an ideological system with special language, beliefs, symbols, and stories" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 4), public memory thus functions as "a model for society [that] defines its experience, articulates its values and goals, and provides cognitive, affective, and moral orientation for realizing them" (Schwartz, 1996, p. 910). As a result, public memory can serve as a constitutive rhetoric that "positions the reader towards political, social, and economic action in the material world" (Charland, 1987, p. 141), or it may assume the form of a "monumental history" constantly "in danger of being a little altered and touched up and brought nearer to fiction" (Nietzsche, 1957, p. 15). Hence, with symbolic investigation and rhetorical critique, public memory's normative manifestation can lay bare the political manipulation and ideological intervention underlying national identity construction.

Last, a rhetorical scrutiny of public memory offers an insightful probe into a nation's momentous relationship between its past and present. A nation, in Ernest Renan's (2006) vision, comprises two components: "One is the shared possession of a rich heritage of memories; the other is present-day consent, wanting to live together, the will to continue to cherish the entire inheritance one has received" (p. 165). Thus, as "a highly contested and negotiated process . . . driven by the need to create a usable past" (Wertsch, 2002, p. 40), public memory reflects our committed (dis)beliefs in past experiences and shared identity, often with emotional intensity. A rhetorical inspection into its mnemonic operation hence discloses a nation's vital dynamics at historical, political, and social levels. When a nation reverts to its past for symbolic resource and persuasive inspiration, such collective retrospection (re)produces not only "debates over the ownership of memory—its regulation, placement, and assignment of meaning" (Browne, 1995, p. 243) but particular versions of national identity. In public remembrance, John Bodnar (1992) stresses, "each site and each bit of detail offered for public consumption inevitably became a representation of a larger and more complex reality and concept" (p. 177). Consequently, public memory "involves not so much specific economic or moral problems, but rather fundamental issues about the entire existence of a society: its organization, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 14).

As a conceptual framework, public memory lends itself to critically illuminating interconnection/interaction between collective remembrance and national identity. Given that communicative scholarship remains "surprisingly limited" on the rhetorical process of national identity (Bruner, 2000, p. 87), such analytical utilities are especially instrumental for not only exploring the underlying national circumstances but probing how "different strategies of remembrance (politicized forms of public memory) . . . have different consequences for the character of nations" (Bruner, 2002, p. 3). If communicative inquiry can "help formulate a critical practice for 'diagnosing' collective identities through the analysis of competing discourses/texts that create, sustain and/or transform them" (Bruner, 2005, p. 312), then a rhetorical interrogation into the public memorial operation of national persona is particularly suitable to deciphering the significant (dis)junctures between historical representation, national identity, and sociopolitical reality.

At a time when memory discourse, as "one of the most important symbolic resources we have" (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994, p. 67), has increasingly shaped national reconstruction and international relationships, a communicative engagement with a nation's public memoryscape regarding its identity building can be significantly illuminating, especially for a quintessentially historical nation like China, whose people can be defined as "*Homo Historiens* in every sense" (Huang, 2007, p. 180).

The Shanghai Expo's Context

Behind the Shanghai Expo's exhibitionary pageantries and ceremonial festivities, the Chinese government has confronted a growing array of communicative imperatives in recent years. Domestically, China's reform and opening up since the late 1970s have dramatically transformed but also drastically fragmented the country, an eventful period marked by rapid economic advances, growing sociocultural diversity, and increasing sociopolitical tension. Over the past decade, China has witnessed a continuous surge in social unrest, from 8,709 incidences in 1993, 87,000 in 2005 (Yu, 2007), and 90,000 in 2009

(Wong, 2010) to 180,000 instances in 2010 (He, 2016) in which peasants, workers, and urban citizens have become the leading social groups advocating for civic rights (Yu, 2007).[2] Meanwhile, China's public expenditure on internal security almost equaled that on national defense in 2009, and it was expected to exceed the latter after 2011, making public security the fastest growing segment of public outlays (Guan, 2010). At the same time, despite its authoritarian tradition and political domination, never before have Chinese civic activities at grassroots levels gathered such a strong momentum toward greater sociopolitical participation, signaled by a series of seething civic initiatives to investigate government malpractices and high-level corruption behind calamitous public accidents. Emblematic of this social-civic movement is the publication of *Charter 08* in 2008, cosigned by more than 300 Chinese intellectuals, journalists, and human rights activists on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document, widely known as "China's Democratic Manifesto," aggressively demands a broad spectrum of constitutional reform and political liberalization.[3]

Externally, China's robust developments have engendered both euphoria and misgivings, including rising concerns over its political, economic, and military ambitions. In the face of this "chance to showcase China's rising clout and prosperity to a global audience" at the Shanghai Expo (Richburg, 2010, para. 2), the Chinese government felt obligated to reassure the world with a refurbished national image of cooperation and convergence. More importantly, despite China's resounding public relations success at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government still needed this Expo, as "a form of power . . . of persuasion rather than of gunpowder" (Kurtenbach, 2010b, para. 3) to project culturally rooted and philosophically inspiring themes to convince the world of its political vitality, economic sustainability, and environmental benignity. "It's that attitude," Austin Ramzy (2010) of *TIME* magazine observes, that explains "why China is fully embracing the expo . . . [and] promises to make the Shanghai expo such an extravaganza" (para. 6).

For the Chinese authorities, while "display[ing] to the world a China with a civilization of more than 5,000 years" ("The Eternally Ongoing," 2010, para. 9), this media event would, as Dayan and Katz (1992) observe, "endow collective memory not only with a substance but with a frame . . . for organizing personal and historical time" (p. 211). Moreover, as a mnemonic marker, this publicity spectacle can, in Dayan and Katz's terms, "socialize citizens to the political structure," "reinforce the status of leaders," and "integrate nations" (p. 201). It is with such memorial intensity and political stake that the Shanghai Expo provided a valuable glimpse into how the Chinese government appropriated historical heritage, cultural tradition, and communicative resources in service of its politico-ideological agenda on national identity construction, alongside how domestic and global publics alternatively construed such rhetorical intervention.

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[2] In 2003, the Chinese government started to release statistics on social unrest, but stopped doing so after 2008. Due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of such information, scholars now turn to various unofficial sources to estimate its scale and gravity.

[3] So far, more than 10,000 Chinese intellectuals have signed this document. Liu Xiaobo, one of its chief drafters, won the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for his prominent role in China's civic movement and political democratization.

The Shanghai Expo: China's Publicity Extravaganza

On May 1, 2010, the Shanghai Expo—a blend of "Sino-Western schmaltz and stiff Chinese ritual" (Higgins, 2010b, para. 4)—started off with an exuberant opening ceremony. This pyrotechnically lavish gambit formally announced the beginning of the six-month-long World's Fair in China's most avant-garde city, witnessed by 20 national heads and government executives, 246 participating countries and international organizations, 186,000 journalists, and a record number of 73 million global visitors.

From a wide array of exhibitionary artifacts China provided for this grand occasion, I focus on two representative texts for a close reading of their political intention, historical invocation, and rhetorical implication. The first artifact is the China Pavilion, because architectural heritage "provides the main components to retaining . . . a nation's character [via] expressing the nation's image and identity" (Lahoud, 2008, p. 390). Further, more than an engineering prototype, this structure, as a meticulous projection of China's national identity, possesses deeper political, ideological, and cultural overtones. The second artifact is China's premium exhibit—a giant three-dimensional animated scroll of China's most famed painting, *Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival*. This classic work depicts a panoramic river view of urban vibrancy and rural serenity of China's ancient capital Bianliang (now Kaifeng in Henan province) during the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127 AD). The deliberate choice of this drawing out of China's vast artistic repository, aggrandized by its cultural reputation and aesthetic consummation, reveals Chinese official organizers' historico-memorial mobilization, symbolic-rhetorical inflection, and politico-ideological motivation.

Moreover, among a diverse range of thematic exhibits epitomizing Chinese cultural heritage, industrial breakthrough, and economic miracle, these two texts have not only generated the most intensive global attention and media commentary but will stand out as enduring symbolic icons and representative hermeneutic specimens, exerting far-reaching influence on the global public's perception of China's national identity over the long term, as illustrated by subsequent analyses.[4]

The China Pavilion

Since its inception in 1851, the World Expo has become a premier global stage to parade host countries' economic achievement, metropolitan vitality, and sociocultural renewal. To such ends, the national pavilion has provided a prime technological medium and communicative channel to exemplify social progress, urban vibrancy, and cultural revitalization. Alongside the Expo's previous memorable structures, such as the Eiffel Tower and Seattle's Space Needle, the China Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo (see Figure 1), "as a physical display of the country's pride and growing power" (Kurtenbach, 2010b, para. 3), stands as probably one of the Expo's most eye-catching structures in physical scale, visual impact, and sociocultural symbolism.

[4] According to the Shanghai Expo Bureau, the China Pavilion and the painting *Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival* will be kept as the permanent fixtures of this event.

Figure 1. The China Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo. Source: Xinhuanet.

Among five exhibition zones stretching along the Huangpu River, the China Pavilion is situated in Zone A along the Expo Axis—a central boulevard that leads to the main entrance of the Expo park. Surrounded by other Asian countries' modest pavilions, this $220 million, 226-foot-high gigantic structure is, in Chinese official media parlance, "one of the largest and most important buildings showcasing the host country's economic power" (Wang, 2010, para. 4). It towers like a red upside-down pyramid with a floor space equivalent to 35 football fields and three times the average height of other pavilions. Nicknamed "The Crown of the East," the China Pavilion presents a distinctive layout of roof, inspired by a quintessential Chinese architectural device called a *dougong* (bracket) dating back more than 2,000 years (Liu, 1984).

Within Chinese living culture and building tradition, *dougong* (see Figure 2), as "a classical Chinese architectural component" (Steinhardt, 2002, p. 1), is symbolic of Chinese architectural essence (Liang, 2006). As an ingenious joint cushion buffering the roof weight on the columns while enhancing the building's resilience against earthquakes, it plays a definitive role in structurally coupling the wooden columns and the roof beams. Hence, *dougong* has been acclaimed as "the most innovative and representative component" of Chinese architecture (Zhao, 2001, p. 73). Moreover, given its critical stabilizing function, *dougong* was technically favorable to projecting ornamental roofs, which, in Chinese political and cultural tradition, symbolized the hierarchical distinction of status and wealth: The more elaborate a building's roof, the more prominent its resident's sociopolitical status. It is only natural that Chinese official media invested this imposing structure with an extensive range of political, ideological, and social significations, typified by its euphoric designations as "Oriental Crown," "Splendid China," "Ample Barn," and "Rich People" ("China Pavilion," 2010).

Figure 2. An example of* dougong *in traditional Chinese architecture. Source: Xinhuanet.

Yet behind the China Pavilion's cultural representation and technological symbolization, more critical communicative ploys are embedded by Chinese organizers. To begin with, this structure's design did not come about accidentally, but was selected from more than 300 entries by Chinese architects. Initially eliminated, its design was later selected by the evaluation committee to become the final choice. Its melodramatic turnaround, in the designer He Jingtang's words, was due to the fact that "It's an abstract expression of China's 5,000 years of history and the culture of 56 ethnic groups," and "every element used in the China Pavilion has its Chinese origin" (Wang, 2010, para. 10). However, as a subsidiary device between the column and beam, *dougong* was structurally subordinate and functionally supplementary, as compared with other independent components in the Chinese architecture system such as platform, entrance, patio, or roof. Thus, the prominent incarnation of such a secondary element as the core concept to construct this high-profile structure is highly strategic and hence poses a significant entry point for further rhetorical excavation.

From a communicative perspective, especially from a public memory standpoint, the China Pavilion reveals deeper rhetorical schemes and persuasive dynamics. First, its hyperbolically geometric shape—an inverted pyramid that extends incrementally wider at each layer—possesses intriguing visual cues and memorial prompts. Visually, an upside-down structure conventionally channels an observer's gaze toward its top, hence accentuating its elevated sections, particularly the uppermost part. With its raised gravity and potentially unstable posture untypical of Chinese naturalist philosophy, the China Pavilion explicitly manipulates the audiences' spatial cognition and memorial association by reducing their macro, comprehensive perspective into a micro, localized eyeshot while truncating their holistic perception into a myopic fixation. When such a magnificent yet cognitively superficial vision prevails, the structure's vertex becomes dominant and exclusive, while its foundation turns oblivious and marginal. Hence, this pavilion, rather than representing Chinese architectural tradition, overhangs as a "disproportionately out-human-sized" and "monstrous symbol of national authoritarianism" (Zhu, 2010, para. 2). Arguably, such a

refracted rendering of China's architectural tradition tends to inscribe an ideologically inflected subject position, particularly for the Chinese audience, by channeling their memorial horizon and collective consciousness toward political centralism and national exceptionalism..

Second, equally noteworthy is the China Pavilion's nuanced exploitation of Chinese imperial heritage and architectural tradition. This structure is deliberately painted the same color—a crimson, resplendent red—as Beijing's Forbidden City (the imperial palace from which China's last feudal rulers governed the country for nearly five centuries). In light of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) purported identity as the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat, such artistic conservatism betrays more of a retrogressive obsession with political orthodoxy and ideological continuity (Zhu, 2010). Moreover, the China Pavilion's location discloses rhetorically strategic deployment. Located at the central site within the Expo venue, the China Pavilion perches next to the intersection of north-south and west-east axes, with no major country's pavilion in the same zone to rival its prominence.[5] Within the Chinese architectural system, which "puts a premium on the built environment's dialectic unity, and integrates all subsidiary components into a synergic whole" (Ma, 1999, p. 83), such a hierarchical geography is especially susceptible to highlighting the central structure's predominant grandeur. As a mnemonic prompt for most Chinese spectators' awareness of their millennial-long architectural tradition and sociocultural connotation, the China Pavilion not only takes the pride of place but implicitly subordinates all neighboring pavilions into its geopolitical scheme of national ranking and power echelon.

Ironically enough, on this supposedly apolitical occasion meant to prototype new ideas and technologies, the China Pavilion tactically functions as a material reproduction and cultural reincarnation of China's political ideology and social hierarchy. Regarding such theatrical contextualism and allegorical landscaping, Chinese architecture scholar Wang Guixiang dismisses it as "overtly aggressive and muscular . . . which betrays Chinese architecture's elegance, tranquility, and humility" (Wang, 2009, para. 37). Cultural critic Zhu Dake likens it to "an awkward symbol . . . flaunting bureaucratic power rather than exhibiting authentic Chinese architectural tradition" (Zhu, 2014, para. 15). Adam Minter (2010) of *The Atlantic* comments, when "the U.S. and Japanese pavilions are exiled to the far ends of the Expo site, as far from the China pavilion as physically possible, the politics are sometimes comically obvious" (para. 5). "It's the 21st century equivalent to the old tribute to the emperor," Tania Branigan (2010) of *The Guardian* alludes: "We've all always had to pay to play in China, but wind-up clocks and oompah bands are old hat so now we have to build pavilions, sponsor things, cut cheques to officials charities" (para. 11).

As such, the China Pavilion, more than architectural representation and cultural manifestation, was memorially refashioned and normatively appropriated by its official sponsors as a dual prompt—explicitly shaping the audiences' perceptions along prefigured visual, political, and cultural directions while implicitly accentuating the Chinese communist government's historical continuity, cultural orthodoxy, and political legitimacy.

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[5] In the Expo's venue layout, the medium-sized Asian and Oceanian countries' pavilions are built to the west zone adjacent to the China Pavilion, while major Western countries' (including the U.S.) pavilions are relegated to the neighborhood with African and Caribbean countries' pavilions in the far west corner.

The Animated Painting *Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival*

Just as every participating country at the Expo rolls out its latest industrial achievement and technological innovation, Chinese organizers at the Shanghai Expo also selected its exemplary exhibits to promote a national image. Inside the China Pavilion, representing China's urban evolution and metropolitan sophistication is an unusual item—a giant three-dimensional animated painting scroll based on one of China's most famous drawings, *Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival* (see Figure 3).

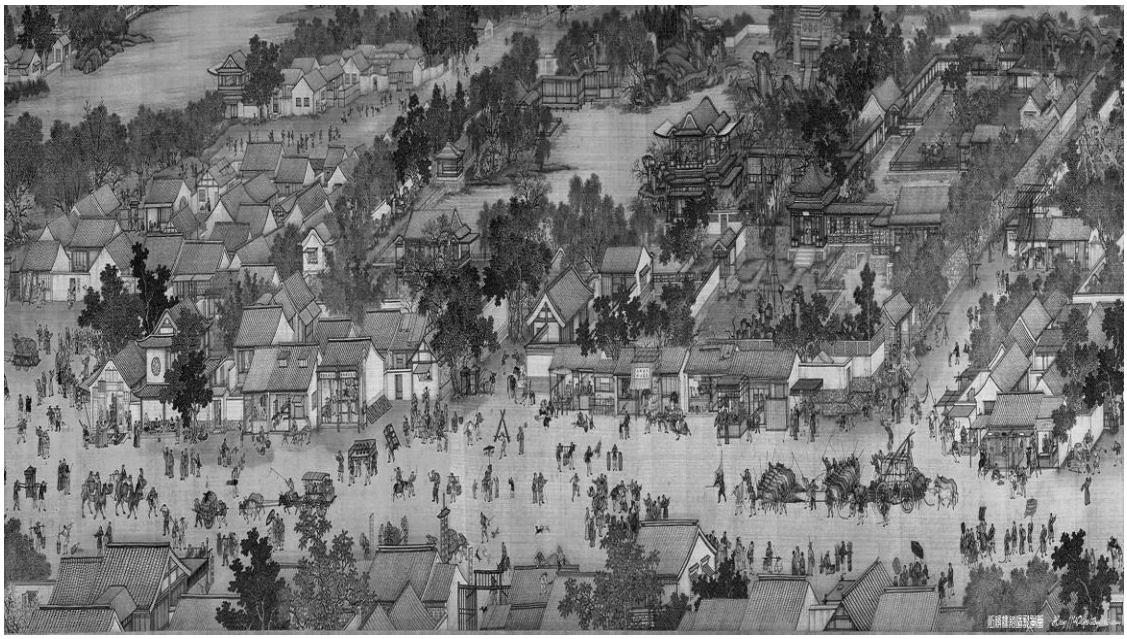

Figure 3. One section of the Chinese classical painting* Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival*. Source: Xinhuanet.

Socioculturally, this "great realistic masterpiece" in Chinese genre painting (Jiang, 2006, p. 130) has been noted for its vivid, panoramic portrayal of urban prosperity and the social vibrancy of China's thriving capital from the 10th to 12th centuries. Originally, this elaborate piece, about 10 inches wide and 208 inches long, was created by Zhang Zeduan, an official painter affiliated with the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Excelling at portraying social scenes, Zhang in this piece reproduced an almost encyclopedic picture of China's 12th-century urban life and social condition. By estimate, 1,659 human subjects and 209 animals are minutely re-created in their circumstantial activities, making for a consummate microcosm epitomic of national political stability, social harmony, and urban vitality. For better exhibition effects, its three-dimensional animated version at the Expo was enlarged by 30 times into a perfectly proportionate, 21-foot-tall and 420-foot-long massive scroll. While on display, this hefty, rolling piece entails 12 cinematic projectors working at the background, alternating between daytime and nighttime scenes.

From a sociopolitical standpoint, this remarkable work of art could hardly be more memorially affectionate with the Chinese audience. In Chinese history, the Northern Song Dynasty brought to an end prolonged warlordism and social disunity, heralding a long-awaited era of political peace and social rehabilitation. It was also during this period that China achieved a pinnacle in cultural creativity, technological advance, and economic prosperity. For example, this period embraced a new heyday in China's intellectual development, as most Chinese scholars concur that, through a millennium of evolution, Chinese culture, including its painting, reached a peak around this era (Cahill, 1984; Du & Jin, 2003). The French sinologist Jacque Gernet (1996) calls this time "China's renaissance" (p. 297). The British academician Joseph Needham (1990) labels it "The Golden Age" in China's science and technology (p. 138). For the Chinese people, this dynasty draws forth recollections of political liberalism, social progress, and cultural diversity; likewise, no mnemonic prompt could be more imaginatively vicarious than a panoptic, verisimilar painting evocative of those auld lang syne.

Moreover, what may be communicatively imperceptible yet rhetorically significant lies in this painting's creative ingenuity, for it deploys, contrary to its Western artistic counterpart, a quintessential Chinese drawing technique called *scattered perspective*. Such a diffusive focus employs multiple vantage points to portray a holistic scene of the subject while ensuring every element is represented in its original detail and proportion. This panoramic tactic contrasts sharply with Western painting's *focused perspective*, a mode of linear, single-point visuality marked by the "combination of an objective, scientific rationality and an empirically accessible material" suitable for distilling an analytical perception of the subject (Dorst, 1999, p. 99). By comparison, a scattered perspective is instrumental to creating a natural, ambient experience, and more so when a meticulous work of considerable size is enlarged into a sprawling canvas and punctiliously retouched into a storied three-dimensional animation. Before such a memorially intimate and visually sweeping exhibit, any spectator would be overwhelmed by its physical magnitude and perceptual immensity.

However, what is most critical in this painting is not even its artistic creativity or physical scale but its psycho-cognitive potency of chain proselytization with spectators: Standing before such a minute, immersive spectacle, scarcely any viewer would not be awed by its artistic ingenuity; neither would such an awestruck viewer question its historical authenticity, doubt China's erstwhile prosperity, or challenge its contemporary government's historical continuity and political lineage. With such an evocative sleight of hand, the Chinese government painstakingly inspired domestic audiences' historico-cultural imagination and predisposed their sociopolitical susceptibility for political legitimation, ideological recognition, and social cohesion.

However, when placed in an expanded historical context, this painting is riddled with political baggage and rhetorical vulnerability. Politically, the Northern Song Dynasty was established by a military general via a coup d'état, and the new sovereign drastically scaled back the military apparatus lest he repeat his predecessor's tragedy. This overt precaution effectively centralized national administration but also debilitated national defense to the extent that the border peace was maintained by regularly conceding tributes to northern nomadic tribes. This pacifist policy proved so fragile that six decades later the capital was sacked and the emperor was captured by the nomadic invaders—a poignant national disgrace chronicled in most Chinese textbooks. Besides, Zhang Zeduan, as the royal painter, primarily

created artistic works to cater to his master's aesthetic imagination and political fantasy. Conceivably, this painting's flamboyant vista of national stability, economic prosperity, and social harmony would very likely delight his royal patron with an immense sense of greatness and immortality.

Nevertheless, constituted by "grammars that transform the perceptible into nonobvious meanings," this painting would function, in Murray Edelman's (1988) anatomy of political language's illusive capacity to reflect social reality, as "a form of action that generates radiating chains of connotations while undermining its own assumptions and assertions" (p. 103). By tapping into Chinese artistic treasury and historical imagining, the Chinese authorities deftly substitute public memory's normative potency ("a model for society") for its semiotic function ("a model of society"), making for what Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp and Lori Lanzilotti (1998) would define as "official expression," which "tends to emphasize an abstract ideal that apparently does not threaten, and in many ways support, the status quo" (p. 152).

Reception and Implication

Throughout the Shanghai Expo's duration, Chinese and global commentaries were swift and effusive. China's official Xinhua News Agency (2010b) proclaimed it "a fulfillment of a Chinese centennial dream, and a passionate embrace of China's 5,000-year civilization with the world" (para. 8). John Boudreau (2010) of *The San Jose Mercury News* commented, "If the 2008 Beijing Olympics was China's postcard to the world, the Shanghai World Expo is the nation's coming out party" (para. 1). Fred Bernstein (2010) of *Architect* magazine observed, the Shanghai Expo is "far more than design—it is a brilliant act of international diplomacy . . . for China's largest city to announce itself as a cultural and economic powerhouse" (para. 6). At "a metropolis that once symbolized subjugation by the West," Andrew Higgins (2010b) of *The Washington Post* construed, "[the Expo] showcases their country as a potent but peaceful world power" (para. 1). Mark MacKinnon (2010) of *The Globe and Mail* wrote, "Expo 2010 confirms how China has moved to the world's centre stage" (para. 1). "The obvious conscious message is that China has arrived," Jose Villarreal, U.S. Expo Commissioner General, opined, "We are basically celebrating China's emergence as a world power" (Higgins, 2010a, para. 3).

Amid such glowing observations surrounding this event, the Shanghai authorities stressed that its success was primarily attributable to the CCP's central leadership and the socialist system's political superiority, while the Chinese central government called on the whole country to rally behind the CCP and uphold the socialist system with Chinese characteristics (Xinhua News Agency, 2010a). Clearly, behind this seemingly commercial and technological event lay a deeper array of the Chinese government's rhetorical maneuvers, designed to memorially engage Chinese and global audiences for political, ideological, and sociocultural objectives.

Such aspirations are especially acute when confronted with seething civic movements and widespread sociopolitical challenges. The Chinese government could not let slip this Expo—a golden public relations opportunity—to make a compelling statement for its political legitimacy, ideological viability, and social credibility. In its endeavor to secure the status quo, hardly any other communicative recourse can

be a more efficient sociopolitical stabilizer and psycho-cognitive placebo than these two memorial artifacts—the China Pavilion and the painting *Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival*.

The choice of the China Pavilion reveals the Chinese authorities' pursuit of historical continuity and cultural orthodoxy. By disproportionately magnifying a structurally supplementary element—*dougong*—into a visually dominant and psychologically glorifying structure, this ostentatiously crimson, monarchically reincarnated structure stands as a cacophonous misfit both within Chinese architectural tradition and amid the otherwise soothing Expo milieu (Wang, 2009). Moreover, when overloaded with blanket Chinese philosophical, political, and cultural symbolism, this elaborate, heavy-duty architecture exposes more of its official sponsor's nationalistic obsession and ideological parochialism (Wang, 2009) than an ancient, emergent superpower's putatively historical maturity and cultural magnanimity. Last, when national pavilions are intended to "*exhibit the means at man's disposal for meeting the needs of civilization"* (Bureau International des Expositions, 2010, para. 2), the China Pavilion, in its representation of Chinese cultural and philosophical heritage, ironically bespeaks the host's penchant for historical orthodoxy, cultural conservatism, and political reactionism. More tellingly, if public memory functions as "an expressive symbol—a language, as it were, for articulating present predicaments" (Schwartz, 1996, p. 910), then this structure pointedly betrays the CCP government's vehement pursuit of political legitimacy, ideological hegemony, and social stability at a time when all those foundations have been unprecedentedly challenged.

For the painting *Along the Riverside at Qingming Festival*, its rationale as the exemplary exhibit of China's national image is not far-fetched at all. As analyzed above, this mediated, decontextualized painting, with its scrupulous detail, hyperbolical visuality, and dioramic realism, implicitly furnishes a sociopolitical utopia—"a model for society" for its official organizers to prosecute political legitimation, ideological identification, and social rationalization. However, no memorial artifact can be gratuitously appropriated to underwrite any political agenda or ideological doctrine without invoking public memory's indexical function as "a model of society." Examined from a broader historical context, the choice of this classic work discloses what Michael Bruner (2000) would call "narrative absences . . . [that] always accompany articulations of collective belonging" (p. 103). Moreover, if official memory, in Foucault's (1977) words, tends to be "fixed, through its history, in rituals, in meticulous procedures that impose rights and obligations" (p. 150), then a reconstituted, historiographical dissection of this freighted painting illustrates what Foucault would propose as "counter-memory" (p. 144), which constantly problematizes the Chinese government's monolithic representation and significantly countervails its exploitive interpretation.

Inevitably, public memory, as "a site of uncertainty, contest, and change" (Browne, 1995, p. 243), has become a competitive domain between the Chinese government and the domestic/global public. As a parody of the Shanghai Expo's theme "Better City, Better Life," local artist Chen Hangfeng exhibited an installation titled "Bubble City, Bubble Life" to mock the Shanghai authorities' obsession with money and prestige (Moore, 2010). Though "the Expo's global participation signals the host nation's robust ascendancy," cultural critic Zhu Dake warns, "Just like the Beijing Olympics, after all the pomp and pageantry, China will remain the same as ever, orbiting within its logical rut" (Zhu, 2010, para. 22). Despite its urbanization strides, "China's political fragility is also evident," as David Ignatius (2010) of *The Washington Post* reminds us: "This new China is at once cocky and scared—anxious looking over its

shoulder even as it races ahead" (para. 4). Dubbing it "a campaign of mass distraction," political scientist Anne-Marie Brady comments, "The hoopla surrounding it is aimed at helping Chinese people feel positive about their country . . . [while] distracting them from other, more depressing issues. In China today, the non-political is in fact deeply political" (Branigan, 2010, para. 13). Consequently, such extensive contestations from domestic and global publics have increasingly challenged the Chinese authorities' political hegemony and historical monopoly.

China's National Identity, Public Memory, and Sociopolitical Discourse

"A society becomes visible to itself and to others [through its cultural heritage]," Jan Assmann (2011) aptly observes, and "which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society" (p. 215). Vis-à-vis the Chinese government's sociopolitical intervention and national branding at the Shanghai Expo, Chinese and global public receptions have proved politically revelatory and socially diagnostic, from which we can glean a few insights into the contemporary crucible of Chinese national identity, public memory, and sociopolitical discourse.

First, China's official hegemonic assertions in the public memory domain demonstrate that its national identity remains precariously tethered to its historical tradition and cultural foundation. Since its "century of national humiliation" at the hands of Western colonial powers from the mid-19th century (Callahan, 2010, p. 67), generations of Chinese politicians have striven to reinstate the nation from its modern decline back to the erstwhile glory by rehabilitating historical traumas while resuturing national identification. Yet such national redemption, as illustrated by the CCP government's legitimacy-oriented rhetorical intervention in public memory sphere, is neither secure nor sustainable. Revealingly, at this putatively forward-looking technological and commercial Expo, the Chinese authorities opted to retrogressively exploit imperial-dynastic heritage and historico-mnemonic sensibility to evoke identificatory imaginings toward national identification. Such a "historical turn" not only exposes the dwindling efficiency of its conventional political mobilization and ideological imposition but highlights the CCP authorities' communicative sophistication and propagandistic opportunism. Such a hypocritical approach, albeit instrumental toward national identity building, nevertheless culminates in a fundamental incongruity underlying its national persona: Self-claimed as a brand-new political party and representative vanguard of the Chinese proletariat in its national history, the CCP government's obsession with legitimate continuity from the national past exposes its fatal incapacity to achieve critical departure and genuine transcendence over the country's imperial-feudal baggage. In fact, the more it contrives "inherited orthodoxy" to heighten its "Mandate of Heaven," the more its staged national identity trivializes its purported political mission and ideological eschatology.

Second, multivocal rhetorical contestation in the public memory terrain shows that China's sociopolitical circumstances have increasingly become a foundational baseline for historico-cultural representation and sociopolitical perception by domestic and global publics, particularly over national identity. As John Bodnar (1992) points out, official authorities tend to promote "a nationalistic, patriotic culture of the whole" at national commemorations, while the vernacular public often "convey what social reality feels like rather than what it should be like" (p. 14). This is especially true for contemporary

Chinese public remembrance, which, no longer dominated by official historical monopoly and political hegemony, has become unprecedentedly complicated by such an experiential, grassroots benchmark. Amid the fluid context in which neither "the concepts of manipulation and propaganda nor the related concepts of dominant ideology and false consciousness" can encapsulate today's Chinese historical sensibility and authoritarian configuration (Zhang & Schwartz, 1997, p. 207), such a "productive critical interrogation of the politics of public memory" (Bruner, 2000, p. 102) has figured more and more prominently in Chinese and global publics' perceptions of China's emergent national identity.

In "making sense of the present and thus for extending the continuous present out to edges of the personal and collective horizons of time/space," public memory affords what Andrew Hoskins (2007) defines as "a central resource" (p. 18). This is most pertinent to a historically constituted, sociopolitically authoritarian country like the People's Republic of China when negotiating its profound yet polysemous past for national identity at the Shanghai Expo. By "formulating a critical practice for 'diagnosing' collective identities through the analysis of competing discourse/texts that create, sustain and/or transform them" (Bruner, 2005, p. 312), this essay not only contributes to the current conversation on China's national ascendancy and prospective trajectory but, more crucially, sheds important light on the vital nexus among its national identity, public memory, and sociopolitical discourse, for it is precisely due to such "extraordinarily popular and rapidly multiplying commemorative rhetorics in whose renovated narratives of national belonging our future may (not) lie" (Biesecker, 2002, p. 406).

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The Entwinement of Politics, Arts, Culture, and Commerce in Staging Social and Political Reality to Enhance Democratic Communication

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This article explores how four British and German theater companies that originated in the countercultural era continue to survive in an increasingly austere economic climate. Although their survival strategies have been marked by remarkable resilience, this has sometimes affected the quality of engagement with their sociopolitical enquiries and interventions informed in part by the radical approaches to theater making that make these companies so distinctive. The article draws on relevant theoretical perspectives and ethnographic fieldwork to argue that whereas some constitutive elements of radical theater are discernible, these are increasingly being constrained by elitist political and market forces that threaten to undermine these companies' unique significance as conduits for democratic communication.

Keywords: dialogic exchange, participatory engagement, aesthetic reflexivity, sociology of cultural production, social critique, political agency, pragmatism

Based on a synthesis of scholarship on radical theater and perspectives from the sociology of cultural production, this ethnographic enquiry investigated theater making informed in part by radical approaches in four British and German cases.[1] Given the multiple definitions[2] of radical theater that emerged from different but interrelated ideological principles, visions, and practices originating in the countercultural era (Lewis, 1990; Walsh, 1993), I conceptualize the term throughout in a sense that effectively captures the (overlapping) ways in which the case study companies have understood and applied radical approaches to theater making in their work since their inceptions.

According to Cohen-Cruz (1998), radical theater in this sense can sometimes draw on agitprop "to mobilize people around partisan points of view that have been simplified and theatricalised," often acts as a "witness [by] publicly illuminating a social [issue]," and plays a fusing role by blending "a theatrically heightened scenario into people's everyday lives to provide an emotional experience of what might otherwise remain distant" (p. 5). Moreover, it creates "utopia [through] the enactment of another vision of

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[1] These cases are introduced in the Method section.
[2] See Cohen-Cruz (1998, p. 3), Kershaw (1992, p. 139), and Walsh (1993, pp. 5–6) on the different conceptualizations of the term.

social organization, temporarily replacing life as it is, and often performed with public participation" and makes use of "common values, beliefs and connections, to address a current concern" (p. 5). In some instances, such norms may be rooted in Marxist or socialist thinking that propagates working outside the confines of elitist political and capitalist influences (Landry, Morley, Southwood, & Wright, 1985).

This conception of radical theater has been argued to offer "a critical perspective on the present social order [by highlighting] the uglier faces of capitalism and the crimes of the powerful [and, in doing so, projects] a view from below [that gives voice to] the lived experience of domination" (Murdock, 1980, pp. 152–153). To Cohen-Cruz (1998), it is seen to "disturb the peace" by crafting "visions of what society might be, and arguments against what it is" (p. 6). Walsh (1993) observes that this radical approach to theater making challenges "the web of formative dualisms that conventionally preside over the creation, production and reception of [culture]" (p. 6), with a view to "interven[ing] at least aesthetically, often socially, and sometimes politically" (Kershaw, 1992, p. 145). Kershaw (1999) lists four features characteristic of this mode of theater making—three of which are most relevant for my purposes in this article: "dialogic exchange, participatory engagement, . . . and aesthetic reflexivity" (p. 20).

The ideas of "disturbing the peace" and "intervening aesthetically" embody artistic values with many dimensions that make them rather difficult to define because "everyone will have their own response to [artistic] work [and will] make different judgements of [such work]" (Matarasso, 2000, p. 53). Nonetheless, artistic values in the context of radical theater as conceptualized above are understood to be "about coming up with ideas, . . . about telling stories and doing it in a way that makes people listen or want to listen" (Shaw, 2001, p. 52). To DiMaggio (n.d.), they are about "craft skill, daring or disturbing content, innovative production technique, virtuoso performances" (p. 41), whereas Parker and Sefton-Green view such values as facilitating "the ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem-solve, communicate, collaborate and . . . reflect critically" (Oakley, 2009, p. 4). But with the ever changing sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions of the 21st century, how does this conceptualization of radical theater fit in the current landscape of cultural production characterized by a "commercial culture governed by the free market and the subsidized culture governed by an elitist aesthetic" (Lewis, 1990, p. 110) of which the pioneering case study companies are a part?

To put this in context, Kershaw (1999) argues that social organization (and, by extension, cultural production) in modern capitalist societies is centered on the market, meaning that "the 'performance' of companies . . . may be measured primarily in . . . economic or industrial or civil [terms]" (p. 13), something that generates ambivalences, paradoxes, and tensions resulting from "the conformity forced on cultural production by capitalist consumerism [and elitist political demands]" (p. 16). I find it fruitful to draw on the sociology of cultural production to illuminate further how this phenomenon has proved problematic and, as such, poses a problem for the realization of radical theater as outlined earlier.

Critical sociologists of cultural production have argued that the sphere of cultural production in modern capitalist societies favors the making and marketization of cultural products that tend to be formulaic, bland, populist, and unchallenging (Power & Scott, 2004), often with little or no sociopolitical significance, at the expense of work that places "the needs of democracy before those of profit" (Curran, 2002, p. 227). Populist cultural products, so the argument goes, are geared toward profit maximization

through repackaging and uniformity (McIntyre, 2012), something that deprives such products of the daring or disturbing and critically reflective dimensions outlined earlier.

For the case study companies adopting radical modes of theater making, this could mean they may struggle to reach audiences who may be swamped by cheap populist cultural products, or even worse, the companies may be tempted to jump on the bandwagon themselves in a bid to survive in a tough marketplace. Similarly, public subsidy and sponsorships can prove troublesome. Grants awarded to make cultural products that may not be profitable but that reflect a critical engagement with the pressing issues of the day may come with strings attached that may work to take the sting out of perceived social criticism (Van Erven, 1988).

This prompts the question of how producers in the companies studied in this article navigate this complex mesh of divergent imperatives, paradoxes, and tensions in their sociopolitical enquiries and interventions. Given the strong track records of these companies' work—much of which has been informed and impelled in part by radical approaches to theater making—it became clear early on that qualitative research methods would be most suited to effectively illuminating the contexts within which such work was produced. To this end, I chose ethnography because of its key strength to yield sufficient detail to enable the interpretation of meaning and context of what is being experienced and researched (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), specific details of which now follow.

Method

This ethnographic enquiry formulated the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do producers in the case study companies uphold radical approaches to theater making?

RQ2: In what ways do producers respond to divergent imperatives and tensions?

RQ3: In what ways do producers respond to demands from subsidy and sponsorship?

I explored these questions through the lens of the following four cases: Antarc Theatre and Gray End Productions in Britain and Kraemer Youth Theatre and GRIPS Theater in Germany. I use pseudonyms to refer to the first three named companies and their respective productions in accordance with the ethical terms under which privileged access to carry out ethnographic fieldwork at those companies was granted. By contrast, the fourth company—GRIPS Theater—and its productions are referred to by real name and titles because I studied only publicly accessible documentary evidence about it and anonymizing this evidence would have been problematic. Unfortunately, full ethnographic fieldwork at GRIPS Theater was not possible because of clashing timings and other practical issues. However, as a participant observer at Antarc Theatre, Gray End Productions, and Kraemer Youth Theatre, I conducted semistructured qualitative

interviews and studied accessible documentary evidence (newspaper articles, meeting minutes, output reviews, archived play scripts, social media websites, and DVDs) between May 2009 and January 2012.[3]

For illustration, Antarc Theatre and Gray End Productions—established in London in 1968 and 1972, respectively, as touring radical agitprop collectives—created work that raised working-class consciousness and provoked widespread demand for social and political change. Today, both companies produce new, challenging, and high-quality work that addresses a host of contemporary social and political issues nationally and internationally. Similarly, Kraemer Youth Theatre (Thuringia) and GRIPS Theater (Berlin) were founded in 1972 and 1966, respectively, as left-wing theatrical entities that questioned dominant social values, exposed perceived structural inequities, and engaged extensively with the concerns and interests of the communities and regions they served (and still serve).

Alongside holding numerous informal conversations with a range of producers during devising workshops, rehearsals, meetings, and journeys to actual performances, I interviewed Adam, an English middle-aged artistic director at Antarc Theatre; Amanda, a 20-something English associate producer at Gray End Productions; and Markus, a middle-aged German co-artistic director at Kraemer Youth Theatre. Strikingly, accounts from the interviews and informal conversations in conjunction with my observations at each company clearly underlined producers' firm commitment and dedication to the radical approaches to theater making conceptualized earlier. I now discuss the extent to which producers uphold these and negotiate conflicting imperatives and tensions.

Dialogic Exchange, Participatory Engagement, Aesthetic Reflexivity, and Commercial Imperatives in Staging Social and Political Reality

During the countercultural era, radical theater committed to an overtly political analysis of society (Murdock, 1980). But social and political circumstances since the 1980s have led to changes in thematic focus and production techniques, with many producers addressing broader audiences and tackling emerging themes, drawing in part on innovative and experimental theatrical techniques "to maximise the socially interactive potential of theatre" (DiCenzo, 1996, p. 51). Some commentators observed a fear that radical theater was in decline (Kershaw, 1992; Peacock, 1999; Van Erven, 1988), but others appear to have foreseen that the new circumstances offered an opportunity to reinvigorate this approach to theater making (Prentki & Selman, 2000).

For example, Antarc Theatre staged a production titled *Showdown With the Greedy Rich* in 2009 that explored contemporary relations between politicians and ordinary people. This production, which oscillated between a "musical gig" and a "pantomime," according to Adam, was based on the Luddite uprising of the early 19th century in Britain. It told the story of a Luddite rebel who wages war against the ruthless "rags-to-riches" society of the time. Although this piece was set in the 19th century, its subject matter was designed so it had "a satirical take on" contemporary elites and politicians, as Adam recollects:

[3] A further exploration of documentary evidence pertaining to GRIPS Theater was undertaken from June to September 2015.

> *Showdown With the Greedy Rich* was a Christmas show in 2009, and it was really successful. People liked it. It wasn't particularly well made. It was flawed. We knew there were weaknesses and we learnt from those weaknesses. Because it fell between a musical gig and a pantomime and people weren't sure what they were seeing. We were testing something out. But we knew it was working because audiences liked it. Audiences did shout out, you know. At one point, one of the characters said about [another character playing the rich man]: "He's just a bastard!" And then turned to the audience: "Let me hear you say the word 'bastard.'" And the whole audience was shouting: "Bastard, bastard." And we were going: "Audiences like that. They like that naughtiness. They like that anger, but it's childish." So, what the danger is, if you are not careful, you dumb down the work and you go to the lowest common denominator, and getting in, a lot of the time "bastard" is dumbing down. But the character that we are calling bastard was belatedly a sort of satirical take on John Prescott,[4] who was the deputy prime minister. And what he had done was he had left his trade union behind to become this very powerful, power-crazy thug, really, you know. So, the audience knew that they were shouting "bastard" not at a character on stage, but they were shouting "bastard" at John Prescott, you know. So, yeah, on the surface you've got a quite superficial piece of work, but under the surface, you've got quite a subversive piece of work which is attacking politicians. (Adam, Antarc Theatre, personal interview)

The production clearly addresses a contemporary issue of public concern. The fact that the audience reacted with emotion reveals the contemporary distrust and disillusionment with modern elites and politicians, just like the Luddites were dissatisfied with the rich in the 19th century. My ethnographic fieldwork disclosed that although the piece was highly exploratory, it was commercially successful nonetheless and demonstrates the willingness of producers to take risks and to experiment with (hybrid) art forms in a bid to portray wider socially relevant and challenging issues in novel ways as opposed to sticking with tried-and-tested formulas common in conventional cultural production that nearly always guarantee commercial success.

Indeed, the boldness in deploying the experimental technique despite the risk of alienating the audience, I would argue, speaks to aesthetic reflexivity. It appears to turn on its head the dialectic between creativity and commerce where the latter is seen to compromise the former by suggesting that, real tensions notwithstanding, the relationship between the two can sometimes be navigable (McIntyre, 2012). Despite provoking the audience into expressing disenchantment with contemporary politics, dialogic engagement and participatory engagement in the sense described earlier are not identifiable. Whereas many of the company's productions I studied exhibited very similar patterns, there were notable exceptions.

A case in point is *Doomed World*—a dark comedy set in a future where food and water are extremely scarce. It is based on dramatic scenes documenting the plight of African migrants arriving at

[4] John Prescott is a British politician who served as deputy prime minister of the United Kingdom between 1997 and 2007.

the Italian island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean Sea. The play focuses on the intensifying problem of global warming and subsequent climate change, both of which have adverse effects on the future of the planet. Adam explained:

> *Doomed World* was not about climate change. It was about what happens as a result of climate change. That is, if we continue to treat this planet the way that we have done and are doing, which is to extract from it as if it is not an innate object rather than looking at it as a living being, then we would destroy it. We would destroy it as a habitat that we can live in. So, what would it be like to live in that virtually uninhabitable environment? And the play was basically saying: "We would do anything to survive and we would kill each other," you know. (Adam, Antarc Theatre, personal interview)

Despite its dramatic treatment of this grim but socially relevant subject, *Doomed World* did not resonate with some audience demographics, which meant that it did not sell as envisaged, although it appears to have entailed many of the ingredients that characterize a radical approach to theater making as discussed earlier. According to Adam, audience research conducted after the play revealed that many audience members found the play "brutal" and "bleak":

> Now, people of the 18–35 age group really liked that play. People over 35 hated it. They said it was brutal. They said it offered no hope. It was bleak. Because we were showing a world—and what we were saying is: "That is the world we are heading for, you know." We were saying: "You know, when young people turn to me in my old age and say to me: old man, what did you do? You know, I can say: Well, I made a play and tried to communicate the message." But, you know, people in the audience were saying: "You're not supposed to do that. You are not supposed to make plays as bleak as that." I would argue they are in a state of denial. I would argue it's a state of fear. (Adam, Antarc Theatre, personal interview)

At a basic level, "audience research" here can be said to reflect dialogic exchange and participatory engagement in what I observed to be common practice when producers and audience members shared their takes on performances either through postperformance discussions on the spot or in a pub, or through surveys. Similarly, it was common for producers to facilitate the development of ideas for particular productions through—in addition to their own research—workshopping and soliciting personal testimonies from interested community members. Producers believed ordinary people's significant contributions to making theater rather than simply watching it was instrumental in effecting social and political change (Prentki & Selman, 2000; Walsh, 1993).

An example of Antarc Theatre's work that reflected dialogic exchange and participatory engagement is a production called *The Blue Asbestos Tragedy*, which investigated the circumstances surrounding the contamination of an inner city in England with asbestos dust emitted by a local asbestos factory over nearly a century. Although local officials were believed to have played down the effects of the tragedy, the ongoing deaths in the area were perceived to be linked to it. As such, the production shed some light on the "obscure histories, relationships, issues and problems" (Kershaw, 1992, p. 246)

surrounding the tragedy. To this end, according to Adam's account, interested community members were drawn into devising workshops over a nine-month period.

Not only did many community members contribute experiential knowledge of the tragedy that—in conjunction with historical research conducted by producers at Antarc Theatre—informed the production from conception to postperformance discussions, but such community members also made up part of the cast. One might argue, then, that producers engendered an atmosphere in which community members could "feel involved in the creative process; [becoming] aware that the play [was] for them, and in a very real sense, by them" (Van Erven, 1988, p. 177). This is an aspect I observed in the other case study companies as well, albeit to varying degrees.

Since the 1980s, Gray End Productions appears to have made increased use of verbatim theater[5] in its social and political enquiries and interventions. Capitalizing on verbatim theater's greatest strength of staging characters that "exist or have existed in the real world, outside of theatre, outside of [producers'] imagination, and that the words those people are shown to be speaking are indeed their own" (Hammond & Steward, 2008, pp. 9–10), producers edit transcripts of public investigations into suspected wrongdoing on the part of public institutions. In doing so, such productions are seen to provide "more space, more words, and more scope than newspapers and TV and radio news bulletins" (Norton-Taylor, 2011, para. 4).

An illustrative production is *Century of East-West Relations* that charted Afghan culture, history, and politics over more than a century and explored how the country continues to be the focal point of the West's foreign policy. My ethnographic research revealed that the play was staged at a time when the British public's weariness of the armed conflict in Afghanistan appeared to have hit a new peak: the end of the 2000s. Amanda noted that the play was "not so much about whose political or cultural position is right or wrong but about giving the audience insights into why events in Afghanistan are the way they are" and that the play contextualized the conflict by providing a detailed exploration of more than "170 years of invasion, occupation and conflict" to the 2000s, and in doing so, provoked discussion about the rationale behind British military presence in Afghanistan "nearly ten years after [the war] started."

Nearly all the reviews of the play I studied praised the high level of skill and technique employed to assemble detailed historical research and in-depth interview accounts of involved parties into a high-quality piece of artful and dramatic work that was widely well received as informative, educative, and entertaining. Key to this was the input from a range of experts on Afghanistan, including experiential accounts of politicians, army officers, and aid workers from the United States, Britain, and Afghanistan, into the devising processes of the play and into numerous postproduction conversations and debates. This points to a high level of dialogic exchange at various points of production.

Commercially, the production was nationally and internationally successful (as reflected in the "attractive" sales of related publications and DVDs alongside ticket sales) despite the fact that it "almost

[5] For a multifaceted definition and nuanced discussion of this term and other related concepts, see Cantrell (2013, pp. 2–3).

broke [the company] because there was just so much extra stuff to do on top of the normal daily firefighting," as Amanda put it. I found that many of Gray End's productions exhibited a similar pattern (including an apparently successful negotiation between creativity and commerce), but none with such intensity as *Century of East-West Relations*.

However, there were exceptions too. *Torture and Murder in Military Detention* is one example whose subject matter was derived from a public enquiry into a fatality at the hands of British troops during the 2003 Iraq War and from perceived widespread misbehavior among military personnel. Amanda commented that the play "had fantastic reviews" and that she thought "the subject matter was great" but the "box office was terrible." Of the reasons for this, considering the company's reputation as a "leading political theatre," Amanda remarked:

> I think it was a number of reasons: I think that it was summer, so people don't come to the theater anyway. The enquiry itself was so absent in the press that people didn't really know or understand what it was about or how important it was. So, there wasn't enough of that kind of consciousness of the subject matter . . . People didn't really know. I think people just—I wonder whether they had, kind of, politics fatigue from . . . We were in the wake of all the expenses scandal . . . you know, maybe they just kind of thought: "Do you know what? I don't want to hear about the government messing up again. I would much rather go [elsewhere]." I think that had a big impact on it. And also, you know, it's [verbatim theatre's] a very queer taste, it's a very sedentary style of performance. It's so subtle. It's almost formic. You know, nothing happens on stage except a witness leaves and another one comes on. It's not everybody's cup of tea. Again, that's fine. But it does make it very hard, you know, made us question whether we should put this on. But again, you just have to go: "Well, actually, that's what we are here to do!" (Amanda, Gray End Productions, personal interview)

Although its "very sedentary style" leaves the verbatim technique appearing less imaginative and entertaining than, say, popular fictitious plays, commentators have argued that "it lets people speak for themselves" (Norton-Taylor, 2011, para. 10) and, in doing so, "widen[s] the number and variety of people . . . listen[ed] to, to include people who traditionally haven't been seen and heard in the theatre" (Hammond & Steward, 2008, p. 18). Also, "this sort of theatre provides what [dominant cultural production] fails to provide, and at a time when it is sorely needed" (p. 10), thus signaling participatory engagement at its best. To others, the verbatim technique is at its most effective when deployed not in its strictly original form, meaning that invented input can be incorporated through "bolder editing and staging," even if this may "displace precise factual representation" (p. 101)[6] for the sake of making productions come alive.

Indeed, I found that producers at Gray End Productions aimed to "marry the gorgeously unwieldy nature of real speech to the dramatic needs of the story without losing the very thing that makes verbatim so [powerful]" (Hammond & Steward, 2008, p. 102) in the quest to "question," "make connections,"

[6] See also the introduction in Forsyth and Megson (2009).

"communicate," and "reflect critically" (Oakley, 2009, p. 4) on key social and political issues of the day. Although the resultant productions may not always be perceived as artistically appealing, rendering them unprofitable, as Amanda intimated, producers do not appear to be giving up the ultimate goal of giving voice to ordinary people. The fact that producers grapple with the situation as Amanda has speaks to a high level of aesthetic reflexivity—favoring public participation over commercial considerations.

Ethnographic fieldwork at Kraemer Youth Theatre indicated that this company also embraces a radical approach to staging work, covering predominantly family and community relationships. A production exemplifying this is *Loving Life Regardless*, which highlights how hearing-impaired children and young adults and their families navigate the struggles they experience. Set in a family context, the play explores the ways in which two nondeaf parents cope with the hearing impairment of their daughter, Mona—a six-year-old—and the associated negative experiences she undergoes daily.

The reviews of the piece I examined paid tribute to how the portrayal of Mona related to the experiences of many affected families and illuminated the difficulties they encountered in their daily routines. Mona—a character based on a person who is deaf in real life—is presented as "a personality with a bright and bubbly character that embraces life with all its complexities" who tirelessly works at "making friends" but is increasingly frustrated by "being constantly harassed and rejected." Feeling "not understood" and "unwanted," Mona inevitably withdraws "into her shell" and gradually becomes aggressive, something that aggravates the already difficult family situation.[7]

A recurrent critique in the reviews was that the oscillation throughout the play between voice-over speech by performers off stage and the sign language used by onstage performers to convey the message to a predominantly nondeaf audience felt disorientating. Markus concurred that it was indeed an issue. He intimated that under the circumstances, *Loving Life Regardless* was nonetheless a success. Not only did it sell, but its subject matter and portrayal helped raise public awareness of an important issue by projecting the lived experiences of people who suffer isolation and marginalization from wider society.

Key to this, I found, was the fact that the core cast comprised members of the community whose experiential knowledge and insights substantially informed the script, something that may have helped the action and dialogue on stage to resonate with the audience. Behind the scenes, though, the "journey"—as Markus put it—was much more challenging. He intimated that there was some wrangling over character names, over the collectively devised script, over the improvisation of scenes, and over issues related to some participants' levels of confidence and commitment during development.

It is precisely situations such as this that producers at the company professed to love about their work, something that can be said to point to a distinctive aesthetic that highlights a devotion to a calling in service to the community, and particularly to those at its margins. The aforementioned challenges notwithstanding, *Loving Life Regardless* offered an "experience of what might otherwise remain distant" (Cohen-Cruz, 1998, p. 5) because it put participatory engagement to effective use and negotiated artistic

[7] In compliance with the ethical terms explained in the Method section, the reviews are not cited in this article in order not to disclose the identity of producers and their companies.

considerations in the best way possible, factors that characterized many of the productions I studied at Kraemer Youth Theatre.

My examination of documentary evidence at GRIPS Theater indicated that since its inception, the company has staged plays designed to influence the social conditions of the intergenerational audience it serves (Hughes, 2014). In doing so, the company draws on dialogic exchange and participatory engagement to problematize the daily contexts of families, neighborhoods, and other social relationships (Claus, 1988). Consumerism, performance anxiety, mistrust, prejudice, identity, youth crime, education, discrimination, physical violence, unemployment, sex and teen pregnancies, drug abuse, homelessness, and the denial of the Holocaust have been key themes. I found that the pattern of the productions has remained strikingly consistent over the decades.

No production at GRIPS Theater captures as many of these themes simultaneously as *Linie 1*. Acclaimed as the company's most successful production (Hughes, 2014), it tells the story of a young female character named Sunny from a provincial town in what was then West Germany who finds herself stranded at the central Berlin Train Station. Pregnant and unable to cope with life back home, Sunny follows an invitation from the father of her unborn child—reportedly a rock star by the name of Johnnie—to come and live with him in the borough of Kreuzberg in Berlin.

En route to Kreuzberg, Sunny encounters a host of characters from different backgrounds, all of whom have stories to tell about their experiences of and perspectives on life in Berlin and the rest of the country. Perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly all the experiences and perspectives revolve around the disillusionment with structural inequalities—many of which were based on concrete, lived realities (Hughes, 2014). The most interesting aspect about *Linie 1* is that many of the themes it tackled when it first premiered in partitioned Berlin have remained relevant.

Then and now, the company's engagement with the aforementioned themes has been characterized by an aesthetic both (a) critical and sociopolitical and (b) emancipatory. Producers have made effective use of the former to scrutinize societal concerns and inequities with a view to engendering social transformation rather than conforming to the formalist constraints of the arts establishment (Fischer, 2002). To this end, the company's facilitation of participatory engagement across its productions and the conversations and debates such productions have stimulated have "help[ed] define Berlin for generations" (Hughes, 2014, p. 20). The emancipatory aesthetic has been concerned mainly with nurturing a sense of citizenship in children and young people, who form an integral part of GRIPS Theater's intergenerational audience as the theater works toward:

> developing their self-confidence, helping them to orient and to assert themselves in their real world . . . to see our society as one that can be changed, to understand criticism as their undeniable right, to stimulate the enjoyment of creative thinking and of creating alternatives, thus stimulating their social imagination. (Volker Ludwig, founder, GRIPS Theater, as cited in Berghammer, 1988, p. 2)

Intriguingly, although most of the company's work sells out, GRIPS Theater does not make a profit and has increasingly relied on public subsidy and sponsorship to put on productions, a phenomenon that the discussion now turns to.

Subsidy and Sponsorship: Makers or Breakers of Social and Political Reality on Stage?

A review of public funding for contemporary theater generally shows that progressive policy makers in Britain and Germany have continually devised measures aimed at supporting the respective sectors (House of Commons, 2005; Hughes, 2007). Whereas many radical theater producers categorically dismissed public support during the countercultural era for fear of becoming corrupted and appropriated into the dominant means of cultural production (Lewis, 1990; Mulgan & Worpole, 1986; Primavesi, 2011; Williams, 1981), there appears to have been a gradual shift in attitude and perception in the mid-1980s. Then and now, the understanding has always been that although associated work is seen to inform community and public life, to critique and challenge the present order, and to enhance democratic practice, it may not be popular to stage, which in turn, renders it unprofitable (Morris, 2012; Morrison, 2008).

However, a turn of events in Britain in the late 1980s led the wider political economy of the Thatcherite and successive Conservative governments to enforce a transition from the reliance on public subsidy to the business sponsorship of the arts (Feist & Hutchison, 1990; Kershaw, 1992, 1999). Unlike in Britain, subsidies in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s, both before and after unification, were widely considered to be "abnormally high" (Hughes, 2007, p. 135). By the 2000s, however, companies adopting the radical approach to theater making in both countries were facing substantial public funding cuts. For instance, whereas Antarc Theatre received US$314,232.32 in financial year 2010–2011, this figure dropped to US$293,103.82 in 2011–2012 and plummeted to US$173,878.54 in 2012–2013. Adam observed:

> Unfortunately, from March [2012], we've had our funding cut again significantly. So, for instance, *Showdown With the Greedy Rich* has nine performers in it, including, you know, a celebrity—George. We can't afford to do that. So we have to look very carefully. So now we are looking at; "How do we maintain an output on reduction of funding?" And as anticapitalists, we should be able to do things. So, we've started looking at other possible income streams, you know. It's awkward that as an anticapitalist I'm using words like an income stream, you know. But I still have to play the business game. I still have to write a business plan for the Arts Council . . . So, in other words, the funding cut is forcing us to change our rhythm, change our output. What I cannot do ethically is I cannot do what Jeremy Hunt[8] wants me to do, which is to go to capitalist philanthropists and say: "Please, sponsor us." Because their money is dirty money, if you know what I mean. (Adam, Antarc Theatre, personal interview)

[8] Jeremy Hunt is a British Conservative Party politician who, at the time of research (2009–2012), was the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media, and Sport.

Gray End Productions saw its public support drop from US$967,446.38 in financial year 2010–2011 to US$900,432.36 in 2011–2012 and to a little under US$869,005.40 in 2012–2013. Amanda notes:

> It's a nightmare. It means that we are gonna have to have in future smaller artistic casts, simpler sets and fewer varied productions. It means that we would have to be much more—we would be much less accessible to smaller and less known companies and playwrights. So that's gonna be really tough. We've already had to cancel some things like the solicitor script reading service of certain topics. We can't afford it anymore. We are looking into fundraising. Solomon [the artistic director] is a full-time fundraiser himself. I mean, he's astonishing the way that he, you know, moves and shakes and puts things together and brings people together and sorts of things. We are also looking at sponsorship and other potential income sources. (Amanda, Gray End Productions, personal interview)

Kramer Youth Theatre lost a third of its public subsidy between 2009 and 2014, with further substantial funding cuts expected in subsequent years.. Markus captures the company's desperation as follows:

> The situation is desperate—We are already struggling with the after-effects of the successive cuts we've had to endure so far, but [any subsequent] cuts are going to hit us very badly on a number of levels. We are only four of us working with way over 100 young people at any one time. The workload is already massive but the cuts now mean that we might find it's only three core staff left which would verge on a catastrophe—and that's no exaggeration! How we are going to cope—We don't know yet but what we know is that the work needs to be done . . . We are left no choice but to reduce the number of our performances and tours and make the casts much smaller. (Markus, Kraemer Youth Theatre, personal interview)

Of all the case studies, GRIPS Theater has been hit hardest, having lost two-thirds of its public support since 2006 and nearly going under as recently as 2012.[9] This has meant that producers are clinging to any accessible subsidy and sponsorship they can get to go about their work. The problem is that a reliance on subsidy can compel producers to dilute social critique (Van Erven, 1988) or consign producers to self-censorship altogether (McGrath, 1990; Patterson, 2003). This may be particularly the case where receipt of subsidy is made dependent on the demonstration of "artistic excellence"—a very fuzzy concept (Kershaw, 1999) of economic value (McIntyre, 2012). It could also manifest itself in restrictive funding criteria and in refusals either to increase or even cut subsidy altogether (Hughes, 2007). Like subsidy, sponsorships can be double edged: They can support the making of work that is impelled by participatory engagement but may not sell. Similarly, they can interfere with the independence of producers in ways that elitist political demands and market forces discussed earlier do.

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[9] See, for example: http://www.welt.de/newsticker/news3/article106258149/Finanzierung-des-Grips-Theaters-gefordert.html; http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/hilfe-vom-senat-benoetigt-grips-theater-steht-vor-der-pleite/6497938.html; http://www.taz.de/!5095645/

My ethnographic data point to different responses to the pressures exerted by public funding and sponsorship. Sometimes producers succumb to these, at other times they withstand them, and at still other times, they experience them not at all. A case in point where producers gave in to the demands of funders concerns a development workshop that preceded a play titled *Why Racism*. Designed by Antarc Theatre at the request of a school that experienced relatively high levels of racial tensions owing to its location in a neighborhood with strong British National Party (BNP) ties, the workshop contextualized the roots of racism by highlighting the roles of colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism.

However, the funding local council and school objected, compelling producers to rework the production into something simpler that was reduced to "cultural differences" in Britain, as Adam recollects:

> So, we devised workshops and went in to try and explore these issues with these 14-, 15-year-old kids. And we realized it was working. They were realizing, actually—one of them kept saying: "Poor countries, poor countries." I said: "Well, what happened to the resources that were taken from poor countries? People move from poor countries and go somewhere else, you know. So, all this talk that they come to our country and take our jobs—what's left of their country? It's kind of simplistic." So, it's back to that imperialism, it's all those arguments, and once you begin to peel that on your way, it's very difficult to justify racism . . . Teachers said to me: "It's very biased. It's overloaded. It's ineffective for the purposes of the workshop. We can't have it like that." So we ended up focusing more on cultural differences in this country. I wasn't comfortable removing the context. But that's what we did . . . It was better than abandoning the whole thing. (Adam, Antarc Theatre, personal interview)

Producers at the company have attempted to counter such situations by pursuing a two-fold strategy: undertaking theatrical training projects geared toward social and rehabilitative purposes and venturing into established theaters to tour their work whenever possible. With respect to the first strand of work, the understanding is that its nature appears to attract funding more readily than (overly) critical work. Its value is reflected in the recognition that its participants—mainly young offenders—tend to "have better social and communication skills, are more likely to go on to pursue higher education, and are less likely to re-offend" (Walshe, 2012, para. 9).

Interestingly, in his discussion of the factors affecting young people's participation in artistic and cultural programs, Hill (1997) asks what claim the arts may have on subsidies if they do not fulfill social or rehabilitative functions or "assist in the processes of change in society?" (n.p.). By encouraging reintegration into society and the acquisition of social skills, arts projects such as the ex-offenders' theatrical training project can be said to foster "a transforming experience" (Matarasso, 2000, p. 16), thereby making a difference in the lives of the disadvantaged in society.

The second strand of work that Antarc Theatre is undertaking constitutes branching out into conventional theaters to diversify their revenue, something that Adam says is not only "rare" but is also riddled with problems and (ideological) "tension":

> We perform once in a while in [mainstream theaters]. And when audiences have come to see our work, that's been really great because they know Antarc Theatre is performing. But that's really rare. Because we make left-leaning theater which we feel is very challenging and questioning and critical, it makes [mainstream theaters] uncomfortable. The London theaters don't want to take that kind of work. So, well, not from us anyway. They will take it from other people. So, I'm struggling with that one. But a voice in my head says it doesn't matter . . . We are not selling out. Do I want us to sell out? Is that not part of the capitalist business system? It's putting bums on seats, you know, it's making a profit. We have this dichotomy. We have this juxtaposition. We have this tension. (Adam, Antarc Theatre, personal interview)

By contrast, GRIPS Theater—which similarly makes left-leaning productions and has relied on subsidies for more than four decades but now has to fend for itself—does not seem averse to commercial opportunities. The company has been compelled to partner with a large energy vendor as its main corporate sponsor, along with an investment bank, a city council department, and a building society, to deliver core programming and other work. This move appears to have tentatively ensured the company's survival, as its founder justifies by noting, "It is exhausting to have to fight forty-three years for the existence of a theatre that funders like to take credit for [but are reluctant to or don't want to fund]" (Schaper, 2012, para. 7). Remarkably, despite periodic threats and attempts to withdraw public support on ideological grounds over the decades, there seems to be no evidence to suggest that the company has given in to political pressure or surrendered its sociopolitical aesthetic (Fischer, 2002).

In response to successive cuts to their subsidies and a need to preserve their autonomy, producers at Gray End Productions have developed diverse strategies built around fundraising and sponsorship events in a bid to diversify their income bases, as Amanda describes:

> Solomon [the artistic director] is our primary fundraiser, frankly. We've also got two members in our development department who are constantly writing grant applications, writing to substantial finance individuals, trying to find corporate sponsorship—that kind of thing. They work more closely with the education and social inclusion department than I do. But often, actually, the social inclusion director writes her own funding applications and sources her own funding for her projects. Often, they are project-specific and bring funds as such. And I do a lot of fundraising as well either through applications, but also through events like an auction or a sort of extra-curricular activity like Am-dram performances recently where lawyers came in and performed for a week on stage with a professional director and a personal designer. The tickets were $10. Again, that was fundraising and it's really tough especially as memberships are dropping away. People's willingness to come to theatre is really, really tough. And that is very scary. (Amanda, Gray End Productions, personal interview)

Furthermore, I observed that Gray End Productions fully exploits its theater space by offering it for rent to businesses and individuals wishing to use it for meetings and functions. Moreover, it has named

seats in the main auditorium after individual and corporate donors and sponsors who have contributed considerable amounts of money in return for visibility and recognition. Asked whether these sponsorship strategies have impacted the company's autonomy, Amanda said no but recounted an unprecedented incident that seems problematic:

> We've never got money from this guy before; we've got one guy who's just donated some money to [a recent production] with the condition that he's allowed to come in and sit in the rehearsals and give me feedback which I then give to Solomon so that, you know, he might want to consider. It's all a very difficult situation—Just because he gave so many thousand pounds why should he come in and tell us what he thinks it should look like? So, it's very difficult, and you know, I've been trying to tread it very carefully, but again, we're gonna need him in the future. So, of course, we need to make sure that he feels like he is being listened to. And actually, his points are well-made. So, it's really tough. But that's the first time we've done that. And we will have to, you know, decide whether it's worth it, and whether we felt it was appropriate or intrusive and that kind of thing. (Amanda, Gray End Productions, personal interview)

With decreasing public subsidies, Kraemer Youth Theatre has likewise had to spread out its revenue sources by increasing ticket prices, getting involved in coproductions with prominent commercial theater companies with fairly established followings and initiating fundraising and sponsorship strategies. The company has only two corporate sponsors, both of whom are savings banks. The rest of its sponsors are primarily civil society organizations. Asked whether the company has experienced any interference from sponsors, Markus remarked that none of

> our sponsors have meddled in our programming. Why should they? They are visible in our premises. And we credit them accordingly if they have sponsored any of our productions. In appreciation [for their support], we sometimes invite them to look at the rehearsals. (Markus, Kraemer Youth Theatre, Personal interview)

All in all, it seems that building partnerships and maintaining links with corporate and individual sponsors have become indispensable survival strategies for the studied companies. Indeed, commentators have observed that an increasing number of businesses are demonstrating an openness to the idea of initiating flexible and strategic partnerships with arts organizations in ways that may work to organizations' mutual benefit (Matarasso, 2000; Shaw, 2001). I would argue that in these economically difficult times, this seems like a viable relationship. But if these partnerships are going to entitle funders, sponsors, and businesses to intervene in programming processes and thus foster the dilution of social critique, then this is a very worrying development for an approach to theater making that understands itself as a distinctive means to "question or re-envision ingrained social arrangements of power" (Cohen-Cruz, 1998, p. 1).

Conclusion

This article has examined how theater companies, two from Britain and two from Germany, are embracing radical approaches to theater making and engaging with perceived societal ills characteristic of modern capitalist societies. We have seen that dialogic exchange, participatory engagement, aesthetic reflexivity, and commercial imperatives are discernible in the respective productions, to differing degrees. These aspects' negotiation plays an integral part in determining how effectively producers succeed in intervening in our social, political, and cultural surroundings in ways that conventional forms of cultural production fail because of elitist political and market forces.

Do the case study companies make radical theater in the strict sense of the term? We have seen that producers do not refer to their work as such but instead talk of staging "political theater" (Amanda) or "left-leaning theater" (GRIPS Theater) or perceive themselves as "anticapitalists" (Adam). More importantly, the empirical analysis points to a hybrid of a few principles from the "iconoclastic radical ideology, shaped by a deep opposition to the over-production and consumerism of" modern capitalist societies and "a pragmatism which produce[s], at the macro-level, an acute grasp of contemporary power structures, and at the micro-level, an engagingly unpretentious commitment to local community activism" (Kershaw, 1998, p. 209). In doing so, it conjures up not only "just *freedom* from oppression, repression, exploitation . . . but also freedom to *reach beyond* existing systems of formalised power, freedom to create currently unimaginable forms of association and action" (Kershaw, 1999, p. 18, emphasis in original). Moreover, in "uncovering and giving expression to what is there, and to the realities of people's lives" (Kershaw, 1992, p. 152), some of the illustrative work we have seen

> is produced on the scale of the local, national or transnational [and] works with its audiences to stage significant political meaning and perspective, posing opinions and facilitating specific critiques that challenge and sometimes [attempt to] break those certainties of governance [and in doing so, lends itself well] to contemporary political agency because of the opportunity it offers to engage in making difference. (Hunter, 2013, pp. 3–4)

Ultimately, in staging social and political reality to enhance democratic communication in an age of growing elitist and proprietary hegemony in public communication, the theater companies studied here are countering the erosion of our civil liberties. They are facilitating a meaningful engagement with politics, arts, culture, and commerce in terms of citizenship, not consumerism; of expressions of cultural creativity, not standardized products. They position audiences by citizenship rights and cultural needs, not income (Cottle, 2003).

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The Television Spoiler Nuisance Rationale

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This essay explores tensions surrounding television spoilers through interviews with thirteen people who are paid to write or edit discourse about television. These professionals include television critics, editors, an entertainment reporter, a popular culture writer, and a television columnist. Analysis of interview transcripts revealed that varying attitudes toward television pleasure undergird the spoiler debate. After describing three divergent television pleasure attitudes, we present the second half of our analysis: interviewees' statements about the timing of their publications, the content of their writing, and the packaging of their writing. Properly packaging articles so that readers need to "opt in" was the only area of consensus among interviewees. The essay describes proper packaging through a nuisance rationale framework, one that reduces spoiler exposure for those who wish to avoid it but keeps engaging commentary available for those who actively seek it. These findings shed light on how to negotiate communicative tensions stemming from evolving media engagement patterns.

Keywords: television spoilers, television pleasure, time shifting, TV critics, active audience, social media

Communication about television shows can be a source of disappointment for not-yet-viewers and a discursive minefield for television critics and others who make a living communicating about television. When National Public Radio's (NPR's) TV critic Eric Deggans was chastised for including a spoiler in his work (see Figure 1), Twitter followers jumped to his defense by humorously reinforcing his claim that the spoiler statute of limitations was up.[1] @AmyZQuinn facetiously requested advice about issuing a spoiler alert for *Twin Peaks* and @craigtimes spoiler-alerted Nixon's resignation. Deggans took a firm stance in his response tweet and seemed to be vindicated by his followers' support, but history tells us that this will be a temporary peace. This essay offers media production perspectives on the complicated

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[1] Our interviewees are all public figures. All but one preferred to have her or his name used in the write-up of our findings. We link to our named interviewees' professional profiles, some computer-mediated communication, and other professional work where appropriate to support our argument.

spoiler debate, analyzing interviews with thirteen people who are paid to write or edit discourse about television. These professionals include television critics, editors, an entertainment reporter, a popular culture writer, and a television columnist, all of whom are based in the United States. [2] The collective voices of our media production interviewees point us to sites of discord and agreement in the spoiler debate.

Figure 1. January 26, 2015, Twitter spoiler exchange.

Because many television viewers engage in time shifting, defined as watching an episode after its air date, spoilers have become an increasingly spirited subject of debate (Gray, 2010). The global circulation of media and fan communication also exacerbate spoiler frustration because of the tension between asynchronous global content release and the imperative of timely fan conversations (Newman, 2012). In his interview for this study, Hank Stuever, TV critic for *The Washington Post,* gave a hyperbolic nod to time shifting, stating, "Nobody is watching anything at the same time anymore." Time shifting has indeed become a significant viewing method, cannibalizing "live" television audiences: Nielsen figures note that time shifting an episode within seven days after the live viewing accounts for 50% of some networks' viewers in the 18–34 age group ("Building Time-Shifted Audiences," 2014).

Changing patterns of viewer engagement, along with experimental release models (such as all-in-one season drops), have gradually helped alter the definition of television spoilers. Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016) divide television spoiler definitions into network and post-network eras. Scholars writing from a network era perspective position television spoilers as narrative information learned before the first broadcast: content that has already aired can no longer be spoiled (e.g., Booth, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Williams, 2004). Baym (2000) captured network era temporality when she explained, "spoilers *pretell*, repeating *previews* culled from magazines, personal appearances, and other computer networks" (p. 87,

[2] We name each person's job title when first introducing a quote from her or him but then describe the group as "writers and editors."

emphasis added). In the post-network era, spoilers may *retell*: the content of already-aired episodes can now be a source of spoiler information for not-yet viewers. In addition to acknowledging expanding spoiler temporality in the post-network era, studies have also identified many spoiler functions that go beyond the traditional negative spoiler connotations. Scholars have described social, cognitive, and emotional benefits to viewers' strategic engagement with spoilers (Booth, 2010; Gray & Mittell, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Perks & McElrath-Hart, 2016).

The limited extant literature considers television spoilers from fan or viewer perspectives (e.g., Gray & Mittell, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Williams, 2004). The media professionals' perspectives analyzed here enrich the conversation, offering different interpretations of existing issues in the spoiler debate and also broadening the scope of the debate. Several of our interviewees have published missives about spoilers: E. Deggans (2013), James Poniewozik (2013), H. Stuever (2013), and Emily VanDerWerff (2014). Additionally, various writers, such as *Vulture*'s Dan Kois (2008) and *Entertainment Weekly*'s Darren Franich (2014) have attempted to codify the spoiler rules for TV critics. However, stakeholders in the media environment have not reached consensus. This essay makes a stronger bid for understanding, analyzing themes from multiple writers' and editors' voices to flesh out the key questions at play in the spoiler debates and some of the common answers to those questions.

We initially set out to uncover our interviewees' spoiler attitudes and practices for dealing with spoilers in their work. As we analyzed the interview transcripts, we recognized that the spoiler debate revolves not just around questions of temporality and form, but that answers to these questions hinge on varying views of media pleasure. This constellation of issues highlights the interplay of personalized and communal aspects of media engagement. The analysis first addresses the wide range of spoiler attitudes and corresponding media pleasures interviewees described. Implicit in many of these attitudes were different views of their roles as writers and editors, roles that were at times irrespective of job title. Where possible, we put the writers' and editors' opinions in dialogue with other studies about viewers' and fans' spoiler attitudes to present multiple stakeholders' voices.

The attitudes about spoilers and media pleasures underpin the second half of our analysis: interviewees' arguments about the timing of their publications, the content of their writing, and the packaging of their writing. We address packaging last because it is the only area of consensus among our interviewees. Properly packaging their writing so that readers need to "opt in" essentially ameliorates the divergent attitudes about spoilers and media pleasures, the disagreements about temporality and content. The essay builds toward establishing a "nuisance rationale" framework for contextualizing spoilers, one that reduces potential spoiler annoyance for some but keeps engaging commentary flowing for those who seek it.

The nuisance rationale was highlighted in the *FCC v. Pacifica* (1978) case addressing the Federal Communications Commission's power to regulate the broadcasting of indecent language. Spoilers are not inherently indecent, but they are unpalatable to some. Our work draws solely from the spirit of the nuisance rationale (and not its legal standing) as represented by the statement from the Supreme Court's *FCC v. Pacifica* decision that "words that are commonplace in one setting are shocking in another." Spoilers only spoil those who fear they will miss out on pleasurable suspense; to others, spoilers are an

inevitable part of a media rich society and may even draw them into a story. Context, timing, and individual differences play essential roles in deciding what is a nuisance and how such nuisances should be minimized.

Our findings shed light on how to negotiate communicative tensions stemming from evolving media engagement patterns. As the television industry transforms along with reception patterns, how can people who make a living producing discourse about this medium adapt and encourage their readers to do the same? The findings here are applicable to broader shifts in new media experiences and communicative norms. During periods of change, it behooves us to recognize the dual importance of the right to communicate and the right to not receive communication in shared social environments.

Communal Television Engagement

The spoiler debate spotlights the challenges of meeting the needs of diverse audience segments: people with different levels of interest in a show, varying knowledge about a show, and divergent attitudes about spoilers will have different communicative preferences. Without these differences, we would have no nuisance: we would all enjoy and dislike the same things. The diversity of these audience segments holds great significance because watching and analyzing television should be seen as a communal pursuit. Writing in the 1980s, Fiske highlighted the social component of the television experience: "What matters is not the audience and not the television text but the generation and circulation of meanings and pleasures throughout our contemporary social formations" (1988, p. 250). Fiske (1988) wrote that the point at which the individual dissolves into the social marks the formation of the cultural domain, the space where pleasures and meanings are activated and circulated.

Although television's social quality has existed in varying degrees since the medium's inception, Jenkins (2006) proclaimed that the media convergence era privileges communal modes of reception over individualistic models. He acknowledged that not everyone is watching together or communicating about what they have viewed, but that "few watch television in total silence and isolation" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 26).[3] Many have a desire to read, listen, and communicate about television texts. The active, collaborative viewer model has notable implications for how we define and analyze a television text. Herbig and Herrmann (2016) use the term "polymediated narrative" to capture the meaningful interactions among a formal diegesis, production forces, critics, academics, advertisers, fans, and other contributors. They encourage scholars not to position television episodes as bounded texts, but rather to see multiple internal and external influences as fragments that comprise the holistic discursive "episode" (Herbig & Herrmann, 2016, p. 761).

The interactions and content flows of social media both help constitute that polymediated narrative and amplify the communal television quality. In his analysis of social media practices, Highfield wrote that the "social media news ecology" includes a blend of factual content, personal opinions, and

[3] The Nielsen Company's assessment of valuable marketing data supports Jenkins's argument. Nielsen focuses not just on the audience of a "live" television program, but also ranks time-shifted programs, Twitter audiences, and Twitter impressions.

humor (2015, p. 2729). Within this ecological system resides a robust communicative space that is superseding other traditional spaces. According to Leetaru of *Forbes*, news website comments sections are disappearing because "the era of social media has given audiences profoundly new ways to engage and converse around the news that transcends what a single news outlet's own website can offer." A study by Buschow, Schneider, and Ueberheide (2014) found that opinions and social aspects of viewing accounted for 49% of television broadcast-related tweets, the highest percentage of any coded category (see also Frativelli, Negri, & Cori, 2015). Eyeballs on the screen will always matter in television production, scheduling, and advertising, but there are now more types of screens, more television content overall, and more user-created discourse that factor into a television program's social impact. Communal modes of reception, whether in-person or computer-mediated, texturize televisual engagement by offering additional spaces and opportunities for viewer communication.

As our reception and communication modes have changed, so has the content of our communication. New media, including social media platforms, have cultivated "hyper-analytical" voices from both regular and professional television viewers, according to NPR popular culture blogger Linda Holmes.[4] These cultural conversations, Holmes claimed, have "elevated both professional television criticism and viewer engagement." There are many opportunities for communication and there is an awful lot to talk about in the era of "peak TV"—the label many writers used to describe 2015's record-setting number of scripted television shows and "avalanche of high quality shows" (James, 2015, para. 1). In the peak TV era, it is both easy and disappointing to be left out of the conversations. Emily VanDerWerff, currently culture editor for *Vox,* wrote about her 2012 realization that she and her *A.V. Club* team could not cover all deserving shows. The average viewer has no chance to keep up, thus leading to more opportunities to be spoiled by the multitude of hyper-analytical voices.

In his analysis of spoiler research and circulation in an online *Survivor* knowledge community, Jenkins shifted the terms of the spoiler debate asking if "one has the right to *not* know—or more precisely, whether each community member should be able to set the terms of how much they want to know and when they want to know it" (2006, pp. 54–55). By shifting the focus to information insulation and timing, Jenkins gestures toward the suitability of a nuisance rationale that highlights the importance of individual preferences and context when structuring the flow of information. The dialectic nature of the reader/writer relationship also asks when, what, how, and how much each community member has the right to communicate about a television show in a professional capacity. The answers to these questions are all predicated on the nature of viewing pleasures.

Qualitative Methodology

After securing human subjects research approval in 2014, we conducted thirteen phone interviews with professionals in a variety of careers involving the writing and/or editing of television discourse. We purposely reached out to people working for different kinds of organizations (e.g., online news sites, popular culture websites, magazines, and newspapers) to present a diversity of professional perspectives. The pool of interviewees included five women and eight men. The interviewees' professional

[4] Holmes was approached for the study but was not an interviewee.

writing experience ranged from four years to 25 years, with an average of 14 years among them. Interview questions included: How do you define a television spoiler? What is your general practice of including or not including television spoilers in your articles? Has your practice of including spoilers changed over time? Have your readers commented on your use of spoilers?[5] These questions were designed to tap into their attitudes toward spoilers, spoiler warning practices, and the perceived bases for both.

After transcribing the interviews, we analyzed the discourse using Grounded Theory, which helps to "demonstrate how logic and emotion combine to influence how persons respond to events or handle problems through action and interaction" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 11). As the Grounded Theory procedure prescribes, we read through the entire transcript, reflected upon the main ideas in segments of dialogue, re-read the transcripts, and then began analyzing the discourse (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 86–87). Our initial analysis focused on interviewees' assertions of professional credibility, empathy with readers, and logical compromises among competing interests. Those themes still course through our analysis, but we realized that varying attitudes about viewing pleasures are essential to understanding how our interviewees make decisions about using spoilers in their work. We re-analyzed the interview responses, presenting attitudes about television pleasure first before delving into the writers' and editors' spoiler practices.

Pleasure in the Television Experience

Our interviewees hold coveted jobs that require recognized expertise and skill. In his work on knowledge production in communities of practice, Wenger explained that "becoming good at something involves developing specialized sensitivities, an aesthetic sense, and refined perceptions that are brought to bear on making judgments about the qualities of a product or an action" (1998, p. 81). Specialized sensitivities (and, perhaps, being a public figure) can lead to prescriptive tendencies—in this case, prescriptions about the proper ways to engage television and maximize narrative pleasures. Focusing on the persuasive role of critics, Epstein (2016) wrote, "along with knowledge, which is available to all who search it out, the critic must also have authority, the power to convince" (para. 2). At minimum, our interviewees' opinions about and experiences with narrative pleasure can have the incidental impact of shaping readers' perspectives. This section analyzes interviewees' arguments about sources of narrative pleasure and suggestions for how viewers can maximize that pleasure. The themes that follow include spoiler neutral, spoiler averse, and spoiler positive perspectives—from our interviewees and from relevant viewer or fan studies—to highlight the complexity of spoiler attitudes.

Spoiler Neutral

Stuever and VanDerWerff discursively undercut the power of spoilers, arguing that enjoying a television show and knowing some narrative information are not mutually exclusive. They admonished viewers not to get hung up in plot twists (the substance of spoilers) because there is much more to appreciate about television. We consider this attitude to be "spoiler neutral"—spoilers neither enhance nor

[5] For a complete list of questions, please contact the first author.

diminish viewing pleasure. Stuever stated that if you are watching "solely for major plot" then "you are not fully watching." The true pleasure of television viewing, he said, is "how that story is told. It's about the artful way that it gets to that point." This attitude privileges the narrative journey over plot landmarks. VanDerWerff, too, encouraged viewers to turn their attention to greater beauty in the television landscape: "The general trend in thinking of spoilers as sort of this all-consuming evil . . . biases the conversation especially in the TV space toward only talking about plot, and that is possibly the least interesting thing on the screen." Not only did VanDerWerff advocate for a particular source of viewing pleasure, she extended that particular pleasure to conversations about television. If viewers are primarily tuning in to and talking about plot twists, they are missing out on much more enjoyable viewing experiences and communication that focus on features such as character development and aesthetics.

Spoiler studies have captured similar arguments from viewers and fans about narrative pleasure. Gray and Mittell wrote that spoilers helped some *Lost* fans to re-focus their attention on other narrative joys because "having already discovered what will happen frees them to concentrate on the formal pleasures of innovative narration and inventive presentation" (2007, para. 12). In his article on narrative complexity, Mittell described operational aesthetics as a focus not on what has happened in the narrative, but rather *how* the narrative mechanics have worked to "guide, manipulate, deceive, and misdirect" viewers (2006, p. 35). We can consider operational aesthetics a site of new and even enhanced viewing pleasure after learning spoilers. Several participants in Perks and McElrath-Hart's (2016) study on spoiler attitudes delighted in operational aesthetics after being spoiled. For example, one woman recounted knowing that a key character was coming back in *Arrow* and still enjoying the episode because, "I still didn't know how [the character came back], and the how turned out to be more interesting" (Perks & McElrath-Hart, 2016, p. 12). In this spoiler neutral perspective, knowing a plot twist does not diminish the significance of watching the events unfold as one journeys through the rich narrative.

Spoiler Averse

Jeremy Egner, assistant culture editor for *The New York Times*, spoke out against his peers' dismissal of the links between spoilers, suspense, and pleasure: "I do know some critics who say, who argue that spoilers don't matter . . . I don't agree with that . . . I feel like suspense is part of the experience of enjoying television or any other sort of narrative work." Maureen Ryan, *Huffington Post* TV critic during our interview and chief TV critic for *Variety* at the time of publication*,* also emphasized the relationship between suspense and enjoyment: "Part of them getting something from [a story] is preserving suspense, the surprises, preserving development, allowing them to experience some of it on their own." In contrast to our other interviewees, Egner and Ryan saw writers and editors as having greater potential to stand in the way of readers' television viewing pleasures by revealing substantive narrative information.

Egner and Ryan captured a perspective that is widely shared among television time shifters we surveyed: The words surprise and suspense commonly appeared in Perks and McElrath-Hart's (2016) study participants' professed reasons for spoiler avoidance. As one participant remarked, "learning what happens in a series before actually watching it . . . ruins the dramatic suspense, much like knowing what you are going to get for your birthday or Christmas" (Perks & McElrath-Hart, 2016, p. 9). In their short

story spoiler experiment, Johnson and Rosenbaum attributed the enjoyment of suspense to emotional and cognitive factors because study participants rated unspoiled stories "as more moving/thought-provoking" compared to spoiled stories (2014, p. 1079).

The spoiler averse attitudes revealed concerns not just about spoilers diminishing viewer enjoyment but about spoilers dissuading people from watching in the first place. Throughout her interview, Ryan evoked a teaser/spoiler continuum to describe narrative components that get people interested in a show compared to narrative information that can deflate pleasurable suspense. In this quote, Ryan distinguished between teaser and spoiler, respectively, and cited reader responses as the litmus test: "I don't get [reader] pushback if I describe really briefly who a character is. If you tell people what [characters] did, what the results of those actions were, then you get into trouble." The line between spoiler and teaser is undoubtedly individualized, but the judgment seems to be rendered in the outcomes—such as getting "into trouble" with readers. Angela Watercutter, senior associate editor of entertainment and popular culture at *Wired,* also drew from a teaser/spoiler divide when describing the crafting of her "binge-watch guides": The spoiler statute of limitations may be up on some decade-old, binge-worthy shows, but Watercutter said, "I definitely don't want the guide to tell you everything that happens in the show so you don't want to watch it. We're just trying to give you enough" to pique interest.

Even if we agree that one role of television critics is to serve as matchmaker between reader and television shows, the best way to cultivate those partnerships is unclear. Consider that Perks and McElrath-Hart's (forthcoming) qualitative study of time shifters revealed that around half of participants "who reported knowing narrative content before deciding to watch the show cited that narrative content and/or their spoiler sources as the *reason* they chose to watch the show." Connecting this finding to an earlier point in the spoiler neutral section, we can speculate that a spoiler may tease effectively by activating curiosity about operational aesthetics: How will the narrative lay clues that build to the plot twist?

Spoiler Positive

We began by representing a neutral view of spoilers, moved to the spoiler averse attitude, and now we end with the spoiler positive position. Deggans illustrated this perspective when he reframed spoilers as a potential viewing enhancement for people who watched the *Game of Thrones* "Red Wedding" scene after learning about the impending carnage: "you're still going to enjoy it. In fact, you might enjoy it more so waiting to see what is going to happen." The spoiler can, according to Deggans, augment the suspense by assuring that the feeling of suspense is warranted: punches will not be pulled. Summing up his 2007 *Lost* fan spoiler study with Mittell in a later publication, Gray wrote, "spoilers serve to stoke the fires of anticipation for fans, working much as trailers and previews do for continuing texts" (2010, p. 152). This enjoyable spoiler function exchanges surprise for suspenseful anticipation.

Another source of pleasure in spoilers can be found in enhanced cognitive involvement with the narrative. Gina Carbone, popular culture writer for *Wetpaint* and *Moviefone,* confirmed that some of her readers use spoilers to increase their cognitive play with a show "because they're the most passionate fan

who wants every little [narrative] aspect . . . Sometimes even knowing things in advance, you question it, you speculate about it even more, and then you send yourself down tangents."

Hills's argument that "spoiler fans' practices can be viewed as highly creative" (2012, p. 119) and Gray and Mittell's (2007) analysis of *Lost* spoiler fan discourse offer further support for these claims. Gray and Mittell advanced a link between spoilers/teasers and critical engagement, writing, "most spoiler fans did not see spoilers as about explicitly solving mysteries, but rather as offering teasers, creating as many questions as they answer, and enhancing the terrain for speculation about the general puzzle surrounding *Lost*" (2007, para. 36). Although spoilers may never find universal adoration, this theme's negation of their usual connotations—plot enhancements rather than destroyers, narrative teasers rather than deterrents—productively alters the scope of their meaning.

Practices Informed by (Dis)pleasures

The divergent views on television pleasures and spoilers described above do not lead us to a spoiler truce. Rather, they help us understand the rocky terrain writers and editors traverse on a regular basis. Spoiler definitions and functions are evolving along with viewing pleasures. So how have our interviewees responded to those changes? Three key spoiler concerns emerged from the analysis of interviewee transcripts: temporality, content, and packaging.

Temporality: When to Publish

Interviewees offered a wide range of responses about the appropriate time to wait before revealing narrative details, suggesting that this is a central concern in the debate. John Jurgensen, entertainment reporter for *The Wall Street Journal,* succinctly affirmed this claim, stating, "The hard part is knowing when the statute of limitations expires . . . There's no sliding scale of spoiler alerts." *Vulture* TV columnist Margaret Lyons was on one side of the temporality continuum with her statement, "Once it airs, that's fair game." Lyons extended the analogy between her work and other forms of journalism to justify this professional obligation: "It's news. It's happening. This is what I cover. You wouldn't expect sports reporters not to report box scores even if you haven't watched the game yet." Lyons argued that time shifting does not have to change all entertainment journalism by drawing a connection to sports television, an entertainment genre that has largely been insulated from the spoiler debate because of its in-time pleasures. This statement about timeliness rests on a foundational syllogism: news must be timely; entertainment journalism is news; entertainment journalism must be timely.

News timeliness was also a key concern for Sean O'Neal, senior editor of *The A.V. Club*, who stated that spoiler-phobia "makes it really difficult for us to do our jobs, and what we're supposed to do is report news, which are new things by definition." O'Neal evoked conflicting audiences for his work: readers who want news and readers who want to avoid spoilers. His professional obligations prioritize the former, but the nuisance rationale allows both to stand on equal footing and have their needs met as we will see in the final section of analysis.

Other interviewees acknowledged the significance of an episode air date when considering the publication of spoilers, but they advocated for more flexible temporal practices. Egner named the air date as "The only standard, objective standard we can really sort of use when it comes to spoiler," but he only considered spoilers "fair game" in criticism pieces "a few days after the thing airs." Deggans saw spoilers as gradually losing their bite "once you get a couple of weeks out" from their original release. After that temporal padding, Deggans was unapologetic about including narrative details in his criticism, challenging the commitment of spoiler-averse latecomers: "most people who care about the show have seen it already." We see that for some interviewees, the air date is an objective, rational temporal standard, but many still offered a temporal cushion for time shifters. One way that they are responding to shifting television pleasures and spoiler definitions is to bend conventional standards and slow the dissemination of detailed narrative information, a form of temporary insulation (or nuisance prevention).

Viewers who "care about" a show are encouraged to watch earlier rather than later in part because of the social nature of television viewing. Spoilers abound not just from journalists and critics, but from other viewers who are excited to discuss what they just watched to expand and deepen their appreciation of a story. Jurgensen pointed to social media as a form of spoiler relief for the *Wall Street Journal*: "It's more likely [readers are] going to get something spoiled on Twitter, Facebook, or social media rather than our coverage, which is not happening in real time . . . We're less of an offender than we have been." Egner concurred with these sentiments, offering the specific example, "If you know something about *Walking Dead* and you see that Tyrese is trending on Twitter or did that night, it leads you to think something bad happened to him." Social media, Watercutter stated, makes "it easier for things to be spoiled long before I get to them," so she would scan the Internet to "take the temperature of what is and isn't revealed to somebody who hasn't actually watched the show yet" before deciding how much to reveal and how to package particular narrative reveals.

Because the work of professional and amateur TV commentators mixes together in what Poniewozik, TV critic for *TIME* magazine during our interview and chief TV critic for *The New York Times* during publication, called a "soup of media input," spoilers from other sources can provide the professionals with a pass to speak and write freely. These examples also highlight the need that viewers and amateur critics feel to communicate about television in the moment. The rights of time shifting spoiler-phobes need to be balanced with the rights of others who are clamoring for pleasurable, in-time television conversations.

Content: What to Write

Balancing these competing needs presents a challenge for writers and editors who are trying to produce engaging discourse. This theme analyzes interviewees' statements about using narrative information in their work. As the interviewees describe the content of their writing, they implicitly evoke generic conventions and reader expectations: What do I need to include in an insightful, engaging, and well-supported work of criticism or journalism? These persuasive statements do not advocate for spoiler absolution, but they do argue that spoilers play a necessary role in the substance of written discourse about television.

Several interviewees who identified as TV critics argued that the nature of criticism necessitates the inclusion of plot information. Stuever noted that he has to reveal narrative details because without them it is "impossible to write about television intelligently." Poniewozik claimed that criticism must include some narrative information, such as quotes from scenes and information about characters "because you don't simply make proclamations about the quality of something without giving substantiation to it." He justified the need for narrative details—often from multiple stories—by explaining that television criticism is rooted in the literary tradition; "therefore, you should be able to use those same tropes and strategies in the criticism of it, which includes referring to a history and connecting ideas across them." References to previous works that collectively comprise a cultural history or arts movement are thus seen as necessary ingredients for thoughtful criticism. Poniewozik bolstered his argument by citing the standard, innocuous practice of referencing Shakespeare plays in criticism "even though not everybody has seen or read every Shakespeare play."

Comparisons serve a meaningful critical purpose; yet, they can present a thorny situation for readers who feel misdirected by an article's headline or perceived focus. The Deggans (2014) article cited in this essay's opening Twitter battle involved a comparison between *The Walking Dead,* a show mentioned in the article title, and other popular shows that were not previewed in the headline. The article addressed literary adaptations and how additional storylines and twists in the television versions add new meaning to the stories. Certainly, the analysis of multiple literary adaptations—*Walking Dead, Game of Thrones,* and *Dexter*—enhances the article's scope and support. However, for time shifters who are scanning headlines to avoid spoilers for specific shows, the comparison to another show can be an unwelcome surprise.

Narrative substantiation is necessary for making a sound inductive argument, but not all narrative detail is necessary: our anonymous critic avoided gratuitous spoilers, stating instead, "I only talk about sensitive plots if I have something interesting to say about them." She, however, was not concerned with how recently a show aired, nor was she willing to skirt sensitive plot issues to appease readers. This attitude was explicitly based on her style of writing: "my writing about television, it's meant to be literary period-type writing, and it's the kind that deals with it as it happens and find new ways of thinking about it." She contrasted this style with "buzz oriented" writing that is "meant to kind of appease people." Because she writes for a more traditional literary criticism purpose, she noted, "I don't feel obliged in the same way to not spoil." Viewed through this lens, narrative reveals are not latent spoilers but rather evidence and framing for illuminating, critical assessment of an artistic work.

Although our interviewees had different thoughts on what it meant to "ruin" a viewing experience for a reader, a consistent thread is that they sought to balance professional obligations with readers' viewing pleasures. O'Neal said it was his job to report on recently aired television shows, but also stated, "it's my job to not ruin a show for anybody. I personally don't like [being spoiled] either . . . So I try to be sensitive about it." Egner mirrored O'Neal's empathic sentiment, noting, "I don't want to ruin anything for anyone. I don't take any joy from it." Ryan noted that sensitivity is an important part of drawing in readers: "I'm in the business of getting people to come back and read my stuff, tomorrow, or next week . . . If you're a jerk about your information, you're not going to cultivate that audience."

Alan Sepinwall, TV critic for *HitFix*, was contrite when discussing a time when he goaded readers into concluding their own spoilers by announcing which actor's contract had not been renewed following a violent cliffhanger on *ER*. He recounted: "I got a bunch of angry letters, and those people were right. There were casting spoilers and just rubbing it into peoples' faces in that moment." This example demonstrates that power differentials exist in viewing communities, but many professional writers and editors are responsive to their readers—especially a critical mass of disappointed reader voices. Sepinwall received angry responses, considered them justified, and altered his practices accordingly. Expressions of empathy with readers, when coupled with accounts of remorse, suggest that writers' and editors' views on both publication timing and appropriate content can become malleable in response to reader input.

Packaging: All in the Presentation

Heretofore this essay has captured a variety of (sometimes opposing) opinions and practices related to spoilers. We see agreement in our final theme: writers' and editors' ideas about "properly packaging" their discourse about television. This is the form or shape their content takes. We see this theme governed by nuisance rationale principles that preserve the right for willing readers or listeners to enjoy discourse about television *and* allow most spoiler averse to engage in strategic avoidance. It is the way that our interviewees best meet divergent reader needs, preserving both viewing and communication pleasures. Proper packaging always includes spoiler-free headlines and pictures, sometimes a well-placed "spoiler alert" (or its more wordy equivalent), and promotion of mutual understanding between writer and reader. Proper packaging, according to VanDerWerff, "should prepare people who haven't seen it, to not read it." Sepinwall stated his overarching philosophy as such: "It's all about [readers] opting in." To borrow from the *FCC v. Pacifica* language, the nuisance rationale of spoilers means that sensitive narrative information should not intrude into unwilling readers' minds.

None of the interviewees would knowingly put spoilers in their publication headlines that readers could easily stumble upon. O'Neal often expressed resentment of spoiler-phobes, but assumed all responsibility for headlines, stating, "I understand if you're mad if I put [a spoiler] in the headline." Egner highlighted the ease of headline spoiler access: "That's something somebody can see even if they're not looking for it." The key point here is that the reader does not have agency in the information exchange if a headline featured on a website or in a print publication contains a spoiler. Once readers click on an article, read past the print headline, or search for the specific details of a plot twist, they assume greater responsibility for finding narrative information. This spoiler-free headlining strategy reinforces Baym's (2000) observation that titles help structure an online community and help participants best meet their needs for specific communication. The spoiler-free headline zone functions as a filter to bring in readers who knowledgeably opt in.

Carbone had the only outlying headline strategy: she used two. Carbone would put "Spoiler Alert" or similar phrase in a headline that appeared on the *Wetpaint* site, but also wrote a search engine optimization (SEO) headline that would include the *content* of the spoiler. The SEO headline and accompanying article would emerge only after the reader had searched for the specific plot twist. The audience for spoiler-laden headlines, Carbone explained, are people "searching around trying to find reactions to the big news that happened." A 2016 article by Sara Boboltz also revealed that *The*

Huffington Post's editors have the spoiler-mitigating power to create dual headlines: the article has a more specific title and the link that is shared through social media has a more vague title (so as not to upset unwitting social media users). As writers and editors consider unique strategies to meet the needs of their readers, it may be helpful to know Carbone's finding that spoiler-laden headlines drew more traffic than spoiler alerts. Carbone's statistical evidence reinforces the importance of giving social members of the viewing community what they desire: communication about recent, surprising television moments.

Sepinwall broadened the scope of his opt-in strategies beyond headlines and into other visual attention grabbers: "I try not to put spoilers in tweets. I try not to whenever possible or use photos that might give things away." Tweets and pictures both provide quick, unavoidable information without taking a second agentic step (like clicking, turning a page, or hitting play). Sepinwall's tentative language ("try not to whenever possible") acknowledges that he and other writers do not have unassailable judgment when assessing what is a spoiler-y tweet or photo, but they give much thought to protecting readers. VanDerWerff recalled using a picture from the very first *Hannibal* episode to accompany an article and having many readers get upset because "if you hadn't seen any of the season, [the picture] would seem like it was a huge spoiler." Complicating these spoiler practices is the fact that a false sense of being spoiled may prevent readers from watching the show and being able to see the writer's or editor's side: why the photo or other piece of information was *not* a spoiler.

Opinions differed on how to properly package recaps—writing that provides the CliffsNotes of an already-aired episode. The major theme is that readers *should* know that a recap will include narrative information, but writers and editors still provided extra warnings. Egner waffled on the subject, stating, "with recaps there's this sort of understanding that this is specifically a little mini review or digest about a specific episode of a specific show" but conceding, "usually we do include some sort of spoiler alert." Egner thought that "most reasonable people" would know that a recap contains narrative information, but there can always be vocal, indignant exceptions. Poniewozik wrote in 2013 that "SPOILER ALERT-ing anodyne information" (para. 12) broadens the definition of a spoiler, but he surmised in our interview that many critics go overboard with warnings because they do not want to be "dealing with pissed off, whiny people on the internet." Watercutter took a least objectionable approach, acknowledging that formal conventions set expectations—"hopefully people are aware of what they're looking at when they start reading [a recap]"—but always beginning recaps with a warning. Spoiler alerting a recap is a sometimes-grudging-but-always-generous way to keep the peace among different factions. It is a sacrifice that writers and editors make to minimize harm.

Many interviewees built in extra spoiler protections for their readers and also encouraged readers to take control of meeting their own needs. Spoiler-sensitive time shifters were encouraged to recognize that their viewing patterns, reading habits, and internet use actually create opportunities to be spoiled. Sepinwall oriented his spoiler philosophy around a particular saying: "'At a certain point, you have to live in the world,' and you can't demand that the world bends to your viewing schedule." O'Neal reiterated that readers are opting in when choosing to read articles about television shows. He urged them: "Take control of your life. Don't voluntarily click on stuff and then get mad." Many writers and editors see themselves as merely asking the readers to save themselves from spoilers and to demonstrate sensitivity toward those who want to engage in conversations about already-aired television. Reader recognition of the generic

conventions in television discourse (e.g., recaps contain plentiful narrative information) and attention to spoiler alerts are ways to assume responsibility for their own viewing pleasures and preferences.

Conclusions

Lotz noted that the television control technologies enabling time shifting have "diminished the already languishing notion of television as an initiator of watercooler conversation—a notion once enforced through the mandate of simultaneous viewing" (2014, p. 27). Many of these conversations are still taking place in fits and starts through the digital watercooler (Matrix, 2014). This essay paves the way for cooperation between the professionals who send out watercooler invitations and those who mosey by for a drink.

We began our analysis by presenting our interviewees' three different views on spoilers and television pleasure—neutral, averse, and positive. Although the three points are contradictory, all are valuable perspectives that also had support from various audience or fan studies about spoilers. Knowing a spoiler may indeed undercut pleasurable suspense; however, spoilers can also draw new viewers into a show and enhance cognitive play by encouraging viewers to speculate about events or pay closer attention to operational aesthetics.

While describing their spoiler attitudes and practices, writers and editors implicitly or explicitly offered four different views of their roles: the *reporter* who delivers timely news, the *matchmaker* who encourages readers to pick up enjoyable shows, the *literary* critic who invites readers to see stories in new or intriguing ways, and the *facilitator* who contributes to and cultivates conversations about engaging stories. Varying attitudes toward spoilers and perceptions of their roles as writers and editors undergirded the interviewees' practices about when to publish, what content to publish, and how to package that content. For example, interviewees who took on the reporter role felt an obligation to fully cover television content without temporal padding. Interviewees who saw themselves as matchmakers tended to be cautious about publishing spoilers and/or committed to providing obvious spoiler warnings, especially if they saw a strong link between suspense and viewing pleasure. Literary critics often justified their inclusion of narrative details (from many stories) as necessary support for their arguments about new ways of seeing or interpreting a show. Facilitators would often pay attention to the conversations around them as they decided how best to intervene in the discourse.

We see proper packaging as the prominent area of consensus that largely elides those differences. Most interviewees agreed that they should give their readers fair warning about spoilers, putting the onus on readers to opt-in to discussions about narrative content. These practices represent a nuisance rationale approach to spoilers that balances narrative revelation and insulation. In a media environment of fragmented viewing patterns, divergent attitudes about viewing pleasures, and differing needs for communication about television, this nuisance rationale is our greatest hope for continuing vibrant, meaningful discussions about media that do not interfere with would-be viewers' potential pleasures.

Writers and editors revealed many ways in which they attempted to exercise due diligence about spoilers, but they also appealed for shared sacrifice in this mutualistic viewing community. VanDerWerff, for example, stated, "It's my job to police what I say to a reasonable degree, but it's also your job [as a reader] to avoid stuff that's going to spoil you." Understanding the generic conventions of various forms of television commentary—what each type of writing includes, how it is organized, and what its purpose is—will go a long way in facilitating readers' willing consent. Other writers encouraged readers to think carefully about narrative pleasures and remain open-minded about the possibility that knowing narrative details may not ruin their relationship with a television show.

The findings here are applicable to the negotiation of other new media communicative tensions. Multiple voices should be considered to reach mutually agreeable guidelines about divisive issues such as the appropriate content and frequency of workplace emails, or parameters for posts in social media groups. The nuisance rationale can be used to frame the negotiation of conflicting rights: one's right to communicate should be balanced with another's right not to receive communication. Compromises are most likely reached by understanding others' concerns, motivations, goals, and perspectives. Our analysis of the interviewee discourse highlights three essential components of negotiating communicative tensions in the new media environment: (1) acknowledging the diverse communicative needs of all members in a community; (2) being open-minded about the potential benefits of receiving communication; (3) working to minimize the intrusiveness of communication that may not be of equal value to those in the community.

The spoiler debate that rests on a foundation of perceived disrespect has been a source of frustration and disappointment for many who take pleasure in viewing television and engaging in television conversations. Discourse about television provides exciting possibilities for viewers to expand their involvement with a series, find new series, connect with other viewers, and learn intriguing new viewpoints. Cultivating greater understanding of the conditions under which professional television commentary is produced and circulated will help readers avoid stumbling upon spoilers or better recover from such stumbles. If writers, editors, and readers can all behave in ways that mutually respect the need to know and the need not to know, we will have a more harmonious culture with a robust digital watercooler—one that preserves agentic opportunities for bubbly exchanges as well as suspenseful silences.

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Contested Hashtags: Blockupy Frankfurt in Social Media

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This research starts from an activist-centric perspective and explores how different actors interfere in activist communication in social media. We pursue this inquiry through a case study of the Blockupy action against the opening of the European Central Bank headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on March 18, 2015. The investigation combines an ethnographic inquiry into activists' social media tactics with a social network analysis of Twitter hashtags to explore how these tactics materialize in social media. The inquiry enhances our understanding of the consequences of activists' use of corporate social media by identifying actors, communication, and networks. Moreover, although activists define Twitter hashtags as theirs, our research shows increasing police use of them, hindering activists' attempts to communicate alternative perspectives.

Keywords: ethnography, social network analysis, activism, Twitter, social media

"The police say they have 10,000 police officers. To them, we say, we have 10,000 likes!" These words were triumphantly shouted from the podium at the public assembly of Blockupy in Frankfurt am Main, the day before the protests against the opening of the new European Central Bank (ECB) headquarters on March 18, 2015. This reference to the count of Blockupy's likes on Facebook demonstrates the centrality of social media in political action today and the interdependence of tactics in the street and on the Web. In the case of Blockupy, social media have become integral to the tactics of multiple participants in street action and their struggle against austerity measures, international corporations, financial institutions, and police authority. This case is particularly relevant from a media theoretical perspective because Blockupy drew heavily upon social media for reporting about the protests against the ECB and for voicing their own perspectives on the events.

As a critique of European austerity measures, the Blockupy protest drew heavily upon imagery of crisis movements and the summit protests of the early 2000s, with the words "We are winning" spray painted on a shop window. This slogan refers to the 1999 Battle of Seattle summit protest, in which these

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same words were spray painted on a wall. Unlike in 1999, activists in today's mediated environments report from street protests through social media in combination with mainstream and alternative media. Smartphones have at least partially replaced the tent within which information was formerly uploaded onto the IndyMedia alternative media platform. This alternative reporting takes place within a long history of activist efforts to establish alternative media channels and critical perspectives. Activists have always built their own alternative media to communicate their own points of view (Atton, 2004; Baines, 2015; Couldry & Curran, 2003; Downing, Villarreal, Gil, & Stein, 2001). In today's saturated media environments, images of riots, peaceful protests, artistic action, police, and news media form a mosaic of perspectives in a struggle for attention on social media. Various authors have suggested that activists can build powerful alternative public communication platforms using social media (Castells, 2012; Jenkins, 2008; Shirky, 2008). However, their claims raise questions about how corporate social media and their inherent logics might shape activists' communication (Fuchs, 2012; Poell, 2014; Poell & Borra, 2011; Uldam, 2016; van Dijck, 2013; Youmans & York, 2012).

Following this more complex and critical understanding of social media, this article explores the dual focus of activists' communicative social media tactics and how these materialize as online communicative networks on Twitter. It does so through an ethnographic inquiry into the Blockupy protests against the ECB opening in Frankfurt am Main on March 18, 2015; interviews with activists; and social network analysis of Twitter data. The interviews and the ethnographic inquiry explore activists' communicative social media tactics, following a common approach in studying social movements' deployment of social media (Juris, 2012; Mattoni, 2012; Treré, 2015; Uldam, 2013). The social network analysis of Twitter data, collected using the hashtag announced by activists for reporting on the day of action, allows us to explore how the protest event materializes in online communicative networks on Twitter as the representation of the events from the activists' perspective intertwined with perspectives of other actors and with the social media logic (Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Penney & Dadas, 2014; Poell, 2014). With this dual focus, we argue that activist communication on corporate social media is not only underlain by "techno-commercial processes" (Poell & van Dijck, 2015) but is also vulnerable to interference by other actors, such as authorities and mainstream media, presenting their own (potentially hegemonic) perspectives. These technocommercial processes, combined with interference by potentially hostile authorities, create tensions among activists, as they believe that social media are problematic tools but are also necessary for spreading a message and mobilizing for protest.

Activists and Social Media Tactics

From a critical media theory perspective, scholars have discussed the role of social media in producing alternative activist perspectives to mainstream media (Askanius & Gustafsson, 2010; Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Poell & Borra, 2011). These scholars address activists' social media communication as part of a larger media strategy. The role of Internet platforms in protests has mainly been discussed on the basis of the alternative online media platform IndyMedia (Garcelon, 2006; Pickard, 2006; Pickerill, 2007; Platon & Deuze, 2003). However, there are many challenges to building alternative spaces using corporate social media. Youmans and York (2012) identify two points at which the architecture of corporate social media shapes their use by activists: (a) the programming code that limits and enables social media use, and (b) company policies and terms of use. Media power in corporate social media

environments has shifted to technological and algorithmic selections defined by large media corporations (such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), shaping activist communication around spectacular, news-oriented reporting while shifting focus from the protest itself (Poell & van Dijck, 2015; Uldam, 2016).

Leistert (2015) notes that corporate social media have become "algorithmic mass media," using censorship through algorithms as a normalization and standardization tool for activists' communicative action. Scholars have argued that violent action frames often dominate not only news media but also social media reporting by activists to produce visibility through radicalized media tactics (Cammaerts, 2012; Juris, 2005; Truscello, 2012). This silencing of critical voices beyond the dominant violent action frames reinforces the neoliberal values in which mainstream and corporate social media are embedded (Couldry, 2010). The Blockupy Frankfurt actions can also be seen as part of antiausterity movements in the Global North, which mobilize in the context of a crisis of neoliberalism (Della Porta, 2015). The corporate social media environment in particular creates contradictions for activists and the collective identity of social movements mobilizing against the capitalist system (Svensson, Neumayer, Banfield-Mumb, & Schossböck, 2015). Self-absorbed and egocentric social media practices can counteract the aims of sustainable activist collectives (Fenton & Barassi, 2011).

These media theoretical perspectives offer important insight into the many empirical studies based on ethnographic inquiry, often in close cooperation with activist collectives (Gerbaudo, 2012; Juris, 2012; Kavada, 2010; Mattoni, 2012; Treré, 2015). These methods of inquiry are vital: Ethnographic inquiry allows us to draw conclusions about communicative social media tactics that are not publicly visible and available as data. They provide insight into the planning of social media communication and into practices that remain invisible (such as encrypted communication). These insights allow us to contextualize media forms and practices, enabling scholars to consider activists' tensions and beliefs in their interactions with media technologies. Nevertheless, use of this approach on its own may result in blind spots, as it only provides insight from the activists' perspective. This study seeks to enhance our understanding of activists' communicative tactics in social media by combining ethnographic inquiry with a social network analysis of Twitter data to further clarify how the protest event materializes in social media and to illuminate the emerging tensions of activists' social media use.

Materialization of Activists' Social Media Tactics on Twitter

In their analysis of activists' social media communication as alternative media, Poell and Borra (2011) note that although Twitter is the most promising social media platform for crowd-sourcing alternative reporting, the contents of the tweets are framed by mainstream news reporting to produce visibility. Social network analysis of Twitter data has been used as a reference point for understanding the materialization of the communicative practices of activists embedded in the social media logic (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Penney & Dadas, 2014). This has been done with two main aims: First, researchers have analyzed tweets' flow, volume, and type to understand how this communication evolved during a protest event and how events compare (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012). Second, they have used tweets, retweets, and replies to identify a communication network (Bruns & Moe, 2013) and to show the underlying social practices within groups of Twitter users (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Lotan, Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney, & Pearce, 2011; Penney & Dadas, 2014). In both cases, Twitter data have

been interpreted as a sociotechnical space of connected visibility in which coordination of physical actions, remote participation, mobilization, emotional support, and information spreading occur on a continuum (Bajpai & Jaiswal, 2011; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2015). Twitter offers a context in which various social activities and dynamics take place on the same technological platform and thus within the same observable data set.

Most of the studies conducted with Twitter data examine just one aspect of activists' communicative social media tactics. They investigate the outcome of activists' communicative action by analyzing a specific social media platform such as Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube (Penney & Dadas, 2014; Poell, 2014; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). To gain more insight into activists' motives, user types, and communicative tactics, these methods have been combined with ethnographic inquiry such as interviews (see Bastos & Mercea, 2015). Most of these studies, however, focus on a particular part of the picture, such as the interaction between mainstream media and activists or activists' mobilization and self-mediation. These focus areas are important, but these studies risk missing the relevance of other actors, such as authorities, in the studied protest events. Authorities in protest events are usually considered in relation to police monitoring and surveillance practices (Elmer & Opel, 2008; Neumayer & Stald, 2014), but as our study will show, they have also become increasingly effective at their own social media communication. Social network analysis of Twitter data can render these blind spots visible, and the combination with ethnographic inquiry also renders visible the plans and practices behind the materialization of communicative social media tactics on Twitter.

The Case: Blockupy Frankfurt

On March 18, 2015, around 15,000 participants followed the call for action against the opening of the new ECB headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. The Blockupy alliance's antiausterity protests made the headlines in the international news, mainly because of riots and burning police cars. International news media attention to these forms of action is not surprising and has been observed since Seattle 1999 (Gupta, 2015), which also marked the start of the antiglobalization movement. In the call for action, Blockupy mobilized for blockades around the ECB building throughout the day and for colorful demonstrations in the afternoon of March 18. The Blockupy alliance has mobilized against the European Troika's austerity measures, which have been in place since 2011 in response to the financial crisis. With its slogan "Resistance in the heart of the European crisis regime," Blockupy Frankfurt presents itself as a colorful and broad alliance acting against austerity within the German geographical center of crisis, as represented by the ECB headquarters. On its international website, Blockupy Frankfurt describes itself as follows:

> We are various social movement activists, altermondialists, migrants, jobless, precarious and industry workers, party members and unionists and many more from many different European countries, who want to connect our struggles and powers beyond nation-state lines. Together we want to create a common European movement, united in diversity, which can break the rule of austerity and will start to build democracy and solidarity from below. (Blockupy, 2015)

The German Blockupy coalition includes the *Interventionistische Linke*, Attac, Occupy Frankfurt, unions, youth and student associations, the Unemployment Forum Germany (*Erwerbslosen-Forum Deutschland*), the *Die Linke* political party, the peace cooperative (*Friedenskooperative*) network, and the radical left alliance *umsGanze!*. Blockupy is thus a diverse coalition of activists and civil society groups, mobilizing numerous subnetworks with different levels of radicalization, such as the M18 alliance and Europe Commune (http://www.thecommuneofeurope.org). Because of harsh police repression in response to actions by Blockupy in 2012 and 2013 and a lack of clarity about Blockupy's collective identity in the European antiausterity movement, the events were mobilized mainly by German activists without sparking broad actions across Europe (Pianta & Gerbaudo, 2015). Nevertheless, activist collectives within the Blockupy network (such as in Italy, Spain, Greece, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden) participated in the blockades and demonstrations on March 18 to support the antiausterity protests.

Method and Data

Following the dual focus of this study, we rely on two sets of complementary data: an ethnographic inquiry and a social network analysis of Twitter data. The ethnographic inquiry's main aim is to identify the social media tactics and practices that activists employed to mobilize for and report from the day of action against the March 18 ECB opening in Frankfurt. It seeks to answer the following questions: Which social media communicative tactics did activists employ to produce visibility in the Blockupy Frankfurt action, and which tensions arose through the technocommercial processes of social media and interference by authorities? The social network analysis of Twitter data addresses the following questions: How did these social media tactics materialize on Twitter during the Blockupy Frankfurt actions? Are other actors, and corresponding tactics, observable in the collapsed communicative space defined by a Twitter hashtag? This set of questions bridges the media theoretical perspectives outlined above because it addresses activists' social media tactics, practices, and beliefs and the resultant materialization in the contested sociotechnical space of visibility on Twitter. By combining these methods in an exploratory approach and focusing on an event following a specific hashtag on the day of action (rather than the Twitter communication by activist collectives' accounts over time), we uncover discrepancies between activists' social media tactics and expectations to produce visibility and these tactics' materialization on Twitter during protest events because of police presence on social media.

The ethnographic inquiry, including observations and interviews with activists before and during Blockupy Frankfurt events, explored the social media tactics and practices to produce mediated visibility. One of the authors participated in the protest events on March 18, 2015, and the activities in Frankfurt for one week leading up to the events (such as assemblies, meetings, smaller demonstrations) and wrote notes about observations and informal conversations with activists. Notes were also written based on observations at assemblies in Denmark and Sweden in the months preceding the protests. Access to the field was granted by the author's work in activist collectives in Sweden and Denmark. Following McCurdy and Uldam (2014), this provided an insider's perspective on the preparation meetings in Sweden and Denmark and an outsider's perspective on the preparation meetings, predemonstrations, and day of action in Germany. Although the participant observation was made overt to members of the activist collectives, it

was not apparent to everyone participating in the day of action and the events leading up to it (see McCurdy & Uldam, 2014).

Moreover, three face-to-face interviews with activists who are members of collectives with different levels of radicalization and from different national contexts (Germany, Denmark, and Sweden) informed the ethnographic inquiry. The three respondents were selected because of their active engagement in activist collectives, their active use of social media tactics, and the different levels of radicalization of the activist collectives they participate in. Our respondents were anonymized and given pseudonyms when quoted from the data, and we do not reveal their individual roles in the activist collectives because of potential security risks. Information from the Blockupy website and its social media mobilization were used to inform the analysis. In a theoretical sampling process suggested by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), data were sampled and coded in a reciprocal process between data and theory until the point of saturation. Although loyalty to activist collectives and previous insight into their practices and tactics gave us advantages in interpreting the data and lowered entrance barriers, the close affiliation to activist collectives might also have created blind spots resulting from political bias (McCurdy & Uldam, 2014). To uncover these blind spots, we combined our analysis with a social network analysis of Twitter data to provide a perspective external to this activist, or insider, perspective.

The second data set is composed of Twitter data, collected using DiscoverText (Shulman, 2011), which uses both REST and STREAM Twitter APIs to gather the data. Following a well-established practice in Twitter research (Lotan et al., 2011; Penney & Dadas, 2014), we collected tweets containing specific hashtags (#blockupy, #M18, #notroika, #destroika) that emerged as relevant in our ethnographic inquiry during the days leading to the event. While we are aware of the possible limitations to not using Twitter Firehose (Morstatter, Pfeffer, Liu, & Carley, 2013), the relatively small size of the event we are describing allows us a high level of confidence regarding data completeness. For the current analysis, we use only the tweets written on the day of the event, from 00:00 on March 18, 2015, to 00:00 on March 19, 2015. This 24-hour dataset of tweets comprises 137,865 messages written by 49,993 unique user accounts. More detailed information about the data set is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Twitter Data.

Unique Users	Tweets	Retweets	Average Tweets per User	External Links
49,993	137,865	110,268	2.75	28,014

As mentioned above, Twitter data were chosen by using a set of event-specific and protest-specific hashtags. Hashtags create a topical space by connecting audiences often not directly connected with one another (Bruns & Moe, 2013). A hashtag enlarges a message's potential audience beyond the network of followers to a community of users interested in a topic or event. Tweets containing hashtags provide a macrolevel of visibility for aggregated communication but also define and identify an intended audience for communicative action. By focusing on the event rather than solely the social media profiles and tactics of activists, we aim to extend research practices concerning social media tactics into their

actual representation within a contested social media space. Visible social media data, besides being produced by a variety of actors, lack insight into activists' planning, motivations, and tactics leading up to this visible representation of the events, which we were able to understand through the ethnographic inquiry.

Chasing the Event: #Blockupy on Social Media

Blockupy Frankfurt mobilized extensively through social media. Aims included not only mobilizing a large number of participants for the day of action but also producing positive visibility for the activists' cause and of the Blockupy actions on March 18. The expectations for social media to produce visibility for the counter-protests were high despite concerns about security. Conversations with activists revealed that that although activists were concerned about security, they found social media to be necessary tools for mobilizing for mass action:

> Blockupy itself is like really, really loud on the social media. It's really like [makes explosion sound]. It can make me a bit worried sometimes because the police can just go onto the website and be like, "There's the map of the blockade, and . . . they put everything online" . . . The main thing for Blockupy is to mobilize a lot of people and then . . . The problem with the police will come later on, but the most important thing is that we're strong together, and we have a loud voice if we're a lot of people. (Susanne, Danish activist, March 3, 2015)

The idea that visibility is more important than security on social media was particularly present within more loosely connected participants on the day of action. Blockupy's low level of radicalization and colorful self-representation went hand in hand with less awareness of surveillance of social media tactics by potentially hostile authorities (see Mercea, 2011; Neumayer & Stald, 2014), as Susanne indicated. In comparison, the more closed and sustainable activist collective M18 displayed more restrictive criteria for being part of the collective: "On Blockupy . . . they can just write and say 'I want to join, I want to do something.' It's not that easy with M18" (Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015). This group also applied security practices, including encrypted channels (such as encrypted messages on smartphones), to avoid surveillance and repression by authorities. Similarly, international assemblies of the Blockupy alliance used Skype and projected the video conversation onto a wall and used tactics such as collective Facebook actions for international mobilization. M18 relied more on its internal, sustainable collective based on trust and avoided any form of communication that could be traced back to individuals (interview, Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015), resembling the tactics of other radical activist collectives across Europe (Askanius & Gustafsson, 2010; Mercea, 2011; Svensson et al., 2015). There is a rising tension between the critical social media practices based on trust and security within the collective and the less critical application of social media as mobilization tools.

In general, encrypted and unencrypted e-mail communication, within activist collectives and to a larger external network, and blogs and alternative media platforms for self-representation played important roles for different alliances mobilizing for the events (interviews, Nina, Swedish activist, April 4, 2015; Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015; see Treré, 2015, for similar results). Moreover, we can

identify different social media tactics because of these media's corporate character, which activists criticize not only because of security issues (interviews, Nina, Swedish activist, April 4, 2015; Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015; Susanne, Danish activist, March 3, 2015) but also because of the anticapitalist ideals for which they struggle, as "there's a business that makes money on our thoughts and feelings and information" (Nina, Swedish activist, April 4, 2015). That which is visible as an event and traceable through social media data is built upon a complex structure of secure (and invisible) communicative tactics, visible communicative tactics, and activist collectives' underlying beliefs and struggles. Although diverse social media practices and encrypted communication occur beneath the surface of traceable social media data, they are used tactically to produce visibility through acts of civil disobedience. What we can see as a visible representation of the events on Twitter is (as the ethnographic inquiry shows) only a small part of the communicative tactics that activists employ.

To understand the visible Blockupy event on Twitter, we first need to provide a general description of the Twitter activity (see Table 1 for an overview). To do this, it is necessary to consider the tweets produced during the Blockupy event in Frankfurt in light of different types of Twitter data that have been collected over the years. Bruns and Stieglitz (2012) have compared several Twitter hashtags and identified two distinct clusters: media events (e.g., #royalwedding, #eurovision) and crisis events (e.g., #tsunami, #qldflood, #londondriots). The first cluster is characterized by a greater presence of original tweets and fewer URLs linking to external sources to share additional stories about the media events. The second cluster is characterized by a greater presence of retweets and more URLs linking to external sources to share relevant information during crisis events (see Giglietto & Lee, 2015, for explorations of various cases).

When mapped on the same graph (Figure 1), the Blockupy data are substantially different from the two clusters. Although they contain a large number of retweets (even larger than an event belonging to the crisis communication cluster), the number of links to external sources is relatively low (almost at the level of media events). An initial interpretation of this data is that the number of actual sources of information is small (hence the large number of retweets for spreading information) and that these sources provide news and information directly as Twitter messages without linking to external resources. A possible explanation for this difference is the minor role played by traditional news organizations. News organizations primarily use tweets to bring visitors and readers to their websites by integrating Twitter into their existing news cycle (Hermida, 2013), which might explain the large number of retweets that include URLs linking to their own news media websites.

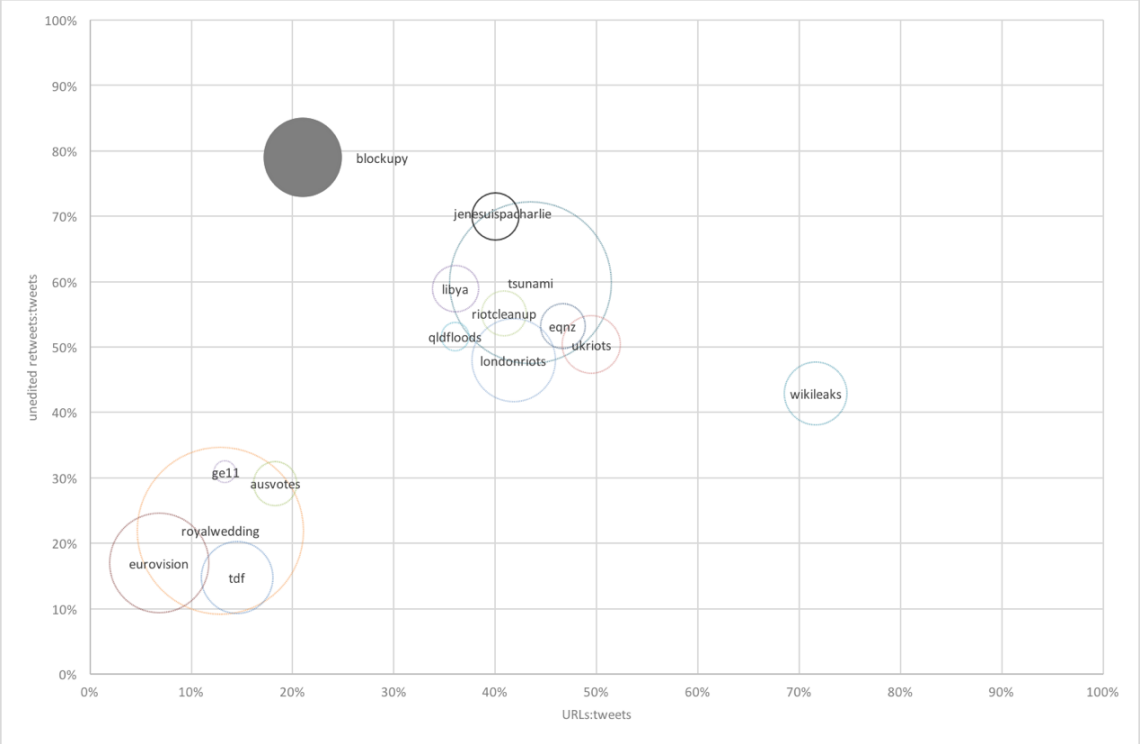

Figure 1. User activity patterns comparing different Twitter hashtags. Size indicates total number of contributors. Blockupy data are highlighted in dark gray.

To understand how the Blockupy day of action on Twitter can be identified with these characteristics, we will further investigate the timeline of Twitter data on March 18. The timeline (Figure 2) shows a temporally bounded event that begins early in the morning, with the first relevant quantity of tweets produced around 08:00; a peak of Twitter activity at 10:00; and then substantial activity at 14:00, 15:00, and from 17:00 to 19:00.

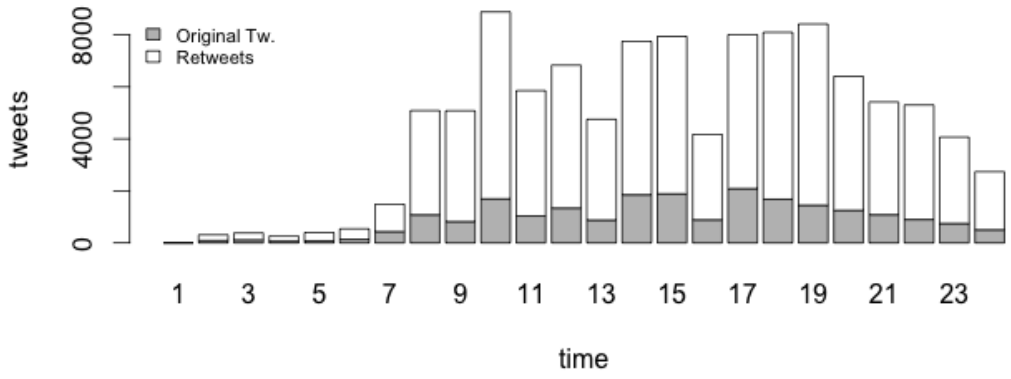

Figure 2. Twitter activity during the day.

On the day of action, Twitter was particularly important for aligning the actions of activists and civil society groups that participated in the demonstration but did not belong to larger activist collectives. In contrast to the secure forms of communication used within activist collectives, Twitter was used to guide participants through "soft leadership" (Gerbaudo, 2012) and to align the actions of those who were otherwise outsiders. This involved, for example, activists outside Germany who did not participate in the events but nevertheless disseminated information that they received from activists in Frankfurt. This increases the tension between critical social media practices of German activist collectives and individual outsiders participating in mass action trying to create visibility. Social media in general and the Blockupy Facebook page and Twitter feed in particular were tools for reaching audiences across the political spectrum by dissemination through likes, shares, posts in personal social networks, and the use of hashtags (interview, Susanne, Danish activist, March 3, 2015; Nina, Swedish activist, April 4, 2015).

Different Actors and Their Social Media Tactics

The actions and social media tactics of Blockupy and its subgroups and subnetworks are diverse and not always aligned. Blockupy's diverse structure, with different levels of radicalization, is typical of modern social movements and their practices of resistance and movement building (Della Porta, 2015) but can appear disorganized in the self-mediation of the movement's identity on social media. The diversity of groups thus creates challenges in unifying their appearance on social media. In addition, the more radical groups and sustainable activist collectives, such as M18, clearly differentiate themselves from Blockupy—through critical technical practices and separate social media campaigns but also on the Blockupy website, Facebook page, and Twitter account, in which Blockupy presents itself as one alliance:

> I would say Blockupy has a different target group, they are more for everyone, they make posts like the normal people. . . . We have one account, the Interventionistische Linke has access, Die Linke has access, Attac has access, and everyone posts something different. We are going to post a new communist call with a very radical speech and then yeah, Attac is posting something against the bad banks and so on or a lot of these social media campaigns where people should hold up the signs. . . . If you know a bit of the style of the different groups, you can figure out who is posting what. (Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015)

Through the shared website and social media account, the diverse groups co-construct the Blockupy alliance's publically visible profile, although their interests, ideologies, values, and tactics differ depending on the different editors representing different groups and their intended audiences. Their identities and the different subgroups are visible to insiders, who know the ideological foundations of the various activist collectives, unions, and civil society groups. The different suballiances also use their own mobilization websites and blogs, and M18 has indeed published its own, radicalized version of the call on its website (http://march18.net/), Twitter account, and Facebook page. This represents a general tendency for diverse forms of action and social media practices to create factions within a broad activist alliance (see Dahlgren, 2013; Juris, 2012; Neumayer & Stald, 2014; Pianta & Gerbaudo, 2015; Svensson et al., 2015).

The diversity of user accounts on Twitter suggests that the diversity of actors on Twitter within the hashtag announced by the Blockupy activist alliance for the events goes beyond a diversity of participants in the protests against the opening of the ECB headquarters. Table 2 shows the most active user accounts (according to the number of original tweets during the day), and Table 3 shows the most retweeted user accounts. Tables 2 and 3 indicate the different dynamics taking place when comparing the production of original content and the content shared through retweets. The user account types were identified based on the user accounts' self-descriptions. Retweets were mainly defined by an explicit willingness to share relevant information (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2012). Although perceptions of relevance can differ by actor, official Twitter accounts (such as user accounts of activist collectives; interview, Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015) tend to receive more retweets even if they are not particularly active in their original content production. The international account, 15MBcn_int, of the 15M movement, which began in Spain in 2011, had few original tweets (it is not present in Table 1) but received many retweets (Table 2). A surprising aspect of the two tables is the presence of accounts from the police (Polizei_Ffm) and the fire department (feuerwehrffm) in Frankfurt am Main alongside the expected news organizations (such as RT and BBC). These accounts might be deemed more reliable by citizens than by activists.

Table 2. Most Active User Accounts (Original Tweets).

Username	Tweets	User Account Type
mehrwortwert	165	Journalist
ThomasOccupy	124	Activist
news_reich	118	Account suspended
Polizei_Ffm	116	Police
Muschelschloss	108	Blogger
rightnowio_feed	95	Account suspended
Blockupy_Ticker	89	Activist account
2ndDemocracy	77	Activist account
TrendieDE	62	Trend aggregator
Blockupy	60	Activist account

Table 3. Most Retweeted User Accounts.

Username	Retweets Received	User type
Polizei_Ffm	5406	Police
15MBcn_int	2478	Activist account
Blockupy	2069	Activist account
RT_com	1418	News media
ThomasOccupy	1146	Activist
feuerwehrffm	1093	Fire brigade
oguzkocaman3	932	NA
BBCBreaking	910	News media
RTerdog4n	884	Account suspended
ReporteYa	835	News media

The presence of law enforcement agencies and (local) news organizations might have occurred primarily because of the public attention that the protest received after riots took place on the morning of March 18. When riots broke out and police cars were set on fire between 06:00 and 09:00, many activists called someone or looked up information on their phones but refrained from taking pictures because of Blockupy's request not to spread images of violent action. This request was rooted in security issues and in a desire to maintain Blockupy's nonviolent self-representation on social media. Police, on the other hand, shared images and videos of the burning police cars (parked in front of the police station), which were shared widely through social media and news media. This supports Poell and van Dijck's (2015) observation that violent action frames produce visibility not only in news media but also on social media.

Nevertheless, for police, firefighters, and news organizations to be present in our data, they needed to explicitly add to their messages at least one hashtag previously selected by the activist groups. Generally, civil society, NGOs, and social movements are very active on Twitter despite a generally low number of Twitter users (11%) in Germany, according to Netzpolitik.org (Dobusch, 2014). The use of one or more specific hashtags is aimed not only at enlarging the potential readership of a specific message but also at identifying an audience that the authors of the tweets intend to reach. The hashtags in our case study thus have different functions for the three clusters of actors represented in the data set: First, for activists, the hashtag defined the borders of a potentially interested community of actors willing to support their action. Second, for news organizations, the hashtag represented a means of identifying and describing the news connecting them to the existing stream of tweets. Third, for the Frankfurt am Main police, the hashtag represented a technical strategy for engaging with a specific audience that evolved over the course of the event. Use of the hashtag thus came down to different tactics and produced different meanings within contested social media.

Activists and Police: A Tale of Two Networks

The visualization of the network of interactions based on replies and retweets among user accounts (Figure 3) shows three clusters. First, the interaction (replies and retweets) of the police account (Polizei_Ffm) comprises the largest cluster within the network. Second, we can identify two clusters surrounding activists-related accounts (Blockupy, 15MBcn_int) and can identify two quasi-isolated clusters aggregated around ReporterYA and RTerdog4n, which are activist accounts located in different geographical and language contexts. The more fragmented and diverse activist clusters map the diversity of groups and subgroups loosely connected through the Blockupy alliance. This diversity is expressed both in different levels of radicalization and political agendas and in the different geographical contexts in which the various groups operate (interview, Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015). Third, we can identify a news media cluster, dominated by RT_com, which plays a central role and is positioned equally close to both the activist and police clusters.

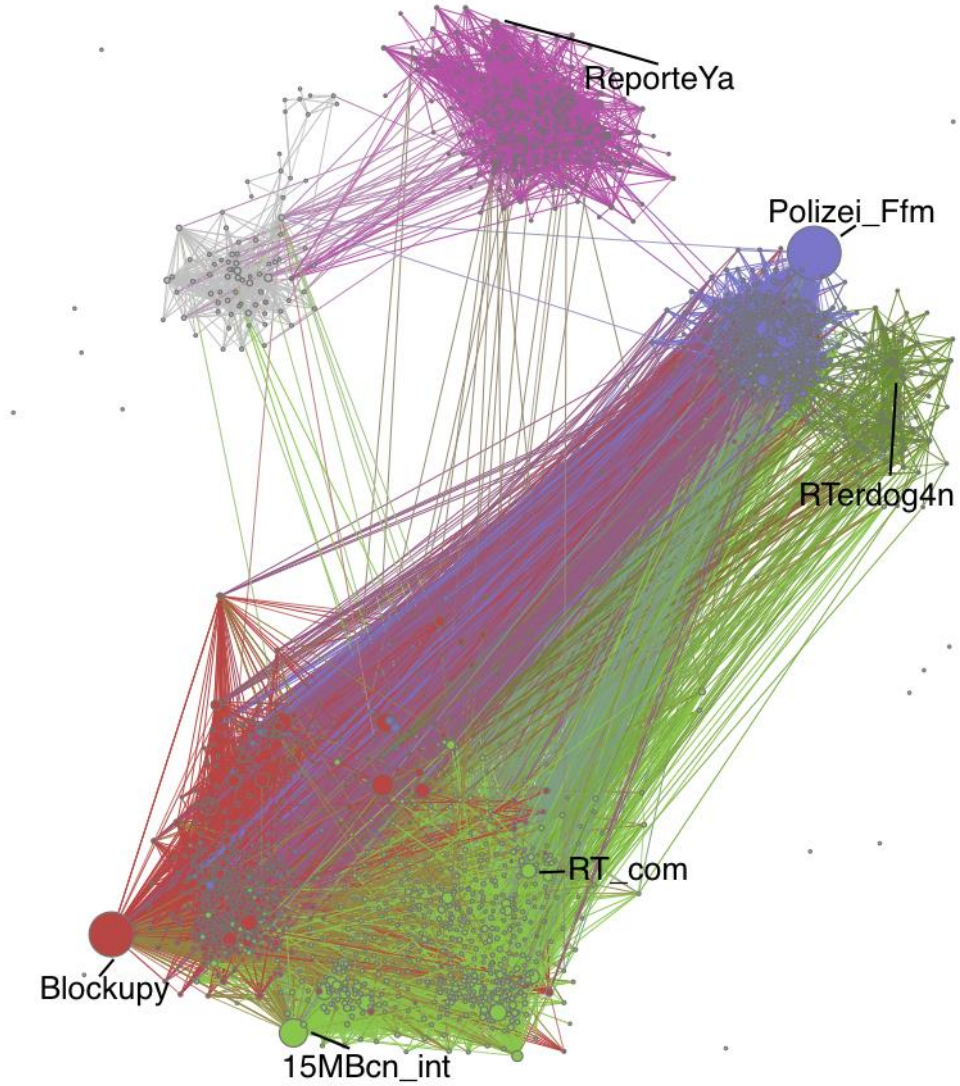

Figure 3. Interaction network of Twitter data (Giant component).

On the basis of our ethnographic inquiry, it seems that the Blockupy alliance did not anticipate the high police presence in its social media interactions. Conversely, Blockupy sought to avoid public communication on social media with authorities, mainly because of security issues, as activists are generally aware that police observe their public social media communication (interviews Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015; Susanne, Danish activist, March 3, 2015; see Neumayer & Stald, 2014, for similar results). Nevertheless, even though the hashtags were clearly defined and proclaimed by activists, police used them to interfere in the street protest information stream on Twitter. This became particularly clear when the police replied directly to activist accounts, stating that the activists' actions were illegal:

> We talked inside the group about how to deal with stuff like that, but we just decided to not answer them and not talk to them and just do our work. It was definitely the right decision to buy an old phone and post on Twitter for the group and not in your name. The police post "what you are doing is illegal" because maybe they can be repressive to you. They see, okay, this guy has the phone for illegal action. (Carlos, German activist, March 1, 2015)

This shows a clear strategy within the activist collective of avoiding monitoring by potentially hostile authorities and the tactics developed to carry it out. The interviewees also noted that they sought to avoid visible interaction with police because of the collectives' beliefs and that they had developed tactics to do so (such as not responding to police). The Twitter data, however, shows that the police developed their own tactics for entering the Twitter stream about the events, in this case by using the protest hashtags announced by activists. We will now compare the different communicative behaviors of two organizationally and ideologically divergent clusters, activists and police.

The communicative behaviors of the two clusters produce different communication patterns that result in different network structures. We have isolated two subgraphs from the larger communication network and have compared descriptive metrics to interpret the behavior of the user accounts more directly connected with the three actors. Because of the complexity of identifying subgraphs of users, we defined them conservatively by starting with their key actors: Police_Network was defined by extracting all of the edges between the accounts connected to the Twitter accounts of the Frankfurt police or the Frankfurt fire department. Blockupy_Network was defined by extracting all of the edges between the accounts connected to the Twitter account of Blockupy or 15MBcn_int. Our approach includes within the subgraphs all of the user accounts that interacted at least once with the key actors of each group. The groups are thus not mutually exclusive, allowing for the possibility of the same account belonging to more than one group if it interacted with more than one key actor. Although mutually exclusive methods, such as modularity (Clauset, Newman, & Moore, 2004), are possible, they risk missing the level of detail that we seek when using this particular procedure.

In Table 4, we can observe that despite the relatively comparable size of Police_Net and Blockupy_Net, these two networks present different characteristics. The average retweet rate of the Police_Net network is lower than the average retweet rate of the Blockupy network, suggesting less intense information propagation activity. The density of the Blockupy network is remarkably higher than the other network. *Density* is the ratio between the number of existing connections and the number of possible connections (in our case, retweets and replies among user accounts), which suggests a tighter network of retweets and replies within Blockupy than within the police network.

Table 4. Descriptive Metrics of the Two Analyzed Subgraphs.

Network	Users	Avg Retweets	Density	Transitivity	Centralization
Police_Net	3497	6.451	0.0009	0.003	0.774
Blockupy_Net	2744	9.252	0.0016	0.011	0.451

To better understand this difference, we can compare the values of transitivity and centralization. *Transitivity* is the probability that the nodes adjacent to a node are themselves connected. In our network, this can be illustrated as follows: Given User A, who retweeted @Blockupy, and User B, who also retweeted @Blockupy, transitivity is the probability that User B and User C will also have retweeted each other. In our study, transitivity can indicate the degree to which nodes are tightly connected with each other in small groups and the size of these groups compared to the network as a whole. This measure has previously been used to describe whether hashtag-based conversations in Twitter generate structures based on many-to-many interactions, with multiple actors actively involved in providing information, or based on one-to-many interactions, with a central source propagating information with little or no interaction among those receiving it (Doughty, Rowland, & Lawson, 2012). The higher transitivity and density within the Blockupy network suggests that communication and interaction among Blockupy supporters is higher than within the police network. This hypothesis is also supported by the centralization value. *Centralization* (here computed on the degree value) measures the extent to which a network is organized around a single hypercentral actor (e.g., a starlike network with a single clearly identifiable center and numerous satellites) or has a more equally distributed structure with no center. We see the presence of central actors in both networks, but their degrees of centralization differ: The police network shows a significantly more centralized structure. Although police traditionally show a top-down organizational structure more than dispersed activist collectives, this structure is surprising, as it comprises a retweet structure based on other user accounts retweeting the police's tweets rather than the internal organizational structure.

The metrics presented in Table 4 indicate a clear and consistent difference between the two analyzed networks. The police network shows a broadcast structure, with a single hyperpopular center and multiple subjects lightly involved in the communication network. The Blockupy network shows a structure in which a clear center is accompanied by numerous actors producing, propagating, and exchanging information. These two patterns of interaction coexist within the same hashtag space, demonstrating that Twitter communication originally planned as part of the Blockupy activity was also subject to involvement by the police, which used a different network configuration that reflected its generally more hierarchical organizational structure. Differences in communication strategies and goals produced different network structures: Blockupy used its pre-existing network of activists to share and propagate messages (thereby producing a network more densely connected and less centralized), whereas the police used Twitter to reach out to citizens and activists and relied on unconnected Twitter users to spread its messages. Although it is always hard to evaluate the final impact of social media communication, Table 3 suggests that the Twitter strategy adopted by the Frankfurt police paid off in visibility and retweets.

Conclusions

As corporate social media have become increasingly central to activists' communicative action, it is important to understand the tensions in their social media practices. These tensions might increase as reporting from street protest becomes embedded within a larger antagonistic event, with authorities becoming increasingly skilled at navigating social media logics. This goes beyond mere surveillance of activists' social media communication and includes the active dissemination of a police perspective on events. This study's dual focus has shown that activists' communicative social media tactics in Blockupy Frankfurt represent a diverse interplay of visible and encrypted invisible communication. The tensions between the critical social media practices of activist collectives and the uncritical use of social media as tools by more loosely connected protest event participants may be reinforced by the increasing police presence. Carefully planned tactics and critical social media practices stressing the avoidance of police interference only partially materialized on social media, as shown by the social network analysis of Twitter data. The various network structures of Twitter communicative behavior by police and activists shed light on the antagonistic character of protest and its reproduction on social media.

Authorities' power in social media has been studied mainly in terms of the surveillance and monitoring of activists, but this study has shown a need for further investigation into the police's public interaction and self-representation on social media (Crump, 2011), particularly during protests and riots (Denef, Bayerl, & Kaptein, 2013; Schneider, 2014). It is also necessary to study how the technocommercial processes of social media (which support the disseminative, hierarchical centralized, and egocentric social media use by police) increase tensions for activist collectives. The more centralized police network clusters and the fragmented network clusters of diverse activist collectives form different communicative patterns correlate differently with the social media logics. While the police displayed more centralized and dissemination-focused communicative behavior on Twitter, they also adhered to the social media logic embedded in the political economy of attention and visibility. Their strategic dissemination of images following the riots gained attention in the international news media. Blockupy's pursuit of a peaceful and colorful protest sought to render these images invisible to ensure a positive media representation of the counter-protests. A systematic investigation of activists' and police's communicative patterns across various social media platforms is needed to further understand how both antagonistic actors produce visibility within the diverse logics of social media platforms.

Perhaps most crucially, it is necessary to ask whether the police's increasingly effective navigation of social media logics for its own positive self-representation pushes activists' issues further into the background. How can activists claim social media for communicating their protest issues away from the spectacle created by news media? How can activists and police alike develop tactics that go beyond antagonizing the other through violent imagery? How do activist collectives react to the tensions arising from increasing police presence in social media while avoiding domination of their social media practices by technocommercial processes? It is necessary to continue undertaking thorough ethnographic inquiries and analyses of social media data, but we must also combine and transcend these narrow perspectives to understand the complex logics of contested social media, the diversity of actors, and social media tactics in protest events beyond their materialization on Twitter. If activists are to shift media power, they too must move beyond merely reproducing mainstream media reporting strategies, yet

scholars and activists alike should be aware that the police too are increasingly employing the advantages of speedy communication and production of visibility, even if they do so within different organizational structures, hierarchies, and ideologies.

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China's Green Public Culture: Network Pragmatics and the Environment

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The rates of environmental degradation and climate change accelerate and challenge taken-for-granted practices of living across the planet. China's recent "smogpocalypse" illustrates how disruptive ecoevents necessitate complex, urgent alternatives and exchange. In this essay, we propose and analyze China's Green Public Culture in terms of its players, networks, media, action, strategy, discourses, and cultural norm. The divergent communication activities of 21st-century green public culture in China are assembled as network pragmatics that cultivate experience, connect practices, tie alliances, express differences, and circulate controversy. Thus, we identify distinctive, emerging networks of cooperation and contestation, the vectors of dissensus that bid to generate and shape resources requisite for living in the Anthropocene.

Keywords: public culture, environmentalism, China, network pragmatics, dissensus, Anthropocene

The Environment and the Anthropocene

In 2000, Nobel Prize–winning scientist Paul Crutzen named the current era as the Anthropocene, a time when "humans are becoming the dominant force for change on earth" (Crutzen & Schwägerl, 2011, para. 2). The Earth System Governance Project (Biermann et al., 2012) concludes that changing course and steering away from tipping points that "might lead to rapid and irreversible change . . . [and] fundamental reorientation and restructuring of national and international institutions toward more effective Earth system governance and planetary stewardship are necessary" (p. 1306). Such a turn hinges on a breakthrough of similar scope and magnitude in the study of communication: the marshaling of networked cultural resources engaged to address and contest environmental change. Forms of life are

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put in jeopardy by accelerating, human-induced, material alterations of habitats and biomes. In this study, green public culture in China is introduced as network pragmatics that feature an innovative mix of communication and resources for living.

Communicative labor addresses "nature" across local and regional sites; such work grounds common modes of living on the planet as well as introduces heterogeneous, sometimes contested alternatives. Efforts to repair the environment, secure sustainability, and affect resilience in the face of climate change remain vulnerable and slow to develop. Indeed, less than a decade ago, we wrote that China and the United States faced an environmental crisis (Liu & Goodnight, 2008). Ecological address sometimes takes surprising turns, however. Notably, in 2014, the United States and China joined in "common cause" to curb carbon emissions. President Obama promised that "the United States would emit 26 to 28 percent less carbon in 2025 than it did in 2005," and President Xi Jinping pledged "to reach peak carbon emissions by 2030" (Landler, 2014, para. 8). In Hangzhou the following September, the presidents advanced the Paris accords and announced a "joint plan to reduce greenhouse gases" (Landler & Perlez, 2016, para. 3). Such announcements could be dismissed as "green speak" given the deep dependency of both nations on carbon culture. In this article, we argue that China is developing fresh, distinctive resources for environmental actions. We illustrate this claim with a recent example and then present network pragmatics to identify an emergent public culture.

China's Smog Event

Without remediation, industrial waste grows. Climate change adds to environmental problems. The mix produces events that alter conventional expectations by exceeding historic experience of dangerous conditions. Dirty-air days startle publics and compel explanation; yet, they defy articulation. Like the global North, China committed to economic development before putting environmental protections in place. The 21st century has rendered urban living increasingly hazardous. National environmental protection laws have been passed belatedly. Rapid industrial growth and lack of local enforcement intensify smog, nevertheless. Temperature inversions trap urban populations. Public responses assemble.

In 2011, the Beijing-based Daerwen Nature Quest Agency and several other provincial nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) initiated the "I Monitor the Air for My Country" campaign. They called for volunteer citizens to keep a daily air quality log and track safety. These efforts pressured the central government to release official particulate matter (PM) 2.5 data daily (Xu, 2014). Unable to ignore urban experiences, officials spoke out: "This pollution is leading to much public worry," party leader Liu Jigang observed of the heavy smog in urban districts (Freifelder, 2014, para. 6). Flights were cancelled on gloomy days, increases in lung cancer rates were noted, and controversy over measurement accuracy flourished. "Is Beijing's smog getting worse?" the press asked (Bristow, 2011). "Smogpocalypse" is here, China's headlines read in 2013 (Lobello, 2013). True, the press pictured dirty air, even while passing along optimistic public policy pronouncements. Stories featured pictures of city landscapes, iconic monuments, and masked citizens, all shrouded in white. To these front-page images was added health threat information depicting day-by-day the floating hazards (Lobello, 2013).

China's national and local environmental agencies responded. Smog monitors were set up by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) in 2012. In 2014, the director of the National Development and Reform Commission's health program spoke of the spread of these measuring initiatives as a "watershed moment" that would help local officials and citizens "to target their concerns and focus attention on the big problems" (Freifelder, 2014, para. 2). New local commitments followed as city governments acted. For instance, *China Daily* headlined an effort by Shanghai in 2015 to cut PM 2.5 by 20% from the level in 2013, with an investment of 100 billion Yuan in environmental protection (Wang, 2015). A daily PM 2.5 index was provided to the public to inform choices for outdoor activity. Some wore masks publically as personal protection. Intended as safety measures, data and masks fused to signal and pace environmental stress. To address air quality, China adapted a cap-and-trade policy, with cost incentives different from its European counterparts (E. Ng, 2013). Neoliberal cap-and-trade efforts to fight pollution are subject to gaming and price manipulation and therefore remain controversial in the West. It is unclear whether China's efforts will succeed (Galbraith, 2015). In Beijing, however, it was reported that the amount of sulfur dioxide and nitric oxide in the air declined from 7% to 4% over 2014 (Landler, 2014).

Since the 1990s, scattered environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs) took to the Internet to articulate concern for specific environmental problems. Presently, Web images and video displays announce ecoevents frequently ahead of press coverage and state responses. In March 2015, air quality urgencies were publicized dramatically by *Under the Dome*, an independent documentary that identified the causes and dangers of smog in China. The producer, Chai Jing, was a former state news anchor, hostess, and advocate of 5Km Green Commuting in Beijing. She spoke sharply in TED-talk fashion on air pollution. Her moving personal account spoke of fear and directed blame toward industrial polluters. Videos of the documentary were posted on Weibo, Youku, Tencent, and even YouTube quickly. Millions watched online (Chyan, 2015). The high-quality video produced a sophisticated blend of personal testimony with scary visual scenes. The "talk" was timed fortuitously with China's two key meetings of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Could it have been a government trial balloon? The film "may not be independent" was as far as the speculation went (Chyan, 2015). Professors, scientists, and experts "discussed the validity of Ms. Chai's arguments, the relationship between business practices and pollution and government oversight of air quality issues" (Fong, 2015, para. 3). Debates followed. At a press conference, Premier Li Kegiang vowed publically that the government would do more to enforce laws (Mufson, 2015).

Party actions have been on the rise. Although China faces serious challenges on environmental protection, it has also announced that it will not repeat the Western "treatment after pollution" path. The commitment of the 2012 18th National Congress of the Communist Party was republicized in 2015: "the country seeks to achieve significant progress in the construction of an ecological civilization that features the sustainable use of resources and an environmentally friendly society" (Y. Chen, 2015, para. 4). Citizens and ENGOs are now accorded legal rights to sue polluters. In March 2015, a chemical polluter in Shandong province was brought to court by an NGO filing for the interests of Dezhou City, and, in July, ENGO Friends of Nature (FON) sued the Beijing Changping district for damaging a 200-acre wetland. Legal intervention is not as common as in the United States. *Under the Dome* readied the country culturally, however, for an ambitious government effort, although the video itself was taken down quickly.

Controversies multiply and stretch the venues of public culture. The liberal *South China Morning Post* questioned what really was at issue with the video, quoting blogger Ran Yunfei, who observed, "A government that has unrestricted power is the biggest pollutant of society. We are not getting to the crux of the issue if we do not see this problem" (T. Ng, 2015, para. 10). The paper quoted that economist Wen Kejian, who wrote the film, "called for courage to continue investigating the problem." "It's like peeling an onion, and the truth may be scary when the inner layer is exposed," he argued metaphorically (T. Ng, 2015, para. 11). Thus, the film stretched antagonism across institutions to address, indirectly, the state.

Green Public Culture and Network Pragmatics

In 2011–2015, smog-day attacks in China drew attention from experts, motivated central and local governments to act, entangled the press in mixed-media coverage, pushed citizens and ENGOs to adopt digital tools for monitoring daily life, and eventually found their way into statements of national and international commitments. Smog prompted environmental discussions, argument trajectories, and public actions of high officials and urban residents. The complex movement offers but the latest illustration of a nest of activities in China emerging at least over the past decade.

In its own style, China's environmental movement has grown vigorously from small scale in the 1990s to the broad-based, complex activities of a green public culture (GPC). M. Chen (2014) commented,

> It's picked up support from everyday citizens, from middle-class parents worried about their children's asthma to frustrated fishermen whose catches have been lost to riverbed contamination. As wealth levels have risen, so has public disgust with the by-products of explosive industrial development. Thousands of groups have rallied around environmental health, conservation and energy issues, and a fresh crop of activists—some affiliated with formal organizations, others simply concerned about continuing to breathe—are channeling that consciousness through social media and grassroots protest campaigns. In doing so, they are pushing the boundaries of permissible dissent and winning incremental victories. (para. 3)

The smog events demonstrate the communication complexity that calls into being China's growing GPC, a harmonious arrangement of disagreement, antagonism, and dissensus (Rancière, 1999, 2010; Willard, 1989) that, we argue, captures the dynamic communications of cooperation and contestation across *pragma*[3], places, people, institutions, and ecologies. Dissensus challenges calculated balances of costs and benefits by assembling *pragma* or facts that express differences, disrupt conventions, and field imagined alternatives. Spurred by disruptive events, dissensual environmentalism prompts new assessments, novel plans, and initiative cascades. These mixed outcomes network agents and agencies that imagine multiple, sometimes incompatible goals such as immediate relief, durable adjustment, long-term adaptation, and smart resilience. GPC furnishes generative contexts for discoveries and reactions, monitoring and enforcement, speculation and goal-setting, cooperation and contestation. The very complexity of the events, activities, and ingenious connections assemble into the dispersive and

[3] Pragma is a particular, active object entangled in an ecology.

integrative flows of China's GPC. In it, ENGOs, government-organized NGOs (GONGOs), and international NGOs (INGOs) initiate, maintain, and abandon relationships with one another, various agencies of the state, and diverse populations at the grassroots, institutional, party, and transnational levels.

Historians observed the uniqueness of China's NGO sectors, even before the Communist Party. Then and now, what is held to distinguish Chinese civil society from its Western counterparts is the unconventional relationship of the state to civic activities. Q. Ma (2002) suggests that the purpose of "early Chinese civil society was not to confront the government, but rather to harmonize the relations between society and the government, providing autonomy to assist government" (p. 115). Wakeman (1993) holds that Chinese citizens conceive of "social existence mainly in terms of obligation and interdependence rather than rights and responsibilities" (p. 134). Similarly, Ho (2007) argues that whereas in the West political rights are deployed by individual citizens to protest against the state, in China duties are maneuvered into line when the state and social organizations cooperate to "protect citizens' rights or counterbalance state power" (p. 192). Civil society structures are presumptively different from Western models based on liberties, freedoms, and individual rights.

Typically, Western environmental efforts are framed as either (1) the civil society discourse of a public sphere or (2) a social movement process that raises awareness through mobilization and confrontation. China's green movement has been studied using similar models. Recently, scholars have expressed discomfort with using Western models. Critics have been successful in identifying indigenous aspects of China's situation, but most have not suggested a distinguishing model (Gu, 2008; Han, 2014; Mol, 2006; Sima, 2011; Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010). China's environmental communication has its own unique configurations and challenges, however. Carter and Mol (2006) assert that these consist of

> inadequate environmental capacities of state and economic organizations; instability in the relations between central and lower levels of government; an active citizenry that increasingly holds officials responsible and accountable, local and national media reporting which is becoming more independent . . . and the increasing integration of China into international and global networks. (p. 331)

In 2008, we proposed that China's environmentalism is best understood within the rubric of GPC (Liu & Goodnight, 2008). Contrary to Yang and Calhoun (2007), Sima (2011), and Gu (2008), we do not think that China's environmentalism constitutes an incipient public sphere, much less one that follows bourgeois history outlined by Jürgen Habermas. Rather, China's green movement features a hybrid model (Bhabha, 1994) that draws on a social imaginary (Anderson, 1991; Castoriadis, 1998; Taylor, 2002) within the ambit of the mixed postempire, post-Maoist legacies of the material social state.

We follow Catriona Sandilands (2002), who took the leads of Hannah Arendt, Dana Villa, and David Torgerson into ecological inquiry. Sandilands challenges the limits of industrial practices through a call for attention to critical, public communicative performances of nature. For her, a GPC is "a realm in which the world can appear and be made meaningful in light of the opinions of multiple others thinking, reflecting, and imagining in each other's company" (p. 129). Echoing Taylor and Bhabha, Sandilands proposes the notion of "green public culture." She calls for more renewed, inclusive green political

changes, in which a much wider range of knowledge and opinions, as well as the approaches that humans practice to engage nature in each other's complex relationships, should be appreciated. This shapes the space for our conceptualization of GPC in China.

In this essay, we extend Sandilands's GPC by developing network pragmatics, an outlook that identifies relations among agents (actors), agencies (private, state, mixed, and grassroots), and operations (circulation and dissemination of materials, objects, experiences, and affect) across China. Network pragmatics refer to those communicative activities that connect words and deeds, describe and publicize facts, train and reflect on objects, make and do activities in blended public and personal places—at various scales and different speeds of circulation. Dissensus enters network pragmatics when facts are experienced as *pragma of things,* objects that act and spread into connected communicative gambits for coupling or disassociating relationships. Dissensus appears as diverse acts of disagreement, contestation, and antagonism. Network pragmatics focus on communication as changing—tentatively evolving—equipment for living in the Anthropocene. China is a hyperlocus of network pragmatics that draw on the heritage of the past, confront the vicissitudes of the present, and turn toward thriving in the Anthropocene. Thus, we identify and conduct inquiry into the novel, emergent fusions of China's maturing GPC.

China's Green Public Culture

GPC is an ensemble of communicative activities that come to exist in the push and pull of local, national, and international networks affecting material conditions and bioecologies. Such activities foster network pragmatics that function as ties connecting humans, nonhuman actors, and apparatus into productive work of a culture scaled at different levels. We hope to introduce and illustrate GPC as an emergent, complex array of cultural spaces that continues to grow and invites ever-more inquiry. Next, we map the terrains of China's GPC by identifying ongoing ties and relations among players, connections, media, actions, discourses, institutional relations, and cultural norms. These elements fuse into network pragmatics, we argue, that are still being worked with, on, and out among a host of international, state, mixed group, and grassroots agencies. The study does not include a review of the unique historical and social factors influencing the matrixes of green culture.

Key Players—GPC Threads Diverse Urban and Rural Agents and Agencies by Identifying Material Problems and Practical Topics; Embedded Activists Unite in a Common Cause

China transformed from a traditional culture to a modern, mixed agricultural and industrial economy. Population and economic pressures converged with shocking costs. Environmental issues vary. Topically, they include material questions of extraction, preservation, biodiversity, and risk, as well as ecological repair, renewal, and preservation. Endangered species initiated NGO causes. Water safety followed. Industrial and air pollution now raise wide concern. As in the West, problems are associated with agricultural runoff, coal-fired power generators, and the chemical byproducts of industries. In short supply to being with, "[a]bout 60 percent of the groundwater beneath Chinese cities is described as 'severely polluted'" (Lallanilla, 2013, para. 13). Unsafe air and water spark activities and protests and make news. Desertification is made worse by aggressive farming and deforestation. Certain places become symbols

that transmit public shame, such as "Cancer Villages." A self-published map of Cancer Villages by Deng Fei demonstrates chilling reality with numbers of places at risk (Deng, 2010). Although Beijing smog stands out, bad air extends into Shanghai, Urumqi, Lanzhou, and Linfen in the west (Lallanilla, 2013). Decreasing blue skies and limited visibility day-by-day draw increasing public attention and efforts to protect.

Diverse agents in the GPC include grassroots ENGOs and GONGOs as the major forces, state and local agencies with growing administrative and policy involvement and development, INGOs and international organizations (IOs) that extend green networks internationally; increased media reporting on facts and causes; and citizens showing more open awareness and action (sometimes direct). Agents engage in discussions and actions that draw on and invent topics that locate material problems, identify concerns, and conjecture possible actions.

Yang and Calhoun (2007) describe China's environmentalism as a fledgling "green public sphere." Generally, however, scholars observe little clear presence of a unified, movement-like, publicity-oriented front of contestation in China (Johnson, 2010; Tang & Zhan, 2008; Tong, 2005). ENGOs appear to adopt neither social movement confrontation nor public sphere debate strategies. The "I Monitor the Air for My Country" PM 2.5 campaign offers a recent example of citizen and ENGO collaboration that employs scientific measurement to raise open awareness (Xu, 2014). Unlike in the West, Elizabeth Economy observes, "China's protests rarely have external coordination from green NGOs"; rather, as experts observe, some NGOs have begun to use the protest momentum "to push for regulatory and legal reforms that will improve environmental protections" (Gilbert, 2012, para. 5). The connections among problems, actions, and politics remain complex, changing, and transient; positions are implied or suggested. Agents affiliate in a common cause rather than ground positions in critical-rational discourses characterizing a public sphere. ENGOs usually connect through topics developed with fact-based materials. Any Chinese ENGO must balance the causes it takes up against the chances the state may expand its controls for its own reasons. The press faces similar constraints. Journalists do report on a range of environmental issues now, but meanwhile they must work within the interests of legitimating the state.

State efforts expand from time to time to support active NGO participation, usually when their goals are not contradictory. ENGOs try all means to make the best of such opportunities. The successful Old Summer Palace anti-seepage campaign in 2005, for example, raised controversies in Beijing over the planned redo of the Imperial Garden's lake surface. The State Environmental Protection Administration and National People's Congress set the precedent of holding public hearings in such matters with the issuance of the "Environmental Protection Administrative Permission Hearing Regulation Trial" (J. Ma, Webber, & Finlayson, 2009; Moore & Warren, 2006). In the decade-long Nu River campaign, early dam opposition strategies shifted to gain access to state planning. Thus, NGOs leveraged local unrest into a path for consultative influence in state planning. NGO access was later permitted more widely by the state. The state does have strict environmental regulations and keeps improving them. Local-level enforcement efforts bring frustration (Mufson, 2015): Once state policy is established, of course, the costs of asking for change and mobilizing opposition go up.

China's green movement persists through the tug and pull of constraints and possibilities defined by a mixture of policy planning, market forces, local government, and central party influence. Ho (2007)

argues that China's political setup is a semi-authoritarian environment, which "is restrictive, but paradoxically, it is also conducive to nationwide, voluntary collective action with less risk of social instability and repression by the governing elite" (p. 188). Such a contradictory duality forms the heart of "embedded social activism" in China, where social spaces for civic action accommodate continuous negotiation and adaptation, as well as incremental political change. The ENGOs "have promoted a more active public life and started to change the way Chinese citizens approach the state" (Tong, 2005, p. 185). Thus, China may have a "thin" public sphere, yet it exhibits increasingly diverse and rich cultural spaces.

Networks—GPC Is Mobilized by Networks Across National and Local Government and Nongovernmental Agents and Agencies

We map the dynamic qualities of GPC in modeling communication along network lines—the "mesh" of actors, agencies, and actants (Latour, 1987, 2005) allied and at odds in different places and at varied times. Grassroots ENGOs form the core of the activism networks in green cultural spaces. Using Guangdong and Guangxi provinces as examples, Wu (2013) shows how China's environmental activism comes together through "an amalgamation of grassroots initiatives essentially led by environmental NGOs, which has gradually taken root in provincial and local politics" (p. 103) rather than as a homogeneous phenomenon. Many local ENGOs not only knit strong local green networks, they also motivate participants to spread out, connect with others, and form broad, sometimes national alliances. The connections come to life through information sharing, topic-generated discussions, and campaign-specific ad hoc affiliations.

The Chinese state restricts the size and standing of horizontal NGO networks. NGOs are not capable of large-scale direct action; rather, their energies are directed primarily across vertical networks. NGOs craft alliances with state-funded GONGOs such as the All China Women's Federation (Han, 2014). Sometimes, ENGOs operate diagonally, cutting across to make the best of information connections with higher ranking officials. This way, they substitute formal institutionalized alliances with informal network exchange, thereby diffusing power (Han, 2014). Reflecting on a series of oppositional movements to hydropower projects on the Nu and mid-JinSha Rivers and the Xiaonanhai Dam, Han records how ENGOs and other nonstate actors (including journalists, activists, INGOs, and UNESCO) formed into loose alliances, finding common cause. Relationships were based on shared beliefs that policy should protect the river. Such networking not only attracted many social agencies and accorded space for diverse voices, but more importantly, it exhibited "qualitative" improvement as the collective activism is now more driven by achieving common policy goals (Han, 2013).

China's ENGOs frequently deploy networking strategies to entangle environmentally aware cultural agents and agencies into campaigns. For instance, ENGOs proactively developed and relied on the China Rivers Network made up of key ENGOs such as FON and Global Village Beijing, individual scientists, academics, journalists, and the Green Journalist Salon. The network agencies exchanged information and ideas, coordinated activities, and mobilized resources throughout their long-term antidam Nu River campaigns against rampant development since 2003 (Han, 2014). Such networking generates advocacy. In a detailed study of 19 environmental campaigns initiated by Chinese ENGOs, Liu (2011) found that several campaigns achieved impressive policy change (such as the Nu River campaign). These flourished by virtue of creating large physical or virtual alliance networks with more than 50 organizations.

China's GONGOs are no strangers to environmental networking. With unique leverage, these government-sponsored agencies compose a special part of green networks. GONGOs function as unseen "magic brokers" that connect different types of agencies at multiple levels of exposure. They are influential partners, second only to governmental agencies, in forming intranational and sometimes transnational environmental partnerships. They often serve as a platform for interactions between grassroots NGOs and political authorities (Xie, 2011). The transformative GONGO network space offers places to test possible bonds among government agencies and grassroots initiatives. The All-China Environment Federation furnishes an example. Approved by the State Council and managed under China's Environmental Protection Division, the All-China Environment Federation's strong resource base includes high-ranking officials and top environmental experts, as well as support from mainstream media and governmental departments. Over the years, it has organized many large-scale conferences, events, and projects that connected the government and various parties in society. For instance, since 2006, it has held an "Annual Meeting of China Environmental Civil Society Organizations on Sustainable Development" connecting hundreds of ENGOs, leaders from the State Council, National People's Congress, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, MEP, IOs, and media to share information and explore cooperation potentials. In addition, it held several environmental law training workshops connecting highly trained attorneys, scholars, and government agencies with local lawyers. Partnering with the United Nations Environment Planning Department, it held major events such as the project on "Protecting the Environmental Rights and Justice of the Public" to build a transnational network with the Chinese public.[4]

GPC entangles local, regional, and national resources, problems, and opportunities. IOs intervene either directly with state support or less directly by contributing money, equipment, and expertise to diverse grassroots initiatives. INGOs extend domestic environmental networks to a broader global green community (Han, 2013). Among active INGOs are the World Wide Fund for Nature, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and The Mountain Institute. J. Chen (2010) argues that environmental protection demonstrates "the most robust growth of Chinese NGOs and their transnational collaboration" (p. 504). Such strong ties result in networks such as the China Civil Climate Action Network, a wide collaborative body made up of many stakeholder INGOs and ENGOs targeting information sharing and collaboration on climate issues (Xie, 2011).

Media—The Mixed and Transmedia Messages of GPC Are Characterized by Styles That Blend Caution and Concern

Media play a crucial role in forming a social imaginary (Appadurai, 1996). Mixed media and transmedia[5]—"across media" (Jenkins, 2011)—generate expressions and performances of a green cultural imaginary in China. In the past decade, the media have played increasingly important roles in promoting environmentalism. Under China's environmental liberalization, media have gained greater autonomy from the state (Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010). Environment-oriented stories draw the least censorship because such concerns usually fall under collective goals. Thus, the mass media are given greater latitude in

[4] http://www.acef.com.cn/en/

[5] Messages or stories that work across several different media platforms, together, provide a richer picture.

reporting these topics. Over the past two decades, news coverage has increased in quality as well as quantity (J. Ma et al., 2009; Yang, 2010).

Traditional media operate within and against changing state goals, opportunities, and constraints. For instance, the press constantly headlines smog hanging over urban scenes. Yet, smog narratives are cautious in attributing responsibility. Journalists remain aware that they operate within tight boundaries because all mass media work remains "carefully circumscribed by the state" (Heikkila, 2011, p. 49). Generally, environmental issues enjoy legitimacy because they are considered newsworthy, although not all stories attract equal coverage. Yang (2010) found that issues such as global warming and animal protection are politically safe, attention-grabbing, and thus likely to appear in stories. Domestic nuclear power, rural pollution, environmental impacts on disadvantaged populations, and cancer, however, get far less treatment.

Although state monitored, China's Internet offers something of a third space, a comparatively freer and growing media for environmental activism (Liu, 2011; Sullivan & Xie, 2009). Ordinary citizens and activists frequent online spaces. Web 2.0 blossomed. Pictures, videos, graphics, and posts join into circulation. Social media take transmedia connections even further. From traditional bulletin board systems (BBSs), Weibo (China's microblogs), to the wildly popular WeChat, the Internet grows discursive spaces for "green talk."

The Internet compensates for the limited resources of ENGOs. With little outside support or staff, many ENGOs were simply born online; other ENGOs born offline actively experiment with extending initiatives and work online. Some local groups such as FON have proactively used digital media to establish their own websites, publicize causes and agendas, and thereby gain public support and mobilize citizens in nature-appreciative, depoliticized activities. GONGOs with staff and standing develop sophisticated websites that topically organize and connect grassroots ENGOs, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and others through apparatus provided by and fully accessible to the state.

Transmedia efforts are on the rise. Present campaigns appear to work through hybrid communications that blend mainstream news and digital transmedia in experimental ways. Transmedia efforts convert pictures, discourse, video, and sound to material digitally compatible with the Internet. *Under the Dome* offers the most recent albeit singular case of transmedia impact. The NGO Wild China Film, for example, combined skillfully fresh, touching images of wild animals online and offline with compelling calls for public action. Greenpeace China has often delivered well-designed videos, images, and textual messages online to engage audiences. The narrative strategies of mixed and transmedia appear to instruct how to appreciate nature, identify problems, and perform shared activities with others.

Mixed and transmedia also function as crucial links in varied degrees to connect online campaign and offline activities such as in the campaign to save the Tibetan antelope, Old Summer Palace anti-seepage campaign, and the campaign to prevent the relocation of the Beijing Zoo (Liu, 2011). Many of these cases achieved impressive results, although the mobilization involved was largely nonconfrontational and depoliticized. For instance, Greener Beijing creatively used the Internet to build a large-scale virtual alliance among various parties to participate in the campaign to save the Tibetan antelope by fighting

illegal poaching. Antelope stories were exchanged through online discussions, vivid visual images, Web-born MP3 songs, and even benefit auctions. These new media initiatives also drew attention of the mainstream media to cover the campaign. Online campaigns spread further to offline exhibition tours and benefit performances. These remained largely nonantagonistic. Activists chose a nondisruptive style. They articulated wildlife rescue as a concern for public awareness of creatures whose habitats are at risk. Follow-up action from the government became expected. The campaign successfully raised public awareness on protecting the antelope, and pushed the government to resist global trade of antelope fur.

Action—GPC Advances Environment-Friendly Ways of Doing, Making, and Acting in Relation to Nature

GPC takes on a do-it-yourself quality. The Internet offers more than a space for reading and posting; its participatory structures invite people to do, make, and attend to things together. Do-it-yourself opportunities hook people to objects that add lifestyle possibilities and meaningful protection for family and friends. ENGO and GONGO websites invite the public to attend activities, observe nature, learn new things, get trained, and document problems and solutions. Local groups organize typically around concerns specific to the well-being of local lives. Experts and residents are invited. Locals make connections across a region and share affinities and interests. GPC extends personal contributions and lifestyles with different mixes and combinations of efforts. Sometimes, these local efforts are aided by international affiliation.

The Global Greengrants Fund (2015) exemplifies a trajectory in which an IO-granting agency promotes scientific research to inform public choice. The Pesticide Eco-Alternatives Center of Yunnan was accorded a grant to study Chlorphyrifo, a persistent organic pollutant, and alternatives to the pesticides. These were to be publicized through workshops, trainings, and online courseware and put out a call for stronger regulations. The Green Qilu Action Research Center in Shandong province was accorded funding to develop an "information disclosure index" for sources of regional pollution. Its goals included training nongovernmental actors and hooking regional actors to advocacy campaigns to hold the government and business accountable (Global Greengrants Fund, 2015).

NGOs urge reform of lifestyle practices, as well. The Wuhu Ecology Center was given an award to encourage zero-waste practices and to decrease incineration activities. Urban populations and the young were supported to cultivate knowledge and appreciation of nature. Green Shoots Natural Education sought to support environmental education instructors, and Guangxi Wild Flowers Environmental Studios sought to encourage urban dwellers and school students to connect with nature and participate in community environmental actions (Global Greengrants Fund, 2015). Awards were also accorded for habitat protection, injured bird rescue, and measuring wastes. NGO projects include mixing monitoring work, ecofriendly practices, and nature appreciation. These efforts develop ecologies by meshing people and places together in eco-supportive data-acquiring performances. Shanghai's Rendu Ocean NPO Development Center, for instance, featured the protection of marine ecosystems and promised to launch initiatives that feature information sharing, network support and collaboration. Guangzhou Environmental Protection targeted inspection and monitoring of rivers around the city by local residents who would in turn pass information to the media (Global Greengrants Fund, 2015).Green network pragmatics connect experiencing, learning,

and doing through sponsoring activities that promote sustainable ecologies. IOs target-fund local groups. On-the-ground activists express passionate commitments to things at hand, and spread their creative energy through planning and bundling courses, conferences, trips, events, and reports. Small grants to groups help individuals network and organize activities. These groups seek out people who desire to appreciate and develop deeper ties to nature. Some ENGOs go further. FON recruits people to generate important facts and then publicize them. In addition, other groups train members in skills useful for documenting facts and in analytic work that identifies the causes and magnitude of problems. Local ENGOs blend expert knowledge with volunteer recruits. Documenting, collecting, and translating local facts into public claims contribute to NGO credibility and publicity.

Discourses—GPC Discourse Promotes Ecological Thinking: *A Wisdom-Seeking Lifestyle, Animated by Awareness of Nature*

In China, much of the public environmental discourse began online—with the birth of the Internet in the 1990s, first populated by well-educated citizens who created online postings and discussions. The Web functions as something of a commons. In print culture, reflective discourses find homes in books, journals, and magazines. In digital green culture, people move from standard formats to experiment with new genres of moral address and ethical reflection.

Through comparing online exchanges of several key ENGOs[6] in 2008 and 2014, we discovered a green discursive space filled with ecological thinking. ENGOs produce important discursive spaces to write, report, share, and expressively engage. Many ENGOs maintained an active BBS to facilitate online discussions and sometimes mobilize action. Each BBS was organized into several major forums with many themes and subthemes. In 2008, we observed that these forums were filled with spiritual or philosophical discourses that took up the pursuit of harmony between nature and humans. Many expressed concerns with poetic language. The posts emphasized reconciliation with living nature rather than argument for change.

The early Internet discourse we examined connected Chinese traditions—de-emphasized during recent material and economic development—back into meaningful relationship to life–world choices. In 2014, we observed that these same ENGO discourses of ethical concern have become even more personal and numerous, even though the discursive exchange online has undergone topic diversification and expansion into a greater range of areas. Discussions invite performances that reweave personal relationships with nature.

There are manifold ways that thread nature back into living. Ecotours are becoming popular. In 2014, Greener Beijing adapted its BBS forum to reflect trendy topics such as waste management and air pollution. Four new forums featured topics for living: "green action," "green life," "green research institute," and "consultation, feedback, and free exchange." Much of the new discourse in 2014 encouraged even stronger personal commitments to ecologically friendly activities. The ENGO's most

[6] These include FON, Green Beijing, Green Earth Volunteer, Wild China Film, Green Web, and Beijing Raptor Rescue Center.

popular (posted) theme was "human philosophy and ecological ethics" in both 2008 (2,365 posts) and 2014 (7,022 posts). Discourses on ENGO websites mostly appear to serve self-expressive functions rather than interactive ends, posts of inspired reflections on the ethics of living.

FON offers an affective, philosophical discursive space as well. In 2008, it sponsored a BBS that featured nature-centered forums with broad discussion threads, including "environmental education," "green life," "green hope action," and "sentiments about nature." FON later expanded the scope of its green communicative work into major social media outlets such as Sina blogs and microblogs, Tencent microblog, WeChat, and even Twitter and Facebook abroad. Recently, FON even discontinued its central BBS and added three specialized, independent online forums on "mountain climbing," "wild birds," and "plants."

ENGO discourses sometimes do invite critical-rational discussion by pointing toward legal avenues of redress. For instance, FON posts on its official blogs messages that question the conduct of businesses in relation to the environment and of government agencies on key questions such as building garbage incinerators and power plants. On one official blog, FON complained that the Department of Agriculture was withholding information from the public. FON requested an administrative review and redrawing of the boundary for the Little South Sea Nature Conservation Area for Endangered Fish.[7] The blog attracted more than 10,000 views. Discourse goes critical when self-responsibility in relation to nature becomes directed toward seeking accountability of agents or agencies that fail to protect the environment adequately.

Ecological discourses not only invite quiet reflection, but also percolate activity. Cultural performances put into play photos, videos, slogans, and reports on policies. The multiple environmental discourses in both the virtual and physical space are framed as Dao-speaking, scientific measurement, causal projections, embedded power stories, telling pictures, and discussions of enduring philosophical values. Dao-speaking draws from Chinese Daoism, a crucial philosophical and religious tradition that emphasizes finding the way to live in harmony with the world and nature. Through philosophical questions and topics, a common space is created to encourage exchange with others; the proliferations of stories continue to create additional imagined space for emerging narratives. These spaces are products of invention, concern, opening transition; yet, they are accomplished in cultural and local settings, inherited from a Confucian tradition[8] of fulfilling self and other obligations in a reciprocal relationship.

[7] In 2005, a plan to build a hydropower station on the Little South Sea was put forward, which received a lot of controversy, but the plan was eventually halted by the MEP in 2015.

[8] A major school of thought in Chinese cultural tradition that emphasizes benevolence, social order, righteousness, reverence, and moral wisdom.

Strategy—GPC Strategies Are Characterized by Communications That Sequence and Blend Cooperation and Contestation

China's GPC strategically blends cooperation and contestation. Ho (2001) explains that ENGO leaders gain leverage by working in cooperation with the government instead of challenging it. The prerequisite for sustained activity is maintenance of legitimacy through establishing a reciprocal relationship with the state (Sima, 2011). Registration is important yet difficult. The cost is restriction of issues (Yang, 2010). ENGOs usually maneuver within a range of consensual expectations and press for change through nonconfrontational behaviors and strategies (Ho, 2007; Sima, 2011).

The Chinese term for NGO itself is equivocal, referring to an organization either simply outside the government or one contrary to it. A movement based on direct opposition and confrontation is unlikely to succeed (Stalley & Yang, 2006). The term *social movement* is also loaded because of painful memories of the Cultural Revolution. Most ENGOs appear aware of this and present goals as peaceful change and development. As a result, the green movement is regarded often as a "depoliticized," cooperative movement committed to restoration of nature (Yang, 2004). It has not emerged as a sustained confrontational force (Stalley & Yang, 2006).

Change is stressed in different ways, nevertheless. Some ENGOs are licensed to work in cooperation with the state; others register as NPOs. The remaining ENGOs are unlicensed. Typically, aggressive opposition arises when development or neglect has severe, negative local impacts. ENGO strategies are rooted in a calculation of caution. As the intensity and negativity of opposition rise, the risks to standing and chances of influence become limited by claimed threats to the "harmonious society"—China's current developmental goal. Outbreaks of protest, which continue increasing in any case, offer opportunities to develop and draw from social capital formed through cooperation with state-sponsored agencies.

Nu River offers a case in point. The decade-long campaign against building dams across a vast river basin moved through different phases. Early in 2004, it met with success. Officially, the development plan was tabled. During the early stage, several ENGOs, intellectuals, and activists confronted the prodam building side resolutely. They questioned plans openly and called attention to the project's huge negative impacts on the biome's ecosystems. Green Earth Volunteers, FON, Green Rivers, and other ENGOs held lectures and forums. Journalist Wang Yongchen spread negative assessments to the media, which publicized the issue and attracted wide public attention. Several proposals with collected signatures of opposition were organized and sent to different government divisions and even to UNESCO. Beijing ENGOs hosted exhibitions, lectures, and other oppositional activities. Local Yunnan ENGOs worked up objections among villagers along the river as well. Beijing and Yunnan ENGOs worked collectively, closely, and with media members.

After 2004, prodam interests countered with a public relations campaign. Power, development, and progress for the region and for China were ballyhooed. Faced with the strong prodam building publicity, ENGOs changed strategy to opt for a milder style of contestation. They did not refute the new claims or intensify the opposition (Sun, 2005); instead, they urged a democratic decision-making process.

Planning is required legally for large-scale development project in China (Johnson, 2010). The new goals urged the Yunnan local government and the Huadian Corporation to conduct a suitable environmental impact assessment and involve the public and various stakeholders in discussing impacts (Han, 2014).

Grassroot confrontations increase in China. Such disruptions number in the tens of thousands. "Environmental issues are now the number one cause of public protests in China" (Levitt, 2015, para. 7). ENGOs in general use a combined strategy of cooperation and contestation: contestation targeting the local government and enterprises and cooperation in issuing a call for the central government to uphold its priorities. ENGOs often need to switch roles and strategies in different configurations depending on the nature and timing of the issues, causes, and solutions.

Cultural Norm—Guanxi *Norms and Chinese Cultural Symbols Constitute an Indigenous Ethic of Care*

China's GPC exhibits indigenous cultural qualities, drawing on *guanxi*, a central dynamic and building block for Chinese society. The complicated personal *guanxi* networks scaffold reciprocal fulfillment of mutual obligations and function to maintain family ties, business relationships, and social structures over the long term. In China, communication is often achieved through maneuvering *guanxi* rules. ENGOs and activists often rely on informal *guanxi* ties and noninstitutional channels to negotiate relationships with various government entities to influence movement development (Han, 2014; Ho, 2007; Tang & Zhan, 2008). Such ties help ENGOs extend influence when lacking funds (Johnson, 2011). The authority held by individual party elites may open opportunities to develop informal strategies and craft environmental change onto power configurations (Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010). For instance, the diagonal relationships between a journalist and high government official played a crucial role in the early success of the Nu River campaign (Xie, 2011). Famous environmental activist and journalist Wang Yongchen drew on her close personal connection with Mr. Wu (known to hold ENGOs in positive regard), previous chief inspector of MEP's supervision department, to obtain updated information on substantial environmental matters and development of the inside political debate during the campaign (Xie, 2011). Informal *guanxi* networks actually shape interdependent connections between the ENGO and private and state entities.

Occasionally, actors draw forward rich and deep traditional cultural symbols to frame an oppositional campaign, linking modern environmentalism with China's cultural heritage. Advocates of the Foshan River campaign evoked the image of "mother river" when calling for preservation. Heikkila (2011) observes that while some traditional Chinese cultural values were deformed or even lost during the recent Chinese cultural revolution, still traditional regard for nature serves as a "a valuable backstop" in securing environmentally responsible development. Such values "serve as a kind of proxy for civil society" and constitutes the "essence of environmentalism with Chinese characteristics" (Heikkila, 2011, p. 49).

The campaign "Saving the Nanjing Wutong Trees" showcases how traditional regard for nature is evoked. In 2011, the Nanjing municipal government decided to uproot more than 1,000 trees to make room for the new Subway Line 3 in a mission to "make urban China modern." Many of the trees to be chopped down were the famous 70-year-old Wutong trees. The "Save the Nanjing Plane Trees, Build a

Green Great Wall" campaign sprung up with street actions and petitions following. Celebrity microblogs and the local ENGO Green Stone quickly spread information. The "green great wall" message was forwarded more than 15,000 times online. Support cascaded. Angry netizens and locals pushed standing Wutong trees as essential cultural symbols of life.

Symbols release memories. Local pride swells. The graceful Wutong was embedded in the city's history as far back as the 1920s when the body of Chinese revolutionary and cofounder of the Kuomintang party Sun Yat-sen moved there from Beijing. The downtown road was named after him. It is a meaningful historical symbol of which Nanjing locals are especially proud. For them, the Wutong is more than a symbol of life; it is also a reminder of the dark days of occupation when Japanese troops perpetrated the massacre in Nanjing. Over longer horizons, the trees fuse with Chinese culture, as these leafy trunk and branches became a major botanical image in Chinese literature, symbolizing noble personalities and serving as a Buddhism symbol (Zhuo, 2011). The trees also offer shelter from countless storms and torrid summer days for the local population. The campaign succeeded, with government halting the plan and establishing a "green assessment plan" before any tree is to be removed in the future (Meng, 2011). Cultural resources release affective responses, calling to value fusions of spontaneous and deeper associations.

Cultural resources and *guanxi* norms yoke questions of living into a strong sense of social responsibility for nature. Chinese activists remind the public of the cultural basis upon which environmentalism rests generally and of the obligations and duties embedded in personal relationships and local commitments. These cultural layers construct a valuable and inseparable indigenous quality of China's GPC.

Conclusion

China's international, national, regional, and local commitments to the environment link manifold communicative trajectories that connect economic growth and environmental protection as uncomfortable partners. These gambits entwine hierarchically empowered and laterally related agents and agencies with duties and obligations, initiatives and responsibilities. China's "about-face" on global environmental issues may render the nation a "role model for the world," foreshadowing good and ill for the planet (Wheeland, 2015). Any GPC is a mix of historical and cultural constraints, everyday practices, and sociopolitical matrixes of power. New generations of agents and agencies emerge and experiment. In biomes across the globe, communication, adequate to suitable living in the Anthropocene, becomes stressed by disturbances caused by unanticipated "natural" events. Thus, dissensus expands.

Journalist-turned-digital-environmentalist Ma Jun took initiative recently in a network reply to Premier Li Keqiang's declaration of "war on polluters" (Carlson, 2015). He recollected that China has come a long way since he called attention to the River Fen's pollution. Then, he had written *China's Water Crisis*, a Rachel Carson-comparable act of dissent. Water facts were gathered and publicized, and reforms commenced. Presently, Jun's Institute for Public and Environmental Affairs heads the Green Change Alliance, a consortium of NGOs working on reporting corporate polluters (Levitt, 2015). The Institute for Public and Environmental Affairs made a splash by initiating a project that exposed water pollution and

creating a Blue Skies Roadmap reporting air quality. Perhaps, both ENGO and state data sources will bring into play a forensic dimension to China's GPC by putting brand reputation into the court of public opinion and by popularizing legal redress. Jun himself sees the present as a "tipping point" —a moment to turn toward ecological balance and away from hyperdevelopment projects (Levitt, 2015).

China's approach, however indigenously accountable, remains influenced by INGOs, the protocols of IOs, and international commitments. The network pragmatics of China's GPC does produce politics, largely although not exclusively through activating an ethic of care. Such a movement takes advantage of transmedia opportunities to connect within and across structures and to educate, recruit, and train agents and agencies. While multiple streams of international influences connect with local efforts, China's own environmental movement has become and remains largely a vast, novel array of communication projects connecting symbolic and material resources for living. Still, China's green activities can match word and deed in awkward, unsettling ways, for instance, by tumbling pictures of smog-shrouded cities with announcements of state reassurance. The networks of GPC perform across broad, visible and hidden events, accommodated by urgent but ambiguous activities that connect complex relationships among entangled agents, agencies, media, institutions, and populations. Of course, China is not alone in its struggles.

The complex, dissensual, dispersive activities of GPCs across the globe are called on to invent and marshal communicative resources requisite to shift away from the extractive presumptions of the Holocene (Klein, 2014). Deteriorating biomes and disruptive ecoevents necessitate communications that adapt, adjust, and thrive in the Anthropocene. China's GPC links material and symbolic resources from distinctive mixes of communicative labor. Network pragmatics invite descriptive, analytical inquiry directed to appreciate and critique the complex of communication experiments (re)convening varying, emergent GPCs working within and across planetary processes.

Twenty-first century GPC grew rapidly in China. Scattered activists initiated ENGOs and publicized online beginning in the 1990s. These efforts grew simultaneously with economic liberalization and Internet development. Debates over the precise roles of non- and quasistate actors in China's emerging civil society continue (J. Chen, 2010). Some assert that ENGOs' influence remains quite limited in contributing to a more democratic process (Tang & Zhan, 2008). Others find that environmental groups gather into a growing source of influence on policy making. Growing participation in the antihydropower development campaigns over the past decade furnish examples (Xie & Van Der Heijden, 2010). Cultural movements are not confined to pre-existing topics, forms, or outcomes. They manifest dissensus by remaining open to difference, subject to factual discovery, experiential invention, and personal initiative. A quasiopen cultural matrix generates experimentation that exceeds traditional conventions, present arrangements, and fixed futures.

Studies of public cultures should remain open to critical inquiry, especially in relation to connections with varied civic, citizen publics. Each GPC has its overlapping and distinctive aspects, as well as its particular difference. This study shows that Chinese ENGOs adopt variable positions, exhibit a style, and alter tactics adapted generally to the standing sociopolitical context. Such strategies of indirection and selective opposition may hamper a push toward wider goals, but cooperative contestation and contested

cooperation appear as signature styles of China's green activism. Network pragmatics extend "awareness and mobilization" broadly to include public culture activities, as varied as are the local conditions that generate constraints, opportunities, and demands. Group-partnering strategies permit ENGOs to maneuver political structures orthogonally and construct alliances, if not friendships, with and among those in government. ENGOs translate grassroot energies into policy influence by pushing for participation in decision making and monitoring. Finally, transmedia enable and promote ways of making, doing, acting, and learning that enable fact gathering, object assessment, and environmental defense. *Guanxi* culture provides social rules for the constant and inventive give and take among agents and agencies; traditional symbolic resources are called on to energize causes.

ENGO work is central, but its advances are open to question. J. Chen (2010) described the rule of progress: "two steps forward, one step backward." The nation does need to mitigate social and environmental grievances; yet, there remain many sociopolitical barriers in China that retard progress (J. Chen, 2010, p. 520). ENGO impact must be assessed and then judged, but thought through over the long run. With a history of two decades, China's environmental movement remains maturing. Even so, ENGO persistence and spread is notable. Lin Hong, a legal expert of FON remarked, "As long as we ENGO in China can survive and still exist, we can make a difference. The most valuable thing for us is to persist" (Jingfang Liu with L. Hong, personal communication, February 26, 2015).

The Anthropocene accelerates and spreads dissensus. Change necessitates the communicative labor and work of GPCs. The Anthropocene demands that researchers attend critically to the development of emergent, alternative communicative actions manifest in distinctive public cultures that engage varying biotic loci manifest across the planet. GPCs are emergent, changing, and antagonistic. What are the strengths and limits, the aspirations, setbacks, and achievements of our independently local yet meanwhile vast, collaborative, antagonistic communication experiments of the 21st century? We invite the study of GPCs, those particular communication experiments that invent, travel, connect, and glocalize.

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Cultural Policy in the Korean Wave: An Analysis of Cultural Diplomacy Embedded in Presidential Speeches

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This article examines the changes and developments of the Korean government's attitude to the Korean Wave, connecting with the notion of cultural diplomacy. It investigates presidential speeches and statements as well as other governmental documents between 1998 and 2014 because they represent and establish guidelines applying to cultural policies. By analyzing presidential statements with the notion of cultural diplomacy, it explores the government's reinterpretation of this transnational, hybrid cultural content into national products, thereby appropriating them as tools of improving national images. Throughout the research, this article connects presidents' viewpoints with their subsequent cultural policies, thereby finding fundamental perspectives framing cultural policies vis-à-vis the Korean Wave.

Keywords: Korean Wave, cultural policy, soft power, cultural diplomacy

> Having started out with Korea's *K-pop*, MAMA today has become cosmopolitan in its content, available to 2.4 billion people around the world. It also represents the success of the creative economy on the global top where culture has stimulated a burgeoning creative industry. (Park, 2014d)

In 2014, a Korea-oriented music award festival called the 2014 Mnet Asian Music Awards (MAMA), which was hosted by CJ E&M—a Korean media conglomerate—was held in Hong Kong. A number of Korean popular music (so-called *K-pop*) celebrities, including EXO, Girl's Generation, and 2PM, performed in front of thousands fans. While the festival culminated in the *K-pop* performances, an unusual event took place—Park Geun-hye, the president of Korea, gave a video message celebrating this cultural event.

Her opening statement at MAMA 2014 provided a focal point related to the Korean Wave—which refers to the rapid growth of domestic cultural industries and the exports of domestic popular culture to the world—also known as *Hallyu*. (Since a Korean soap-opera, *What Is Love,* recorded ratings of 4.7% in China in 1997, the Korean government has tried to make Korean pop culture one of the global cultural

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standards.) However, MAMA was the first major popular cultural event in which the nation's president appeared (Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2013). Considering that this event was broadcasted live across 16 countries, her speech indicated the ostentation of the nation's cultural industries and their leverage to regional communities.

Apart from the president's statement, the government engaged in this "corporate" event. The Small and Medium Business Administration (SMBA) sponsored the awards in exchange for hosting exhibitions of 57 Korean cultural enterprises. Such engagements confirm the government's intention to support Korean cultural industries and their popularity in global markets as well as imply the government's willingness to expand *Hallyu* as an industrial, transnational, cultural flow with Korean values.

The case of MAMA clarifies the significant role of popular culture in strengthening the national brand, which influences the development of the nation's economic power by affecting purchasing behaviors of foreign consumers. In addition, by favorably impressing foreign citizens, cultural products and events contribute to expanding the nation's political leverage. Such impacts convince government to support cultural events as a diplomatic means—as a way of public diplomacy (Melissen & Cross, 2013).

The role of government has become a major element for the growth of cultural industries, as it has developed its own distinguishable cultural policy based on state-developmentalism. Since the early 1960s, Korea has advanced one of the strongest state-led developmental models, which has pursued a top-down and export-led economy. Although the government has adopted and developed neoliberal reforms since the early 1980s—which reduced the government's intervention in many parts of society—the government has not entirely given up its crucial role and has continued to develop its state-led cultural policy, as in the national economy (Heo, 2015; Jin, 2016).

This article examines the changes and developments of the Korean government's approach to *Hallyu*. It uses the notion of cultural diplomacy and soft power because they are connected with this cultural trend, as recent presidential statements indicate. It historicizes presidential statements in relation to *Hallyu* because they represent and establish guidelines applying to cultural policies. Then it examines how and to what extent their perspectives on *Hallyu* given in the presidential speeches have influenced the government's cultural policies in practice. Finally, it identifies the implication of their speeches to domestic audiences, thereby examining the implication of improvements on the national image.

Understanding Cultural Diplomacy in the Korean Wave

The notion of cultural diplomacy has progressively evolved, and policy makers and politicians in many countries have increasingly engaged in the realm of culture over several decades. As Kozymka (2014) points out,

> the classical notion of cultural diplomacy entails culture as a component of traditional diplomacy, and it had been mostly confined to the promotion of one nation's culture abroad to strengthen relations with other nations, to enhance cooperation or to promote national interest. (p. 9)

In other words, cultural diplomacy is commonly defined as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding" (Cummings, 2003, p. 1). In the early 21st century, this notion of cultural diplomacy has been considered as one of the most significant public diplomacies because culture is a field of international relations in its own right as much as a tool of foreign policy. This suggests that "culture is not just as the arts, but in its broad definition, as reflected in the growing recognition of culture's role in promoting human development, fostering intercommunity dialogue and understanding, building peace, and broadening education" (Kozymka, 2014, p. 9).

More specifically, "cultural diplomacy is seen as a subset of public diplomacy or the operation of a state's culture in support of its foreign policy goals, to combat stereotyping, develop mutual understanding, and advance national reputation and relationships across the border" (Mark, 2009, pp. 9–15). As Dizard (2001) points out, public diplomacy tends to focus on promoting the ideas and values of one society to another through cultural programs and information (cited in Erickson, 2012). However, cultural diplomacy is not driven solely by the idealism of mutual understanding. A new development is reflective of shifts in cultural policy toward conceiving culture as a resource (Yúdice, 2003). In particular, Nye (2004) focuses on "soft power" in his understating of cultural diplomacy. For Nye, the exchange of ideas is key to his concept of soft power, conceptualized as "getting others to want the outcomes that you want" (2004, p. 5; also cited in Erickson, 2012). It is a more complex concept than simply influencing people. He points out that "threats are [also] useful to influence people to act in ways that align with one's desires. Soft power, rather, is attractive power, inducing an active change in people's preferences that in turn change their actions" (Nye, 2004, p. 6). It implies that nation-states use culture in global politics through actualizing cultural policy as "display."[1]

As Korean popular culture goes global in the early 21st century, it signifies the Korean Wave's potentiality as a set of soft-power resources that may have a significant and complex impact on cultural diplomacy as well as on trade, tourism, the academy, and other national interests across various contexts (Nye & Kim, 2013). Therefore, Nye and Kim argue that "Korea needs to pay more attention to soft power" (2013, pp. 31–32) as one of the most significant cultural diplomacy strategies, as other countries, in particular, the U.S. government, has used the film industry as a resource. Indeed, Nye (2004) claims that

[1] In terms of the discourse of cultural policy as "display," Williams (1984) distinguished "between cultural policy as 'display' and cultural policy 'proper'" (cited in Varga, 2013, p. 826). As Varga (2013, p. 826) explained, the main objective of cultural policy "proper" is "the governmental management of materialized artistic expressions and their circulation in civil society, which is achieved by measures of subsidizing and public patronage of the arts and administered by arts councils and ministries of culture that typically emerged in the second half of the 20th century. In addition to such explicit political measures in intervening in cultural practice—which has since become the key concern of cultural policy studies (McGuigan, 2004, cited in Varga, 2013, p. 826), Williams has emphasized another group of less explicit cultural policy instruments that are often overlooked as political measures of public policy in the cultural arena." In this regard, what Williams (1984) argues is that "cultural policy measures in modern societies are not concerned with cultural policy 'proper,' but rather with 'display,' which aims at unifying the nation-state and upholding the symbolic legitimacy of a particular social order" (cited in Varga, 2013, p. 826).

soft power co-opts people rather than coerces them, and soft power is the ability to entice and attract. In addition, as Nye and Kim (2013) point out,

> the soft power of any country rests primarily on three resources: 1) the attractiveness of its culture, 2) its political values, when it lives up to them at home and abroad, and 3) its foreign policies, when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority. (p. 32)

Of course, the notion of soft power has been criticized for not presenting a structured theoretical framework for this theory. Several theoreticians have questioned how to measure soft power and how to define it (G. Lee, 2009; Vasilevskytė, 2013). In particular, it is critical to understand that the culture's attractiveness can be used by the government to legitimize its political power, which may result in negative consequences.

Korea has faced a particularly challenging task in creating a positive national image despite its spectacular economic development and success (Elfving-Hwang, 2013; R. Kim, 2011). Under this circumstance, the government has certainly developed the growth of *Hallyu*, primarily because "popular culture has become a potentially important resource for soft power diplomacy, transcultural collaborations, dialogues and struggles to win hearts and minds of people" (Nye & Kim, 2013, p. 35). It has advanced the articulation and legislation of cultural policy and the promotion of cultural industries, with a renewed focus on culture and nation branding as an essential component of foreign policy (Nye & Kim, 2013). As G. Lee (2009) explains,

> the Korean wave is [itself] not soft power, but is one of Korea's many soft resources. Possessing soft resources does not guarantee automatic conversion of the soft resources into soft power. Therefore, one needs to come up with very refined and sophisticated strategies on how to mobilize one's soft resources to achieve certain political and economic goals and national interests. When such efforts are realized and positively influence the achievement of the goals, then one can say that soft resources are being translated into soft power. (p. 134)

In fact, as Elfving-Hwang (2013) explains, until the early 1990s, "Korean outward-projecting state-led cultural engagement had by and large consisted of various forms of cultural exchanges, such as promoting Korean cultural products through autonomous agencies that are state or privately funded" (p. 15). Although the government changed its effort to use culture as resources, Cho (2005) explains that this export "was not driven by the government's drive to promote a certain image of Korea, but rather grew out of the necessity to explore new export markets in the wake of the Asian financial crisis after 1997" (p. 148). As the government has supported the development of cultural industries since the late 1990s, the key concern for policy makers was "to transform the Korean Wave into a sustainable source of income" (Cho, 2005, p. 160).

In opposition to cultural policies of the 1990s, emphasizing commercial imperatives, cultural policies since the mid-2000s have been intertwined with considerations of soft power and how Korea increasingly posits itself as a developed, postindustrial middle power with an important role to play on the

global stage, both as an economic and a cultural power. In this regard, the government has also sought to enhance

> Korea's image as a reliable and developed business partner and to create an image of a dynamic and developed country with which advanced countries can aspire to do business. Within this context, the success of Korean popular culture (*Hallyu*) outside Korea has become another welcome tool for cultural engagement. (Elfving-Hwang, 2013, p. 15)

As such, while cultural diplomacy in tandem with soft power has been part of each government, there are some significant shifts in each government's priority and policy standards. Through this examination of the *Hallyu* phenomenon using cultural diplomacy in tandem with soft power, we hope to illuminate some of the complexities inherent in examining the Korean Wave as it has manifested—and continues to manifest—in Korea.

Research Methodologies

In this study we aim to explore implications of the Korean government's cultural policies related to *Hallyu*. By analyzing the government's interpretation of this cultural booming, we try to find ideological appropriations of cultural policies. To examine those translations, we use two major qualitative methodologies, both textual analysis and discourse analysis. Most of all, we analyze texts of presidential remarks that mentioned *Hallyu*, because presidential statements represent executive power. By searching for the keyword "*Hallyu*" in the Presidential Archives and in *Cheong Wa Dae*'s (the presidential office of Korea) Internet archive, we identified 74 remarks from 1998 to 2014.

As a result of this text analysis, we classified those findings into three categories—cultural industries, soft power, and cultural exchange/diversity, as Table 1 indicates. The first category represents the traditional viewpoint of the Korean government, which views this cultural popularity by estimating direct economic profits and industrial prospects. On the other hand, presidential remarks connected to the second and the third categories regard this phenomenon as a way of improving the national image so that it links to key objectives for developing cultural diplomacy (Kaneva, 2011; Varga, 2013). This research includes Nye's (2004) concept of soft power as a main theoretical background for connecting speeches with the notion of cultural diplomacy. Finally, we investigate statements from the viewpoint of cultural exchange and diversity to stress the emergence of a new nondominant popular culture that diversifies the environment of producing, circulating, and consuming cultural contents. Cross-border dialogues are important in developing cultural diplomacy because they aim at dispelling foreign countries' concerns about harming their own industries (Iwabuchi, 2015). Considering the importance of popular culture in shaping national identity, this attitude strongly affects foreign relations.

We then explore discourses that construct presidential statements. We employ Fairclough's (2010) notion that the aim of analyzing discourse is to understand the interpretation of particular texts with their underlying logics connected to society's meaning structure. Basically, he refers to discourse as a way of representing the text with a particular perspective. In this regard, interpreting the text is bound to

broader discourse practices and sociocultural practices that produce, distribute, and consume the meaning of text. Such practices are made by relations between texts and their meanings that are strongly bound to hegemony struggles. By exploring discourses underlying cultural policies, one is expected to uncover the process of justifying unequal interests surrounding policies.

To understand discourses that construct the Korean government's policies on *Hallyu*, we use newspaper articles and government reports for searching logics giving influence to presidents and top authorities who design cultural policies. While explaining each administration's stance on interpreting *Hallyu* with speeches, we combine the analysis of presidential remarks with a number of cultural policies that were implemented during each president's term. Analyzing cultural policies includes governmental reorganizations, laws and regulations, and cultural activities sponsored by the government.

After exploring discourses of the Korean government's *Hallyu* policies with presidential remarks, we explain the increasing portion of cultural politics within governmental policies with the notion of cultural diplomacy. Our findings will shed light on the current debates on the role of the nation-state amid neoliberal cultural policies.

Analysis of Presidential Speeches on *Hallyu*, 1998–2014

Admitting that the Korean Wave phenomenon primarily started in 1997, right before Kim Dae-jung took political power in 1998, we analyzed presidential speeches between 1998 and 2014. Table 1 provides the historical changes of the major categories in which presidents have been emphasizing *Hallyu*. Analysis of presidential speeches on *Hallyu* implies two major trends. On the one hand, it proves that presidential remarks on the popularity of Korean pop culture have been steadily increasing. This tendency especially became predominant during Lee's term. In contrast with his two predecessors, Lee used this term 38 times while in office, which far exceeded those of both Kim's (seven times) and Roh's (nine times) statements combined. The trend continues to Park Geun-hye. She has already spoken this term 20 times since being sworn in to office in February 2013.

According to Table 1, presidential speeches cited the term *Hallyu* has been increased. At first, Kim Dae-jung used this term in less than 1% of his total addresses. However, following the growing popularity of the cultural boom in Asia, his successors have spoken the term *Hallyu* more often. While Roh spoke *Hallyu* in nine official addresses during his tenure, President Park—who just finished the first year of her term of office as of 2014—used this term in more than 20 speeches. Such an increase indicates that both presidents and their administrations engage in the discourse of *Hallyu* connecting with their policies.

More specifically, 56 remarks are connected with the cultural diplomatic perspective—which regards exporting cultural contents as an extension of the nation's political and economic influence in the international society. While Kim and Roh stressed *Hallyu* from the industrial perspective, mainly emphasizing either boosting cultural industries or exporting more Korean products, Lee tended to highlight *Hallyu* in the context of cultural diplomacy—building national brand power, raising national image, and underscoring the global boom of becoming more acquainted with Korean culture. So far, Park has mixed these two perspectives.

Table 1. **Hallyu** ***in Presidential Speeches.***

Presidents (number of his/her total speeches)	Cultural industry	Soft power	Cultural exchange/ cultural diversity	Others	Total	*Hallyu* speech-to-total ratio
Kim Dae-jung (855)	6	1	0	0	7	0.8%
Roh Moo-hyun (797)	4	1	3	1[a]	9	1.1%
Lee Myung-bak (819)	7	22	8	1[b]	38	4.6%
Park Geun-hye (incumbent, 122)	9	6	4	1[c]	20	16.3%
Total	26 (35.1%)	30 (40.5%)	15 (20.3%)	3 (4%)	74(100%)	

[a]Roh mentioned *Hallyu* during his special lecture as an example for highlighting the role of democratic regimes in improving industrial competitiveness, especially ICTs and cultural industries (Roh, 2007, para. 74).

[b]During his weekly radio address, Lee spoke of "*Hallyu* stars" who had supported Japan's recovery from the Tohoku Earthquake (M. B. Lee, 2011, para. 10).

[c]While praising the police's criminal investigation tactics, Park said "*Hallyu* in administrative sectors" during her speech for the 69th anniversary of the establishment of National Police (Park, 2014c, para. 8).

However, none of presidents significantly expressed the importance of cultural interchanges or preserving cultural diversities. Only 15 presidential statements concerned *Hallyu* with cultural multiplicities. Reflecting Korea's state-led and top-down economic and cultural policies, these presidential speeches are crucial because they work as guidelines to the continuity and change of each government's major cultural policies in tandem with *Hallyu*.

Cultural Policies in the Pre-Hallyu Era Until 1997

In Korea, the first systematic attempt to construct national cultural policy was "the first five-year cultural development plan" made in 1974, under the management of the Ministry of Culture and Public Information. Although there were several significant measures, such actions focused on preserving cultural heritages and traditions (Yim, 2002). The major direction of the Fifth Republic, established in 1981, was not much different from the previous Park Chung-hee regime that considered culture as parts

of the national arts. However, the Chun Doo-hwan regime stated cultural promotion as a national duty in its constitution (Ministry of Culture and Tourism [MCT], 2001). However, many plans, such as *Kookpoong* (National Spirit)-81, during this period were aimed at securing the regime's legitimacy because it seized power by force (MCT, 2001).

After the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, the Korean government recognized the importance of culture in the era of globalization. President Kim Young-sam demanded cultural competitiveness with the notion of globalization and the emergence of the information society, as his address delivered at the Seventh Conference for the Promotion of New Economy stated (Y. S. Kim, 1994, para. 3). During the same year, "the government launched an official *segyehwa* (globalization) policy as a way of actively responding to external pressures imposed by the U.S. and to survive in the new world of infinite global competition" (S. Kim, 2000, pp. 2–3). In practice, upon taking office his administration proposed a five-year plan for cultural development. Kim's emphasis on development of cultural industries, including the information technology sector, could be exemplified throughout his speech celebrating the Culture Day in 1995:

> We live in an era in which culture holds sway over the destinies of nations. The advent of the Information age and the knowledge industries made the cultural competence equal to national competence. (Y. S. Kim, 1995, paras. 3–4)

The changing milieu surrounding the media sector drove Korea's media and cultural policies. During this period, technologically, Korea's media and cultural environments experienced dramatic changes—cable television service and the first communications and broadcasting satellite was launched. Therefore, the government recognized the importance of information and communications technologies, thereby enacting the Framework Act on Informatization Promotion and established the Committee for Informatization Promotion (H. D. Lee, 2012). Along with technological developments, Kim Young-sam demanded the media industry strengthen its international competitiveness, which can be exemplified in his address delivered at the commemoration of launching satellite broadcasting service in 1996:

> We are living in the era of borderless broadcasting. With the development of new information and communication technologies, broadcasting industries have to face unlimited competitions. As a leading nation of the global broadcasting industry, we have to globalize our broadcasting services. We must improve not only technologies but also international competitiveness of television contents, thereby triggering the globalization of broadcasting and image industries. (Y. S. Kim, 1996, paras. 14–18)

Indeed, Kim's administration regarded cultural development as a new way for national development. In this regard, it designed policies aimed at stressing cultural welfare, the Volkgeist, and the globalization of Korean culture. Kim's ambitions toward cultural globalization meant exporting cultural contents to foreign countries. For instance, in 1997 the Korean government established 10 Representative Korean Cultural Symbols including *Hangeul* (Korean alphabet), Buddhist temples, and Taekwondo. Then, these cultural symbols were widely accepted and promoted through PR activities by the government (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2005).

Of course, the issue of developing cultural industries during Kim's government did not play a major role in advancing cultural values. However, his administration's emphasis on cultural policies was a turning point of the nation's cultural policy, which viewed culture with the notion of economic profitability. Previously, the ultimate purpose of the government's cultural policies was to control the domestic audience by emphasizing traditional values and delivering pro-governmental propagandas in many ways, including censorship and import regulations. Such changes in promoting culture as an industry continued with his successor, Kim Dae-jung, who also supported *Hallyu*.

Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003): Viewing Hallyu *as a New Horizon of the National Economy*

The first official presidential statement mentioning *Hallyu* was in 2001, when Kim Dae-jung gave an opening speech during the Third Conference of Tourism Promotion (D. J. Kim, 2001a). While stressing the importance of boosting the tourism industry as a new economic growth engine and the best among industries, he spoke about *Hallyu* as the head of state for the first time. This stance was underlined again when he said *Hallyu* started to rise in East Asia and he would encourage cultural industry as a "chimney-less key industry" during his speech celebrating the National Liberation Day (D. J. Kim, 2001b, para. 57).

His speech showed that the Korean government's initial perspective on *Hallyu* was strongly based on an economic logic. The core of Kim's point of view vis-à-vis this newly emerging boom of Korean culture in the Asian region could be seen in his address at the conference of promoting growth industries:

> We should develop *Hallyu* in the direction of making this as lasting and beneficial for our economy. In detail, we should constantly create contents in music, soaps, movies, animations, games, and characters. In 2003, the size of creative cultural industry will grow up to $290 billion, which is bigger than the size of the semi-conductor market—which is estimated at $280 billion. Such prospects suggest that we must concern cultural contents which create high-added value without big investment while improving our national image. (D. J. Kim, 2001c, para. 1)

Although he sometimes viewed *Hallyu* as a mechanism of raising national strength, Kim's perspective on *Hallyu* was mostly confined to it being a way to boost cultural industries. In fact, during his incumbency, the government expanded the budget for the cultural sector, appropriating approximately $0.9 billion, which was more than 1% of the national budget in 2000, and extended it to $1 billion in the following year. An increased portion of this budget was mainly invested in supporting cultural industries (Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism [MCST], 2013). For example, his government created a $125 million fund to promote Korean cinema between 1999 and 2003 (Kang, 2002, p. 19). Regardless of the size of the funds, it was enough to show the government's willingness to create policies favorable to the film industry (Jin, 2011). This implies that Kim's regime developed and executed several significant cultural policies to support emerging cultural industries.

In short, along with the emergence of *Hallyu*, Kim's administration launched institutional initiatives for incubating and supporting indigenous cultural industries. However, as Kim's speeches

indicate, this approach was based on neoliberal market logic. The governance criteria of neoliberal administrations were based upon productivity and profitability, or, in other words, on business norms (Brown, 2006; Jin, 2014). This attitude was accompanied by the neoliberal rearrangement of governmental policies in the aftermath of recovering the nation's economic crisis in 1997–98, and by the restructuring of the nation's industrial structure in favor of service industries.

Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008): Connecting Hallyu *With Cultural Diversity*

As did his predecessor, Roh also emphasized the role of *Hallyu* in relation to the industrial perspective. However, during his presidential term, his stance of understanding this cultural phenomenon showed the possibility of various interpretations, including the viewpoint of mutual cultural exchange and cultural diversity. For instance, Roh's first statement in reference to *Hallyu* was highlighting the role of cultural exchange between Korea and China during his state visit to China. By pointing out both *Hallyu* and *Hanfeng* (a growing popularity of Chinese culture), he tried to express the mutual friendship between the two countries. Although he used this term in China, it is still worth noting that it was the first time that nation's president viewed *Hallyu* in the context of cultural exchange and sharing diversities, not from an industrial point of view. The following are his views on *Hallyu*:

> Cultural exchanges between two countries are expanding, as expressions such as *Hallyu* and *Hanfeng* represent. Such interactions serve as a momentum for deepening mutual understanding and expanding the base of cooperation. (Roh, 2003a, para. 9)

> There seems to be a lot of excitement these days about learning Chinese and its culture. You can see Chinese products all over the place, and can hear Chinese announcement in metros. Also, our youngsters are fond of Chinese movie stars like Zhang Yimou, Gong Li, and Leon Lai. I also heard Chinese people have a lot of interest in *Hallyu*. Many people enjoy Korean pop songs, movies, and television dramas, and recently Kimchi. (Roh, 2003b, para. 14)

Most of all, Roh's administration represented cultural policies with the concept of Creative Korea, which was modeled on the British and the United States' creative programs that regarded culture as an "incubator of creativity." The goal of this plan was to create a new culture based on exchanging various types of cultures, thereby preserving and improving cultural diversities in East Asia (MCST, 2013). For instance, in 2004, the government initiated a project called Hub City of Asian Culture—Gwangju, which aimed to make Gwangju the city of cultural exchange, research, education, and enjoyment by 2023. This indicates that Roh's administration showed considerable interest in developing cultural diversities.

During his presidency, the government continued to connect this cultural popularity with industrial perspectives. Indeed, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2004) identified the government's major role as a coordinator in the era of the knowledge-based economy by complementing market competitions in creative cultural industries and by supporting foundations of pure arts that contributed to future cultural industries. The following statement, which celebrated Trade Day, supported such stance;

> I will vitalize raising exports from service industries, notably the marine transport industry and creative cultural contents industry. I will establish legal bases upon which to have financial and insurance benefits as equal as merchandise exports. I will reinforce supporting systems in marketing in order to expand service exports. Such exports on high value-added industries will create jobs with good qualities. (Roh, 2005, para. 19)

Paradoxically, Roh's awareness of culture and cultural industries based on cultural diversity was rather flexible, which could be identified with his policy on the screen quota system. This system, which made movie circulators to guarantee the screening of Korean movies, had contributed to the growth of the Korean film industry. However, the United States demanded the abolishment of this regulation as a prerequisite for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiation. In spite of Roh's personal political inclination to mid-left, he gave up his political stance. Indeed, during his luncheon meeting at *Cheong Wa Dae* in November 2004, with entrepreneurs attending the Korea-U.S. Business Conference, he said that "the Korean government thinks that it is time to solve the screen quota issue and there should be more discussions between the Korean and the U.S. film industries" ("Time to solve the screen quota issue," 2004, para. 1). Thus, his government decided to reduce the quota from 146 days per year to 73 days a year (Jin, 2014). Still, it launched a new public film fund to support Korean cinema since 2007, partially for supporting independent film producers who pursued cultural diversity.

While a number of cultural policies during Roh's administration regarding the Korean Wave were inherited by his predecessor, Roh's stance on this cultural booming represented his liberal perspective. Compared to other presidents, who saw *Hallyu* with self-centered point of views, Roh relatively connected this term with cultural diversity, which focused more on mutual exchange while preserving equalities among each culture. He stressed this approach to domestic audiences, reviewing the development of Korean cultural industries as a result of the nation's democratization, which accelerated diversity (Roh, 2007, para. 74). Considering his political history as a human rights lawyer, such results suggest that president's personal political background affects to cultural policies.

Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013): Combining Hallyu *With National Prestige*

After the transfer of political power from liberal to conservative in December 2007, newly elected president Lee extended the notion of *Hallyu* to traditional culture and heritage from the nation's long history. While giving his inaugural speech, he demanded the industrialization of culture with the modernization of traditional culture and the advancement of the culture and arts industries, along with developing creative contents industries. In the same vein, he frequently used the term *Hallyu* and its growing popularity as a method of improving national image. Lee's administration wanted to differentiate itself from the previous liberal-progressive Roh administration in the cultural sector (Jin, 2014), which means that the Lee government planned to develop *Hallyu* for the enhancement of national image, in addition to the growth of the national economy

More specifically, Lee shifted the rhetoric of internationalization toward nation branding in conjunction with the Korean Wave. As a former businessman who served as a CEO of Hyundai Group, Lee recognized the importance of branding and PR. In this regard, he established the Presidential Council on

Nation Branding in 2009, a supervising organization devising plans for increasing brand value. This council developed the slogan Global Korea, a campaign orchestrated by the government in close association with a number of business conglomerates including Samsung, LG, and Hyundai-Kia Motors and major entertainment companies, such as SM, YG, JYP (Ih-Prost & Bondaz, 2014). In fact, the quotes Lee gave during the speech celebrating the 45th anniversary of National Broadcasting Day focused on defining the role of *Hallyu* in strengthening national prestige:

> Korean broadcasts have already become worldwide, and the diffusion of *Hallyu* exemplifies their fruits of past history. With broadcast contents which edge up to Asians and beyond the region, we enrich our national branding and national image. In addition, our broadcasting channels which transmit all over the world gives national pride to Korean businessmen and overseas Koreans. (M. B. Lee, 2008, para. 9)

During his tenure, in the context of cultural diplomacy and the promotion of Korean culture as a way of increasing international leverage, his administration designed a number of policies for strengthening cultural power. For example, in 2012, it launched a bureau under the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism for promoting *Hallyu*, which was the first time that the government used this term to name a governmental branch.

An interesting point is that Lee started to combine *Hallyu* with soft power. As Nye (2004) argued, this phrase means the ability to get what you want through attraction via culture, values, and foreign policies rather than coercion or payment. In this regard, Lee constantly emphasized the role of culture in building up national power with culture and putting emphases on globalizing Korean culture. During the first year of Lee's administration, the government highlighted culture as a criterion of national competitiveness and a sine qua non for improving the national brand, thereby strengthening the ability of public diplomacy and giving positive impressions to foreign people, and improving enterprises' images overseas (MCST, 2009). In this regard, his use of the term in this perspective outnumbered its use in other categories. He constantly connected *Hallyu* with the national brand in many presidential statements, regardless of the characteristics of the events. For example, his speech during the Seoul Forum 2012, an annual seminar hosted by *Seoul Economy Newspaper*, showed this direction:

> I believe that it is a great opportunity for us to communicate with foreign people and to move their hearts through *Hallyu*. We have to think seriously about how to improve *Hallyu* as representing Korean value, as a sustainable engine for national development (M. B. Lee, 2012, para. 4)

Throughout his tenure, Lee stressed the importance of *Hallyu* as a core mechanism of soft power, and he related it to national brand power and national competitiveness that are linked to concepts of cultural diplomacy. Also, Lee was highly concerned about expanding *Hallyu*'s range to other cultural sectors such as fashion and food. For instance, Kim Yoon-ok, the first lady, had a special interest in connecting Korean food, including kimchi, with *Hallyu*. Directly after his inauguration, his administration presented a task plan report about the globalization of Korean foods, and a taskforce for the mission was

founded in May 2009. This taskforce became the Korean Food Foundation in the following year. Lee addressed his opinion about globalizing Korean food on a television talk show in September 2008:

> I have a special interest in introducing Korean foods as healthy foods so that Koreans can spread all over the world. Thereby we can expand the scale of *Hallyu* not only (popular) culture and arts, but also food culture. (M. B. Lee, 2009, para. 103)

However, one must understand that the stance of Lee's administration was not much different from the previous liberal administration in terms of its emphasis on economic imperatives. Regardless of its emphasis on national image, the overall goal of Lee's government was to develop the national economy through the institutionalization of soft power. His perspective on *Hallyu* with cultural diplomacy underwent a slight variation with his replacement, Park Geun-hye.

Park, Geun-hye (2013–2018): Fusing Hallyu *With Creative Economy and Soft Power*

During her inaugural speech, president Park announced that "cultural enrichment" would be one of four administrative priorities during her presidency. As one of her major policy tasks, she promised to increase prosperity for Korean culture with many policies such as increasing government spending on culture, up to 2% of the budget of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism and legislating a framework act on culture (Jin, 2014). She also established the Presidential Committee for Cultural Enrichment to consult with cultural artists about her cultural policies. Specifically, among 10 tasks comprising cultural enrichment, at least two tasks—promoting cultural diversity and cultivating creative cultural industries for "Korean Style"—were related to *Hallyu*. However, by this time, conjoining her emphasis with the notion of creative economy, her stance on *Hallyu* has focused more on promoting industrial gains and soft power than on supporting cultural diversity.

As past presidents did, Park also emphasizes the role of *Hallyu* in the context of economic profits, particularly with the notion of "the Creative Economy," which means the convergence between traditional industries and information and communications technologies, thereby becoming a new growth engine of the national economy. The following address was delivered by Park, exemplifying her standpoint regarding *Hallyu,* which is based on industrial perspectives. During her opening statement during the 2014 World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, she said,

> We use the expression Korean Wave to describe the widespread enthusiasm for Korean culture. Today, that wave is spreading rapidly across the globe. When Korean music recently paired up with YouTube, it became a global sensation. *K-pop*, Korean dramas and films are being greeted here and there and creating new added value. When the cultural values of each country are brought together with IT technology, the possibilities for generating greater added value become truly limitless. Indeed, this is another key attribute of the creative economy. The companies that are welcomed around the world are those that have successfully combined various cultural contents with new technology. (Park, 2014a, paras. 52–55)

As a result of her emphasis on the role of ICTs in expanding *Hallyu*, her administration has promoted the convergence between Korean cultural contents with ICTs. For example, it has sponsored several concert halls including SM Town and KT K-Live in Seoul for hosting *K-pop* virtual concerts, using three-dimensional holograms. It also has planned to export Korean Web-toon, which means cartoons distributed via the Internet, to overseas markets, notably the U.S. (MCST, 2015; Ministry of Science, ICT, and Future Planning, 2015).

While Park stresses *Hallyu* for reviving the national economy along with the concept of the Creative Economy, she also recognizes the role this cultural phenomenon as a tool of heightening national image, as Lee did. The opening statement for celebrating the Fifth Asian Leadership Conference held in Seoul in 2014 is an example of viewing *Hallyu* as a way of expanding the nation's power in international society:

> Looking back on our past seven decades of division, the Republic of Korea accepted liberal democracy and market economy, overcame the Korean War and following security threats, and became the country which has the 8th largest trade volume in the world. Beyond economic logics, *Hallyu* has become an international cultural trend sharing hearts and friendships. (Park, 2014b, paras. 9–10)

In this regard, while maintaining existing cultural policies—such as protecting intellectual property rights, in particular copyrights, of Korean cultural contents—Park's administration also has developed cultural diplomatic strategies. For instance, in 2015, armed with a budget increase of more than 25%, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism plans to open more Korean Cultural Centers and King Sejong Institutes overseas, where Korean cultural content has gained popularity, notably, constructing the Tourism and Cultural Center in Paris (MCST, 2015). Although Park has just entered her fourth year in office and still has more than a year of presidency, Park's viewpoint of *Hallyu* seems to highlight industrial perspectives so far, while she also succeeded Lee's strategies—connecting *Hallyu* with cultural diplomacy. As Anholt (1998) pointed out, nation brand is a concept stemming from marketing. It is defined as the way in which a nation is perceived by foreigners, notably in their degree of positive opinion and trust at the evocation of the said nation (Ih-Prost & Bondaz, 2014). As such, it is clear that Park Geun-hye's point on *Hallyu* has been a nexus of the enhancement of national image and marketing strategy in the name of the creative economy.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this article we analyzed the ways in which several Korean presidents have interpreted *Hallyu* through presidential speeches between 1998 and 2014, to find the aims that connect the Korean Wave phenomenon with cultural diplomacy. Although there are several key implications, it is crucial to understand that more than two thirds of their remarks were on this cultural issue. They focused on either an industrial perspective or cultural diplomacy and soft power rather than cultural diversities or exchange, in spite of the growing size and impact of *Hallyu*. In particular, the recent conservative administrations have developed their cultural policies to use *Hallyu* as soft power. These results suggest that the

implications of the Korean Wave have been based on expanding the nation's international leverage, thereby seeking export expansion and cultural values.

As Aronczyk (2013) points out, national culture and its cultural products become basic materials of constructing the "national brand," and this implies that cultural assets are still important in the transnational arena when representing each nation-state. Nation-states have constantly transformed national culture and reconstructed national identity as reflecting transnational cultural and economic flow (J. Lee, 2012). In addition, the growing power of culture in developing the economy also justifies the government's engagements (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Thus, notwithstanding recent changes of viewing cultural industries and their contents as "transnational" or "culturally hybrid," it is still premature to conclude that the power of nation-states is declining. Like the example of Korea indicates, governments engage in cultural industries as a major stakeholder and exert its influence to market players, because the cultural industries and the Korean Wave have become major parts of the national economy.

In cultural industries, the Korean government has developed a distinctive style of neoliberalism with Korean uniqueness because Korea's cultural policy has been deeply rooted in developmentalism. Either liberal or conservative, administrations structurally developed state-led developmental principles while advancing the logic of neoliberal agendas. Since the Kim Young-sam administration, all successive governments have especially developed their cultural policies in the name of economy imperatives. Regardless of their prior political directions, administrations have not much considered cultural diversity, and their goals in supporting the Korean Wave are mainly economic imperatives.

Also, policy directions of presidents, either liberal or conservative, seem to be significant, as a number of addresses about *Hallyu* commonly direct nation's cultural policies. The government has continued to capitalize *Hallyu* in that it combines *Hallyu* with cultural diplomatic policies overseas and maximizes its cultural impact. On the one hand, it has assisted cultural industries with financial aids and institutional supports. On the other hand, it has run various cultural initiatives—such as hosting *K-pop* concerts, and establishing King Sejong Institutes that teach the Korean language—in many countries where *Hallyu* gained popularity (Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange, 2014). The government has especially developed the nexus of cultural policy between economic imperatives and cultural diplomacy, emphasizing soft power. This means that the government has materialized cultural products through their subsidies and legal supports for the national economy while advancing cultural products for the enhancement of national image.

Meanwhile, it is also significant to acknowledge that cultural policies under different regimes from the late 1990s and the present have shown several important differences, in particular between liberal and conservative governments. In the Korean Wave tradition, liberal administrations between 1998 and 2008 had primarily pursued economic imperatives alongside cultural industries.

However, conservative administrations have mainly appropriated *Hallyu* as soft power, to brand the nation-state in the global society. In other words, they have used *Hallyu* as a main mechanism of cultural diplomacy so that they can expand the nation's power. Lee and Park's administrations have emphasized soft power as a tool to further materialize digital technologies and popular culture for the

national economy. In addition, they have tried to cultivate the nation's power through *Hallyu* as a way of expanding its leverage. Such intention can be explained with the notion of cultural diplomacy, which aims to take advantage of cultural products for disseminating new images of the nation, thereby strengthening its international influence, as Otmazgin (2008) argued.

To conclude, the Korean government, in particular, conservative administrations, has developed the Korean Wave as soft power in tandem with the national economy. It has not advanced *Hallyu* as a separate area, solely focusing on the increasing role of popular culture for the enhancement of national image, but has developed it as part of the national economy because the government believes that the growth of the national economy supported by the Korean Wave would be able to work as both hard power and soft power. The role of soft power developed by *Hallyu* in the Korean context, therefore, provides not only new theoretical implications emphasizing the nexus of soft power and hard power but also new policy implications, focusing on the increasing role of the nation-state in the realm of popular culture in the era of neoliberalism.

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Framing Corruption in the Chinese Government: A Comparison of Frames Between Media, Government, and Netizens

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The use of microblogging sites has increasingly posed a challenge to the Chinese Communist Party's ability to manipulate information and control its reputation in the face of malfeasance. Going beyond individual cases, this article uses framing theory and content analysis to examine and compare the four primary functions of frames employed by the news media, government, and netizens on the topic of government corruption. Results show partial differences in frames between netizens, government, and news media.

Keywords: framing, social media, microblogging, netizens, news media

In China, where the flow of information is tightly controlled and monitored, the popularity of microblogging sites presents a new challenge to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) stronghold on the creation and flow of information. As Abdelhay (2012) aptly observed, the prominence of social networking sites has resulted in users communicating and interacting in new ways, which can be potentially disruptive to current news and social structure. The cost of participating in online mass incidents is low for most netizens compared to the cost of traditional collective action (Bondes & Schucher, 2014), especially since there is a certain degree of safety in numbers when being involved in incidents that are critical of the CCP (Leibold, 2011). Consequently, China's netizens have readily seized upon the capabilities of microblogging sites to voice their opinions, expose incidents of, and engage in discussions about corruption and social injustice. More importantly, China's netizens have utilized the network capability of microblogging sites to spread information, news, and opinions more quickly than the government can censor. Such claims are supported by multiple incidents of netizen-initiated investigative journalism and exposé (Zheng, 2008), and numerous studies have documented the success of netizens in pressuring government officials to intervene and address incidents of corruption and injustice (Bondes & Schucher, 2014; Hung, 2013; Qiang, 2011; Sullivan, 2014; Tang & Sampson, 2012; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012; Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007).

Traditional news outlets in China largely fulfill the role of a "party-assigned mouthpiece" (Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007, p. 91). Despite having some "flexibility" to report on topics that fall "within gray areas" (Y. Tong & Lei, 2013, p. 308), journalists normally have to toe the line and practice self-censorship when reporting on sensitive events that may challenge the legitimacy of the CCP, therein limiting their ability to

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respond to public opinion or hold the government accountable for its actions (Qiang, 2011; Tang & Sampson, 2012; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012; Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007). Therefore, the capability afforded by microblogging sites in the hands of a generation of technologically savvy online users has had a profound effect on traditional news media. By providing a readily available channel for information and public opinion, microblogging sites allow netizens to bypass traditional media outlets (Hung, 2013).

Consequently, microblogging sites pose a challenge to the party's ability to manipulate information and control its reputation in the face of malfeasance, a function that traditional news outlets typically serve. Therefore, this article investigates the similarities and differences between how microblogging sites and traditional news outlets discuss the topic of corruption in the contemporary political system of China, an issue that did and still can pose a threat to the legitimacy of the CCP. Corruption in contemporary China is "the use of public authority and public resources for private interests" and "private benefit [which] includes not only personal gains, but also the interests of work units, departments and regions when they are given priority over public interests" (He, 2000, p. 244).

Focusing on a broad topic like corruption within the Chinese government would allow for a more complete understanding of how it is treated in the media and by netizens in general, as opposed to being limited to and bounded by the unique circumstances surrounding individual incidents about government corruption. Furthermore, the comparison between mainstream media coverage and online discussion will provide an opportunity to examine the possibilities and limits of microblogging technology in a political environment where information is tightly controlled.

Microbloggers' online discussions on topics like corruption are especially sensitive to the government because of its propensity to challenge the party's legitimacy. The problem of corruption within the Chinese government has been rather pervasive as "public officials have been the main perpetrators of corruption in China for the past 20 years" (Guo, 2008, p. 350). As explained by He (2000), "the authority and legitimacy of public officials depends on their using their power properly for the public good" (p. 260). If public officials abuse their power for personal gains at the expense of public interest, their personal legitimacy and authority will be affected negatively. However, if corruption was to spread into all departments and levels of the government, the Chinese Communist Party's image would be tarnished, leading to a loss of public support for authority.

The sensitivity of this topic to the Chinese government has to be understood in the context of its recent memory—the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Public outrage and condemnation of rampant corruption within government institutions and organizations led to widespread support for and participation in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 (He, 2000; Sun, 2001), one of the largest protests in the history of China (Cheng, 1990; Mason & Clements, 2002) as well as one that significantly threatened the existence of the one-party system. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, it is worth investigating whether online discussions of corruption on microblogging sites will differ between netizens and traditional news media in significant ways.

Literature Review

Aware that traditional media outlets are under the control of the CCP and may be subject to censorship, online media such as discussion forums, blogs, and microblogging sites are often the "first place people go to find the latest news and share experiences and opinions" when it comes to incidents that might portray the government in a negative light (Qiang, 2011, p. 56). Unlike traditional media outlets, which may be banned from reporting politically sensitive topics, online media often enjoy greater autonomy, circulating sensitive topics more freely (J. Tong & Zuo, 2013). Due to traditional news media's inability to freely report on stories of public interest, citizens often have to turn to online media to share their stories in the hope of garnering enough online support to pressure the authorities to address or resolve the issue (Y. Zhang & Tomlinson, 2012). Even in the absence of widespread news media coverage, netizens have been known to pressure authorities to respond favorably to their demands (Hung, 2013; Qiang, 2011).

The obvious implications of online mass incidents on the state have piqued the interest of scholars. Beyond the traditional research on information censorship and control in China, a growing number of studies examine the role of the Internet on online public discussion about political and social issues. However, few studies have examined the new technology of microblogging (Hung, 2013; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012) and its relationship with mainstream news media in China. Current studies instead focus on forums, Web comments, and blogs to examine this dynamic, which is not surprising due to the fairly recent introduction of microblogging sites such as Sina Weibo to the Chinese online public.

Furthermore, as Sullivan (2014) observed, existing research on the impact of online public opinion and citizen journalism has predominantly focused on case studies of specific online mass incidents, which had been selected for their outcomes—such as authorities responding favorably to or meeting the demands of netizens (see Bondes & Schucher, 2014; Harp, Bachmann, & Guo, 2012; Hassid, 2012; Hung, 2013; Li, 2010; Tang & Sampson, 2012; J. Tong & Zuo, 2013; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012; X. Zhou, 2009; X. Zhou, Chan, & Peng, 2008; Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007) instead of examining broader topics or issues. These studies of online mass incidents, particularly those on microblogging sites, have focused on the Internet's ability to promote political participation online, shape public opinion, and exert pressure on the government to intervene and resolve matters of injustice (Bondes & Schucher, 2014).

What is striking about the affordances of microblogging sites is how netizens' use of these sites has altered the dynamics between mainstream news producers and netizens who use microblogging sites to "counter, integrate or disseminate" mass media coverage of protests (Vicari, 2013, p. 475). In many instances, microblogging sites and traditional news outlets enjoy a symbiotic relationship. Research has found that, at times, netizens can provide leads and news stories for traditional news outlets through popular online discussions, and the involvement and support of mainstream news media can exert added pressure on the authorities to resolve issues (Tang & Sampson, 2012; J. Tong & Sparks, 2009; J. Tong & Zuo, 2013; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012; Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007). In addition, netizens can help sustain a news story or help it gain traction by sharing the story via their network of contacts (Hung, 2013; Tang & Sampson, 2012). Other times, traditional news media can lend credibility to netizen-led investigations by reporting on them (Xin, 2010).

Examining the characteristics of mass incidents on microblogs, Tong and Lei (2012) discovered that an important feature of microblogging is its close relationship with mainstream media outlets. Even though microblogging is itself able to garner immediate pressure from public opinion, the involvement of traditional media outlets can be beneficial (Y. Tong & Lei, 2012). Providing extensive coverage of the incident beyond the online media mainstream news outlets heightens pressure from public opinion and hastens the resolution of given incidents, and therefore has the power to force authorities to reverse decisions (Y. Tong & Lei, 2012). The mutually beneficial relationship between netizens and traditional news outlets is also bolstered in Tang and Sampson's (2012) discussion of the interaction between mainstream news media and online forums. Their study of three different online incidents led them to claim that "strong public opinion" provides "feedback" to traditional news media as a "strong collective voice," which in turn increases the "impact of public discussion" on news coverage (p. 464).

Crucially, netizens not only provide news topics for traditional news outlets to report on but offer journalists justifications to pursue politically sensitive issues. In fact, a strategy to avoid censorship and repercussions from the party is to leverage online opinion to justify journalists' news reports of the incident and how the incident is covered. This is exemplified by netizens' widespread interest in an incident, which leads to more critical coverage by traditional news outlets as politically sensitive topics or news angles can be legitimately taken up by the press (Tang & Sampson, 2012).

It must be noted that the differing relationship between traditional news outlets and netizens, as documented in current research thus far, is largely dependent on the specific incidents that the researchers chose to examine and how the incident is covered by the media. In a political climate where information is controlled and freedom of expression is limited, the interaction between netizens and traditional news media, as well as its outcome, is not always predictable. Of more relevance to our study is Y. Zhou and Moy's (2007) analysis of the interplay between traditional news media coverage and online public discussion, which found that netizens and traditional news media used significantly different frames to discuss issues of social justice—specifically during the "BMW case" (p. 84).

Considered one of the most salient topics online, the BMW case was one of class warfare and differential treatment by the judiciary system because of the accused's alleged powerful political connections (see Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007).[1] Zhou and Moy (2007) found that in discussing the BMW case, netizens used "aggressive frames" and called for "social reform," whereas the traditional media used "mild but constructive" frames and called the incident a "crisis to government credibility" (p. 93). They discovered that, even though there was evidence of netizens setting news frames early on, there was no evidence of the reverse happening, showing that netizens' discussions and interpretations of the issue—at least in the BMW case—is independent of traditional news media.

[1] Su Xiuwen, the wife of a successful, well-connected businessman, reportedly lashed out at a couple for accidentally scraping her BMW sedan with their onion cart. She later drove her car into the crowd, killing one of the couple and injuring 12 bystanders. Despite the severity of her crimes, the local court sentenced Su to a two-year jail sentence coupled with a three-year reprieve (Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007).

What was also interesting about Zhou and Moy's findings was the discovery that different news organizations played different roles; some acted as a mouthpiece of the CCP, whereas others acted as a watchdog, criticizing the party for a lack of credibility and calling for "a more transparent and responsible government" (p. 90). The sometimes favorable reaction of traditional news outlets to online mass incidents should be seen in the context of economic reforms that has liberated news media from their role as purely mouthpieces of the government in favor of audience appeal (Tang & Sampson, 2012). Indeed, Stockmann (2011) found that the tone of reporting by different news organizations on the same news topic varied according to their dependency on government subsidies. Despite considerations to appeal to audiences for commercial gains (de Burgh, 2003), the fundamental role of the mainstream media in China remained the preservation of political stability and confidence in the CCP regime (X. Zhang, 2006).

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

Hence, framing may provide a useful analytical lens for examining the differences in how corruption is discussed and treated on microblogging sites compared to traditional news media. Goffman (1974) refers to frames as the "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences (in Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007, p. 80). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) explain that, at its core, a frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. It is a process of "interpreting and expressing" a person's subjective understanding of an event or issue in relation to the person's "immediate environment" (Wang, 2013, p. 378). Rather than a single unified frame, frames often imply a range of interpretations, allowing for some extent of controversy among those who share a common frame (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Wang, 2013). Frames determine which aspect of an issue gains prominence, and which recedes into the background, leading to interpretations that benefit one side while hindering the other (Entman, 2003).

According to Entman (1993), framing involves selection and salience. To frame means 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" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). In other words, frame settings are important because they guide the audience on how to interpret, remember, evaluate, and choose to act upon an event. Entman (1993) explained that the typical primary functions of frames are to "define problem," "diagnose causes," "make moral judgments," and "suggest remedies" (p. 52). These frames are embedded in the text itself, which are manifested by the inclusion or omission of certain keywords, images, and sentences that "reinforce clusters of facts or judgments" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Therefore, the words, images, and sentences that make up the frame can be distinguished from the rest of the text by their ability to elicit support for or opposition to a particular side in an issue (Entman, 2003).

Frame Building

Frame building refers to the process of negotiating and creating frames under the influence of three major factors: journalistic practice, political influence, and cultural background. Therefore, a frame "might gain influence because it resonates with popular culture or a series of events, fits with media routines or practices, and/or is heavily sponsored by elites" (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009, p. 22).

Previous studies have suggested that five aspects of journalistic practice affect how news is framed in mass media: embedded social norms, internal pressures from the organization, external pressures from authorities, journalistic routines, and personal bias of journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). Political actors such as elites, governmental officials, and interest groups are actively engaged in a frame-building process to push frames that support their interest. As acknowledged earlier, journalistic practices are under the pressure of authorities; various studies have found increasing force from interest groups and policy makers that influenced news framing (Andsager, 2000; Nisbet, Brossard, & Kroepsch, 2003). Frames are often negotiated under certain cultural contexts. In other words, frames have cultural roots and need to resonate with certain cultures to have meaning. However, since frame creators such as journalists are unconsciously influenced by the culture they live in, the impact of cultural context on frame building is usually unnoticeable.

Traditional frame-building research was more concerned with internal factors, such as journalistic routines, in influencing news frames (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). As a result, internal factors were believed to be more influential than external ones, such as political actors, in shaping media frames. However, Lim and Seo (2009) pointed out that frames promoted by government have advantages over news frames in terms of reach and resources. Frames constructed by the government, which can reach a wider public, can exert much influence on a state or national level. Political officials are often the major source for news media when it comes to policy-related issues, and this reliance on political officials has resulted in issues being framed by them. Since public officials control information flow and decide whether a policy statement can be made public, government frames are likely to guide news media frames (Lim & Seo, 2009).

In the context of Chinese traditional news media, the CCP government may play a substantial role in influencing the types of frames that are adopted in the news media. Y. Zhou and Moy (2007) explained that journalists may experience external pressure from the CCP—for instance, political ideology, national interest, and political stability—which may play a greater role in news framing than the internal beliefs of journalistic values and practices. Hence, external pressure and fear of repercussion from the government are internalized in routine journalistic work, resulting in journalists adopting and promoting news frames that support and align with the government's ideals and expectations (Y. Zhou & Moy, 2007). Therefore, when studying news articles on *tanwu* (corruption) from a mainstream news agency, we propose:

H1: The primary functions of frames about corruption from solely governmental sources (i.e., government press releases) are similar to frames about corruption from mainstream media.

Reese (2007) developed the concept of a competing frame, defining it as a frame that contradicts the dominant frame in mainstream news media, which is compelling and hard to challenge. Wang (2013) expanded this idea and argued that in China, where mainstream media are tightly controlled by the government, there is a lack of voice that challenges the dominant frames in mainstream media; thus, social media provide a platform for competing frames to emerge and spread. Nisbet (2010) discussed the importance of studying framing in digital media as well. He believed that the focus of study in this area

would shift from the previous "transmission model of traditional news framing effects to a more interactive, social constructivist, and 'bottom up' model of framing" (p. 75).

Understanding the different mechanism between a transmission model and a bottom-up framing model, it is reasonable to assume that frames from a social media platform constructed by citizen journalists may be different from frames initiated by mainstream media or government. In China's case, as Y. Zhou and Moy (2007) proposed, those public frames on social media may not only be different from but challenging to the mainstream frames. In this study, Weibo's posts present an opportunity to test the differences and similarities between news frames and online public frames. To examine whether a difference in the frames on the politically sensitive topic of corruption exist between traditional news media and Weibo users in China, we propose:

H2: The primary functions of frames about corruption from microblogging sites are different from frames about corruption from mainstream media.

Method

To investigate the relationship between online public frames on microblogging sites and traditional news framing, we compared posts from Sina Weibo with Chinese language news articles from the Xinhua News Agency.[2] Considered the Twitter for Chinese users (Sullivan, 2014), Sina Weibo is one of the biggest commercial Internet corporations in China.[3] As a popular microblogging service that has "monopolize[d]" the market (Y. Tong & Lei, 2012, p. 297) in China, Sina Weibo is a good platform to examine online public discussions. Similarly, the Xinhua News Agency is one of China's largest traditional news organizations and is often known to be a party-controlled propaganda tool for the CCP (Hong, 2011; X. Zhang, 2006). As China's official news agency, Xinhua sets the news agenda promoted by the government, and its news content is often distributed to other news publications in China (Cheng, Golan, & Kiousis, 2015, Keck & Tiezzi, 2015). Hence, it is an appropriate medium to assess what the party wants readers to know about government corruption.

A data-scraping tool was used to mine the keyword *tanwu* ("corruption") from Sina Weibo during the period of September 1, 2012, to January 31, 2013.[4] This time frame was chosen because it contained a particularly active discussion of corruption by public officials and civil servants. During this time period,

[2] Although Lu (2013) found that television is the dominant channel for Chinese citizens to acquire political news, the choice of newspaper was more appropriate for our study due to comparable demographics (e.g., age, literacy) between Weibo and newspaper users. In addition, our analysis of Weibo posts and news articles are primarily text-based.

[3] Sina Weibo shares some similarities with Twitter, such as the 140-character limit, but it also has some differences. For instance, it combines "elements of bulletin board systems and blogs" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 27).

[4] About 1,000 posts from the total number of posts with the keyword *tanwu* were first randomly selected for each month. A sample of 60 posts was then randomly collected from this sample of 1,000 posts for each month.

netizen-led investigations, speculations, and overall fervent discussions about corrupt public officials led authorities to further investigate these online public allegations, resulting in the arrests of several public officials. Instead of focusing on specific corruption-related online incidents that occurred during this time period, 60 posts were randomly selected from each month until a sample of 300 posts was collected. Because these posts were not collected in real time, there is a good possibility that the population of posts from which this sample is drawn may have already been subjected to censorship.

Similarly, 300 Xinhua news articles with the keyword *tanwu* were randomly selected from Baidu Search Engine for the same time period. The pool of 300 news articles on Baidu is the result of its automated random selection process.[5] In total, 300 Weibo posts and 300 Xinhua news articles were coded by two coders: one of the authors and a second coder who was not familiar with the purpose of this study.

Content Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is Weibo posts and Xinhua news reports. Only articles and posts that were about corruption related to the Chinese government and party officials were coded. Because we were primarily interested in Weibo users' comments toward government corruption rather than using Weibo to acquire political information, we only coded the text of the posts and not links shared by Weibo users. Following Entman's (1993) definition of the four primary functions of frames, we developed a code book that guided the analysis of the data. Coders were asked to thoroughly review each article and tweet and were instructed to categorize the tweet and article based on the text's four primary functions: frames that define problem, frames that interpret causes, frames that make moral evaluations, and frames that suggest treatment recommendations. Entman (1993) suggested, "A single sentence may perform more than one of these four framing functions, although many sentences in a text may perform none of them. And a frame in any particular text may not necessarily include all four functions" (p. 52). Based on this understanding, the coders were asked to code for all four primary functions. In other words, if a tweet or news article had more than one primary function such as problem definition and casual interpretation, these two categories would be selected.

In addition, as Gamson and Modigliani (1989) explained, frames typically include a range of positions rather than a single one. Consequently, coders were also asked to categorize which specific frame was used to fulfill the four primary functions. For instance, if there was more than one possible cause of corruption mentioned in the article or tweet, coders were asked to code the article or tweet according to the predominant cause. Due to the close relationship between the CCP and mainstream press such as Xinhua news, the coders were also instructed to code for government-only news articles.[6] For the

[5] Baidu Search Engine uses its own automated selection process to randomly return a maximum of 300 articles during the time frame studied based on the specific keyword *tanwu*. The 300 articles were checked for reliability over several days to ensure that the articles retrieved by Baidu did not differ from day to day, and that Baidu showed the same 300 articles for the time period studied.

[6] The Chinese government website (www.gov.cn) lists various sources for information about corruption, and a substantial number of articles about corruption from the Xinhua News Agency are listed (http://new.sousuo.gov.cn/s.htm?t=gov&q=贪污).

purpose of this study, these government-only news articles are termed *governmental press releases*. Governmental press releases are marked by their characteristic of solely providing information and/or quotes from government sources. They can be distinguished from other news articles, because they are copies of fact sheets from the government with no interpretation or editing by the journalists. A typical article of this kind often begins with an opening sentence such as, "According to the central government . . ." and contains quotes from government sources.

After a period of training and pretests, the two coders independently coded 60 randomly selected posts and 60 news articles (20%) to test for intercoder reliability. The pretest samples were external to the actual samples analyzed. The percentage of agreement ranged from 93% to 97% for Weibo posts and from 97% to 100% for Xinhua news articles. Controlling for chance agreement using Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007), coefficients ranged from 0.89 to 0.95 for Weibo posts and from 0.94 to 1.00 for Xinhua news articles (see Table 1). Disagreements were resolved by reaching consensus through discussion. After testing for intercoder reliability, the two coders divided the remaining posts and Xinhua news articles, each coding 120 posts and 120 news articles.

Table 1. Intercoder Reliability.

	Weibo posts		Xinhua news articles	
Categories	Percent agreement	Krippendorff's α	Percent agreement	Krippendorff's α
Problem definition	93%	0.89	100%	1.0
Causal interpretation	95%	0.92	100%	1.0
Moral evaluation	97%	0.95	100%	1.0
Treatment recommendation	93%	0.89	97%	0.94
Governmental press releases			97%	0.94

Results

Of all the Weibo posts (n = 300) and Xinhua news articles (n = 300), over half were posts (n = 166) and news articles (n = 161) about corruption in contemporary Chinese government. This refers to party members, staff, or public officials belonging to or working for the CCP (i.e., judiciary, police department, and legislature). The remaining posts and news articles were about corruption in corporations or foreign countries, and these were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, of all the Xinhua news articles that were about governmental corruption (n = 161), 53 articles were identified as governmental press releases, and 108 articles were identified as conventional news articles (i.e., nongovernmental press releases).

Media and Government Frames

We found partial support for hypothesis 1, which postulated that the primary functions of frames about corruption from governmental sources are similar to frames about corruption in mainstream media (see Table 2). Frames about problem definition and casual interpretation were not significantly different between the news articles and governmental press releases. Both Xinhua news (95%) and government press releases (100%) defined the problem of corruption in contemporary Chinese government predominantly as an individual incident—an isolated case that is not related to the broader political environment in China. Similarly, both Xinhua news (95%) and government press releases (100%) blamed the cause of corruption on the public official's individual flaws such as personal greed.

The Xinhua News Agency employed significantly different frames from governmental press releases for frames about moral evaluation and treatment recommendation. However, the distribution of specific frames used to fulfill the primary function of moral evaluation showed similarities between the frames rather than differences. Both sources framed the actions of the government in addressing the problem of corruption positively. Both Xinhua news (90%) and governmental press releases (100%) evaluated the problem of corruption as one in which the government has already taken or is taking measures to solve the problem. In other words, the government was framed as being effective in curbing the problem of corruption—at least in terms of individual incidents of corruption committed by public officials. Ten percent of Xinhua news articles did not have the moral evaluation frame in their articles, which resulted in the overall primary function frame as being significantly different.

The treatment recommendation frame, on the other hand, showed significantly different frames between Xinhua news and governmental press releases, and the distribution of specific frames used to fulfill that primary function were also different. Most news articles (81%) mentioned punishment of public officials as a solution (either proposed or already enacted) to address the specific problem of corruption in the Chinese government. The remaining news articles (19%) proposed or wrote about solutions at a policy and law enforcement level to address the problem of corruption. Conversely, governmental press releases predominantly framed the solution to the problem as one that is targeted at a policy and law enforcement level (62%). The remaining press releases (38%) mentioned solutions aimed at the individual level such as punishment of public officials.

Media and Netizen Frames

We found support for hypothesis 2, which postulated that primary functions of frames about corruption from microblogging sites are different from frames about corruption from mainstream media (see Table 3). There were significant differences among all four primary function frames employed by Xinhua news articles and netizens. For instance, netizens tended to focus more on the problem of corruption than on solutions, and they are more critical of the government than the Xinhua News Agency. However, it is important to note that the distribution of frames showed similarities in the dominant frames used to define the problem and interpret the causes. The frames constructed by the Xinhua News Agency to fulfill the primary functions were largely consistent and showed clear dominance of one frame over another. On the other hand, netizens employed a wider variety of frames to fulfill the primary functions.

***Table 2. Media and Government Frames*.**

Frames	Xinhua news article	Governmental press releases	χ^2
Problem definition (%)			$\chi^2 = 2.532$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$
Organizational case			
Individual case	95%	100%	
Not defined[a]	5%		
Causal interpretation (%)			$\chi^2 = 2.532$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$
Political environment			
Individual flaws	95%	100%	
Not mentioned[a]	5%		
Moral evaluation (%)			$\chi^2 = 5.794$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$
Government taken or is taking control	90%	100%	
Government lacks political will			
Not mentioned[a]	10%		
Treatment recommendation (%)			$\chi^2 = 29.244$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$
System level			
Policy and law Enforcement level	19%	62%	
Individual level	81%	38%	
Not mentioned			
Number of news articles	108	53	

Note. Fisher's Exact Test for the problem definition, causal interpretation, and moral evaluation variables yield $p > 0.05$. Due to the lack of variability in the moral evaluation variable, we combined the categories *government taken or is taking control* and *government serving own interests* since these two categories are closer in meaning than *government serving own interests* and *lacking political will*. This also applies to the media and netizen frames.

a These cells have an expected count of less than 5. This is because none of the governmental press releases fit in more than one category.

Even though both Xinhua news articles (95%) and posts (52%) largely classify individual public officials as the problem for corruption (see Table 3), one that is not related to the broader political environment, 34% of posts also defined the problem as an organizational problem. This proportion of posts considered corruption a systemic problem; most government officials are seen as corrupt, and the problem is defined as an issue not with individual public officials but with the larger political structure or environment in China. Similarly, when interpreting the cause of corruption in the Chinese government, the majority of news articles (95%) and many posts (44%) assigned blame to the individual public official, framing the cause as a weakness in character or personal flaws. This is in contrast to 34% of posts that considered the broader political environment, such as lack of transparency and an effective regulation mechanism, as reasons for corruption.

In terms of moral evaluation, the majority of Weibo posts (54%) did not include this primary function. The posts that did, interestingly, framed the government as being effective in controlling or solving corruption (35%), a frame that is similar to the majority of Xinhua news articles (90%). Eleven percent of posts framed the government as lacking political will to control the problem. About half of the posts (49%) also did not employ the treatment recommendation frame. When that frame was used, the solution (both proposed and enacted) was to punish individual public officials (34%), a dominant frame that was also employed by Xinhua news (81%). Fourteen percent of posts recommended or wrote about policy changes as a solution to address the problem of corruption, and only 2% of posts called for solutions to be implemented on a system level such as broader political party reform.

Table 3. Media and Netizen Frames.

Frames	Xinhua news article	Weibo posts	χ^2
Problem definition (%)			$\chi^2 = 60.536$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$
Organizational case		34%	
Individual case	95%	52%	
Not defined	5%	14%	
Causal interpretation (%)			$\chi^2 = 75.286$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$
Political environment		34%	
Individual flaws	95%	44%	
Not mentioned	5%	22%	
Moral evaluation (%)			$\chi^2 = 79.376$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$
Government taken or is taking control	90%	35%	
Government lacks political will		11%	
Not mentioned	10%	54%	
Treatment recommendation (%)			$\chi^2 = 82.887$, df = 3, p < 0.01
System level[a]		2%	
Policy and law Enforcement level	19%	14%	
Individual level	81%	34%	
Not mentioned		49%	
Number of news articles	108	166	

[a] This cell has an expected count of less than 5, because none of the Xinhua news articles fit into this category.

Discussion

Reports on Corruption Present a Strategic Opportunity

Recognizing microblogging's potential challenge to mainstream news sources and its contribution to the understanding of online public discussion about corruption, this study compares frames that are salient on governmental press releases, Xinhua news articles, and Sina Weibo posts on the issue of corruption in China. Both governmental press releases and Xinhua news articles share the frame of defining the problem of corruption as an individual issue, a strategy that arguably benefits the party. By defining the problem of corruption as an individual rather than organizational problem, the media and government are both able to shift the blame away from the one-party system and onto the individual public official, in turn attributing the causes of corruption to personal reasons such as character weakness rather than a weakness in the system. This strategy employed by the government and mainstream media has to be understood in the context of how power is structured within the CCP government. Cai (2008) explained that the central government has delegated power to local governments, which also means shifting responsibility and blame to local government and public officials. Hence, "the central government holds local governments accountable by assigning responsibility directly to local leaders" (Cai, 2008, p. 416).

This power structure within the CCP government provides an explanation for the government's tolerance of corruption-related Weibo posts and news articles as well as punishment of public officials, in part because the government has anticorruption policies and has been making strides to reduce corruption. This is not surprising since the prevalence of corruption within the Chinese government is alarming to the extent that it is seen as the "greatest public concern behind unemployment" (He, 2000, p. 243). Hence, the Chinese government has a vested interest in controlling and deterring future corruption. Therefore, while it may appear counterintuitive to raise the salience of corruption as a problem by allowing the mainstream news articles to report on cases of corruption committed by public officials, the legitimacy of the central government may in fact be reinforced with increased media attention to corruption cases. Focusing attention and directing the public's anger toward local public officials has provided the central government an opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness in punishing local officials for their wrongdoing (another dominant frame in both governmental press releases and media). Hence, the central government is able to construct an image of reform as well as reduce and redirect the social grievances of the people away from the government (J. Tong & Zuo, 2013).

Limited Role of the Press in China

It is worth noting that the news articles differed from the government press releases in a significant way when it came to recommending solutions to the problem of corruption. While the government releases overwhelmingly proposed or mentioned solutions targeted at the policy and legal level, such as implementing tougher sentences and stricter regulation (a proactive measure), most news articles emphasized punishment of individual public officials (a reactive measure). This difference could be explained by the role of mainstream media in China. Unlike media in democratic countries, the role of the media in China is to serve the interests of the CCP government in maintaining political stability and

reinforcing authority. As a result, mainstream media in China may be limited in its ability to make any suggestions on policy changes. In the case of addressing corruption, they may be limited to merely reporting the results (i.e., punishment) of public officials who have been found guilty of corruption instead of proposing recommendations on policy or legal change.

Fragmented (Online) Public: Competing Frames

While the frames employed by both the media and governmental press releases remain fairly consistent across our sample, the frames employed by netizens had a wider variation, reflecting what Wang (2013) conceptualized as a fragmented public in contemporary China. Yu (2011) argued that today's media system in China has been diversified by advanced media technology and is no longer "an organic whole" that merely functions as the mouthpiece of the CCP government (p. 70); and neither are the Chinese media audiences the "passive Mao-indoctrinated masses" Western scholars once thought them to be (p. 68). This diversity was a result of a fragmented society, further intensified by China's marketization that unequally benefited one portion of the population over another. Since online frames constructed by netizens are impacted by one's personal experience, education level, and other factors related to the broader social, economic, and political environment, Wang (2013) argued that the inequality and fragmentation in society "translate into the uptake and penetration of digital media" (p. 377).

Among the diverse frames reflected in the Weibo posts were prominent competing frames against dominant frames employed by the media and governmental press releases—frames that directly challenged the authority and legitimacy of the CCP government. As Y. Tong and Lei (2012) acknowledged, the government is often viewed with skepticism and negativity by the general Chinese public to the extent that as long as an incident is related to the government, the public has come to believe there must be some form of injustice involved. As seen in the results, there were clear sentiments of netizens' cynicism toward the actions of the central government presented in many frames, accusing the CCP government as a whole of being corrupt and lacking political will to solve the problem of corruption.

Media Environment in China

It is important to recognize that the existence of competing frames online bolsters the argument that online public dissent is sometimes tolerated to a certain degree in China. Cai (2008) explained that the response of the state to popular online dissent often relies on the government's perception "of the costs and benefits associated with the choice of a particular response" (p. 414). The government recognizes that excessive repression or force will be counterproductive in a digital era when online popular dissent cannot be easily controlled and may have the countereffect of fueling resentment and damaging the legitimacy of the CCP (Cai, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that the CCP government would allow the Internet to serve as a channel for netizens to express their resentments and opinions in a nonthreatening manner to the government as long as they are contained online and do not threaten to lead to organized opposition off-line. MacKinnon (2011) called this phenomenon a "networked authoritarianism," where "an authoritarian regime embraces and adjusts to the inevitable changes" brought by the Internet (p. 33).

However, as MacKinnon (2011) pointed out, while netizens may feel less oppressed online, the government's strategy of monitoring netizens' activity online, censoring and manipulating online conversations, has impacted netizens' ability to organize a substantial movement against the CCP. Other scholars have also observed that the Chinese government has adapted to the technological changes brought forth by the decentralized control of the Internet and has employed various forms and tactics of control and censorship in response to online political dissent as well as to direct public opinion (Abbott, 2012; Hung, 2013; Li, 2010; MacKinnon, 2011; Qiang, 2011; Sullivan, 2014; Tang & Sampson, 2012; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012; Y. Zhang & Tomlinson, 2012).

According to the results of our study, despite the variation of frames, there were still large percentages of frames employed in Weibo posts that were similar to frames in Xinhua articles and governmental press releases, such as defining the problem of corruption at the individual level and believing that the government was effective in controlling the problem. This may be the result of online censorship, which not only blocks but guides online public opinion. Therefore, highly contentious posts may not have been captured in our sample due to censorship. King, Pan, and Roberts (2013) estimated that the central government employs between 250,000 and 300,000 commentators commonly known as "50 cent party members" to manipulate online discussion (p. 326). In addition, government institutions and officials have developed an extensive Web presence to communicate directly with netizens. Numerous studies have shown that online portals often have to stick to the official government reports and delete information or block accounts that are perceived to be harmful to the government (Qiang, 2011; Tang & Sampson, 2012; Y. Tong & Lei, 2012). Such media strategies adopted by the government may limit the diversity in netizens' opinions (Lu et al., 2014). This is especially true when the government fears that online dissent can no longer be contained online. Therefore, the proportion of Weibo posts within each frame may not fully represent online public sentiment.

On occasions where the government sees the threat of mobilization off-line, netizens have been arrested for encouraging subversion of state power (Sullivan, 2014). Other times, the government stamps out any potential for a rebellion by limiting and controlling its ability to gain momentum online (Leibold, 2011). It may be that netizens are aware of online censorship and surveillance, and this awareness may temper their actions on Weibo. For instance, a number of Weibo posts were ambiguous in their description of corruption and avoided using the words associated with the CCP government, which may be the result of fear of repercussion. In addition to the fear of repercussion, the lack of alternative information sources may make it difficult for the public to think beyond what is presented in the news media and challenge the dominant frame or interpret the incident differently.

Limitations and Future Research

Although our study yielded interesting results, our sample size of Weibo posts and news articles is but a tiny drop in the population of posts and news articles about corruption in the Chinese government during the time period studied. In addition, without being able to collect Weibo posts in real time, our sample may not accurately represent online public sentiment about governmental corruption, and results should be interpreted with caution.

While this study focused on the comparison of frames among government, media, and netizens, future research could attempt to explain why such variations exist. For instance, surveys could take into account the diverse media sources that netizens use to acquire political information (see Lu, 2013) to infer frame differences by matching results with Weibo posts. Additionally, time-series analysis could probe into the effectiveness of news frames in shaping netizens' frames of government corruption.

In this study, government press releases were separated from news articles even though they were selected from the sample of news articles. This was done to distinguish information provided solely by government sources and other types of news writing due to the role of the press as political mouthpieces of the Chinese government. Future research can investigate government frames that are directly analyzed from government official statements, documents, and announcements.

Conclusion

Even though the affordances of innovative technologies such as microblogging might present a challenge to the legitimacy of the CCP government, in the case of articles and posts about corruption in the Chinese government, our study found few differences in frames between netizens and news media. It is likely that external forces such as governmental control and censorship may continue to shape and guide online public opinion as well as mainstream media frames. This is not to imply that microblogging sites have not changed the dynamics between state and mainstream media. As previously mentioned, many studies have shown instances of netizens circumventing online censorship to broadcast cases of social injustice as well as mainstream news media leveraging netizens' online opinion to report cases not sanctioned by the CCP government. Because those instances were often bounded by their unique characteristics, our study attempts to go beyond individual cases and focus on the broad topic of government corruption to illuminate frame differences and similarities between netizens, government, and news media.

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Information Control and Political Impression Management: A Dramaturgical Analysis of the Chinese Premier's Press Conference

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This study takes a dramaturgical approach to explore the mode of political impression management as a result of the interactions between the Chinese government and journalists at the Chinese Premier's Press Conference (CPPC) over the past 20 years. It argues that an overall script for every role is planned at the backstage to avoid uncertainty and help set up what might be performed and expected on the front stage. Notwithstanding, some flexible arrangements at the front are also specifically designed to deal with accidents. This art of impression management by the Chinese government means the received knowledge generated by the traditional propaganda model that is often linked to China's internal and external behaviors needs to be revisited. This study offers longitudinal evidence to rethink how and why the Chinese government manages public information and its impression at the international level.

Keywords: political impression management, symbolic interaction, dramaturgy, press conference, China

Given the development of mediated politics, politicians are increasingly expected to appear and perform before large audiences at multiple stages, for example, in media interviews, debates, and press conferences (Craig, 2016). As public encounters between politicians and journalists is important to political life today, what has been said and what kind of image has been presented are always carefully managed at those stages (Edwards, 2007; Kumar, 2003). This study seeks to explore such information control and impression management processes in a Chinese-specific context, with a focus on the Chinese Premier's Press Conference (CPPC) since 1993.

The adaption and development of the political leader's press conference in China does not exist in a vacuum. It can be tied to calls for "a more open and transparent government" that coincides with the development of a prosperous economy (Chen, 2011, p. 77). Within this context, the CPPC, first introduced

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in 1988, attempted to use Western governmental techniques to coordinate external propaganda and has been institutionalized as an annual media event since 1993 (Yi & Chang, 2012). On this stage, the Chinese premier is the lead actor while other Chinese political figures and journalists are actors with discrepant roles. Of course, the interaction between Chinese authorities and journalists not only occurs in those few moments of the press conference at the front stage but also occurs backstage for preparations. This is particularly true for the CPPC because almost every question at the conference is preselected backstage. Why do Chinese political leaders adopt the form of a press conference but also seek to control the information delivered at the conference backstage? How do Chinese officials organize the CPPCs? And to what extent does the interaction between Chinese officials and journalists determine the performance at the front stage?

This study seeks to explore backstage interaction between the Chinese government and various journalists, and their public behaviors on the front stage, to understand how Chinese political images have been managed through press conferences over three premiers and four administrations[2] from 1993 to 2012. Informed by a sociological perspective on politics, especially a dramaturgical one (e.g., Borreca, 1993; Welsh, 2006), I consider the performance at the CPPCs as a social process of organizing resources and information. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the Chinese political leader's public activities and the organization of Chinese political life from a another aspect; that is, how Chinese political power is converted into authority through controlling, influencing, and sustaining definitions of a situation in the context where others can also only act in a prescribed manner.

A Dramaturgical Analysis of Political Impression Management

In Goffman's (1959) classic dramaturgical work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* he proposes a theatrical analogy to explore how performers present themselves to particular audiences and attempt to control the definition of the situations for impression management. For Goffman (1959), the definition of the situation is a collective and interactive one, so everyone has to adopt more or less the same definition of the situation and change their behavior to ensure that the performance goes on. In other words, people have their own expectations of social reality and the constraints they will encounter in their interactions. At the same time, people are able to actively adapt their plans to various situations, even though their expectations may not be fulfilled, or they can refuse to accept the definition of the situation and break off interaction. Thus, the impression management process builds up in an interaction order that is "predicted on a large base of shared cognitive presuppositions" (Goffman, 1983, p. 5).

Goffman's sociological dramaturgical approach advances impression management studies in two important aspects: first, impression management is studied within social interaction so that it is considered as a complex interactive process rather than a static state; and second, the impression management process involves not only rules and institutional mechanisms but also cognitive and moral underpinnings (Riggins, 1990). The importance of emphasizing the cognitive and emotional rules during the interaction is that it leads to an active conception of the actors. According to Goffman (1959), to

[2] From 1993 to 2012, the CPPC has gone through three premiers and four administrations: Li Peng, Zhu Rongji, and Wen Jiabao (Wen had two administrations).

sustain a particular definition of the situation to manage impressions, the performers may actively make use of various defensive or protective tactics to save the show. For example, in the case of the CPPC, how to choose journalists as partners to follow the designed script to ask questions and how to keep this "secret" from the public audience constitutes important tactics for Chinese officials in impression management. This is not an easy task, however. Journalists from different places and media organizations have different preliminary definitions of the particular CPPC based on the information that is available to them. Some of them may seriously challenge the official censorship of questions and so may be unwilling to work in the ways proposed by organizers. How do the Chinese official organizers and journalists, as participants, understand the performance of the CPPC? How do they achieve temporary agreements for the front stage performance through their communication backstage? Those are interesting questions in regard to the CPPC impression management process and its cognitive and emotional bases. Considering such questions directs our attention away from traditional views of organizational activities, which usually focuses on formal, routine, and taken-for-granted rules (Mangham & Overington, 1982) and toward informal and interactive factors.

However, for impression management in the political field, the Goffmannian approach has limitations. As Tuchman (1978) argues, since Goffman is interested in an individual's moods and gestures from one situation to another, he does not identify organizational and professional resources in organizing experience (p. 195). According to Hall (1972), political impression management involves "two processes of power": (1) information flow control, which refers to process of gathering intelligence, maintaining secrecy, and preparing the performance; and (2) symbolic mobilization of support, which includes using symbols for persuasion (pp. 54–69). This occurs in situations that are characterized by collective goals, consensus, and cooperation rather than those characterized by private goals, dissensus, and competition (Hall, 1972). Take the CPPC, for example. Its organization is affected by a network of organizational relationships, especially the changing Chinese state–press relations. How do the media organizations' different structural relationships with the Chinese government and their organizational resources influence on their questioning opportunities at the CPPC? Why do some journalists have more opportunities than others over the past 20 years? This study also seeks to answer those questions.

In sum, I view the impression management at the CPPC as a process of achieving a particular kind of collective interaction order through negotiation or interaction between the Chinese officials and journalists at the back and front stages. To find out how information control operates backstage and how the performance is delivered frontstage, three sets of research questions are asked:

RQ1: *The context. Why is the information control process important for the impression management of the CPPC? How do the structural relationships between the Chinese government and journalists influence the impression management of the CPPC? How do journalists from different places view the conference differently?*

RQ2: *Backstage and preparation. What kind of preparation is done before the conference? How are the roles assigned to different journalists? How is the script prepared for different roles?*

RQ3: Performances at the front. How is the front stage set? To what extent does the backstage preparation determine the frontstage performance? How do Chinese officials manage the performance on stage? What happens if accidents take place on stage?

Method

The evidence of this study was interweaved from in-depth interviews with domestic and foreign journalists and relevant government officers. In total, 35 journalists who have attended or taken part in reporting the CPPC and two important government officials related to the organization of the CPPC were interviewed in the past three years. These 35 journalists come from 32 different media organizations, of which 10 were Chinese government-affiliated media organizations, seven were local Chinese media organizations, and 15 were foreign news agencies. Among them, 21 journalists have attended the CPPC more than once, and 10 of them have asked questions to the premier at the conference. All the interviews were face to face, except for one case that was done by telephone. Most of the interviews took place in coffee shops or restaurants near the journalists' place of work. Generally, the interviewees selected the locations. With the promise of confidentiality, I taped the conversations, except for those of two informants. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 45 and 150 minutes. The language of the interviews was either Mandarin Chinese or English, depending on the preferred language of interviewees. The interviews of journalists mainly aimed to address their preparation when attending the CPPC, including how they obtained invitations, prepared questions, and received an opportunity to pose a question. Interviews asked for their perspectives toward the change of the CPPC over the years as well (see Appendix).

The two government officials I interviewed held or used to hold positions as directors of relevant government departments. They have many years of experience in organizing these conferences for the state leaders and are very familiar with the rules and procedures of such conferences. To gain their trust, I met my interviewees many times and engaged in conversations during tea or dinnertime, when they felt most comfortable. I was able to conduct two interviews with one of them, each of which lasted over 60 minutes. The interviews of officials focused on the organization of the CPPC, referring to the cooperation and conflict among political organs while organizing conferences, and the official considerations of the CPPC, including how to control questions and manage uncertainty.

I took interview notes for each interview and transcribed the recorded raw data within a week after each interview. After all these interviews, I compared all responses about the same subject and developed a theme, for example, negative feelings of foreign journalists toward opportunities to raise questions, when multiple answers were pushing one interpretation of reality. I highlighted those themes in different colors so I could return to the evidence when I needed them.

The CPPC Context for Impression Management

Behaviors always occur in overlapping contexts, within which both the actors' embedded structural relationships and their awareness and interpretation to those situational conditions are included (Maines & Charlton, 1985). Referring to the CPPC's case, because officials and the media stand in different

positions for interpreting the press conference, multiple factors, such as shared or conflicting goals, differential access to resources, and rule ambiguity, all work together to influence the impression management at the CPPC.

The Structural Contexts

In post-Mao Chinese politics, a very pragmatic strategy of "performance legitimacy" has been developed (Zhao, 2009; Zhu, 2011). Such performance legitimacy consists of three major bases: "moral performance," "economic performance," and "the defense of national interest" (Zhao, 2009, p. 424). Thus, it pushes Chinese top officials to work harder to ensure high-speed economic development and expand benefits to the public, on the one hand, while behaving like moral leaders of society, on the other hand. In this context, "public opinion" has been increasingly emphasized, and the ways and forms of the Chinese government to manage press relations have changed accordingly (Hung, 2012).

Although it is generally accepted that the Chinese media serves as a tool for the government to mobilize the public (e.g., Chang, 2002; Lee, 1994), it is reductive to conclude that this is still the case in today's environment. In fact, the media have increasingly gained latitude to pursue self-interested goals and may bargain with authorities in some areas within the context of the ongoing reform era (Pan, 2010; Zhang, 2011). For instance, Huang (2007) argues that media regulations in China have transited from "a rigid totalitarian state control mode" to "a state–media–market–society negotiation model" (p. 405). Here, negotiation can be understood as a bargaining process, with each side having to more or less consider the others' interests and possible reactions before making its own decision (Huang, 2007). This became truer as a result of the SARS crisis in 2003, from which the government learned the lesson that strict control of information in mainstream media is not practical in the Internet era (Tai & Sun, 2007). As a result, the impact of structural factors on the Chinese state–press relationship have become more situational, diverse, and defused.

On the other hand, it is also incorrect to regard the foreign media in China as an extremely critical power in relation to the Chinese government, despite the fact that their issue priorities collide concerning some sensitive topics, such as June 4, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Chinese dissidents (Fackler, 2007). In fact, the governing logic of Chinese security authorities' concerning foreign correspondents is quite simple: They are allowed to do their jobs as they like most of time, unless they cross a sensitive line (Epstein, 2012). As a foreign reporter shares:

> In the past, when a crisis happened, the usual way of the Chinese government in managing news was limiting our accesses to news sources in China. After several events, for example, the Tibet Riot, I think, the government understands that cutting off news sources can no longer prevent a big story from getting out to the rest of the world. (Informant F02, personal communication, July 25, 2011)

As a result, the Chinese government is using more sophisticated public relation techniques to manage relationships with foreign correspondents, creating formalized channels for conversations, and providing news sources (Brady, 2008). The CPPC can also be viewed as such a public relations technique.

As a formalized platform for the Chinese premier to communicate with foreign and domestic journalists, the CPPC has undergone a change from the preinstitutionalized process, during which its happenings depend on the personal characters of the Chinese premier and on specific historical context, to the semi-institutionalized stage, where both formal structure and informal relationships have been involved since 1998 (Yi, 2016). In other words, today's CPPC operates according to those institutional patterns that have evolved over time and rely on personal communication backstage to determine some aspects regarding the control of information.

The Situational Contexts

Because the CPPC has been the only annual press conference regularly held by Chinese political leaders for both international and domestic media, its organization has been set very strictly. The attendance of journalists is by invitation only, and their questions to the premier are prearranged. Every named journalist can ask a maximum of two questions, and follow-up questions are not allowed. On average, the CPPC lasts about one to two hours, with about 11 or 12 opportunities for questioning the Chinese premier at the conference. In other words, only 11 or 12 journalists can directly raise their questions to a Chinese premier in a public space once a year.

However, the Chinese journalists and foreign journalists have shown respectively different attitudes over the definitions of the situation projected by the Chinese government, due to their different structural relationships. For the Chinese media and journalists, most of them consider the question opportunity an honor and a chance to improve their own images. As a journalist from a Chinese medium recalls, "It surely makes a difference if the premier would allow us to ask a question at the press conference. We will highlight our newspaper's name in the news title, like: 'premier answered the question from a Newspaper X journalist" (Informant J17, personal communication, May 7, 2012). On the one hand, the commercial reform of Chinese media in recent years has resulted in Chinese media impressions playing a prominent role in markets. On the other hand, the Chinese media's overall properties and positions in relation to the core power system limit their roles at the CPPC. As another journalist from a Chinese central media organization points out:

> To decide what to ask, we would, firstly, hold an internal meeting to discuss the year's hot issues. After this, we submitted three to four topics and they replied us a few days later. Surely, we have to follow their suggestions even though I personally preferred not to. Then, we held another internal meeting to focus on questioning skills, which my boss considered more important for our media organization. (Informant J19, personal communication, May 11, 2012)

It is another story for foreign media organizations. Although they fundamentally challenge the logic of news censorship in China, they still have to follow such settings as a part of the rules of the game if they want to ask questions at the CPPC. As an experienced foreign correspondent said, "It is good for us to ask questions, but it is not central. Because generally, if I don't ask, someone will still ask similar questions because these are points of interest for the Western media" (Informant F04, personal communication, August 1, 2011). Thus, it is more important for a foreign journalist to ask the question

that he or she intends to ask. As another foreign correspondent puts, "I wouldn't change the question to be allowed a question. I wouldn't compromise my journalistic ethics or journalistic standards" (Informant F16, personal communication, May 12, 2012).

In sum, the situational context involves multiple and complicated considerations by participants. Because the acts of giving a question opportunity to a journalist has different meanings for different media organizations and journalists, it is important for the Chinese officials, the on-stage performers, to carefully design every role for the overall script to avoid incidents in impression management.

Backstage and Preparation

In the performance of a press conference, journalists play an important role in controlling the message. Take the U.S. presidential press conferences as an example; aggressive questions from journalists have brought various challenges to the on-record president (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). It forces the president to use some informal mechanisms, for instance, the daily gaggle between the reporters and press secretary, to predict questions and maintain a sense of control over the interaction (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2013; Kumar, 2007). For the CPPC, the Chinese premier and his officials prepare the roles and the script backstage, where secrets are kept from the audience.

Preparing the Roles

In a performance, roles are discrepant in terms of their function, information available, and regions of access (Goffman, 1959, p. 145). Thus, once an audience is allowed backstage, his or her role is changed. According to Goffman (1959), there is a role called "shill," who acts as an ordinary audience member but in fact works with the performers (p. 146). In the case of the CPPC, because the organizer wants every question from journalists to be prearranged, the role of "shill" is specially needed for the show. However, not every journalist may agree right away with Chinese officials to play such a role, so multiple rounds of interaction between the two sides usually occurs backstage.

Initially, the Chinese official organizer will divide 11 to 12 question opportunities at the conference into several approximate categories: four to five for well-known media organizations from developed countries, one for Hong Kong and one for Taiwan, and leaving the last four to five opportunities for the Chinese media or some otherwise excluded candidates. After that, the corresponding governmental departments will contact journalists through a bureaucratic structure. For example, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) are responsible for foreign correspondents while the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) and Taiwan Affairs Office (TWAO) take care of journalists from those regions, respectively. However, lacking a fully institutionalized structure (Yi & Chang, 2012), this process of choosing journalists largely relies on past experience and personal relationships that correspondent officers possess.

Table 1. Top 15 Media Organizations That Have Mostly Asked Questions at the CPPC, 1993–2012.

Rank	Media	Countries or Regions	# of Questions Asked at the CPPC
1	CCTV	Mainland	18
2	Xinhua	Mainland	15
3	People's Daily	Mainland	12
4	CNN	U.S.	10
4	FT	UK	10
5	China National Radio	Mainland	9
6	Lianhe Zaobao	Singapore	7
6	AFP	France	7
6	Wall Street Journal	U.S.	7
7	Reuters	UK	6
7	TASS	Russia	6
8	TVB	Hong Kong	5
8	NHK	Japan	5
8	Phoenix	Hong Kong	5
8	UDN	Taiwan	5

As a result, such opportunities turn out to be centered on just a few media organizations over years (see Table 1). Overall, journalists from CCTV have asked 18 questions over those 20 years of the conference, which means that the Chinese premier has taken questions from CCTV journalists almost every year with the exception of two years. Xinhua News Agency and *People's Daily* represented the other two top central media organizations in Mainland China that also have a high number of opportunities to ask questions. As a Chinese journalist recalls, "Usually, the three top central media representatives are guaranteed question opportunities while other central Chinese media will take turns to ask the remaining question for Chinese media every year" (Informant J12, personal communication, July 18, 2011). This selection process mirrors the pecking order of the Chinese media. But more important, the questions from central media can be trusted to avoid accidents that may damage the impression of the premier.

At the same time, we find similar patterns in foreign journalists' questioning opportunities as well. CNN has had 11 opportunities and the *Financial Times* 10, which means that every two CPPCs would have at least one question from these two media organizations. Going through the list of foreign media organizations that have asked questions at the conference, journalists from developed countries—especially from popular financial media organizations—have had more opportunities than those from undeveloped countries and small media organizations. However, those media organizations that are considered to be unfriendly to China, such as *The New York Times*, BBC, and *The Times* of London did not

get opportunities to ask questions. The relationship between the media organization and the Chinese government plays an important part here. As a journalist who has asked questions at a CPPC recollects:

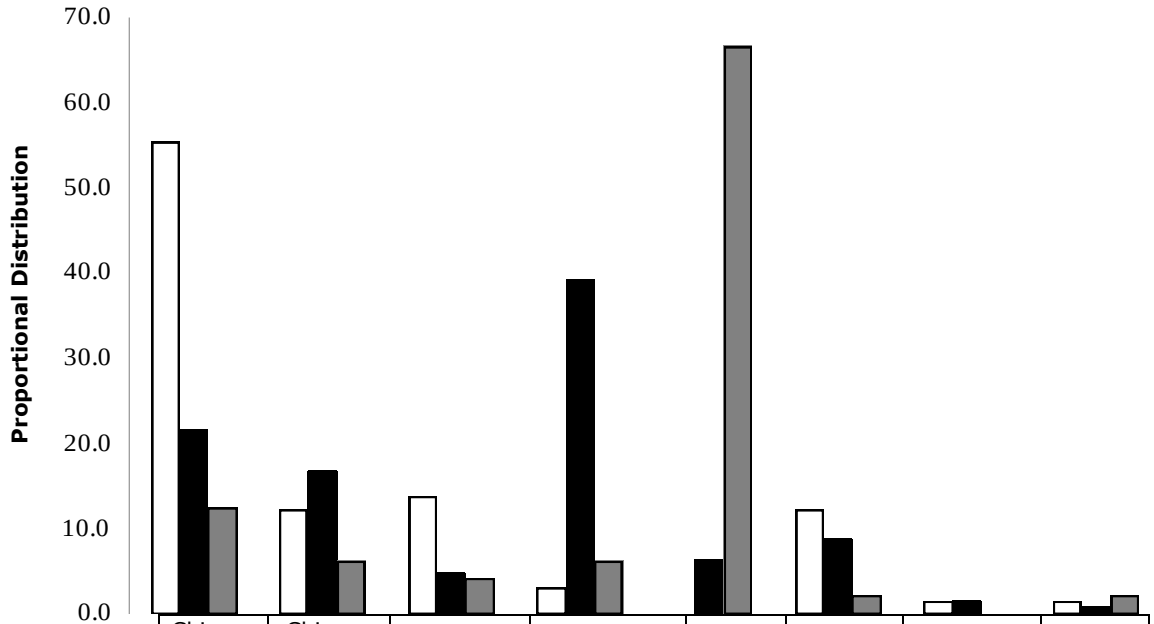
> I know another media organization has asked for question opportunities for many years through "official" channels, that is, their leaders communicate with those governmental departments. But I got it done through my personal way by accident. These are basically two different methods to get those opportunities. (Informant J18, personal communication, May 10, 2012)

Therefore, rather than choosing a new partner to partake in the performance together, Chinese officials tend to choose journalists they have become familiar with over years. This explains why the now retired CNN Beijing Bureau Chief Jaime FlorCruz, the longest serving foreign correspondent in China, has had the most question opportunities at the CPPC over the past 20 years. As Goffman (1959) argues, one important defensive attribute for impression management is to choose a teammate that is loyal and disciplined. Thus, this selection process mainly depends on a general framework of the performing team. As an official points out, a general unwritten selection rule probably includes "the coverage," "the audience" and "the authority" of that media organization (Informant G01, personal communication, May 15, 2012). However, selecting some short-listed media organizations or journalistic candidates only means a start of negotiations. The selection framework keeps change while the interaction goes on. At this point, the script for every role must be taken into consideration before making a decision.

Preparing the Script

How journalists play their roles in the performance is firmly related to what questions they may ask. For Chinese officials organizing the CPPC, these questions represent the messages that have to be delivered to both the international and domestic public. All questions are carefully prescreened and have gone through discussions between the two sides many times. To probe the journalists' interests, Chinese officials do not limit the range of topics and ask journalists to provide three to four questions that they are interested in. In fact, once journalists agree to reply, they have already made a concession to the officials because they are offering multiple choices for the officials to retain the power to make decisions. To choose this one question from a particular candidate, Chinese officials rely on their judgment of the character of the media organization in question and gradually develop a list of topics as a whole, but with continued revisions in tune with the interaction. As an experienced foreign journalist recalls:

> We knew some topics ahead of time at the coordinated meeting for candidates, which was held one or two days before the CPPC. But we did not know which questions would be asked by whom because it would be changed even in the last minute. (Informant F05, personal communication, Aug 11, 2011)



	Chinese economic policy	Chinese political affairs	Government activities	International relations	Regional policy	Social issues	National law	Others
Media from Mainland	55.4	12.3	13.8	3.1	0.0	12.3	1.5	1.5
Size (*n*)	36	8	9	2	0	8	1	1
Foreign Media	21.6	16.8	4.8	39.2	6.4	8.8	1.6	0.8
Size (*n*)	27	21	6	49	8	11	2	1
Hong Kong and Taiwan Media	12.5	6.3	4.2	6.3	66.7	2.1	0.0	2.1
Size (*n*)	6	3	2	3	32	1	0	1

Figure 1. Different concerns between different media, 1993–2012.

Figure 1 displays the different patterns of topics of questions asked by Hong Kong and Taiwan media, domestic media, and foreign media organizations at the CPPC over the past 20 years. For Chinese journalists, over 50% of their questions are about Chinese economic policy. But at the same time, few of their questions refer to international relations or regional issues. Questions about international relations are designed to be assigned to foreign correspondents whereas journalists from Hong Kong and Taiwan are limited to the topics about regional policies (66.7%).

Furthermore, topics about Chinese political affairs, governmental activities, and social issues, which might contain some sensitive topics, have also been carefully arranged. For example, only 12.3% of Chinese journalists' questions are concerned with Chinese politics while foreign journalists have asked more about such topics, but still only account for 16.8% of their questions in total. This does not mean that journalists are not interested in Chinese political affairs. Instead, it shows that topics related to political issues in China have been strictly manipulated and designed through the presubmission process backstage. However, it is wrong to say that the Chinese government is afraid to answer political questions, because sometimes we can find that the organizers themselves have introduced such topics into the conference. As an informant provides:

> Sometimes, I could not imagine that journalist from the central media would ask about such sensitive topics at the conference. But later, I heard that it was not an accident but due to a special agenda from a political leader. (Informant J01, personal communication, July 2, 2011)

However, questions contain not only topics but also frames. It is unsurprising that the officials and the media share different "frames" toward a particular question topic because they may have different definitions of the situation that affect their interests in performing at the CPPC. Some tactics are used by journalists to avoid the official side's manipulations. As a journalist says, "You could just submit some general topics but try to hide some sensitive meanings. When you raise the question on the spot, you could revise it or add meanings through some words without changing the topic" (Informant F10, personal communication, September 1, 2011).

Therefore, a journalist may not completely follow the commitments made with the officials backstage before the conference. The official side, to avoid uncertainty as much as possible, has to carefully select people as representatives and position them with a proper topic in a friendly form. However, to settle these matters, a balance between "who can ask" and "what to ask" is difficult to achieve. As a foreign correspondent recalls,

> The MFA officer called my cell phone directly and asked if I would attend the conference. I said I was attending and he asked if I would like to ask a question. Later, I e-mailed them a question about democracy and direct election and he called me back a few days later and asked if I could change the question. I said it was the only question I wanted to ask, and he said he would discuss it with the premier's office and let me know later. Later, he let me know that the premier would be happy to answer the question. So I asked it. (Informant F16, personal communication, May 12, 2012)

This story highlights a dilemma for the Chinese government in negotiating with foreign journalists in that journalists from well-known media organizations in Western countries do not consider the opportunity as a favor and will not compromise their journalistic principles. Thus, to include these journalists in the CPPC performance, the officials have to lay down their restrictions on question topics. However, most of the time, it is difficult for the officials to sacrifice partners with whom they have good relationships.

As I mentioned before, opportunities are divided according to groups of media organizations. In addition to the guaranteed opportunities to each group, there are also some alternative opportunities to ask questions that are not determined according to the group within which the media organization is located, but the relationship between the media organization and the organizers. Lacking even unwritten rules at this point, in some cases, many decisions might be revised at the last minute. As an informant recollects:

> That year there were already four Chinese media and one Hong Kong media organizations. One more opportunity was intended to be given to another Hong Kong media organization, but the night before the conference it was changed to a Chinese journalist who did not show up at the coordinating meeting. Because there had been no time to prepare answers to new questions, that journalist asked those questions submitted by that Hong Kong media organization. That Chinese journalist must have used a very strong public relations tactic to do this. (Informant J19, personal communication, May 11, 2012)

This demonstrates the different meanings of "who can ask" and "what to ask" for participants in the situational context: foreign journalists pay more attention to the content (what kind of questions they can ask) while the Chinese journalists consider the form (question opportunity) as more important. Chinese media organizations would sacrifice the topics they want to ask about rather than lose the opportunity to show themselves off to the public. It is because many other candidates might be assigned topics that the official side is able to balance between the role and the script.

Therefore, the official side is not simply targeting a balance only of "who can ask" and "what to ask" separately, but constructing a convincing script as a whole. Retaining their power and resources in decision making, it is more crucial for the official side to choose partners with whom they might make deals with next time, as the topics themselves can be arranged according to several methods—for example, by asking another journalist to ask a question or by managing the ways it might be answered.

Performances at the Front

The interdependence of back and front regions is explicitly explained in Goffman's region model, where any onstage performance depends on the existence of the backstage for preparation and rehearsal. To avoid these failures in impression management, the performing team usually maintains the range of backstage on the one hand and formalizes the onstage behavior according to the agreed-upon order on the other (Meyrowitz, 1990).

Setting the Front

As a "collective representation," Goffman (1959) argues that every social front is distinguished from other fronts through the use of three main elements: "setting," "appearance," and "manner" (pp. 22–27). The concept of "setting" is taken directly from the theater, which consists of all the physical scenery and props used to construct the background and stage on which the performance is presented.

"Appearance" refers to all stimuli that tell us of the performer's social status, and "manner" is the way the performer walks, talks, and postures, which "warns us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (Goffman, 1959, p. 24).

All these elements of the CPPC are quite different from those employed at press conferences of political leaders in other countries. Every CPPC is held in the Great Hall of the People, which has consistently been an important venue for Party and state affairs and diplomatic activities. During the era of Premier Li Peng, when only four or five questions were allowed from journalists at the time, the premier and other vice premiers stood on the stage to answer questions, which is similar to the format of U.S. presidential press conferences. In the era of Premier Zhu Rongji, because more time was left for journalists to ask questions and the length of the conference became longer, officials remained seated on the stage with hundreds of journalists seated in the audience. This has remained the setting ever since.

Usually, in the first years after the election of new leaders for the State Council from the National People's Congress (NPC), vice premiers will also attend the CPPC and sit on the stage. Except for those particular years, the stage normally has only five people, all sitting. They are (1) the moderator of the conference, who is usually the spokesman of the NPC; (2) a translator for the premier; (3) a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), who is usually the spokesman of the MFA; (4) a member of the premier's office; and (5) the premier, who sits in the middle. Although the different personal styles of the premiers have led to slight discrepancies in their appearances and manners, the overall front of the CPPC has become highly institutionalized, regardless of who is sitting at the main table and what is being conveyed.

As the CPPC format has become increasingly formalized and normalized however, not everything at the front has been set. The remaining, flexible part of the proceedings is mainly handled by the moderator of the conference. Because of the presubmission of questions, the Chinese premier seldom selects journalists to ask questions directly; this is done by the officer from the MFA or the premier's office. Because of the coordination meeting backstage, officials can meet with journalists who are going to ask questions at the CPPC. To further ensure that the right people are named, some governmental officials also sit in the audience with the questioning journalists. As a foreign journalist recalls, "There surely would be no accident, because they would reserve the seat for me, with two governmental officials sitting on my left and right side" (Informants F12, personal communication, April 25, 2012). Such procedural restrictions place a clear imprint on who is in charge. In this mediated format, another rule is to unmistakably create an aura of authority around the premier.

Interestingly, the order of questions is not always set long before the conference. As one journalist points out, "It was not until the morning I was guided to a seat next to a government official that he told me that I would be the third person to ask a question" (Informant F05, personal communication, August 11, 2011). However, another journalist states,

> I knew I could probably ask a question at the conference, but I did not know when my turn was. It made me so nervous every time the premier was about to end his

> responses. Thus, on that morning, I felt like I was on a rollercoaster. As last, I asked a question as the fifth journalist. (Informant J19, personal communication, May 11, 2012)

Thus, in addition to the first three questions set backstage before the conference, the order of other questions is managed by the moderator according to the situation. This is particularly true of the last two or three questions, for which no confirmed commitments are made to the journalists before the conference. Such is the art of managing a performance in China—leaving some flexibility and space to back up.

Dealing With Accidents

Allowing flexibility is different from allowing uncertainty. The former is a strategy to make a performance vivid without breaking its order, whereas the latter brings challenges to performers to maintain order. The backstage is a place where the order is prepared with some flexibility; but strategies for dealing with uncertainty are also planned. Thus, officials usually seek to make commitments with journalists at the end of their negotiations backstage. As an informant recollects, "We had several conversations about the questions' topics, question tones, and so on. Lastly, they entrusted me to follow what we have communicated to ask a question at the conference. They especially reminded me not to ask a different question" (Informant F05, personal communication, August 11, 2011).

But why do journalists have to follow their commitments? What happens if journalists break their commitments? Referring to their structural relationships, it is easy to understand why Chinese journalists do not break commitments. However, foreign journalists, although there surely have been cases where they have broken their backstage commitments, also follow these rules most of time because they are aware of the definition of the situation and seek to maintain good relationships with the Chinese government. As a foreign correspondent summarizes:

> It does not make much sense to break this commitment. For one thing, even though you asked a very tough question on the spot, the premier could choose to answer it very simply. Another thing is that it would have a very bad impact on your relationship with the officials in the future. (Informant F14, personal communication, May 7, 2012)

These words demonstrate that the preservation of power to define the situation is the reason the official side can deal with uncertainty at the conference. A significant example can be found from Premier Wen's conference in 2006. About halfway through the two-hour conference, a Taiwan reporter brandished his walking cane above his head in the audience and demanded loudly to be given a chance to ask a question, which made much of the audience stand up and watch him. In this case, Premier Wen unexpectedly acceded to his request, saying, "That reporter over there was very emotional. We can probably give him the opportunity." It is believed that this was unplanned because his question was quite different from other, presubmitted questions. He asked a question about the severe environmental problems of water pollution in China and criticized Premier Wen as follows:

> So I have this idea: No matter what kind of achievement you can score in terms of industry development—if the water in the city is no longer suitable for drinking, your achievements at the end of your term of office will probably be strongly compromised. This is my question. Thank you. ("Full Text of Chinese Premier's News Conference," March 14, 2006)

The premier took notes very carefully before he replied to the journalist. He began his answer with a smile: "You have won a right to speak because of your tremendous courage." From another perspective, the premier's words could be seen to imply that the CPPC runs on a well-designed script because "unchosen journalists" would not have won that right to speak at the conference if they do not contain enough courage to break the orders at the front. At the same time, it is hard to find anything else that is unusual in his answer to the question, which reflects the ability of the Chinese leader to handle any kind of question. This case indicates an interesting point to us: It is not because of the leadership's inability to answer questions that determines the presubmission procedure, but the requirement of the Chinese political structure that any public discourse be discussed with the collective leadership team, particularly for something as important as the CPPC for China's international and political communication. As a journalist recounted of her experience in attending the CPPC,

> I think there would be no accidents at today's CPPC since the preparations are done in so much detail and the discussion with a journalist on his or her question has undergone more and more revisions. Everyone strictly follows the scenario. (Informants F12, personal communication, April 25, 2012)

As mentioned before, some journalists may change their frames or tones to ask a specific question when the press conference is broadcasting live. To reduce such occasions, negotiations with journalists on "what to ask" have involved discussion of more details. For example, another journalist recalls,

> After we produced a series of question topics, the Chinese official would call us back to approve one of them. In further discussions, they suggested we cut down the length of the question on the one hand and take a more professional perspective in asking such a question on the other. (Informant J18, personal communication, May 10, 2012)

All the above organization of the CPPC reminds us of an interactive view of change. It is the relationship between negotiation and constraint, which "operate in a state of tension," that influences how change is likely to take place (Fine, 1992, p. 94). Constraints onstage provide more resources for officials negotiating with journalists backstage. In turn, these negotiations open up possible change on stage, in the direction of more predictable and consensual patterns.

Conclusion

By exploring the interactional processes between Chinese officials and journalists both backstage and frontstage according to dramaturgical viewpoints, this study has found various strategies of Chinese

officials in making a planned image at the CPPC. Backstage, officials carefully choose journalists as their teammates. To avoid accidents, officials heavily depend on their past experience and personal relationships, so that those "old friends," with whom they are familiar, will not betray their secrets of the backstage and are frequently chosen. As a result, the question opportunities are given to a limited number of media organizations, for example, the three top central Chinese media and popular financial media outlets from developed countries. On the other hand, the script is also specially designed for each journalistic role according to the characteristics of their media organizations. However, to achieve the balance between "who can ask" and "what to ask," each side may compromise on their interests in order to actually perform at the conference.

The backstage preparation helps to set the frontstage and avoid uncertainty during the performance, but it does not mean that there is no flexibility. Instead, every actor on the spot may create contingent events that deviate from plans so that the Chinese official side would also make flexible arrangements in addition to those institutionalized frontstage settings. At the same time, Chinese officials will continue to refine their organization, deepening their negotiations with journalists backstage to manage flexibility and further setting the frontstage arrangements in detail. However, I argue that the Chinese officials, who organize the conferences, constantly maintain the power to define the situations of these conferences in spite of their sacrifice on some issues in some particular situations. For example, sometimes they allow sensitive political topics, although they are relatively difficult to answer. On the other hand, Chinese officials are facing more difficulties in information control. Today's information is increasingly globalized and digitalized, and as a consequence, secrets can hardly be kept to the backstage, and intrusive surveillance increasingly impinges upon public spaces. For example, there have been more news reports of overseas media releasing facts about information control at the backstage of the CPPC (e.g., Lao, 2013; Sze, 2005).

Therefore, the impression management of the CPPC leads us to rethink the ways in which the Chinese government seeks to manage public information as well as its impression. As Wu (2014) states, a more "sophisticated propaganda" model has been adapted by the Chinese party-state to meet the new requirements of globalization and political economic developments occurring in China today. The overall organization of the CPPC is firmly related to the "soft power" strategies that China seeks to pursue in international politics, in step with its rise to great power in the world. For instance, China has made use of a series of global events or media events, including the Asian Games, Olympic Games, Fortune Global Forum, and other various large-scale cultural activities overseas, to promote a new international image and win more friends (e.g., Liang, 2010). All of these practices share similar symbolic meanings with the CPPC that boost the Communist Party and the Chinese government's ruling legitimacy on the one hand, and cultivate China's international images on the other (Li, 2009; Wang, 2011). Hence, going beyond the CPPC case, it needs to be further asked why and how is there more of a preoccupation with the use of information control and symbol manipulation by the Chinese government on both domestic and international audiences? Under what kinds of social conditions is political impression management likely to be used more frequently in China? Future studies should tackle these questions.

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Appendix

Interview Guide for Journalists

Part 1: Individual and Organizational Background

1. How many years have you been working in the office based in mainland China? What kind of news are you responsible for in your office?
2. How important is news about China to your media organizations?
3. Have you ever reported the NPC and the CPPCC (or *Lianghui*)? If so, how many times have you been?
4. How many reporters in your office are allowed to report *Lianghui* on the average every year? What are their different tasks in reporting these conferences?

Part 2: Preparation Before the Press Conferences

1. How important is the news about *Lianghui* and the CPPC for your media organization in reporting China?
2. How does your office get the invitation for the CPPC?
3. Before the CPPC, what kind of information do you expect to get from the conferences?
4. Do you do any preparation before the conferences? For example, prepare the questions, search related information, briefing conferences in your office?

Part 3: Practices at the Press Conferences

1. What do you think of the organization of the CPPC by the Chinese government?
2. What is the most important task for you in attending this conference?
3. About the questioning:
   (1) Have you ever asked questions at the Chinese Premier's Press Conference?
   (2) How did you get that opportunity?
   (3) Does it matter if you don't get the opportunity to question? Why?
   (4) How do you consider the questions asked by journalists from other organizations? Did they ask the questions that you intended to ask?
   (5) Do you find any difference between the questions at the CPPC and those in other press conferences, for example, the press conferences regularly held by the MFA?
4. What do you think about the answers from the premier? Did they meet with what you expected?
5. How do you consider the impact of the premier's personal characteristics on the press conferences?

Part 4: About Change

1. Have you seen any changes at the CPPC over the years?
2. Do you think the CPPC has tackled more important topics in your fields of interest? If so, how do you consider this change?
3. Would you like more CPPCs in China? If so, why? Do you predict there will be any more CPPC outside the context of *Lianghui*? If so, why?