

**IDEOLOGIES OF CRIME NEWS IN CHINA IN AN ERA OF
COMMERCIALIZATION**

A Thesis

by

LI XIAO

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2003

Major Subject: Science and Technology Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Ideologies of Crime News in China
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In the literature researchers don't agree whether news content in China in an era of media commercialization still functions to promote the dominant ideology of the ruling Communist Party. The thesis is a theoretical discussion of ideology, ideological hegemony and its evolving nature, with the consideration of Chinese situations. The theoretical discussion concludes that the dominant ideology in China is changing with the demands of a changing world, and so is media's representation of ideology. With some explorative data of crime news on three domestic and non-domestic news web sites to illustrate the theoretical discussion, the author of the thesis finds that in an era of media commercialization the ideological influence still plays a bigger role than the commercial influence in shaping crime news content of domestic media. Moreover, ideological messages are distributed through crime news in such subtle and indirect forms as the selection of official news sources, the frequent indication of the death penalty, the positive presentation of the police, and the attribution of individual causes to crime.

The thesis is dedicated to my parents and my husband.

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I wish to thank Dr. Priest for telling me to think logically and to explain everything clearly in the thesis. I am also very grateful for her encouragement and guidance. Every time I gave her something written for the thesis, Dr. Priest always said that I was making good progress or having a good start, but it would be better if I could make such and such changes. Dr. Priest's comments encouraged me, and in the meantime showed me weaknesses and helped me to improve them. Finally, Dr. Priest is always ready to help and give valuable suggestions when I was confused or met problems. I really appreciate her help in the completion of the thesis.

I also wish to thank Dr. Sumpter for proofreading my thesis and for offering critical views of it. I learned from Dr. Sumpter some important factors and procedures involved in a quantitative study. I also learned from him some basic skills in doing good research. For example, I learned to pay closer attention to citations and details. I also learned to proofread an article sentence by sentence. I feel all the efforts made now to take everything seriously in the thesis will do me good in the research in the long run.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1994 *Journal of Communication* published a symposium of five articles on the topic of Chinese media in eras of economic reforms and commercialization. Chu's (1994) article "Continuity and change in China's media reform" was the leading article of the symposium. The article not only discussed the media development since the founding of the People's Republic of China, but also generalized and provided critical views of the other four articles. The article concludes that the symposium articles share one common feature in that they all agree that in an era of commercialization the official media and political news, that is, the Party press and news about national leaders and major policies, may still be under the watchful eyes of the Communist Party, but the commercial media and non-political news, that is, light social news, entertainment news and crime tabloids etc., have proliferated to such an extent that they have significantly weakened the impact of the official media, and eventually the ideological control of the Communist Party.

Besides the symposium articles, the author of the thesis read another research article, Liu's (1998) "Profit or ideology? The Chinese press between party and market," which talked about since the government media subsidy policy was cut in 1992, how the Chinese media were pressured by markets to cater to readers and advertisers rather than merely to Party leaders.

This thesis follows the style of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*.

The article also concludes as the symposium articles do that while taking the place of serious political news, diversities of mass-appeal news seriously endanger the monolithic ideological control of the Party. To sum up, these research articles support the notion that when political news about national leaders, meetings, and policies etc. is replaced by entertaining social news, the Party's ideological control over the media will be weakened.

However, an opposite argument was raised by Zhao Yuezhi (1998) in her book "*Media, market, and democracy in China.*" Generally, the book is a qualitative study of the effects of media commercialization on media practices and content in China. In the introduction chapter, Zhao mentioned that media commercialization and market pressure led to vivid, mass-appeal, or even sensational news content, but such news doesn't necessarily mean that it doesn't promote the ideological control of the dominant Party. Zhao (1998) argues in the era of media commercialization the dominant ideology is promoted by mass-appeal non-political news in more hidden, subtle, and indirect forms than by political news. For example, news stories about the war in the former Yugoslavia have such audience-appeal elements as violence and death. But such stories, even though they didn't explicitly propagate political views of the Party, managed to persuade the Chinese viewers that the price of ending a Communist Party's rule would be political and economic chaos (Zhao, 1998). In this situation, the news has just served to "compel compliance to the current regime" (Zhao, 1998, p.5).

Based on the symposium research articles (1994) and the articles of Liu (1998) and Zhao (1998), the media in China have roughly experienced three eras in development since 1949.

The first era, which may be called Mao's era (under the name of the founder of New China, Mao Zedong), lasted almost 30 years, from 1949 to the death of Mao in 1976. The news content in this era featured political propaganda, mainly to indoctrinate the Chinese people with the communist political views of the country's new leader, Mao Zedong, and of prominent Communist leaders in the Soviet Union such as Lenin. When Mao died, Deng Xiaoping succeeded his position as President of the country. In Deng's era, the national priorities shifted from political campaigns to economic reforms and modernization of the country. The economic news and news about national development headlined newspapers and television newscast in the 1980s, which is the second era or Deng's era. In the early 1990s, even as Deng handed his power to his successors, he still remained the spiritual leader of the nation. In February 1992, Deng traveled through China's most prosperous economic regions, and in his speeches urged the people to support and accelerate the economic reform efforts. The whole nation rallied around his powerful callings for further economic reforms, and so did the mass media. The year of 1992 marked the third era in the development of the Chinese media. In this era, the media not only accommodated their content with the evolution of the national policy, but also the media system had to change. In 1992, except for a few national organs, such as China Central Television, People's Daily, and the Xinhua News Agency, media organizations in China no longer received government financial subsidies. Although the

state still retains media ownership, the media must compete in the market for revenues and for their survival. The media commercialization means the news had to satisfy both the government leaders and common readers. The market pressure brought mass-appeal news content to the media, such as news about crime, accidents, and disasters, which had been considered taboos in news coverage in the first two eras of media development.

The changes in news content, which resulted from the media commercialization, raised disagreements about the media's ideological role in society among communication researchers studying the Chinese news media. These researchers don't agree on whether non-political news, particularly the mass-appeal news featuring negative events, still functions to uphold the nation's dominant ideology and maintain the social status quo. These researchers are divided in two camps. Researchers in one camp, represented by Chu (1994) and Liu (1998), believe that ideology is eroded and the authority and images of the ruling Communist Party are ruined by such news content. Researchers in the other camp, represented by Zhao (1998), argue that even though the media under the market pressure have to reform their format and content to be more appealing or even sensational, they are still in keeping with the guidelines of the dominant Communist Party. In other words, in the era of media commercialization, the media's ideological function is not as evident as it was in the political propaganda of Mao's era, but it still exists and functions in more subtle and indirect forms such as the example of news stories of war in the former Yugoslavia (Zhao, 1998).

In the thesis a theoretical discussion was conducted to support the argument that even news stories about negative events can uphold dominant ideology and maintain

social control in China. The theoretical argument of the thesis is achieved through a thorough reading of the literature on ideological hegemony theory and a careful analysis of the argument held by researchers believing news on negative events eroded ideology. The author of the thesis argues that researchers who believe in the erosion of ideology misunderstand the meaning of ideology, and are ignorant of the shifting nature of ideological hegemony. Ideology, as Raymond Williams (as cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.183) defines it, is “a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a ‘world view’ or a ‘class outlook.’” Essentially, ideology is an inclusive worldview of society, with political ideology as a part rather than a whole it. Political ideology, such as Marxism or the democratic political views in the West, explains society from a political perspective. But society can also be explained from other perspectives such as the religious or cultural. For example, in China many people believe in the religion of Buddhism, which claims that there is life after death, and if people commit wrongdoings when they are alive, they will be punished by the judge from the hell after death. Buddhism explains social reality from a religious perspective and can be seen as a religious ideology. In the same way, when society is explained from a cultural perspective, there will be a cultural ideology. For example, in China collective interests are said to be more important than individual interests, and individuals are often encouraged to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of a larger working unit, a community, or a country. But in the United States individual interests are much more valued and protected. The different cultural

ideologies between China and the United States lie in their different ways of defining reality from different cultural perspectives.

Despite the different ideologies, every society has a dominant ideology, which is the ideology of the ruling class. According to Gramsci (1971), the dominant ideology explains social reality in the interests of the ruling class and rules over the ideologies of other subordinate classes. The dominance of one ideology over others is called ideological hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). In the literature, researchers, especially Gramsci after raising the notion of ideological hegemony, agree that the mass media, through the distribution of the dominant ideology, play an important role in maintaining the social order and justifying the social control of the ruling class. Dominant ideological values are articulated and reaffirmed through the media. “Not only is news about the powerful, but it structures stories so that events are interpreted from the perspective of powerful interests” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.185). Besides, it should be noted that ideological hegemony takes place in free-press societies like the United States, as well as controlled-press societies like China.

Moreover, ideological hegemony is never a permanent state of affairs and never unchallenged and unchanged. Hall (1980) and Williams (1977), in their interpretations of Gramsci’s work, note the complex, contradictory and evolving character of hegemonic ideology. Hall (1980, p.36), for example, says, “For Gramsci, ‘hegemony’ is never a permanent state of affairs and never contested.” Ideological hegemony has a shifting nature and will always adapt to the demands of a changing world. Media’s representation of ideology also changes with the evolvement of a dominant ideology.

Chapter II presents a detailed discussion of ideological hegemony in the media in both the United States and China. In the following paragraphs the author of the thesis gave a brief discussion of the evolution of the dominant ideology in China in three eras and the accommodating news content change in each era. A more detailed discussion in this aspect was provided in Chapter II.

Since 1949, the power in China has been kept in hands of the Communist Party for more than 50 years. But the stable one party's leadership in China doesn't mean that its dominant ideology does not change over time. In Mao's era, politics was in supreme command, and Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought were considered the panacea to all social problems. Therefore, in this era the dominant ideology was a political ideology, the political thoughts of communist leaders. The media's intensive political propaganda served to teach the Chinese people communist political views and uphold the dominant ideology in that era. Mao's era lasted for more than three decades, and in such a long period of time the dominant political ideology has gradually become a synonym for ideology itself (Liu, 1998). In the case of China, when people talk about ideology, they usually mean the highly politicized ideology of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought (Liu, 1998; Zhao, 1998). But when tracing the origins of the meaning of ideology, researchers should find that ideology means more than a political ideology, and most importantly, dominant ideologies shift and evolve.

When China entered Deng's era, the national priorities changed from political indoctrination to economic reforms. The dominant ideology changed, and accordingly

the mainstream news in this era was economic news and news about national development (Chang, Wang, & Chen, 1994).

In the third era, which is the era of media commercialization, China furthered its economic reforms, and the reforms greatly affected the way of living in the media industry. Before the commercialization, the media in China were owned and funded by the government. The news workers only had to answer to higher government authorities to make sure the news content was “appropriate” (Liu, 1998). They didn’t have to worry about the money, because they had a government subsidy, which paid for their practices and losses. But in 1992 the Central Government cut the media subsidy policy and forced media organizations to be self-reliant. To make profits and survive, the media organizations turned their attention to advertisers, readers, and viewers. Consequently, big changes were made in both the news content and style. The dull style and monotonous content, which jaded readers in the past, were replaced by live news reporting, light social news, entertainment news, and news of crime, accidents, and disasters (Liu, 1998).

Some researchers (Chu, 1994; Liu, 1998) studying the media in the commercialization era argue that news stories about negative events such as crime, accidents and disasters will take the place of political news propagating government policies, break the social consensus that the Chinese people live in a safe society, and therefore threaten the government’s dominant ideological control over the media, and eventually over the viewers.

The author of the thesis rejects the notion that the rapid increase of news stories about negative events reduces the ideological elements in news content in an era of media commercialization. A theoretical discussion was presented in the thesis along with some exploratory data to illustrate the argument.

Generally speaking, an ideological perspective is applied to the study of news in the thesis. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), there are five levels of factors which influence media content, the individual level, the media routines level, the organizational level, the extramedia level, and the ideological level. The individual level of influence refers to individual journalists' personal values and experiences which affect their way of reporting news. The media routines mean "those patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.85). Specifically speaking, media routines require news stories to be newsworthy, objective, accurate, and fair, and journalists to meet deadlines, and to rely on sources for their stories. The organizational influence on media content means news content could be different because of the differences in ownership, internal structure, goals, technology, and markets among different media organizations. The extramedia level of influence refers to influences from outside the media, such as the interests of advertisers and the needs of audiences. The last level of influence, which is studied in the thesis, is the ideological influence on news content. At this level, media researchers ask: how routines and organizations ultimately work for the interests of the powerful, the dominant classes in society (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

Shoemaker and Reese argue (1991) that the five levels of influence on media content are not equal but ranked in hierarchy, from the lowest micro level, the individual influence, to the highest macro level, the ideological influence, and these levels function hierarchically: what happens at the lower levels is affected, even to a large extent determined, by what happens at higher levels. For example, influences resulting from individual media professionals may have relative minor effects on the overall society, since they probably are not factors that would systematically emphasize or exclude certain content to serve institutional interests. However, when media content is influenced by factors at a higher level, that is, advertisers from outside the media, the opportunity is greater to manipulate media content by advertisers than by individual journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

The ideological level subsumes all the other levels, and “at this level all the processes taking place at lower levels are considered to be working toward an ideologically related pattern of messages and on behalf of the higher power centers in society” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.184). From an ideological perspective, advertiser influence, for example, becomes “not just the self-interested action of a single firm but a systematic and structural result of a capitalist advertiser-supported media system” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.185). From an ideological perspective, the media function as “extensions of powerful interests in society, and the routines, values, and organizational structures combine to maintain a system of control and reproduction of the dominant ideology” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.185).

To sum up, influences on media content from the ideology of the dominant classes would indicate broad and pervasive effects on society, and therefore an ideological perspective was applied to the study.

In an exploratory data analysis of crime news stories to supplement the theoretical argument, web site news, rather than newspapers news or television news, was used. First, with the development of technology and improvement of people's economic conditions, computers spread in China, and the Internet has become an important information source for Chinese people. According to data released by the Chinese Ministry of Information Industry at the end of 2002 (http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-11/25/content_640420.htm), the Internet users in China have reached over 54 million as the second largest Internet population in the world following the United States. China has a total population of 1.3 billion, and compared to this number the Internet population may seem a fraction, but 17 percent of China's urban population was using the Internet according to China Daily on June 26, 2001, and this number increases at an exceptional high speed every year. China Internet Network Information Center (www.cnnic.net.cn) reported in July 2002 that the Internet population has risen by more than 70 percent since June 2001. Internet users in China also have some distinctive characteristics. According to a survey by China Internet Network Information Center in 2003 (<http://www.cnnic.net.cn/develst/2003-1/4-2-1.shtml>), women account for about 40 percent of all users; users below the age of 30 account for about 70 percent of all users; about 57 percent of Internet users are unmarried; about 58 percent of users have a college education or above, but the number of users without a college education is

increasing. Students account for the largest number, 28 percent, of Internet users, followed by professionals 16 percent, business administrators 9 percent, and government officials 8 percent; the unemployed, peasants and military personnel account for the lowest percentage of Internet users. Moreover, according to the survey, 78 percent of Internet users read online news regularly. In sum, readers of online news or web site news are mostly young students and people from the ruling and middle classes.

These people are not only important media consumers but also active participants in the building of China: communist government officials are the ruling class; professionals and business administrators are the newly emerged middle class in control of economic power; students, especially college students, are young, well-educated, and eager to participate in the development of the country. In the history of modern China, students have been an especially important force participating in social and political movements and pushing for social changes and reforms. For example, in 1919 when the World War I was over, China, even though a winning country with the help of the West, had to sign an agreement to give up many of its national rights and its coastal city Qing Dao to Japan. Angry students in Beijing joined by factory workers went to demonstrate on streets calling to overthrow the corrupt and weak government and to build a new society promoting new science, democracy, freedom, and human rights. The demonstration quickly spread over the country and became a historic national political movement, which embarked a new era in the Chinese history. In April 1976, the death of respected Premier Zhou Enlai triggered mass demonstrations led by students at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Students paid their last respects to Zhou, denounced

radical Maoist thoughts, and called for ending of the ten-year Cultural Revolution. Five months later when Mao died and his widow was arrested, the ten years of turmoil ended.

To sum up, the majority of web site news readers - students, government officials, professionals and business administrators - are also the important forces that influence the current Chinese society most.

The second reason for the study of web site news is that even though there is some difference between web site news and newspapers news in some respects such as the more frequent update of web site news than newspaper news on a daily basis, the content of web site news is mostly the same as that of newspaper news. According to web site regulations published in the state-run People's Daily newspaper in 2000 (news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1010708.stm), web sites are required to seek permission from the government before publishing news stories. Commercial web sites are forbidden to write news stories of their own, and must attribute the stories they publish. The regulations are said to be "in a string of measures taken by the Chinese Government to control online content in the country" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1010708.stm>). As a result, news stories on commercial web sites are almost all selected from newspapers. Therefore, the study of web site news content in China is also an indirect study of newspaper news content.

The third reason is that the author of the thesis intended to study and compare the Chinese language news media from both within and outside China. The non-domestic web site, which is the largest news web site in North America, is found comparable to the two domestic news web sites.

Among the three web sites in the study, one is a domestic government-supervised web site www.peopledaily.com.cn, the second one is one of the most popular commercial news web sites in China www.sina.com.cn, and the third one is a Chinese news web site in the United States www.chinesenewsnet.com, which is also the largest Chinese news web site in North America.

According to the introduction on its web page, the [chinesenewsnet.com](http://www.chinesenewsnet.com) is the flagship venture of the Chinese Media Net Incorporation, an online media company founded in 1999 in the United States. The founder of the corporation is a Chinese immigrant to the United States, who worked as a senior journalist and media critic for many years in mainland China and Taiwan. The [chinesenewsnet.com](http://www.chinesenewsnet.com), in Chinese called *duowei news net*, covers international news and regional news in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and North America as well as news of economics, sports, entertainment, science and technology, and society. The web site aims to serve “the global Chinese community,” but because of Internet censorship, people in mainland China can not access it. News on the web site comes from *duowei news agency*, an online news agency of the corporation, and from other news organizations in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States. With more than 3,000 news items on line each day, the web site claims that it uses a “fair and objective reporting,” and that its news is like its name *duowei*, which means “comprehensive and multi-dimensional.” As the web site claims, its news “transcends ideologies and reaches audiences from diverse geographic regions.”

Even though the author of the thesis doesn't know for sure if the news on the non-domestic web site is truly objective and beyond ideologies, but the fact is true that the web site is a private news organization located out of China, and therefore is not affected by the media regulations in China. Otherwise, if the Chinese government could control the web site, the web site would not be blocked in China. Meanwhile, the censorship placed on it doesn't mean that the web site is anti-China or anti-Chinese government. Many foreign online news media are blocked from entering China. According to a CNN report in December 2002 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/east/12/03/china.internet>), the Chinese government could be blocking as much as 10 percent of web sites, and the news media is one of the most commonly blocked along with web sites dealing with Taiwan, Tibet and dissidents issues and religious web sites. The non-domestic Chinese web site helped in the study of ideological elements of news in China when its news was compared with that of the two domestic web sites.

The author of the thesis looked through the database of Communication Abstract for research articles on web site news in China, but none of such articles has been found. Web site news was studied in the thesis because its readership is quite representative of the social classes influencing the current Chinese society; the online news content is very similar with the newspaper news stories, therefore, the thesis is also an indirect study of print news in China, which has a much wider readership than web site news; the comparison of non-domestic news with domestic news also helped to identify the hidden

ideological elements of domestic news, which might not be so evident when compared and studied within.

After the author of the thesis decided to study web sites news, she decided to analyze one type of news - crime news. Twenty years ago when the media was in the first or even the second era of development, crime news stories were still very rarely reported. The scarcity of crime news in the media doesn't necessarily mean that there was no crime in society at that period of time, rather, it means in trying to avoid reporting negative events such as crime and disaster, the Central Government managed to present its people with an image of a clean society with no crime, violence, nor anything ugly (Chu, 1978). In the early 1990s, the media developed into the third era of commercialization and had to shoulder market pressures to attract viewers and to make profits. As a result, news content became more diverse. Sensational and sensitive news topics which had been considered taboos in the past, such as crime, accidents and disasters, appeared and prospered in the third era (Liu, 1998).

In addition, crime news was chosen in an explorative data analysis because crime stories are quite representative in the news coverage of negative events, and according to the personal observation of the author of the thesis, crime stories are also more often covered than disaster and accident stories on a regular daily basis.

When the author of the thesis searched the database of Communication Abstract with the keywords such as Internet, crime news and China, no research paper on this topic has been found. According to the Internet development report from the China Internet Network Information Center (www.cnnic.net.cn/internet.shtml), Internet entered

China in 1994, and was first used by scientists and researchers. Web sites that provide news content appeared several years later. The commercial web site www.sina.com.cn was founded in 1996, while the government web site www.peopledaily.com.cn was set up in 1997, and the non-domestic web site www.chinesenewsnet.com in 1999. The author of the thesis speculates that research on Internet crime news wasn't done because of the late appearance of news web sites in the 1990s.

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Ideology was a relatively new word when Marx and Engels used it in the *German Ideology* in the 1840s. It had been coined by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy in the 1790s to refer to the “science of ideas.” Several influential scholars in the field of Marxism theories have given ideology a definition. Louis Althusser (1971, p.32) says ideology is “the system of ideas and representations which dominated the mind of a man or a social group.” Stuart Hall (1986, p.26) defines ideology as “the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the system of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.” Generally speaking, the term ideology refers to systematic and inclusive social explanations of what goes on in a society by different social groups. Ideology is the mass consciousness or common sense of reality. It is what people think of reality. It reflects and defines reality, but it itself is not reality.

Different social groups can think of reality differently, and therefore may have different ideologies and definitions of reality. Despite the diversity of ideologies, every society has a dominant ideology, which is the ideology of the ruling classes. The dominant ideology rules over all other ideologies in a society, frames all competing definitions of reality within its range, and brings all alternatives within its horizon of thought (Gramsci, 1971). The dominance of one ideology over others is called ideological hegemony, and Antonio Gramsci first raised the notion of ideological

hegemony. Gramsci, in the late twenties and thirties of the twentieth century, with the rise of Fascism and the failure of the Western European working-class movements, began to consider why the working-class was not necessarily revolutionary and why it could, in fact, yield to Fascism. Condemned to a Fascist prison when the anti-Fascism workers' movement in Northern Italy failed after World War I, Gramsci spent years trying to account for the defeat, resorting in large measure to the concept of hegemony: bourgeois domination of the thought, the common sense, the life-ways, and everyday assumptions of the working class (Gitlin, 1979). According to Gramsci (1971), ideological hegemony means that the definitions of reality, which are favorable to the dominant classes, also constitute the primary lived reality for the subordinate classes.

Gramsci believes it is ideological hegemony that makes subordinate classes yield to the dominant ideology of ruling classes no matter if the dominant ideology truly reflects social reality of subordinate classes. How can dominant classes inculcate subordinate classes with the dominant ideology to achieve ideological hegemony? Or in other words, how can subordinate classes believe in a dominant ideology that may not truly correspond to their real social realities? The negative nature of a dominant ideology may help answer the question.

Traditionally, the dominant ideology is believed to have a negative feature, which means it doesn't truly reflect reality of subordinate classes, but conceals and misrepresents reality. In the realm of dominant ideology, men "experience" themselves in ways that do not fully correspond with their real conditions. The dominant ideology conceals rather than clarifies the real conditions of men (Hall, 1977). Therefore, what is

represented in a dominant ideology is “not the system of the real relations which governs the existence of men, but the imaginary relations of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (Hall, 1977, p.336). Hall (1977, p.325) says that “ideology is now understood not as what is hidden and concealed, but precisely as what is most open, apparent, manifest – what takes place on the surface and in view of all men. What is hidden, repressed, or inflected out of sight, are its real foundations.” Therefore, it is not surprising that Marxism proposes a form of opposition between science and ideology. “If ideology is a distorted form of thought that remains trapped in appearance, science, on the contrary, is an intellectual activity, which is able to penetrate the veil of appearance to reach the inner relations of reality” (Larrain, 1991, p.56).

In a capitalist society, Hall (1977) believes a dominant ideology has three ways to misrepresent the reality in the interests of the ruling class or the interests of the bourgeois. The first way is through “masking” and “displacing.” Marxism asserts that the exploitative nature of a capitalist society is most evident in the production process where surplus value is produced by workers but eventually exploited by the bourgeois who own capital and means of production. But in the dominant ideology, the emphasis and visibility are shifted from production to exchange, because in the process of exchange, the relationship between a buyer and a seller of a commodity is apparently equal and out of free will. As a result, what goes on beneath the surface of exchange is masked, and therefore the unequal relationship between workers and capitalists in the process of production is shifted to the apparent equal relationship in the process of exchange (Larrain, 1991).

Secondly, Hall (1977, p.337) believes that in a capitalism ideology the collective interests of working classes are “fragmented” into the internal oppositions between different strata of the class. The collective working-class value is individually and privately appropriated, while the values of workers and capitalists, which maybe set against one another, are mixed as one in that the “needs” of producers are represented as the “wants” of consumers (Hall, 1977, p.337).

Third, Hall (1977, p.337) points out that the capitalism ideology creates an “imaginary unity or coherence” on society by using such terms as the “community”, the “nation”, “public opinion”, the “general interest”, the “popular will” or “ordinary consumers” (Hall, 1977, p.337). Such terms mask the conflicting and contradictory interests within a society, and thus create a forced social consensus.

Hall analyzed the capitalism ideology mostly from the perspective of economic determinism. In traditional Marxism, economic determinism believes that the base, the economic relations in a society, shape the consciousness of individuals who are brought up in that society. Most importantly, the process of ideological indoctrination is often subtle and invisible. Besides the three ways observed by Hall that a capitalism ideology uses to inculcate the masses, there are other examples of ideological indoctrination in a capitalist society, and the notion of “self-made man and woman” is one of them.

In a capitalist society, such as in the United States, many people embrace the notion of the “self-made man and woman.” The belief, according to Berger (2000), means that people downgrade the significance of social, economic, and political matters, and place too much importance on individual intelligence and personality for success.

People are “prisoners of psychology” (Berger, 2000, p.75) in that they don’t see society as important, but only themselves, their willpower, and their personality. People believe that only individuals exist, and society is just an abstract. If only individuals count, psychology is the master science (Berger, 2000).

Marxists argue that the notion of being self-made is of great use to the bourgeoisie, the class that owns and controls the means of production. Anyone who fails has only himself or herself to blame. The failure is contributed to some deficiency in personal willpower, resolution, or character. In summary, success is purely personal, and so is failure (Berger, 2000). Marxists attacked this notion as justifying the social control of the ruling bourgeoisie class by turning everyone’s attention from social ill to personal deficiency.

In the same way, unemployment in a capitalist society is treated as laziness of workers; workers’ strikes are transformed into a problem of public order; criminality and new forms of violence are treated as the result of lack of authority of family, not enough law and order, lack of Victorian values and so on (Larrain, 1991). Marxists argue that these forms of dominant ideology misunderstand and displace the real origins of social problems and justify the ruling class’ control (Larrain, 1991). Marxists believe that the real origin of the social problems is the unequal economic relationship between the working class and the bourgeoisie in that the bourgeoisie owns the means of production, and the working classes own nothing and have to sell their labor and be exploited by the bourgeoisie. The inequality further triggers unemployment, workers’ strikes, criminal activities and other social problems. Although Marxists’ analysis of the real origin of the

social problems is mostly from the perspective of economic determinism, and therefore seems a little bit reductionistic, it is true that the dominant capitalism ideology does contribute social problems to individual and personal causes rather than social causes so that the ruling bourgeoisie class doesn't have to take the responsibility, and their control is justified.

When ideology theory was developed by Louis Althusser (1971) in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," ideology is believed to not only reflect reality, but also affect reality. According to Althusser (1971), ideology, like police, army, and courts, is also a kind of state apparatus to help establish and maintain the social order. Althusser (1977) believes social order is achieved through a combination of coercion and consent. State apparatuses like police and courts use force to achieve coercion, and ideology uses its influence on mass consciousness to achieve a mental consent. Although coercion is a necessary aspect to maintain the social order, social life functions more smoothly when order is based primarily upon consent (Althusser, 1971). Ideological influence on mass consciousness is realized through such cultural institutions as churches, schools, and the mass media. Therefore, the mass media along with other cultural institutions are the ideological state apparatuses to help achieve the mass consent and maintain social control.

In the literature, researchers, especially Gramsci after raising the notion of ideological hegemony, agree that the mass media, through the distribution of the dominant ideology, play an important role in maintaining the social order and justifying the social control of the ruling class.

Journalistic constructions of reality legitimize and reinforce the existing political and social order, and, as agencies of social control, news organizations denigrate and inhibit dissent. Within this perspective, news stories as symbolic accounts provide the public with definitions of social and political realities. These definitions are largely in keeping with the meanings, values and interests of powerful institutions and groups in a society. (Carragee, 1993, p.332)

Content studies examining a variety of issues have provided support for the news media's ideological role. The Glasgow University Media Group (1980, 1976) found that British television news coverage of strikes stressed the views of management and the British government, while deprecating arguments by unions and workers. The same is true in the United States, where labor positions are termed "demands", whereas management positions are called "offers" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p.185).

Other researchers have extended this ideological perspective to news coverage of international affairs, especially news stories about the Third World. These studies repeatedly stress that the American news media supported American foreign policy by accepting the ideology of the Cold War, and paid no attention to the historical and social roots of conflicts in the Third World (Carragee, 1993).

Some studies explored the media's ideological role in society by examining the news coverage of alternative social movements. In his influential study of coverage of the New Left by the New York Times and CBS news, Gitlin (1980) argues that these news media delegitimized the student protest movement through a variety of framing devices. Shoemaker (1984), in her analysis of news stories concerning eleven American

political groups, provides some support to the theory that the media act as agents of social stability.

Many of these critical analyses of the news media's ideological work have relied on Gramsci's concept of hegemony as a central concept (Carragee, 1993). According to Carragee (1993, p.333), within these media studies, hegemony refers to "the processes by which ruling classes and groups shape popular consent through the production and diffusion of meanings and values by the major ideological institutions in a society." More importantly, Hall (1980) and Williams (1977), in their interpretations of Gramsci's work, note the complex, contradictory and evolving character of hegemonic ideology. Hall (1980, p.36), for example, says, "For Gramsci, 'hegemony' is never a permanent state of affairs and never contested."

The author of the thesis argues that ideological hegemony and its evolving nature may provide some insights for the debate concerning the ideological role of the Chinese news media in society. Since the founding of the new China in 1949, the power in China has been kept in hands of the Communist Party for more than 50 years. But the stable one party's leadership in China doesn't mean that its dominant ideology does not change over time. As a matter of fact, the ruling Party has gradually accommodated its ideology to the demands of a changing world during the 50 years. The media, when owned and subsidized by the government, is said to be the "mouth piece" of the ruling Party, and no doubt faithfully promoted what the Party deemed as important during a certain era of time, whether it was Marxism indoctrination in Mao's era or economic reforms in Deng's era. But Mao's era lasted too long a time for almost 30 years. As a result, the

dominant ideology in Mao's era, the Marxism indoctrination, has become the synonym for ideology itself (Liu, 1998). The notion has affected researchers studying the Chinese media to such a great extent that they believe that news content promoting anything other than Marxism or the Communist Party's political views does not help maintain the ruling Party's ideological control (Chu, 1994; Liu, 1998; Lee, 1994). These researchers argue that news coverage, especially coverage of negative news events such as crime news stories, erodes the Party's ideological control and harms social stability. The author of the thesis first argues that ideology is not a mere political view of the world, but rather it is a systematic and inclusive social definition of the world. Political ideology defines the world from the perspective of politics, but besides it, reality can be defined from other perspectives such as the religious or cultural. Therefore, non-political news also can have an ideological effect on society, but different from political news propaganda, which directly influences people's political consciousness, the ideological effect of non-political news is more hidden in subtle and indirect forms as Zhao has argued in 1998. Secondly, the author of the thesis argues that because of the evolving nature of ideological hegemony, the dominant ideology can change over time. The dominant ideology in the era of commercialization is different than that in Mao's era, and the media content changes accordingly. Therefore, the author of the thesis argues that it is inappropriate to measure the ideological effect of news content with an unchanging dominant ideology. Especially in the era of commercialization when the news content became more diverse, if the ideological effect of such news content was measured by the dominant ideology in Mao's era as researchers believing in ideological erosion did,

apparently such news content isn't Marxism indoctrination, but it doesn't mean that such news content doesn't function ideologically in that certain era.

In the following pages the author of the thesis explained in detail the changes of dominant ideology in the three eras in China and the correspondent news content changes.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist Party under Mao faced several daunting tasks (Chang & Tai, 2003): (1) to eradicate the economic and social consequences of the civil war; (2) to recover the damages of decades of foreign domination and exploitation; and most importantly, (3) to win the trust and support of the people, for the ruling communism thoughts at that time were relatively new for the Chinese people.

To accomplish his goals, Mao learned from the Soviet Union, the leader in the communism world, and Maoist China, therefore, exhibits a major feature of a Leninist state: the Communist Party holds a monopoly over state power and national resources, including complete control of the mass media. No private ownership is allowed (Chang & Tai, 2003). In legitimizing the Communist Party's control over the media, Lenin, the Communism leader in the Soviet Union, asserted that a socialist and communism consciousness could not emerge spontaneously among the working class. Rather, correct consciousness had to be inculcated by the Communist Party. Lenin believed that the media could be used as an instrument by the state to propagate the communism consciousness to the masses and to suppress opposing ideas (Chang & Tai, 2003).

The Soviet media model had a significant impact on Maoist China. Mao believed the mass media were producers and molders of national consciousness. Moreover, he justified Communist Party control of mass media by taking China's conditions into consideration. In Chinese agrarian society, where rural peasants were geographically and culturally isolated, communism values and ideologies could be inculcated only through the party-run propaganda machines, the media (Chang & Tai, 2003).

To solidify the communist rule and channel the mass consciousness into a collective communism view, Mao initiated a series of political campaigns during the early 1950s, using a remarkable system of mass communication to bring the people into direct contact with the central communist government. "Never before in Chinese history did the leaders attempt to reach the people on such a large scale. The campaigns used all forms of communications, such as radio and newspapers, banner posters, posted announcements, study groups, and street lecturers, to indoctrinate the Chinese people in cities, towns, and the remote countryside" (Chang & Tai, 2003, p.36).

But the political indoctrination of communism in the 1950s gradually evolved into a mass worship for Mao and Mao's Thought in the Cultural Revolution. Mao and Mao's Thought were deified to the status of God, and considered as the panacea to solve all social problems. The news content in the Cultural Revolution was merely political propaganda, promoting the God-like status of Mao and his thought. News events that could lead people to doubt the wisdom of Mao and the Party were banned. As a result, stories about famine, starvation, crime, and accidents often went unreported (Chang & Tai, 2003). China, depicted in the news, was a wonderful country with no crime and

poverty, and everybody lived a happy and satisfactory life. And the media propagated that this bliss owed to Mao and his thought.

Despite the happy life depicted in the news, the reality is China was just the opposite during the Cultural Revolution. Mao's penchant for extreme solutions to China's problems resulted in a weak economy, poor living conditions, and torture of individuals who dared to challenge his thought. The death of Mao and arrest of his widow marked the ending of Mao's era.

When the exiled leader Deng Xiaoping seized the power and succeeded as the country's leader, China entered Deng's era, the era of reform and modernization. Under the pragmatic leadership of Deng, national priorities in China were shifted from political indoctrination of Marxism to economic reforms and national development. For the Chinese people who have survived the suppression and suffering of the Cultural revolution, the post-Mao China stood as a changing social world, and they collectively needed to know what it was like and why. To enable the people to understand and thus participate in the country's building, the news media in the 1980s promoted economic reforms and national development in their news coverage. Economic news and news about national development greatly outnumbered all other themes of news. According to a content analysis of news in People's Daily for one month in 1992, economic news and news about national development accounted for about 50 percent of all news, while news about Mao's Thought and communism accounted for only about 2 percent of all news (Chang, Wang & Chen, 1994).

TABLE 1

MAIN THEMES OF NEWS IN PEOPLE'S DAILY IN 1992 (Chang, Wang & Chen, 1994, p.58)

<u>Main themes</u>	<u>Number of stories</u>
Economic reform	194
National development	118
Regional cooperation	65
Sovereignty	55
Religious/ethnic conflicts	35
Racial issues	30
Socialism	26
Relations with developing countries	14
Aggression/repression	12
Democracy/democratic reform	12
Nuclear arms proliferation	11
Social justice	11
Mao Zedong Thought	8
Rich-poor/north-south division	8
Communism	7
Power struggle	7
Capitalism	5
Human rights and freedom	5
Terrorism	5

Note: Data are for domestic editions of June 15 to July 15, 1992 (5 days missing).

The majority of economic news in the 1980s and early 1990s reflects the change of the dominant ideology from political indoctrination in Mao's era to economic reforms in Deng's era.

Researchers argue that the media commercialization with its mass-appeal and diverse news eroded the Party's ideological control on society. Taking the newspaper industry for example, before the media commercialization, most Party-owned daily newspapers relied completely on state subsidy and received their subscriptions from the official purse (Zhu as cited in Liu, 1998). In 1992 when the state stopped the subsidy policy, these papers lost their guaranteed official subscriptions, and as a result, their circulation dropped sharply. The daily circulation of People's Daily, the national mouthpiece of the Communist Party, dropped from 6 million in the early 1980s to fewer than 3 million in 1998 (Chang & Tai, 2003). Meanwhile, the market pressure led to an increase in the number of market-oriented newspapers, the evening and weekend newspapers. Liu (1998) argues that the increase of such market-oriented newspapers seriously injured the ideological control of the Communist Party. First of all, evening and weekend newspapers depend on light social news, entertainment news, crime tabloids, and gossip etc. to attract readers and increase sales and advertising revenues. Such mass-appeal or even sensational news challenges more serious political news in Party newspapers and distracts readers' attention away from news of Party's policies and activities. Secondly, the commercial success of evening and weekend newspapers has put pressure on serious Party newspapers and forced them to copy market-oriented practices. Some Party papers have expanded their pages and started to print their own evening or weekend editions. However, with the increase in the number of printed pages, the volume of political news and comments suffers a hidden cut in proportion to the total size of the paper (Liu, 1998). In summary, researchers believe that media

commercialization eroded the ideological control of the Party partly because the increasing number of non-political news “drowned” the political messages of the Communist Party. Readers were distracted and less informed of the political policies and activities of the Party, which means the Party’s ideological influence on society would be lessened (Liu, 1998; Chu, 1994; Lee, 1994).

Besides the decrease in political news, researchers argue that the diversity of news other than political indoctrination also makes more difficult the Party’s dictatorship of what the people are being exposed to (Liu, 1998; Chu, 1994; Lee, 1994). In other words, media commercialization makes the Party’s monitoring of news and therefore people’s lives more difficult. As Pool (1973) observed that the steady weakening of Communist ideological control in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the late 1960s and early 1970s may be attributed to the spread of radio sets and cross-border broadcasting, Chu (1994) argues that the same process may be underway in the 1990s’ China. Chu (1994) says that the adoption of new media technologies and the expansion of news content have broken the Party’s monopoly and opened people’s eyes to “alternatives.” Chu cited Pool (1973) as saying

If the official mass media are to become lively and appealing, they must increasingly escape Party control and in so doing they will also tend to undermine Party control. To the extent the domestic media change in order to compete, the role of the Party is also changed and diminished. To the extent that the media become vital, the Party loses its monopoly on the management of life and on many of its most valued functions. (1973, p.488)

Taking the news coverage of negative events such as crime, accidents, and disasters for example, in 1977 in a one-week news study on Peking television, which is today's China Central Television, Chu (as cited in Chang, Wang & Chen, 1994) found no coverage of crimes and disasters. It could be argued that the apparent lack of such coverage in the late 1970s might be due to the small sample size of Chu's study. However, it is difficult to imagine that no crime or disaster occurred in China during that period. A more plausible explanation for the absence of crime and disaster stories, according to Chang, Wang and Chen (1994), is that crime and disaster stories, because of their negative nature, could undercut the Chinese authority's claim of a better Communist society than western countries.

Compared to the 1977 study, in a 1992 study of China Central Television news, crime and disaster news appeared, though at a relatively small frequency compared to economic news (Chang, Wang & Chen, 1994). In the late 1990s, crime stories became much more common than in the 1980s (Liu, 1998).

Researchers argue that media commercialization breaks the Party's monopoly of news. Consequently, crime stories, which have been considered a taboo in news media in the past, emerged and flourished. Such news unfolds the dark side of the society, breaks the social consensus that Chinese people live in a clean and steady society because of the leadership of the Communist Party, and therefore damages the image of the Party and erodes the Party's ideological control on society (Liu, 1998; Chu, 1994; Lee, 1994).

This paragraph is a summary of the argument held by researchers believing in ideological erosion. First, ideology was eroded because media commercialization and market pressure lead to the decrease in political news propagating Party's policies and activities and the increase in mass-appeal social news and tabloid news. Secondly, ideology was eroded because the increase of mass-appeal non-political news makes the Party's monopoly of news more difficult, and therefore Party's control of people's mental consciousness and life was weakened. Third, when Party's monopoly of news was weakened or even broken, news covering negative events such as crime, accidents, and disasters emerged and flourished. The boom of such news stories damaged the ideal image of the Party, which claimed especially in Mao's era to be able to eradicate all social evils and lead a clean and stable society.

The belief that ideological control was eroded in the era of media commercialization was refuted by Zhao (1998). In summary of Zhao's argument, first of all, ideology is not an exclusive political view as commonly believed in Mao's era. Therefore, ideological hegemony is not a mere political indoctrination of Marxism and Mao's Thought, but a means to maintain social stability and uphold the dominance of the ruling Party. Secondly, ideology exists not only in political news but also in mass-appeal social or even tabloid news. In other words, even though non-political news does not explicitly promote political doctrines, it also serves an ideological function in society.

But the argument was just briefly mentioned in Zhao's work. No theoretical analysis has been done to explicate the meaning and nature of ideology and ideological hegemony in consideration of the Chinese situations. And no empirical data has been

analyzed to supplement the theoretical argument. The author of the thesis did a theoretical analysis of ideology and ideological hegemony taking the Chinese conditions into consideration. Moreover, an explorative data analysis of crime news was done to illustrate the theoretical argument.

When the author of the thesis looked through the database of Communication Abstract with keywords ideology and crime news, no research papers studying crime news and its ideological effect have been found in the research literature on China, but the author of the thesis did find three papers studying the ideological role of crime news in newspapers in the research literature about the United States. In “Serious crime, news coverage, and ideology: A content analysis of crime coverage in a metropolitan paper” in 1981, Humphries analyzed routine crime stories (n=126) drawn from the New York Post in 1951 and 1968 in an effort to reveal the relationship between ideology and crime news coverage. Humphries (1981, p.195) argues that what distinguishes ideology from other systems of knowledge is its “fragmentary presentation of reality and the universal character imparted to the accounts of the world.” In other words, ideologies “fragment a specific phenomenon, such as crime, by abstracting it from its historical foundations and structural circumstances and by conveying the resulting fragments of information as universal or natural features of the social world” (Humphries, 1981, p.195).

Based on a content analysis of about 100 crime news stories in 1951 and 1968, Humphries (1981) found that approximately 45 percent of the routine stories were devoted to serious crime (homicide, forcible rape, aggravated assault, robbery, grand larceny, burglary, and auto theft). Humphries argues that coverage of violence and lethal

crime is important because it has commercial value, and can boost circulations of metropolitan newspapers. But despite its commercial value, Humphries claims that coverage of violence is less readily understood in the social and historical context in that the actual serious crime rate in reality is much smaller than that in the news. For example, in both 1951 and 1968, serious crime represented only about 20 percent of the offences known to the police compared to the 45 percent in the news (Humphries, 1981). “Routine news coverage exaggerates the incidence of serious crime and thereby minimizes the impact of non-lethal crime and other types of offenses” (Humphries, 1981, p.196).

Humphries’ content analysis emphasized the demographic information of criminals and victims, which is confined to sex, age, race, and employment status. First, Humphries (1981) found that offenders in the news are often young males and more blacks than whites. Humphries argues that news coverage individualized the phenomenon of crime by categorizing offenders into certain groups as “youth” and “minority membership.” Crime was depicted as merely connected to age and race, and therefore was a problem of certain age groups and race, rather than a result of deteriorating economic conditions and unemployment. For example, Humphries (1981) says that the collapse of work opportunities, especially among young black males, paralleled the rise of violence and theft as recorded by police arrest records. While the New York Post’s crime reporting constantly ignored the deteriorating economic conditions that produce crime historically and concentrates on the racial aspects of crime.

“In doing so, the press creates the impression that violence is a timeless attribute of race and not a social relation characterizing redundant labor” (Humphries, 1981, p.202).

As to the employment status of offenders and victims, Humphries (1981, p.202) says “employment status can be used to locate people structurally, by suggesting social class position, and historically, by indicating the specific labor market affecting employment patterns.” But in the content analysis, the information on offenders’ or victims’ employment status was sparse. Humphries (1981) argues that the frequency with which such information is not included, even though it is obtainable from official sources, indicates the degree to which reporters abstract offenders or victims from their social and historical contexts. Humphries (1981) believes that the presence or absence of employment status data on the victim or offender can be viewed as a means of binding the individual to or severing him from the social world. It would be difficult for readers to interpret the crime or to judge the offender independently if the offender was only represented as a “felon,” “assailant,” or “slayer,” and not located in the familiar world of work (Humphries, 1981).

In summary, Humphries (1981) believes that the New York Post’s crime news coverage is ideological in that it ignored the socio-historical circumstances surrounding such crime events. It overestimated the incidence of serious crime; it correlated violence with youth, gender, and being a member of a racial minority and ignored its social and historical foundations; it didn’t give adequate information to offenders’ or victims’ employment status, and thus abstracted them from their social context.

The second paper is “Economic conditions and ideologies of crime in the media: A content analysis of crime news” by Melissa Barlow, David Barlow and Theodore Chiricos in 1995. Based on a content analysis of crime stories in Time magazine during the post-World War II period, the paper argues that news about crime is ideological in that it gives an inadequate and distorted picture of the contradictory reality of crime. The paper cited Larrain’s (1983, p.27) interpretation of ideology as “a particular form of consciousness which gives an inadequate and distorted picture of contradictions, either by ignoring them, or by misrepresenting them.” More specifically, “ideology refers to a limited material practice which generates ideas that misrepresent social contradictions in the interests of the ruling class” (Larrain, 1983, p.27). Therefore, crime news stories are considered ideological if they “racially bias social image of crime and criminals and if they draw attention away from the socioeconomic sources of crime” (Kramer as cited in Barlow, Barlow & Chiricos, 1995, p.6).

Barlow et al. (1995) analyzed the ideological aspect of crime news in the United States mainly from a political economy perspective. For example, Barlow et al. (1995) believe that crime in a capitalist society is rooted in the economic inequality between those who own the means of production and those who do not. Therefore, it is an inversion of the social reality of crime in a capitalist society to portray crime as primarily a lower class phenomenon in that the lower class, the class most victimized within the capitalist social structure in terms of alienation, inequality, unemployment, and poverty was portrayed as predators on society, whereas the classes that reap the largest share of society’s benefits are portrayed as victims (Barlow et al., 1995).

In addition, the paper found that only 3 percent of references to the employment status refer to offenders as unemployed. Given the relationship between unemployment and crime, the researchers (Barlow et al., 1995, p.15) argue the sparse reference of unemployment is “a particularly egregious inversion of the harsh social reality of crime in late capitalist society.”

Finally, this paper also found a significant bias against racial minorities in the description of offenders. Researchers (Barlow et al., 1995) argue that through such a racial bias within media representation of crime, the racial groups most victimized within the capitalist social structure, by inequality, unemployment, and poverty, are presented as predators on society. In addition, viewing persons of color as inherently more criminal makes it easier to blame them for crime and less likely to identify the economic and social roots of crime.

The third paper “Mobilizing support for social control in a declining economy: Exploring ideologies of crime within crime news” is also written by Barlow, Barlow and Chiricos (1995) based on the content analysis of their previous paper examining types of crime and characteristics of offenders. This study extends exploration of ideologies of crime in the news by examining reports about the causes of crime and commands of what to do about crime. The study found that a majority of crime news attributed crime to personal causes such as irrationality and pathology of offenders, and the solutions the media called to crime rarely went beyond getting tough on individual criminals. Researchers (Barlow, Barlow & Chiricos, 1995) argue that explanations of crime that focus on the irrationality and pathology of offenders distort the social reality of crime

and are considered ideological because they conceal the basic contradictions that give rise to crime, such as inequality, unemployment, and poverty; in doing so, they support the interests of the dominant economic class in maintaining the status quo. As to commands of what to do about crime, researchers argue (Barlow et al., 1995) that criminal justice policies that focus on controlling individual criminals and improving the efficiency of the criminal justice system support the status quo, whereas commands that address the social structural causes of crime call into question the basic structure and institutions of capitalist society.

To sum up, researchers of the three papers, based on content analyses of types of crime, demographic information of offenders and victims, causes of crime and commands of what to do about crime, generally believe that crime news is ideological in that it misrepresents and inverts the real social reality of crime by portraying crime as a lower class phenomenon, as an internal attribute of young and minority groups, and as merely caused by personal reasons. And finally, tougher judicial policies rather than attention to social problems are called for in the treatment of crime.

Although the three papers were found in the research literature about the United States, and the ideologies of crime news were analyzed in the context of a capitalist society, the findings and arguments of these researchers did give some insights to the thesis. On the explorative quantitative study part, the author of the thesis did a content analysis of crime news stories that analyzed types of crime, demographic information of offenders and victims, and causes for crime.

Despite the insights given by previous studies, the thesis had some significant differences from the previous studies. First, the social context of the thesis is a Chinese society, which, despite its capitalism-like economic reforms in recent years, is basically different from a capitalist society in its political system and social and historical backgrounds. Secondly, rather than study a single news organization as previous studies did, the thesis extended the content analysis of crime news to three different news web sites with different ownerships. Moreover, one of the web sites is located out of mainland China and its news was compared with that on domestic web sites in order to explicate ideologies of crime news in domestic Chinese media. Therefore, taking the Chinese conditions into consideration, the author of the thesis added to the data analysis such categories like news sources, punishment for criminals, and presentation of police.

It was mentioned in Chapter I that the online media in China are required to seek permission from the government before publishing news, and commercial web sites are forbidden to write news of their own. Therefore, domestic news web sites, especially commercial web sites, mostly select news stories from news agencies, newspapers, or state-run online news services, and posted them to the web. Meanwhile, when a story is posted to the news section of a web site, the source of the news story should be stated clear. In a pilot test of web site news, crime news on the two domestic web sites were found to come from two types of news sources most often. One is state-run news agencies, newspapers, and online news services. The other is commercial urban newspapers or metropolitan newspapers. To the non-domestic web site, its news came

from both domestic news sources and its own news agency, and sometimes news media from the United States.

From an ideological perspective, not all sources are equally likely to be selected. Sources with economic or political power are more likely to be used than those who lack power. News stories selected from official sources are also more likely to be interpreted in the interests of the ruling class (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 1**: Will the government-supervised web site be more likely to select crime news from official news media than the other two web sites, and will the two domestic web sites select crime news from the news media in the United States?

In the literature researchers argue that violent crime news sell and boost circulation and advertising revenues, but meanwhile violent crime news is ideological in that it distracts readers' attention away from other types of news and misrepresents the social reality of crime (Barlow et al., 1995). Contrary to the serious violent crime, white-collar crime and official corruption are much less reported in the news. Roshier (1973, p.33) compared crime news in three British national dailies with official statistics about crime, and concluded that "the newspapers do give a distorted impression of the relative frequency of different types of crime and ... this distortion is in the direction of over-representation of more serious offenses." In an analysis of ninety-six crime news stories that appeared during a three-month Crimefighters Campaign on New York Daily News in 1982, Gorelick (1989) found that some types of crime – murder, rape, robbery – were mentioned more often than in official New York Police Department statistics. Others –

larceny, motor vehicle theft, burglary- were mentioned less often. No story about white-collar crime ever appeared. Some researchers question why the media focus so much attention on serious crime while completely ignore others such as white-collar crime and government official corruption, which are equally serious and of much greater economic importance. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) argue that most news is about people who are already prominent. For a non-prominent person to be covered in the news often requires that he or she do something deviant such as demonstrating or breaking a law. And this is why there are so many lower-class crimes in the news. According to Barlow et al. (1995) news representation of crime as a lower-class phenomenon in the United States is an inversion of reality because rather than predators on society, the lower-class people are actually victims of social problems such as inequality, alienation and unemployment. Even though the social roots of crime in China maybe different from those in the United States, more lower class crime news in the media does help to shift readers' attention away from high government official crime and maintain the control of the ruling Party. Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 2:** Will violent crime be more likely to be reported on the two domestic web sites than other types of crime, and will government official crime be more likely to be covered on the non-domestic web site than the two domestic web sites?

In the news representation of crime in the United States, crime is often committed by young males belonging to minority groups. This is ideological because crime is misrepresented as a problem of certain age groups or racial groups rather than a broad social problem (Barlow et al., 1995). But the author of the thesis speculates that

the Chinese society is a comparatively homogenous society compared to the American society, and the youth in China are not traditionally considered as a problem. Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 3**: Will offenders in crime news on the two domestic web sites concentrate in certain age groups, but not necessarily in the youth age group; and will the non-domestic web site has such concentration?

Grabe (1999) argues that news coverage of crime punishment discourages potential criminals, intimidates them to obey social rules and laws, and ultimately helps to maintain the status quo. Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 4**: Will crime news on the domestic web sites be more likely to indicate death penalty than crime news on the non-domestic web site?

Humphries (1981) says that the demographic information on the victim or offender is a means of binding the individual to the social world. The absence of demographic information will abstract offenders or victims from their social and historical settings, and make it more difficult for readers to interpret the crime independently or to judge the offender or victim. Among the demographic information, the employment status or occupation is the most helpful to locate the individual in his or her social settings. Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 5**: Will crime news on the two domestic web sites be less likely to provide occupational information of offenders and victims than crime news on the non-domestic web site?

Researchers argue that the explanation of crime that focuses on the individual causes distorts the social reality of crime. It is ideological because it conceals the basic contradictions that give rise to crime, such as alienation, inequality, unemployment, and

poverty; in doing so, it supports the interests of the dominant class in maintaining the status quo (Barlow et al., 1995). Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 6**: Will crime news on the two domestic web sites be more likely to focus on individual causes for crime than crime news on the non-domestic web site?

Grabe (1999, p.165) argues that crime news stories tend to portray the police as “swift, effective, and fair”, and the positive presentation of police “creates an illusion of certainty and trust in law enforcement.” Therefore, the author of the thesis asks **research question 7**: Will crime news on the two domestic web sites be more likely to present the police force positively than crime news on the non-domestic web site?

To help to answer research question 7 concerning the causes for crime, an explorative qualitative study of one crime event happening during the study period was done. The author of the thesis speculates that some differences in the discussion of causes for crime among the three web sites might not be visible in a quantitative study.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Publication: In the thesis crime news stories from three Chinese language news web sites were gathered. Among the three web sites, www.peopledaily.com.cn is a domestic government-supervised web site. It is the online publication of the newspaper People's Daily, which is one of the most important national newspapers in China and generally sets the propaganda agenda for other Party newspapers. Therefore, www.peopledaily.com.cn was chosen as a representative of government-supervised news web site in China.

www.sina.com.cn is the largest domestic commercial news web site in China, and therefore was chosen as a representative of commercial web sites. As the author of the thesis intended to study if media representation of crime still functions to maintain the status quo and promote the Party's ideology control in an era of commercialization, the analysis of crime news on a commercial web site is especially important for the study. Commercial web sites emerged in the era of commercialization. Different from government-supervised web sites, commercial web sites are privately owned and survive on the basis of advertising revenues. Some researchers argue that since commercial web sites are not financially dependent on the Communist Party, they don't have to function to promote the Party's ideology. However, this argument was refuted by others that despite the private ownership, news on a commercial web site is still keeping in line with the guidelines of the Party's written or unwritten media policies, and therefore promote the Party's ideology control in an indirect way. Therefore, through a comparison of news

between a state-run web site and a commercial web site, the author of the thesis tried to explore whether news on both web sites is essentially ideologically different from each other.

Moreover, a third web site, the non-domestic web site www.chinesenewsnet.com, can help to reveal what the two domestic web sites don't present to their readers. www.chinesenewsnet.com is the largest Chinese news web site in North America. It is privately owned, and claimed to contain an "objective reporting." Although the author of the thesis can't guarantee if news on the web site is truly objective, at least it is not under the control of the Chinese government, otherwise it won't be blocked to enter mainland China. Meanwhile, the censorship placed on the web site doesn't mean it is anti-China, because overseas online news media are among the most often blocked in China. In Chapter I a more detailed introduction to the non-domestic web site has been given. And also in Chapter I reasons to study web site news have been discussed.

Period of time: A one-month period of time in the year 2003 was chosen for coding. The year 2003 was chosen because some web sites don't have such an archive that allows readers to track daily news posted in the past. The government-supervised web site www.peopledaily.com.cn has an archive that enables the news search by keywords. It is helpful when readers want to find more news stories about a certain event, like a bank robbery in Northeast China, but such an archive isn't appropriate for the study of daily crime news, because keyword-searching can't find out the entire crime news stories posted on a certain day. The non-domestic web site www.chinesenewsnet.com also has a keyword search archive. The domestic commercial

web site has an archive that can give the entire news stories that were posted on a certain day as long as the exact date is typed in. In summary, for two of the three web sites once the news stories on a certain day are updated and replaced, it is impossible to track them in later days. Therefore, the year 2003 was chosen when the thesis is being written. In the thesis about a month period of time was chosen for coding, which is from mid February to mid March (February 10 to March 10). The first reason for choosing this period of time is that crime news is regularly reported on the three web sites on a daily basis, therefore the author of the thesis could have collected enough crime news stories for coding in a one-month period. The second reason is that by mid February the traditional Chinese festival, the spring festival, has ended, and everything including news media went back to normal. Despite the original one-month period planned in the thesis, the actual coding days are about 20 days. First, Saturday and Sunday news stories, were not coded because on Saturday and Sunday crime news on domestic web sites was not promptly updated as they were from Monday to Friday. Second, when crime news on the domestic commercial web site was coded, the author of the thesis first tried to collect all crime news posted on a weekday but eventually found that the amount was so large that it is impossible to collect all. Three days later, the author of the thesis decided to collect only the front-page crime news on the domestic commercial web site, which is supposed to be the most appealing crime news that day. Therefore, the coding in first three days was not counted but considered as a pilot test. Therefore, for the first three days 39 news stories from the commercial web site, 11 news stories from the government web site, and 7 news stories from the non-domestic web site, were taken

away from the coding. Each day, crime news was primarily collected in the morning from about 10 a.m. to 12 p. m. in central time America, which is about the midnight in China.

Unit of analysis: crime stories. The author of the thesis decided to code “routine crime stories,” which in Humphries’ (1981, p.193) words “condense the drama of victimization, coming closer to the experience of crime than do news items about trends or law enforcement policy or opinion statement.” In addition, the author of the thesis only coded crime news in which crime happened in mainland China. On the government-supervised web site www.peopledaily.com.cn, the routine crime stories concentrate in a subsection called “Case Fax” (which can be understood as immediate news coverage of recent crime events) under the Society section. The author of the thesis coded all crime news appearing in this subsection each day. On the domestic commercial web site www.sina.com.cn, the author of the thesis coded all the front-page crime news on the Domestic section and Society section. As crime news on the commercial web site was not concentrated under a subsection, the standard to decide whether a certain news item is crime news depends on whether an offender or a victim is present in the headline, or whether a judicial process is involved and indicated in the headline. The same standard applies to crime news coding on the non-domestic web site, where crime news was mostly found in the Mainland News section and Society section.

Since the author of the thesis didn’t randomly select coding days, and didn’t randomly select crime news on each day, the data in the thesis may not be analyzed with inferential statistics and can’t be generalized. But it did reflect to some extent the overall

characters of crime news on the three web sites and help answer the seven research questions in the thesis. The author of the thesis has coded 133 crime news from the government-supervised web site, 105 from the commercial web site, and 64 from the non-domestic web site for analysis.

Operational conceptualization of some coding categories: There are five categories in news sources. All the five categories were developed from a pilot test. The category of official news media refers to government-supervised news agencies, newspapers, online news services such as Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, New China News Agency, Xinhua News Net, People News Net etc. The category of urban newspapers refers to metropolitan newspapers such Beijing Evening, Jinghua Time etc. The category of Duowei News Agency refers to the non-domestic news agency which belongs to the same corporation as the non-domestic web site. The category of American news media refers to such media as Voice of America, New York Times, and Washington Post etc. The last category is other or unknown.

There are six categories in types of crime. The category of violent physical crime was developed from a literature review of research papers on crime news, such as the papers of Humphries (1981) and Barlow et al. (1995). It includes murder, robbery, burglary, arson, explosion, poisoning, assault and battery, kidnapping, and rape etc. The category of white collar crime was developed from a pilot test, but its exact definition is from dictionary.law.com, which defines white collar crime as "crimes involving commercial fraud, cheating consumers, swindles, insider trading on the stock market, embezzlement and other forms of dishonest business schemes generally committed by

professionals and business people. Theoretically the term “white collar crime” distinguishes these crimes and criminals from physical crimes, supposedly likely to be committed by "blue collar" workers.” The category of government official corruption was developed from a pilot test. The category of sex crime was developed from a pilot test, especially of crime news on a commercial web site. It mainly refers to pornography. The sex crime doesn’t include rape, because rape is physically violent, and therefore belongs to the category of violent physical crime. The category of anti-government crime was developed from a pilot test of crime news on a non-domestic web site. Based on the pilot test, anti-government crimes refer to dissident activities, workers’ strikes etc. The last category is other or unknown.

Categories of occupational status were also developed from a pilot test. Categories of causes for crime were developed both from a pilot test and a literature review. The category of social causes such as unemployment, inequality, and poverty was developed from the research papers of Humphries (1981) and Barlow et al. (1995). The category of individual causes was developed from both a pilot test and a literature review of the papers of Humphries (1981) and Barlow et al. (1995). The individual causes mainly refer to greed, revenge, mental illness etc.

Categories of the presentation of the police were developed from a research paper of Grabe (1999). The category of positive means the police are clearly stated in a story as “swift”, “effective”, or “fair”. The category of negative means the police are clearly stated in a story as slow, inefficient, or unfair. The category of neutral means the

police aren't mentioned in a story, or, no evaluation comments on their performance are given when the police are mentioned in a story.

Reliability: A test-retest method was not used in the coding scheme, and therefore the reliability of the data is affected by this negligence. This error may affect the accuracy of the data analysis. As a result, the quantitative study can be treated as a supplementary effort to illustrate the theoretical argument in the thesis, but the analysis of the data results can't stand alone and be claimed to support any hypothesis. The author of the thesis suggests future work can be done to improve the methodological deficiency of the study and explore the ideological role of news through empirical data.

Coding sheet: (see Appendix A)

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The data in the thesis is not randomly selected but coded in consecutive weekdays. It is important to use an uninterrupted time period for crime news study because as Grabe (1999, p.159) argues that major crime stories tend to evolve over days or even weeks and a randomly sampled period of time would only “provide fragments of this evolving storytelling process.” For the quantitative analysis of the data, how a certain crime event evolves is not a concern. But in an in-depth qualitative analysis of a certain crime event, an uninterrupted coding helps to provide more detailed and complete information for study.

In the quantitative analysis of the data, simple frequency counts and percentage are used to make comparisons and derive conclusions about patterns in the data set. In the selection of news sources, the results (Figure 1) indicate that the government-supervised web site tended to select crime news from official sources most often among the three web sites. About 79 percent of crime news sources on the government web site came from the state-run news media, compared to 48 percent on the non-domestic web site and 25 percent on the commercial web site. The commercial web site selected crime stories from urban newspapers most often, about 74 percent, compared to 5 percent on the non-domestic web site and 19 percent on the government web site. About 11 percent of crime news sources on the non-domestic web site were from the news media in the United States, while no such crime news source has been found on the two domestic web sites. In addition, the results show that despite its selection of news from its own news

agency and the media in United States, the non-domestic web site

www.chinesenewsnet.com used more crime sources from official news media in China than from urban newspapers.

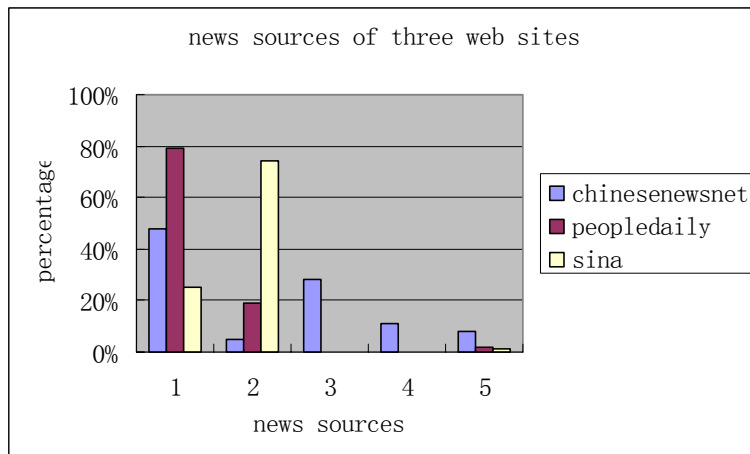


FIGURE 1

NEWS SOURCES

News Sources: 1=official news media, 2=urban newspapers, 3=Duowei News Agency, 4= American news media, 5=other or unknown

The reason for this, as the author of the thesis speculates, may lie in journalists' belief that official sources have more important things to say and be more authoritative. Another reason is that news from official sources maybe more ready for use than urban newspapers. Located outside China, when the non-domestic news web site can't get enough news from its own news agency, it is more likely for the web site to turn to official media sources than to clip urban newspapers. On the other hand, the two

domestic web sites didn't select crime news from the media outside China. The government web site used the official media sources most often so that crime news stories would be told and interpreted from an official perspective. The commercial web site used news from urban newspapers most often, because as the author of the thesis speculates crime news from urban newspapers can be more sensational and more appealing to readers.

The results (Figure 2) on types of crime indicate that all the three web sites had more violent crime news than other types of crime news. Violent crime news accounted to 70 percent of all crime news on the commercial web site www.sina.com.cn, compared to 45 percent on the non-domestic web site and 35 percent on the government web site. It looked like violent crime stories on the latter two web sites didn't reach 50 percent, but there are six categories of crime types in the coding. Therefore, even though violent crime stories didn't reach half percent of all crime news on the two web sites, their percentage was still much higher than other types of crime. About 16 percent of crime stories on the non-domestic web site www.chinesenewsnet.com are government official corruption, compared to 13 percent on the government web site and 3 percent on the commercial web site.

However, it should be noted that even though violent crime stories accounted for the largest percentage of crime stories on all the three web sites news, the government web site had fewer violent crime stories than the other two web sites. The commercial web site had 70 percent violent crime stories, and the non-domestic web site had 45 percent. Both were higher than the 35 percent on the government web site. The reason,

as the author of the thesis speculates, maybe that the market pressure on the government web site may not be as great as that on the other two, so the government web site maybe not in such a great need to attract readers through sensational violent crime stories.

Besides, the government web site had more white collar crime stories than the other two web sites. 19 percent of all crime news on the government web site was white collar crimes, compared to 9 percent on the non-domestic web site and 8 percent on the commercial web site.

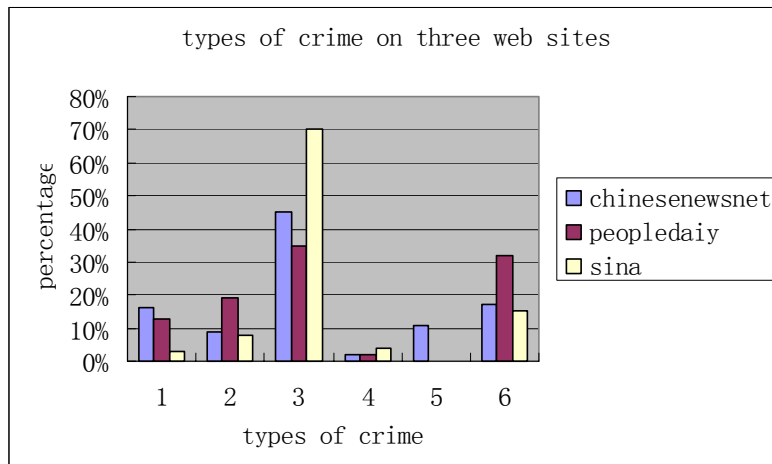


FIGURE 2

TYPES OF CRIME

Types of crime: 1=corruption by government officials, 2=white collar crime, 3=violent physical crime, 4=sex crime, 5= anti-government crimes, 6= other or unknown

In summary, even though government official corruption and white collar crime stories were not as prominent as violent crime stories, they did play a big part on the government web site. This phenomenon is opposite to what the author of the thesis has found in the literature, where white collar crime and government official corruption crime were rarely reported in the news. The reason for the coverage of government official and white collar crime on the government web site, as the author of the thesis speculates, may have something to do with the policy change and the social control of the dominant Party. Gordon (1973) argues that the State may be pressured to prosecute the wealthy and the people in power if their criminal practices become so dangerous that their victims may move to overthrow the system itself. In those cases, the State may punish individual members of the powerful class in order to protect the interests of the entire class.

The author of the thesis thinks that Gordon's explanation maybe fit into the current conditions of China. With the development of economic reforms, China is facing some serious social problems that emerged in the reforming process and need immediate treatment. For example, the unsuccessful reforms on state-owned enterprises lead to rising unemployment rate of factory workers and their deteriorating living standard. Meanwhile, some government officials and business people became very rich through illegal means of money gathering. When factory workers or peasants can't make their ends meet after hard working for a whole year, corrupt officials have countless money to buy varieties of luxuries and send their children abroad. Official corruption now has become so serious that it enlarged the disparity between the rich and the poor and

triggered the antagonism against the government among the lower-class people. In this situation, the Party is taking actions to punish its corrupt individuals for the protection of its entire control.

To maintain its dominance and legitimacy, the Party has put the anti-corruption a priority on its agenda. According to a news report by New China News Net on February 22, 2003, Director of the Party's Discipline Committee Wu Guanzheng said the Party has made the anti-corruption an important political task to achieve. According to an Internet survey by Peopledaily.com.cn during January and February in 2003, "anti-corruption" has become the topic the public concern most, followed by the topic of "reform on legal system and realization of fairness and justice." The author of the thesis argues that the government official corruption and white-collar crime news reflect, to some extent, the policy change of the Communist Party. When the Party decided to face the problem of corruption and put it as a priority on national policies, the news media, especially the government news media, will discuss the topic more openly.

But other types of crimes, which were claimed to be anti-government activities, such as workers' strikes in Northeast China, dissident activities, and activities for human rights, were not reported on the two domestic web sites. About 11 percent of crime news on the non-domestic web site was such news, but none of them appeared on the two domestic web sites.

The results (Figure 3) show that most of the crime news stories on the three web sites didn't provide the age information for criminals. About 80 percent of crime news stories on all the three web sites didn't provide the age information. For the rest 20

percent, 19 percent of criminals in the non-domestic web site crime news, 11 percent on the government web site, and 6 percent on the commercial web site, are in the adult age group, that is, from 31 to 60 years old. In summary, according to the available age information, the government web site and the non-domestic web site crime news had more criminals at the adult age, while criminals of crime news stories on the commercial web site were evenly separated in three age groups, that is, 7 percent in the youth group (20 and under), 7 percent in the young adult group (21-30), and 6 percent in the adult group (31-60).

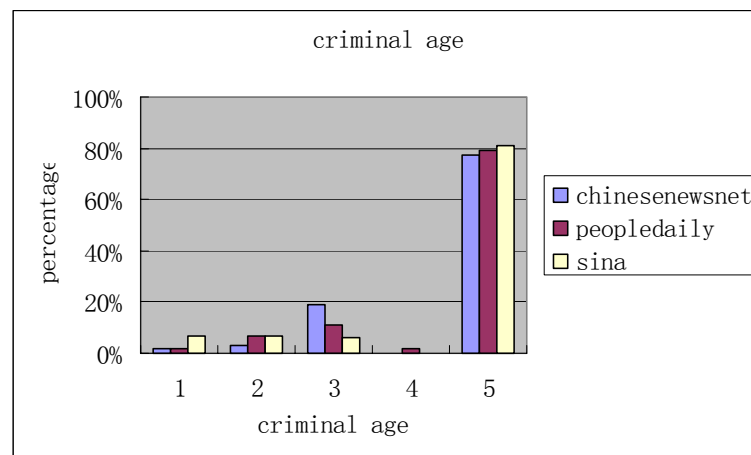


FIGURE 3

CRIMINAL AGE

Age: 1=youth (20 and under), 2=young adult (21 to 30), 3=adult (31to 60), 4=senior citizen (61 and above), 5=unknown

As to the punishment for criminals, results (Figure 4) show that about 14 percent of stories on the government web site indicated that the criminal had been sentenced to death, compared to 15 percent on the commercial web site and 6 percent on the non-domestic web site. Generally, domestic web sites had a higher percentage of crime stories revealing death penalty than a non-domestic web site.

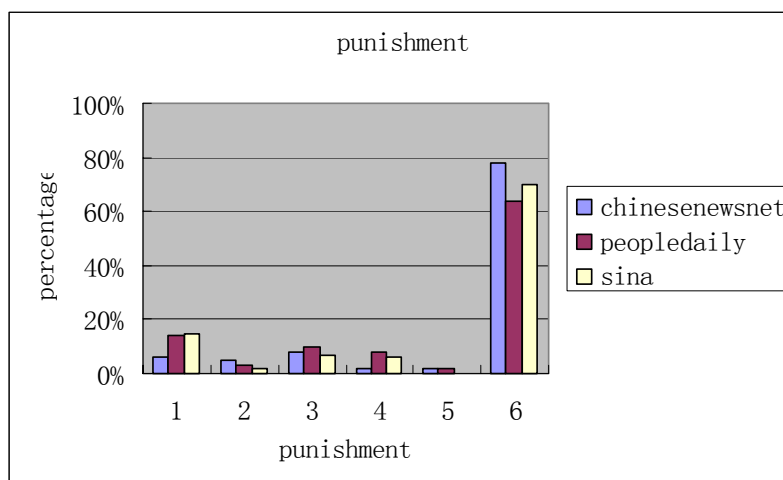


FIGURE 4

PUNISHMENT

Punishment for criminals: 1=death penalty, 2=life in prison, 3=under 10 years in prison, 4=10 years or above 10 years in prison, 5=financial fine, 6=other or unknown

The results (Figure 5, 6) show that 45 percent of all crime stories on the non-domestic web site didn't provide the occupational information, compared to 38 percent on the government web site and 42 percent on the commercial web site. On the occupational status of victims, about 67 percent of crime stories on the non-domestic

web site didn't provide the information, compared to 70 percent on the government web site and 55 percent on the commercial web site. When compared within, nearly half of the stories on each domestic web site didn't provide the occupational information of criminals and victims.

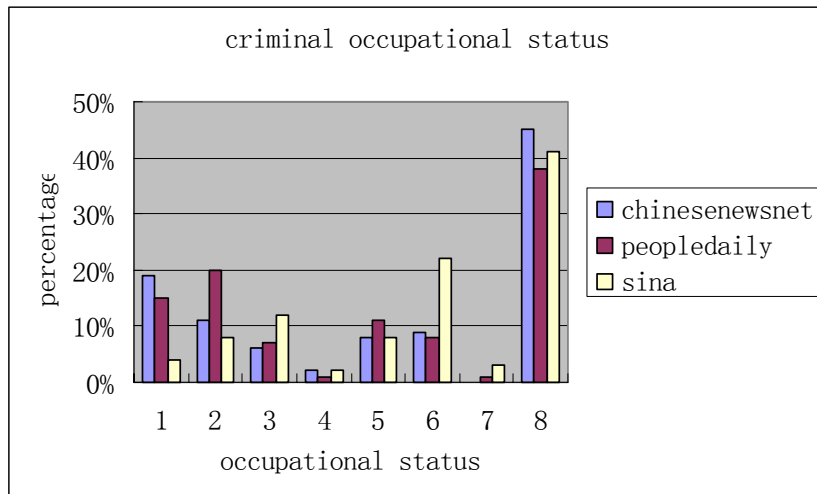


FIGURE 5

CRIMINAL OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

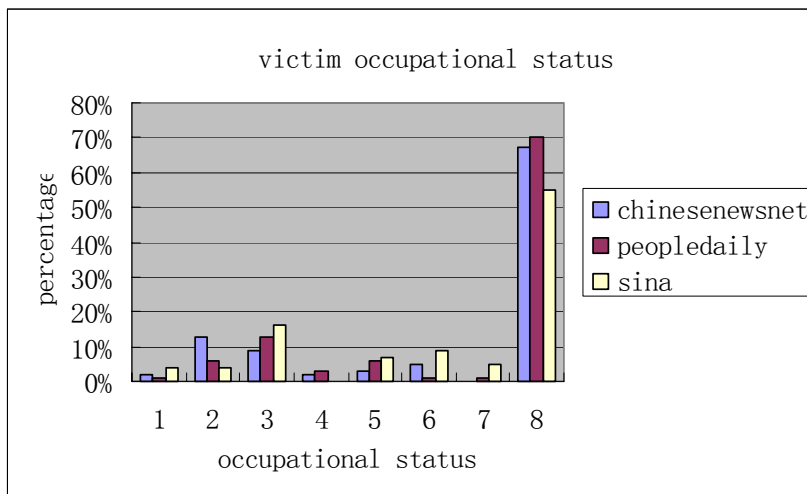


FIGURE 6

VICTIM OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

Occupational status: 1=government officials, 2=managers, private entrepreneurs and professionals, 3=employees, staff, and small business owners such as shopkeepers, 4=factory workers, 5=peasants and peasant migrant workers, 6=unemployed, 7=students, 8=unknown or other

A majority of crime stories on all the three web sites didn't mention directly the causes for crimes (Figure 7). But when they did, 11 percent of all stories on the non-domestic web site mentioned individual causes, such as greed and revenge, compared to 20 percent on the government web site and 31 percent on the commercial web site. About 6 percent of all stories on the non-domestic web site discussed the social causes for crime such as inequality and unemployment, but no discussion on social causes for crime appeared on the two domestic web sites.

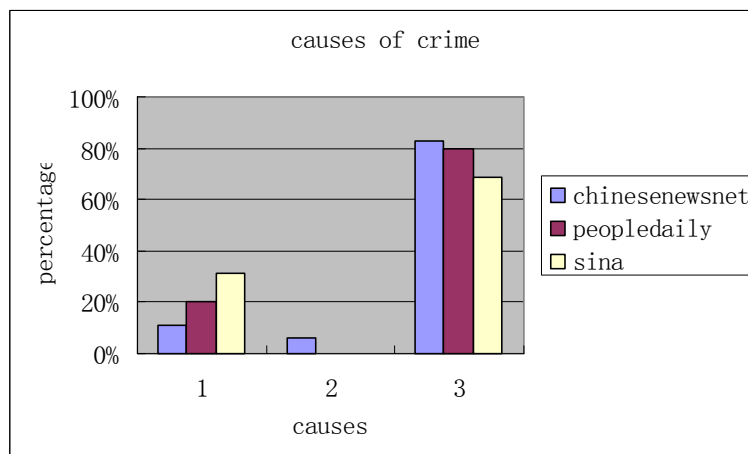


FIGURE 7

CAUSES FOR CRIME

Causes for crime: 1=individual causes, 2=social causes, 3=other or unknown

Finally, when it comes to the presentation of police, 11 percent of crime news (Figure 8) on the non-domestic web site presented the police positively, compared to 26 percent on the government web site and 13 percent on the commercial web site. It also should be noted that a majority of crime stories on all the three web sites presented the police force neutrally.

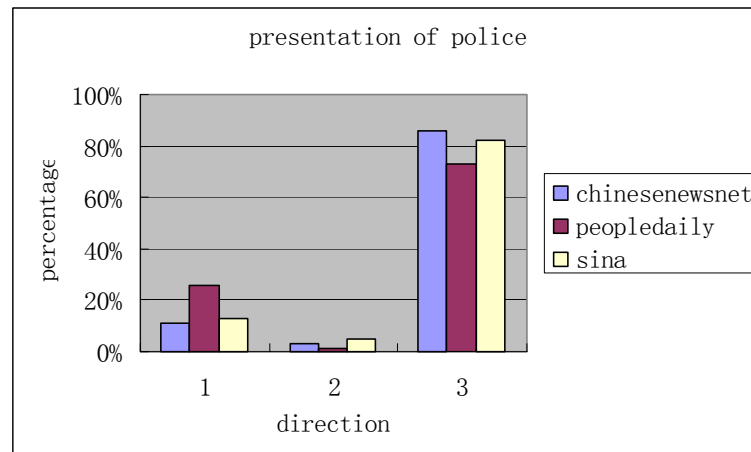


FIGURE 8

PRESENTATION OF THE POLICE

Presentation of police: 1=positive, 2=negative, 3=neutral

Despite an explorative quantitative study, a qualitative analysis was done to discuss in depth how the three web sites told about the causes for the same crime event. This qualitative study helps to answer research question 6 concerning the causes for crime. While time did not permit a fully developed qualitative analysis, one qualitative comparison was included in the study to suggest how some important differences among the three web sites were not visible in the quantitative part of the study. Stories of explosions on Peking University and Tsinghua University campuses were chosen for analysis. Explosions on the two university campuses were done by one person, and therefore were treated as one crime event. Besides, the crime event was chosen for other two reasons. First, the crime event happened during the coding period on February 25, 2003. Secondly, the crime is a serious crime occurred in Beijing, Capital of China, and at

Peking University and Tsinghua University, two of the most famous universities in the country. It used to be uncommon for the domestic media to report such serious crime happening at such important places. But this time the crime event received intensive and consecutive coverage from both domestic media, including the two domestic web sites, and the non-domestic web site. All the three web sites covered the crime event almost at the same time, that is, as soon as the explosion happened, and with quite the same intensity, that is, each web site had follow-up stories concerning the development of the crime event. The author of the thesis wonders despite the same intensity and concentration on the same crime event and its development, if the three web sites would tell their stories the same way, especially in the description of the criminal and his motives to commit the crime.

On the late morning of February 25, 2003, an explosion occurred in a dining hall at Tsinghua University, injured six people, but no one died. Shortly after, another explosion happened at Peking University, also in a dining hall. The explosion injured three people with no death. When the explosions happened, a journalist from Xinhua News Agency was having dinner at one of the explosive dining halls and witnessed the event. The news was released by the Xinhua News Net, the online publication of Xinhua News Agency, on the same day of the explosion, and it was selected by both the government web site and the commercial web site and posted to the web on the afternoon of that day. The non-domestic web site reported the crime event shortly after.

After the occurrence of explosions, the domestic news media continued to report the development of the event. News about the victims of explosion, the recovery of order

on the two university campuses, the investigation of the crime, the arrest of the suspect and the sentence of the criminal etc. all appeared on the domestic and non-domestic web sites. The continuous coverage lasted till the end of April when the criminal was sentenced to life in prison. The concentration of the qualitative analysis is on the causes of the crime indicated on the three web sites.

After the criminal was sentenced on April 30, the commercial web site selected from the news magazine China News Weekly an interview with the lawyer of the criminal. The criminal's background and motives for crime were discussed in the interview. The criminal, Huang Yuxiang, was born in Fujian Province, South China, in 1976. His parents are factory workers. After graduation from high school, Huang didn't find a satisfactory job, but migrated from one city to another to do some temporary jobs. As to Huang's motives for the crime, according to Huang's lawyer, Huang confessed he wanted to be famous, and so he chose to explode the two most famous universities in the country to attract people's attention. Huang's lawyer denied that Huang had mental illness. He said Huang was a nice guy with ambitions and dreams, but the unstable life, unemployment, and poor economic conditions disillusioned him. Finally, Huang chose to use violence to realize his dream and to be famous.

The government web site chose another interview from Xinhua News Network on March 13, 2003, which was claimed to be "an exclusive interview with Huang's family." But in the story, the journalist actually interviewed Huang's uncle in hometown. Huang's uncle and grandparents are all teachers in hometown, so in the story Huang was said to be raised in a family of education. But the author of thesis questions the claim

because in the story Huang's uncle said he had little contact with Huang since Huang moved with his parents to another province at the age of 5. In addition, Huang's parents and their occupations were not mentioned in the story. At the end of the story, the journalist cited Huang's co-worker, describing Huang as "stubborn, self-conscious, and radical."

On the government web site, stories always emphasized Huang's motive for the crime is to be famous. A story on March 8, 2003 was headlined "Huang's confession: explosions for fame."

Contrary to the government web site, the non-domestic web site discussed more about the social causes for the crime. After the explosion happened, news on the non-domestic web site speculated that the crime maybe committed by unemployed people unsatisfied with the society. The news on non-domestic web site didn't emphasize the criminal as mentally ill and craving for fame as the government web site did.

In summary, in representation of motives for crime, the government web site concentrated on the individual deficiency of the criminal, claiming he did the crime to be famous. Even though, the government web site tried to explore Huang's background with a story headlined "exclusive interview with Huang's family," only Huang's remote relative, his uncle was interviewed in the story. Because Huang's uncle and grandparents are all teachers at hometown, in the story Huang was said to be raised in a family of education. But Huang's parents, who are factory workers, were not mentioned, let alone being interviewed. In the latter part of the news story, Huang was described as "stubborn and radical" through the quotation of his coworkers, but Huang's frequent changes of

jobs were not mentioned. The commercial web site had some discussion about the Huang's unstable life, unemployment, and linked these factors to his crime. But stories on the commercial web site didn't blame the society for Huang's criminal act, but that Huang himself should be blamed for not strong enough to go through the tests and difficulties in life and ultimately yield to illegal means to achieve his goals. The non-domestic web site had more discussions about the social causes than the two domestic web sites. But different from the commercial web site, the stories on a non-domestic web site recognized the seriousness of such social problems as unemployment and believed it is beyond the individual power to conquer. Crime is inevitable as long as social inequality and unemployment exist. Therefore, stories on the non-domestic web site are essentially different from those on a commercial web site in that social problems rather than the strength of individual willpower are believed to be the ultimate causes for crime. On a government web site, stories even avoided the discussion of the criminal's social conditions that may lead to crime.

As one example of comparison is not adequate enough to conclude that domestic web site news shifted the causes for crime from social problems to individual weaknesses, future research work could explore these qualitative aspects further.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the comparison of the two domestic web site news, crime news on a commercial web site was different from a government web site in that its news sources mainly came from urban newspapers rather than official news media, and that it had much more violent crime news than the government web site. The author of the thesis speculates that the two differences may have something to do with the greater market pressure on the commercial web site. Financially independent, the commercial web site is more pressured to appeal to readers and increase its advertising revenues, and therefore is more likely to turn to urban newspapers for mass-appeal crime news stories. It is also no surprise that about 70 percent of crime stories on the commercial web site were violent crime since violent crime stories sell well.

Despite the differences, the two domestic web sites have more in common. They were the same in that both didn't use American news sources; death penalty was more often indicated in the news than the non-domestic web site; police were presented as positive, and individual causes were attributed to crime. The sameness between the two domestic web sites suggests that the commercial web site essentially has the same ideological function as the government web site does, because when crime news was selected from the media inside China rather than outside China, it is less likely that news event will be interpreted from any perspective other than being permitted by the government; when the police were presented as efficient and swift, an ideological message was distributed through the news that the government law enforcement system

was effective and dependable; an important ideological function of the media is to help the ruling class maintain social control and the status quo, therefore when the news attributed individual reasons to crime, the ruling class was spared the responsibility and their control was justified.

At this point the author of the thesis concludes that in an era of media commercialization, commercial factors like the need to attract readers and increase advertising revenues do influence the news content of a commercial web site in some aspects. For example crime news stories on a commercial web site can be more vivid and sensational than those on a government web site. But overall the ideological influence plays a bigger role in shaping the news content of domestic media than commercial factors. It should also be noted that different from propaganda campaigns in Mao's era which propagated political ideologies directly and openly, news media in the era of commercialization have dominant ideologies distributed through more subtle and indirect forms, such as those ideological messages distributed through the selection of domestic news sources, the positive presentation of the police force, and the attribution of individual crime causes etc.

It is also interesting to notice that contrary to the research literature where crime other than violent crime was rarely reported in the news, the results show that the government web site had quite a number of official corruption and white collar crime news stories. The author of the thesis speculates that this phenomenon may have something to do with the changes of priorities in government policies or the changes in the dominant ideology. When official corruption became so dangerous that it threatened the

control of the dominant Communist Party, the ruling Party decided to punish its individual members in order to protect the interests of the whole class. Therefore, when anti-corruption was set as a priority on the Party's agenda, the media correspondingly will discuss more about the topic. The open discussion of official corruption on a government web site supports the theory that dominant ideology changes with a changing world, and so is media's representation of ideology.

Despite the frequent coverage of official corruption news on the government web site, when a non-domestic web site was added to the comparison, crime news that featured sensitive issues like punishment for dissidents, arrests of striking workers, was reported on the non-domestic web site, but none of such news appeared on the two domestic web sites. The phenomenon further proves that the domestic web sites, whether governmental or commercial, are still under the tight ideological control of the government.

Finally a qualitative analysis of a certain crime event was done to explore the different interpretations of motives for crime on the three web sites. The qualitative analysis shows that both commercial web site and non-domestic web site discussed the criminal's social conditions that possibly lead to the crime. But the essential difference between the non-domestic web site and the commercial web site is that stories on a commercial web site blamed on the individual's weakness not to go through the tests of social difficulties, while stories on the non-domestic web site believe that social problems rather than the deficiency of the individual willpower are the ultimate reasons

for crime. The government web site didn't mention the social causes of crime, but insisted that the criminal was mentally ill and committed the crime for fame.

Due to some methodological deficiencies in the quantitative and qualitative studies, the results are treated as some explorative data to illustrate the theoretical discussion of the thesis. Future quantitative and qualitative studies can be done to improve the weaknesses of the thesis, and explore the ideological role of news through empirical data.

In conclusion, the author of the thesis, with the consideration of Chinese situations, theoretically discussed ideology, ideological hegemony and its evolving nature, and believes that the dominant ideology in China is changing, and so is media's representation of ideology. With some explorative data to illustrate the theoretical discussion, the author of the thesis believes that in an era of commercialization crime news on the domestic news web sites, whether governmental or commercial, promotes ideologies of the dominant Party through such indirect and subtle forms as the selection of official news sources, the comparatively frequent indication of the death penalty, the positive presentation of the police, and the attribution of individual causes to crime.

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APPENDIX A
CODING SHEET

News Sources:

1=government-supervised news agencies, newspapers, online news services such as Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, New China News Agency, Xinhua News Net, People News Net etc.

2=urban newspapers or metropolitan newspapers such Beijing Evening, Jinghua Time etc.

3=Duowei News Agency (the non-domestic Chinese news agency providing news for the non-domestic news web site. The news agency and web site all belong to the Chinese Media Net Incorporation founded in North America.)

4= American news media such as Voice of America, New York Times, Washington Post etc.

5=other or unknown

Types of crime:

1=corruption by government officials

2=white collar crime (according to the definition on dictionary.law.com, white collar crime means crimes involving commercial fraud, cheating consumers, swindles, insider trading on the stock market, embezzlement and other forms of dishonest business schemes generally committed by professionals and business people. Theoretically the

term “white collar crime” distinguishes these crimes and criminals from physical crimes, supposedly likely to be committed by "blue collar" workers.)

3= violent physical crime such as murder, robbery, burglary, arson, explosion, poisoning, assault and battery, kidnapping, and rape etc.

4=sex crime such as pornography and public sexual performance (rape is not in this category because it is physically violent.)

5= crimes claimed to endanger national security such as such as dissident activities, workers’ strikes etc.

6= other or unknown

Demographic information of offenders and victims

Age

1=youth (20 and under)

2=young adult (21 to 30)

3=adult (31-60)

4=senior citizen (61 and above)

5=unknown

Gender

1=male

2=female

3=unknown or other

Occupational status

1=government officials

2=managers, private entrepreneurs or professionals

3=employees, staff, or small business owners such as shopkeepers

4=factory workers

5=peasants or peasant migrant workers

6=unemployed

7=students

8=unknown or other

Punishment for criminals

1=death penalty

2=life in prison

3=under 10 years in prison

4=10 years or above in prison

5= financial fine

6=other or unknown

Presentation of police

1=positive: “swift”, “effective”, or “fair”

2=negative: slow, inefficient, or unfair

3=neutral: the police are not mentioned, or no evaluation comments on the police performance are given.

Causes for crime

1=individual causes such as psychological illness, revenge, family conflict etc.

2=social causes such as unemployment, poverty, inequality etc.

3=other or unknown

VITA

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