

A Movement of Varying Faces: How “Occupy Central” Was Framed in the News in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, the UK, and the U.S.

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This research applied framing theory, in combination with the protest paradigm, to the specific context of a significant protest event in Hong Kong’s history. A total of 191 news stories concerning the “Occupy Central” crisis were examined to delineate how the events were framed in the UK, the U.S., mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The newspapers in all five media markets were found to have differing news stories about the same event or the same issue. News framing was analyzed in terms of selection and description biases, including news perspective, favorability toward the protesters or the government, sourcing pattern, and attribution of responsibility. The results show significant differences among the five markets, not only between contrasting media systems, but also between comparable ones. The frames employed in the coverage are interpreted in terms of the markets’ ideological differences. The reasons for these differences and theoretical implications are explored.

Keywords: Umbrella Movement, Occupy Central, news framing, protests, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan

The 2014 “Occupy Central” crisis in Hong Kong is seen as China’s biggest political struggle since the government’s crackdown on the prodemocracy “Beijing Spring” movement on June 4, 1989. The Occupy Central protests, also known as the “Umbrella Movement,” took place in Hong Kong when activists and students occupied the streets to protest the decision made by the Beijing-based central government on the

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procedure for electing the Hong Kong Chief Executive, which ruled out civil nominations and was thus considered to foster “fake” universal suffrage.

The Occupy Central crisis led to the arrests of protesters, shutdown of government agencies, school class boycotts, and other complications. Given the probability of its deep and long-lasting impact, the Occupy Central movement may well become one of the most significant events in Hong Kong’s history. The crisis reminded the world of the Beijing Spring of 1989 and its ensuing bloodshed. News media, local and global, paid close attention and reported the crisis extensively. In Greater China—owing to its geographic, ethnic, and political proximity—the news media in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan closely monitored the protests and the accompanying crisis. Western media, especially those of the UK and the U.S., also broadly covered the progress of the movement.

The Occupy Central crisis, combined with its backdrop of different political climaxes in the three regions of Greater China and in the Western world, provides an extraordinary opportunity for a news framing study because it involves political aspirations toward democracy, something that is valued and sensitized to varying degrees among different media systems. The conflicts between the protesters and the established rulers during the crisis allowed news media to adopt a variety of frames congruent with their political and social values.

Using frames derived from past studies and identified from original data, this study examines how Occupy Central was presented in the news and analyzes the frames exerted on the coverage. Framing analysis is conducted in terms of the overall news perspective, favorability toward the protesters or the government, attribution of responsibility, sourcing patterns, and economic consequences. The frames employed in the news coverage are interpreted in light of the differences in ideological orientation and press freedom in the five jurisdictions. The reasons for the observed differences and their theoretical implications are explored.

Literature Review

Rationale of Research

Framing in the news. Gitlin (1980) described a news frame as the central idea around which attributes of news events are organized, which then guides the conceptual blending of words, images, and thoughts. That is, a news frame is the pivotal organizing idea for news content that furnishes a context and defines what the issue is through the use of selection, exclusion, emphasis, and elaboration (Ghanem, 1997). Eventually, the “frame,” or perspectives, that journalists employ draws attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage and influences how people understand, remember, evaluate, and act on a problem or issue (McCombs, 2005; Perlmutter, 2007; Shen, 2004; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004).

For journalism studies, probably the most useful and widely cited definition of framing is from Entman (1993), who argued that news framing essentially involves selection and salience—to frame is to select certain aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient. Entman (2004) summarized the functions of framing and divided them into four categories: the promotion of a particular definition,

identifying cause, moral judgment, and endorsing remedies or improvement. Some basic assumptions—for example, the assumption that framing provides the pattern to construct the interpretation of society—are shared by most subsequent research (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010).

Ideological news framing. As scholars have observed and commonly agreed, news is not always a reflection of an objective reality, but typically a socially constructed product. It is said that no newsgathering and reporting system is fundamentally nonideological, apolitical, and nonpartisan, and therefore, the differences in news coverage are almost a clear fact (McQuail, 1992).

Among the social factors constructing news production, ideology plays a key role. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) defined ideology as “a symbolic mechanism that serves as a cohesive and integrating force in society” (p. 212). The production and reproduction of ideology rely on different state apparatuses, including the news media (Althusser, 1971). As Herman and Chomsky (1998) explained, mass media, including those in a free press environment like the United States, are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) observed the “universal fact” that mass media are controlled by governments—regardless of whether they are in countries where the media are largely privately owned or where the media are primarily government owned, controls are exerted through laws, regulations, licenses, taxes, and/or media financing.

Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad (1998) argued that ideology is a major source of news framing, and media transmit ideology by selectively choosing content and constructing it into a coherent structure. In the context of news work, and in the case of international news coverage in particular, as they observed, the dominant ideology of the nation (be it capitalist or communist, democratic or authoritarian) appears to function as a major source of framing.

One protest, different stories. As Entman (1993) and Lasorsa (1997) noted, through framing, media can differ even when presenting the same story or issue. When it comes to anti-government protests, ideological influences may be particularly evident. Depending on the ideological boundaries, a protest event can be framed as a deviant action characterized by violence and vandalism, or a social movement striving for justice and democracy; it can be framed as a conflict between government and opponents, or as just an incidental standoff between the protesters and the police force. For example, contrasting American and Chinese media coverage of the 1989 Tiananmen protests in Beijing, Friedland and Zhong (1996) observed that U.S. media portrayed the student protests as a “prodemocracy” revolution, whereas Chinese media called it “counterrevolutionary” turmoil. In examining *The New York Times*' coverage of student uprisings and governmental reprisals in China and South Korea, which both occurred in the 1980s, Kobland, Du, and Kwon (1992) found that the demonstrations in Communist China were portrayed so as to illuminate the troubles facing dictatorial communist regimes, whereas the reporting on those in pro-Western South Korea focused on the demonstrations themselves instead of the wider implications of a repressive government. More recently, Zhang and Fahmy's (2009) comparative analysis of U.S. and Russian newspaper coverage of political movements in the former Soviet republics revealed a clear pro-movement pattern in *The New York Times* but a pro-incumbent one in *The Moscow Times*: The U.S. newspaper depicted the protesters favorably, whereas the Russian newspaper treated protesters in an unfavorable manner. Du and Cheng (2013) examined media coverage of the Egyptian Revolution and found that it was framed in different ways in

newspapers of different ideological backgrounds, giving contrasting depictions of the protesters. In comparing news coverage of anti-war protests in the U.S., the UK, and China, Peng (2008) examined frames, themes, and overall favorability toward the protesters, finding that significant differences exist in coverage not only between contrasting media systems (U.S. and UK vs. China), but also between comparable media systems (U.S. vs. UK).

Protest paradigm. The concept of *protest paradigm* offers theoretical support to understand specific types of coverage on protests and movements. As journalists cover protests through a coherent ideological worldview, Chan and Lee (1984) argued that a protest paradigm can be considered as a heuristic notion summarizing a pattern of news coverage that expresses approval or disapproval toward protests and dissents. As they observed, protest frames were imbued with a media outlet's political ideology: Right-leaning newspapers emphasized social order and the status quo, whereas left-leaning outlets privileged the protester's perspective. According to McLeod and Hertog (1999), a protest paradigm is "a routinized pattern or implicit template for the coverage of social protest" (p. 311), and its elements serve three dimensions in describing protesters: delegitimization (whether to question the legitimacy of radical protest groups), marginalization (whether to accentuate the deviance of the protesters from the mainstream public), and demonization (whether to exaggerate the potential threat of a protest group).

Ideologies of Press Control and Media Systems

International communication scholars (e.g., Lule, 1988; Willnat, Weaver, & Choi, 2013) are often struck by how differently journalism is practiced in different parts of the world. As such, they have constructed "major dimensions" or "normative concepts" of media systems to highlight the special features of different journalism practices in the world and to help distinguish the underlying elements among them. Political parallelism, or the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties, and the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system, has been one major dimension through which media systems and news coverage are compared (Balmas & Sheafer, 2013; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1975; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Seymour-Ure, 1974). Along with this dimension, a number of scholars have weighed in on this issue, and a series of media system typologies have been developed to reflect the varied ideologies of press control worldwide.

While Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's (1956) "typology of the press" categorized media systems worldwide as authoritarian, libertarian, communist, or social responsibility, Hachten and Scotton (2007) developed five different country-level media system concepts,² including the Western concept, which values the right of the media to report on, comment on, and criticize the government without retaliation (such media systems are exemplified in Western nations such as the U.S. and the UK, among others), and the communist media system type, within which the press is believed to serve positive functions for society by socialization to desired norms (communist media transmit official views, serving the ruling party but not the public; examples of such media systems can be found in China, Cuba, and North Korea). Hallin and Mancini (2004) focused on Western press and identified three major models: polarized pluralist, democratic

² The other three concepts are authoritarian, developmental, and revolutionary, which are not essentially relevant to this study and therefore not discussed here.

corporatist, and liberal. According to Patterson (2007)'s interpretations, the liberal model features a vibrant commercial news market, a limited amount of state intervention, a high degree of journalistic professionalism, and a weak political parallelism (the purest example of the liberal model is the U.S. media system); in polarized pluralist model countries, journalists are more "dependent" on political elites than are those working within the liberal model; the democratic corporatist model has the coexistence of strong commercial media and politically linked media (the British press appears to fall somewhere between the liberal model and the democratic corporatist model because of Britain's strong public broadcasting system and partisan-tinged national newspaper system).

It is widely known that the news media in mainland China are under strict ideological control by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). They have been used as the state's ideological apparatus and the "mouthpiece" of the government for "command communication" (Wu, 1994, 2000). The CCP and its government continue to insist that the media, including both party-owned organs and those based on mass appeal, continue to operate under the CCP's directions. As such, Chinese journalists often tell very different stories than their counterparts in Western systems for news coverage of the same event.

Hong Kong enjoys greater press freedom, given that the city was deeply influenced by British colonial governance and tradition and has embraced capitalism and developed a mature market economy where the free flow of information is highly valued. Although Hong Kong is now under the rule of Communist China, a policy of "one country, two systems" was designed to ensure the autonomy of this Special Administrative Region (SAR).³ Under that political framework, the press is supposed to be able to continue operating within the Western normative concept, facilitating the flow of information.⁴

Taiwan's media environment is the freest among the three Greater China regions studied. Freedom of the press is safeguarded by the constitution, under which the press can monitor government policies and official conduct without undue restraint. According to Freedom House, Taiwan currently has a free press, ranking 47th among 197 countries around the world in terms of press freedom (Freedom House, 2014b).

The 2014 Hong Kong Occupy Central Crisis

The Occupy Central⁵ crisis in Hong Kong is considered China's biggest political challenge since June 4, 1989, when the government finally cracked down on the months-long prodemocracy movement in Beijing,

³ The 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, which is the basis for the 1997 Hong Kong Handover from the UK to the People's Republic of China, states that, after the handover, the socialist system of PRC would not be practiced in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and Hong Kong's previous capitalist system and its way of life would remain unchanged for a period of 50 years, until 2047.

⁴ It is worth noting that in practice, freedom to apply the Western normative concept also implies freedom to apply the Communist one, and there have been growing concerns about media owners and journalists in Hong Kong choosing to impose self-censorship (Cheung, 2003). In fact, Hong Kong now has what Freedom House terms a "partly free" press (Freedom House, 2014a).

⁵ "Central" is Hong Kong's financial and business center, hosting major multinational corporations' headquarters and numerous foreign countries' consulates. It is considered the "Wall Street" of Hong Kong.

resulting in massive bloodshed and gaining worldwide attention. The Occupy Central protests, also known as the Umbrella Movement, took place in Hong Kong when tens of thousands of activists and students gathered to protest outside the government headquarters and occupied a number of the city's critical streets. This was fueled by the Beijing-based central government's decision on the procedure for electing the Hong Kong Chief Executive, which was viewed as fostering "fake" universal suffrage.⁶ The Occupy Central crisis led to the arrests of protesters, shutdowns of government agencies, closure of schools, and so on. Given the haunting similarities between this and the Beijing Spring of 1989, and the probability of its deep and long-lasting impact, some historians consider Occupy Central to be one of the most significant events in Hong Kong's history.

Worldwide media responses to the protests were mixed, although most have called for peaceful action and movement toward democratic reform. Stark contrasts in the news coverage in various media outlets have been observed. It seems that although the majority of the news coverage, including that originating from Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S., is characterized by a sympathetic perspective toward the protesters, some reports, especially those by mainland-based media, tend to denounce the movement by highlighting the protesters' negative behaviors and the economic consequences of the crisis. Such observations, however, are sketchy and superficial. Quantitative research is needed to examine the pattern of the media coverage and draw substantiated conclusions.

Based on previous research, this study proposes the following general research question and hypothesis:

RQ: How was the Occupy Central movement reported in the news coverage in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S., respectively? What is the difference, if any, among them?

⁶ The 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration states that, after the handover in 1997, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong shall be selected by election; in accordance with The Declaration, the Hong Kong Basic Law stipulates that the ultimate aim of selecting the Chief Executive by way of universal suffrage is guaranteed.

⁷ Specifically, mainland China's coverage is more likely than that of other region/state to:

- H1: adopt a general **news perspective** in favor of the government's stance.
- H2: portray the **government actions** as reconciliation instead of suppression.
- H3: describe the **protester behavior** as violent.
- H4: mention **human** examples or exemplars.
- H5: mention **economic consequences**.
- H6: (less likely to) mention **Beijing Spring** of 1989.
- RQ1: How are **judgmental headlines** presented in the news coverage of each region/state?
- RQ2: How is **conflict** framed in the news coverage of each region/state?
- RQ3: How is **causality** of movement interpreted in the news coverage of each region/state?
- RQ4: What is the **solution** of the problem/conflict mentioned in the news coverage of each region/state?
- RQ5: What is the **sourcing pattern** in the news coverage of each region/state?

H: News media of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan exerted different frames on the coverage of Occupy Central that corresponded in each case with their respective prevailing ideologies (see specific hypotheses in Note 7).

Method

Sampling and Data Sources for Content Analysis

It is commonly agreed that the Occupy Central movement began on September 28, 2014, in Hong Kong, when the demonstrations against the Chinese central government's decision on the procedure for the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive election took place, and ended December 15,⁸ when the government finished the clearance operation. As such, the time frame for the content sample of this study is set from September 28 to December 16, 2014.

Media content was obtained through the WiseNews database (for Chinese news) and the Factiva database (for English news). Catering to the needs of academic research, WiseNews is commonly agreed among researchers of the Chinese media to be the best available database that archives Chinese news publications in the Greater China area. The Factiva database is the best available source for English news for the purpose of this research, because it is commonly considered an established and comprehensive source overall for research related to journalistic documents. For this study, one leading newspaper was selected from each region/state (tabloids are excluded regardless of circulations): Hong Kong–*Ming Pao Daily* (明報, because Hong Kong's newspapers are quite divided in terms of anti-Beijing vs. pro-Beijing, we have selected from the liberal/neutral category); mainland China–*People's Daily Overseas Edition* (人民日报海外版, because *People's Daily* cannot be accessed via any database); Taiwan–*United Daily News* (聯合報, a mainstream paper that holds a relatively objective stance toward PRC); the UK–*Financial Times* (because it tends to pay the most attention, among major UK newspapers, to Hong Kong as one of the world's top financial hubs); and the U.S.–*The New York Times*. In total, five newspapers were examined.

In the database searches, the keyword "Occupy Central" (or 占中 in Chinese Simplified; 佔中 in Chinese Traditional) was used to search "in content" in each newspaper during the corresponding time period. This resulted in 36, 481, 109, 35, and 32 news stories from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S., respectively. To have a similar sample size for each newspaper, a random procedure was conducted to draw 10% of the *Ming Pao* stories and 40% of the *United Daily News* stories. After a one-by-one manual screening process to eliminate irrelevant items,⁹ the final sample for the study consisted of 36, 46, 44, 35, and 32 news stories, representing the five states/regions, respectively.

⁸ The selection of the ending date is confirmed by three major news organizations around the world: a. BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30474687>; b. South Morning China Post: <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1661842/police-outline-details-clearance-causeway-bay-occupy-site>; c. People's Daily Overseas Edition: <http://sc.people.com.cn/n/2014/1215/c345462-23225112.html>

⁹ For example, a story with the keyword in content but actually focusing on tourism instead of the movement per se was not included in the sample.

Measurements

The unit of analysis was a single news story. The framing analysis involved 11 key variables that were designed to measure the frames used in reporting the Occupy Central protests. Among the 11 variables, three are 5-point interval-level measurements: **News Perspective** (from *clearly anti-protester* to *clearly anti-government*¹⁰); descriptions of **Government Actions** (from *peaceful conciliation* to *violent suppression*); and descriptions of **Protester Behavior** (from *very negative* to *very positive*).

The other eight are categorical variables: **Judgmental Headline** (whether the presence of judgmental words in a headline is mild, strong, or none¹¹); **Conflict Frame** (whether the story refers to two or more sides of the problem or issue); **Causality** (attribution of cause/origin: internal, external, or mixed balance); **Solution** (responsibility for solving the conflict: individuals, Hong Kong government, China central government, other government, or institutions/corporations); mention of the **Beijing Spring** (whether mentioned); **Economic Consequences** (is there a mention of financial loss or costs involved?); **Human Interest** (is there a mention of a human example or examples?); and **News Source** (government, pro-movement, or anti-movement). These variables are established in light of several previous studies in this research line (Du & Cheng, 2013; Kim, 2000; Kobland et al., 1992; Luther & Zhou, 2005; McLeod & Hertog, 1999), in combination with what was observed and identified from original pilot data—that is, via both deductive and inductive approaches.

Qualitative variables, such as frame keywords, were included as necessary to supplement the quantitative analyses. Other variables, such as region (newspaper base: mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, UK, or U.S.), paper title, date, and so on, were also included as needed to aid the analyses.

Coding and Intercoder Reliability

A detailed and thorough coder training session was conducted before the coding process was formally set out. Ten percent of the sample was randomly selected using SPSS and then coded to test the intercoder reliability. Coding rules and specific criteria were discussed and agreed on between the two coders, who were postgraduate students of communication fluent in both Chinese and English, until they were reasonably comfortable with the materials and procedure. Intercoder reliability coefficients were calculated for each variable using Scott's pi, with the highest being 1 and the lowest 0.76 (0.82 on average).

Data Analysis

The coding results were entered into SPSS for statistical analyses. For H1 (general news perspective), H2 (government action), and H3 (protester behavior), which involve the scale variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc tests were used to detect significant differences in framing among the regions/states. For RQ1 (How are judgmental headlines presented in the news coverage of each

¹⁰ 1 = *clearly anti-protester*, 2 = *probably anti-protester*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *probably anti-government*, 5 = *clearly anti-government*.

¹¹ 0 = *none at all*, 1 = *mild presence*, 2 = *significant presence*.

region/state?), RQ2 (How is conflict framed in the news coverage of each region/state?), H4 (human examples or exemplars), H5 (economic consequences), RQ3 (How is causality of movement interpreted in the news coverage of each region/state?), RQ4 (What is the solution of the problem/conflict mentioned in the news coverage of each region/state?), H6 (mention of the Beijing Spring of 1989), and RQ5 (What is the sourcing pattern in the news coverage of each region/state?), where categorical measurements are involved, chi-square tests were used.

Results

For the scale variables, ANOVA test results show that there are significant differences in the news perspective adopted ($F = 77.38, p < 0.001$), the framing of the actions of the Hong Kong government ($F = 24.37, p < .001$), and the framing of protester behavior ($F = 86.56, p < .001$) in the newspapers of the five states/regions (see Table 1).

Table 1. Differences in General (ANOVA).

| Regions | News perspectives | Government actions | Protester behavior |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>M</i> |
| China ($N = 36$) | 1.00 | 2.25 | 1.31 |
| Hong Kong ($N = 46$) | 2.87 | 3.5 | 2.85 |
| Taiwan ($N = 44$) | 3.57 | 3.77 | 3.75 |
| UK ($N = 35$) | 3.66 | 4.14 | 3.69 |
| US ($N = 32$) | 4.31 | 4.41 | 4.38 |
| | $F = 77.38$ | $F = 24.37$ | $F = 86.56$ |
| | $p < .001$ | $p < .001$ | $p < .001$ |

Then Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference post hoc test was used to explore where exactly the differences lie. Findings suggest that significant differences exist among all the pairs except for Taiwan ($M = 3.57$) and UK newspapers ($M = 3.66, p = .991$) in terms of news perspective, government actions, and protester behavior. According to the variance within each group, the result shows that China is more likely to uphold the "pro-government" stance, whereas UK and U.S. newspapers tend to be in favor of "pro-protester" perspectives.

With regard to the framing of government actions, the post hoc tests found significant differences between the mainland China coverage and the other four newspapers. Hong Kong coverage ($M = 3.50$) was also different than that of the U.S. ($M = 4.41, p = .001$) and the UK ($M = 4.14, p = .038$). On the other hand, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S. were quite in line with one another. Findings suggest that government actions were generally framed as conciliatory in mainland China media, whereas the same actions were largely framed as suppressive or violently suppressive in others.

As for framing of protester behavior, results show the same pattern as in “news perspective,” with significant differences between all pair groups except for Taiwan ($M = 3.75$) and the UK ($M = 3.69, p = .996$). Protester behavior was framed as violent in mainland China news coverage, while less violent in the others.

Chi-square tests were adopted to analyze the categorical variables, showing significant differences in the mentioning of human interest ($\chi^2 = 29.20, p < .001$) and economic consequences ($\chi^2 = 31.52, p < .001$). The other categorical variables, including judgmental headline, conflict frame, Beijing Spring, attribution of causality, responsibility of solution, and quotations of news source, also exhibited differences among the five newspapers via frequency analysis (frequency analysis was conducted instead of chi-square tests, which requires a minimum expected value of greater than 5, but some of the cells in these variables turned out to have an expected value below 5).

For the question of whether the news headlines appear judgmental, as Table 2a illustrates, the mainland China newspaper shows the strongest inclination to use judgmental words ($N = 17, 47.2\%$).

Table 2a. Presence of Judgmental Words in Headlines.

| | China $N = 36$ | Hong Kong $N = 46$ | Taiwan $N = 44$ | UK $N = 35$ | U.S. $N = 32$ |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| None | 3 (8.3%) | 26 (56.5%) | 17 (38.6%) | 13 (37.1%) | 12 (37.5%) |
| Mild | 15 (41.7%) | 18 (39.1%) | 23 (52.3%) | 19 (54.3%) | 10 (31.3%) |
| Significant | 17 (47.2%) | 2 (4.3%) | 4 (9.1%) | 3 (8.6%) | 10 (31.3%) |

With regard to how the conflict was framed in news reports, as presented in Table 2b, Chinese newspapers were more likely to use the opinions of one side of the conflict to construct the story without even mentioning opinions of the opposite side ($N_{\text{none}} = 24, 66.7\%$), whereas U.S. news stories were inclined to one-sided interpretation but with counterviews included ($N_{\text{clearly}} = 19, 59.4\%$).

Table 2b. Balanced Coverage.

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| None | 24 (66.7%) | 16 (34.8%) | 14 (31.8%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (3.1%) |
| Clearly one-sided | 12 (33.3%) | 5 (10.9%) | 8 (18.2%) | 11 (31.4%) | 19 (59.4%) |
| Slightly one-sided | 0 (0%) | 20 (43.5%) | 21 (47.7%) | 15 (42.9%) | 12 (37.5%) |
| Balanced | 0 (0%) | 5 (10.9%) | 1 (2.3%) | 9 (25.7%) | 0 (0%) |

Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the UK loaded nearly half of the stories with slightly one-sided framing ($N_{\text{slightly}} = 20, 43.5\%$; $21, 47.7\%$; and $15, 42.9\%$, respectively).

Table 2c. Providing Human Example(s).

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|-----|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 16 (44.4%) | 17 (37.0%) | 18 (40.9%) | 27 (77.1%) | 27 (84.5%) |
| No | 20 (55.6%) | 29 (63.0%) | 26 (59.1%) | 9 (22.9%) | 5 (15.5%) |

$\chi^2 = 29.20, p < .001.$

It was also revealed that the U.S. newspaper provided the most human example(s) in its stories ($N_{\text{yes}} = 27, 84.5\%$) compared with the other four newspapers (Table 2c). For example, in one of the news stories, *The New York Times* specifically interviewed several Hong Kong pop stars and reported their personal sufferings after they showed support for Occupy Central. The exact name, career, and even age of those celebrities appeared in the story.

Table 2d. Mentions of Economic Consequences.

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|-----|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 24 (66.7%) | 9 (19.6%) | 7 (15.9%) | 7 (20%) | 11 (34.4%) |
| No | 12 (33.3%) | 37 (80.4%) | 37 (84.1%) | 28 (80%) | 21 (65.6%) |

$\chi^2 = 31.52, p < .001.$

Table 2d shows that, for the question whether there is a mention of financial losses or gains in the coverage, *People's Daily Overseas Edition* appears to be the most critical of the economic consequence brought about by Occupy Central ($N_{\text{yes}} = 24, 66.7\%$ and $N_{\text{no}} = 12, 33.3\%$). It seems the other newspapers did not completely ignore economic consequences, but did not give them frequent emphases ($N_{\text{no-HK}} = 37, 80.4\%$; $N_{\text{no-TW}} = 37, 84.1\%$; $N_{\text{no-UK}} = 28, 80\%$; and $N_{\text{no-US}} = 21, 65.6\%$).

Table 2e. Attributions of Conflicts.

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Internal | 29 (80.6%) | 40 (87.0%) | 33 (75.0%) | 4 (11.4%) | 5 (15.6%) |
| External | 7 (19.4%) | 2 (4.3%) | 6 (13.6%) | 27 (77.1%) | 22 (68.8%) |
| Mixed balance | 0 (0%) | 4 (8.7%) | 5 (11.4%) | 4 (11.4%) | 5 (15.6%) |

With regard to the primary cause/origin of conflicts, as Table 2e indicates, newspapers in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are more likely to attribute it to internal conflict, meaning that it is caused by Hong Kong's government or residents ($N_{\text{internal}} = 29, 80.6\%$; 40, 87%; 33, 75%, respectively). However, UK and U.S. newspapers tend to accuse the Chinese government of causing the conflicts (the external cause) more often than others ($N_{\text{external}} = 27, 77.1\%$ and 22, 68.8%, respectively).

Table 2f. Problem Solving.

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Individual | 0 (0%) | 6 (13%) | 6 (13.6%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| HK government | 13 (36.1%) | 29 (63%) | 29 (65.9%) | 23 (65.7%) | 21 (65.6%) |
| China government | 1 (2.8%) | 0 (0%) | 5 (11.4%) | 11 (31.4%) | 11 (34.4%) |
| Other governments | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (2.9%) | 0 (0%) |
| Institutions | 22 (61.6%) | 11 (23.9%) | 4 (9.1%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |

For the question as to who is responsible for solving social problems, all newspapers appealed to the Hong Kong government to take action ($N_{\text{HK}} = 29, 63\%$; $N_{\text{Taiwan}} = 29, 65.9\%$; $N_{\text{UK}} = 23, 65.7\%$; and $N_{\text{US}} = 21, 65.6\%$), except for the China paper, which suggested that institutions (which means organizations, parties, or any other clusters participating in this event) should take responsibility to ease the tension and end the protests (Table 2f).

When referring to the Beijing Spring of 1989, results show that none of the three Chinese newspapers mentioned this similar event (Table 2g).

Table 2g. Mentions of Beijing Spring of 1989.

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|-----|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 13 (37.1%) | 9 (28.1%) |
| No | 36 (100%) | 46 (100%) | 44 (100%) | 22 (62.9%) | 23 (71.9%) |

However, UK and U.S. papers did bring it up in a small number of news articles ($N_{\text{UK}} = 13, 37.1\%$, and $N_{\text{US}} = 9, 28.1\%$).

As for the sources quoted in the stories, as presented in Table 2h, the China paper was more likely to quote both anti-movement and government sources ($N_{\text{government}} = 12$, 33.3%, and $N_{\text{anti-movement}} = 24$, 66.7%), whereas the Hong Kong paper seems to have an even distribution ($N_{\text{government}} = 11$, 23.9%; $N_{\text{pro-movement}} = 15$, 32.6%; $N_{\text{anti-movement}} = 9$, 19.6%; and $N_{\text{balance}} = 11$, 23.9%).

Table 2h. News Source.

| | China <i>N</i> = 36 | Hong Kong <i>N</i> = 46 | Taiwan <i>N</i> = 44 | UK <i>N</i> = 35 | U.S. <i>N</i> = 32 |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Government | 12 (33.3%) | 11 (23.9%) | 10 (22.7%) | 1 (2.9%) | 3 (9.4%) |
| Pro-movement | 0 (0%) | 15 (32.6%) | 25 (56.8%) | 12 (34.3%) | 24 (75.0%) |
| Anti-movement | 24 (66.7%) | 9 (19.6%) | 8 (18.3%) | 1 (2.9%) | 3 (9.4%) |
| Balance | 0 (0%) | 11 (23.9%) | 1 (2.9%) | 21 (60.0%) | 2 (6.4%) |

Both Taiwan and U.S. coverage cited pro-movement resources more, whereas UK news coverage showed greater sourcing balance. It is worth noting that none of the China paper's coverage quoted pro-movement sources.

Discussion

In light of framing and the protest paradigm developed in previous research, this study observed the characteristics of news coverage of the 2014 Hong Kong Occupy Central Movement in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S. The analyses aimed at detecting the selection bias (inclusion, exclusion) and the description bias (salience, emphasis, attribute). The findings of this study support the general hypothesis that newspapers in the five jurisdictions applied different frames in their coverage of Occupy Central and the related issues.

People's Daily (Overseas Edition) and Mainland China

Overall societal balance and harmony is always a main goal for governance in China. This has been emphasized more since the proposal and promotion of the concept of "Constructing the Harmonious Society." In 2004, the Central Committee of the CCP put forward this governing philosophy clearly and developed it gradually in the following years. Guided by this ideology, the government tries hard to eliminate instability factors and avoid social conflicts, playing the role of conciliator. Thus, in the view of the Chinese authorities, Occupy Central was a movement threatening social harmony, the protesters' behavior was unacceptable, and it was necessary to take action to call a halt.

As the "mouthpiece" and propaganda platform for the CCP, *People's Daily* claims to bring the latest news dispatches of policy information and resolutions of the Chinese Government (*People's Daily Online*, n.d.). This explains the shared stance it held with the government in interpreting Occupy Central. Its perspective was clearly at the *anti-protester* end of the framing spectrum, and it offered obvious and distinct

moral judgments on government and protesters, discussing the government actions as positive and the protester behavior as negative.

Judgmental headlines were also used frequently by the China paper, and in this way, the "anti-protest" stance was strengthened. Headlines such as "All social sectors in Hong Kong call for the immediate end of Occupy Central" ("占中"嚴重影響經濟民生 香港各界呼籲恢復正常秩序) and "Hong Kong residents are eager to end the farce named Occupy Central" (港人急呼結束鬧劇"占中") showed that it defined the protest as a negative factor to societal development.

Moreover, the government's perspective and opinions were repeated when official statements were directly quoted in the coverage. *People's Daily* gave more coverage to government statements that solicited the restoration of peace and stability. These statements were also congruent with the government's role as conciliator. All the news sources of *People's Daily* fall into two categories: government and anti-movement. It seems apparent that there was no balanced report about Occupy Central in China. By limiting the source pattern narrowly to government statements and words congruent with the philosophy of authority, ideology was successfully transmitted into media through framing.

Meanwhile, the coverage tended to attribute social instability in Hong Kong to external influences, such as financial support from the Western world for the protesters. In discussing who is responsible for solving the problem, it frequently suggested that organizations and parties participating in the protests should ease the tension. For example, one news article stated that all communities in Hong Kong were opposed to Occupy Central, and their immediate wish was to ask the Hong Kong Federation of Students (香港專上學生聯會) to retreat from the scene. Another news article directly blamed Occupy Central with Love and Peace, the initiator of this movement, for intensifying the conflicts and violence at the scene.

All in all, in the *People's Daily* coverage, China's central government was neither the cause of nor responsible for a solution to the crisis. This reflected that Chinese media were constrained in criticizing the government. The Chinese government has a low tolerance for accepting blame; to maintain authority, it rarely confesses its faults publicly. Thus, negative views toward its authority were blocked in state-sponsored media.

Because of political parallelism, *People's Daily* adopted frames aiming to achieve political objectives, which were different from those applied in the other states/regions. The media content generated by these frames also resonated little with others: Only in mainland China did the news framing emphasize the efforts of the threatened governments to restore social stability. In this framing, those involved in the protests were deemed to be the cause of the chaos that upset the harmony of society and thus were framed as troublemakers. Apparently, *People's Daily* adopted a protest paradigm of delegitimizing, marginalizing, and demonizing the protesters (McLeod & Hertog, 1999) in its coverage of Occupy Central, which conformed to its ideological affiliation with the established institutions and systems, and fulfilled its position as "mouthpiece" of the governing party.

Ming Pao Daily and Hong Kong

In terms of news perspectives, government actions, and protester behavior, although Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Daily* lay at the opposite end of the framing spectrum to *People's Daily*, the difference between them was smallest among all the comparisons between *People's Daily* and newspapers outside mainland China. In other words, although the government actions were depicted as violent suppression by the Hong Kong paper, the severity of the violence was not as strong as that described by Taiwan, UK, and U.S. media. *Ming Pao Daily* also unlinked the Chinese government from problem solving. Findings like this reflected the influence of political intervention from mainland China. Although a liberalism ideology dominates Hong Kong society, increasing political connection between mainland China and Hong Kong after the handover made it possible for the Chinese authorities to exert influence on the Hong Kong government. Such influence may have then passed on to Hong Kong's news media.

However, contrary to *People's Daily*, *Ming Pao Daily* had the largest percentage of headlines with nonjudgmental words. Titles like "Forty-five Arrested in Clearance, Demonstrators Pepper Sprayed" ("渠蓋堵龍和道清場拘 45 人 示威者遭胡椒噴面制服拖行" *Ming Pao Daily*) showed a sense of objectivity. The news sources for this Hong Kong paper were diverse, and each source category accounted for a relatively even percentage across all source categories, giving the appearance of balanced coverage overall. *Ming Pao Daily* also attributed the cause of the protest to internal factors in Hong Kong, and few external factors were mentioned, which was different from the reporting in mainland China's media.

In summary, the objective and balanced coverage of *Ming Pao Daily* showed the press freedom that Hong Kong enjoyed; on the other hand, its relative closeness with mainland China on the political spectrum indicated the special connection between the ideologies of these two places. Caught in the movement's physical location itself, Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Daily* fell between the two poles, exhibiting a degree of ambivalence.

United Daily News and Taiwan

News media in Taiwan enjoyed the highest level of press freedom among the Greater China regions. Our findings show that the affective attributes assigned by the Taiwan newspaper to government and protester correlated highly with those of Western media.

An interesting finding is that, with regard to news perspective, government actions, and protester behavior, the differences between the Taiwan paper and the UK paper were not significant, which showed their similar moral judgments on the movement. Because moral judgment is directly related to legitimacy (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009), these reports in Taiwan and the UK implied that they were inclined to acknowledge the legitimacy of the protesters, indicating that these two places had political and ideological congruency to some extent.

When it comes to who is responsible for solving the problem, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S. overwhelmingly stated that the Hong Kong and China central governments were in charge of taking appropriate action. This stance, apparently, was quite the opposite to that of the China paper.

Financial Times, The New York Times, and the UK, U.S.

The short cultural and political distance between the UK¹² and the U.S. leads to their shared ideologies. There are two findings in our research that could distinguish papers in the UK and the U.S. from those in other places. One is that their stories with human examples accounted for a much larger percentage than others. Western media tend to publish stories of people from different social backgrounds because reporting on ordinary people's lives is usually considered the primary purpose of a news organization.

It is also worth noting that *The New York Times* and the *Financial Times* were the only two media to mention the Beijing Spring of 1989. The mention of the earlier protests provided a great context of the story to readers who may not know everything about China. The values promoted in the Beijing Spring of 1989 are pertinent to Western media values because both emphasize an aspiration for democracy. Sheaffer and Gabay (2009) stated that shared values between events and news media can lead to the successful promotion of an event's agenda. As widely agreed, the primary focus of Western media coverage around the world is on human rights, liberal democracy, and democratic government. It is thus naturally one focus when they cover Hong Kong and China.

Overall, news media in democratic societies appeared more in favor of the protesters and critical of the actions taken by the Hong Kong government. This offers the hint that a particular dominant ideology can influence media's framing of politically sensitive issues. Common ground among the Hong Kong, Taiwan, UK, and U.S. papers is the anti-communist-ruling attitude. This shared attitude may have contributed to the similarities existing in the Occupy Central coverage among the four.

Some features of the UK and U.S. papers were similar to those of Hong Kong and Taiwan; for example, they tended to use less subjective evaluations in the headlines. Commonly, they adopted factual statements such as "'Umbrella Revolution' exposes divisions among residents of Hong Kong" (*The New York Times*) and "Hong Kong sets stage for protest clearance" (*Financial Times*).

One interesting finding of the study is that the UK coverage of the movement seemed to overlap with that of Taiwan more than it did with that of the U.S. With regard to news perspective, government actions, and protester behavior, there was no significant difference between the Taiwan paper and the UK paper. This implies their shared moral judgments on the movement and acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the protests. *The New York Times*, as an exemplar of a pure liberal press, was found to be the boldest among the free media examined in this study in framing the movement, holding an obvious anti-government

¹² In the preparation stage of the study, we searched in the database both *The Guardian* and *Financial Times* for the target content to identify the sample newspaper. Unfortunately, *The Guardian* returned a minimal number of news reports that would make too small a sample for the purpose of this research. *Financial Times*, however, returned a sizable number of relevant reports that is more comparable with the papers representing the other countries/regions. Because Hong Kong is one of the world's top financial hubs, it is reasonable to interpret from the search result that *Financial Times*, among UK leading papers, paid the closest attention to the movement and is an appropriate representative for the purpose of this study, though this compromised selection should be acknowledged as one limitation of the study.

stance and a clear positive attitude toward the protesters. The Taiwan paper, though largely enjoying a libertarian press environment, appeared to have used relatively measured narratives, like those in the UK paper, which falls between the liberal model and the democratic corporatist model and was perhaps more concerned about the economic consequences that the movement may bring to Hong Kong. The Taiwan paper's behavior may be due to the tendency for most Taiwanese media to practice self-censorship in reporting sensitive issues about mainland China while the then-incumbent Nationalist Party's (KMT) government was cementing ties with China.

While some previous research found that protest stories tend to depend heavily on official sources and rarely quote protesters instead (McLeod & Hertog, 1992), Gans (2003) called for a more bottom-up approach to reporting that relies more on alternative voices from everyday citizens rather than official sources. It is worth noting that, as this study discovered, *The New York Times* employed this approach evidently. Its coverage embraced voices from the protest site, including those of demonstrators in tents and on city streets, family members of protesters who had been detained in mainland China, as well as celebrities who were denied access to mainland China because of their support of the protest. For alternative views against the protests, *The New York Times* also interviewed youngsters at home and abroad, some of whom expressed reservations toward the chaos. This indicates that *The New York Times* has a grassroots inclination, no matter which side of the story is being told. Contrary to the typical protest paradigm, in which the news portrays the alternative views of protesters as irrational or lacking legitimacy in general, *The New York Times'* coverage on Occupy Central depicted the government's supporters to be less rational.

Whereas media in mainland China appear to have conformed to the protest paradigm in reporting the Occupy Central protests, U.S. media show no tendency to follow the pattern and seem to lend most legitimacy to the protesters. It is worth pointing out that previous studies have mixed findings with regard to the protest paradigm. For instance, in terms of reporting the anti-Iraq-war protests, U.S. press invoked the protest paradigm to a greater extent than its UK counterpart (Dardis, 2006), whereas Harlow and Johnson's (2011) content analysis found *The New York Times* falling back on the protest paradigm when covering the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. The Egyptian Revolution and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement have many features in common, though *The New York Times* appears to have had different approaches covering the two. Such differences imply that, besides ideology, there may well be other factors affecting protest coverage, such as international relationships, national interests, and so on. As Lee (2014) proposed, protesters' tactics, target of protest, type of government, and media-outlet ideology are all factors influencing the degree to which the protest paradigm is employed. This study, along with previous ones in this line of research (e.g. Harlow & Johnson, 2011; Lee, 2014; Weaver & Scacco, 2013), unveiled the complexity existing in protest coverage that the protest paradigm falls short to explain.

For centuries, it is a general tendency that Western media portray and judge the political systems and societies in the East (or nondemocratic societies) as flawed and inhuman. It is noteworthy, as some scholars have pointed out, that the protest paradigm was initially meant to explain how the media cover political movements in their own country or at least directly related to the interests of that country. The Western media coverage of prodemocracy protests in foreign countries, especially nondemocratic states, may well involve an outsider perspective that is beyond what the protest paradigm suggests. In such a case,

a more global vision may be helpful in explaining the phenomenon, with other factors, such as the East-West global hierarchy or the media stereotypes, taken into account.

Journalism scholars have long contended that although news media and news practitioners are supposed to be, and profess to be, objective and impartial, they do not operate in a social, political, and ideological vacuum (Kobland et al., 1992). By selecting some aspects of a perceived reality in the Occupy Central protests and excluding others, and describing certain aspects with salience and emphasis, the UK, U.S., mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan newspapers employed different news frames congruent with their various ideological boundaries. The resulting coverage promoted a particular problem definition, certain causal interpretations, and evaluation of the protesters, the governments' actions, the responsible parties, the economic consequences, the solution, and even moral judgment of the legitimacy of the democratic movement as a whole.

The news framing observed in the media coverage of Hong Kong's Occupy Central movement is not surprising given the respective ideological backgrounds of the newspapers involved. These conclusions resonate with overall observations on the news from previous framing research. The results of this study are also consistent with those of previous studies in confirming that a particular framing may be made salient not only in press systems where the state imposes strict authoritarian control, but also in systems where press freedom is highly valued, like those of the UK and the U.S.

Although framing analysis comparing how different media outlets frame and present the same particular events or issues in different ways has been done before, this study is unique in that it assessed the phenomenon of news framing by examining how three Chinese-speaking regions, with close geographical and cultural proximity, deal with a political event occurring within their own area, compared with Western coverage on the same matter. It sheds light on media framing in different clusters of media markets with various ideological backgrounds, where the press is free, partly free, or not free.

This research applied framing theory, in combination with the protest paradigm, to the specific context of a significant political crisis in Hong Kong's history. It reveals specifically how the same events and issues were reported by news media of varied ideological backgrounds in different ways. The results provide new empirical evidence to buttress the framing theory. Moreover, the study furthered scholarly understandings of the protest paradigm by integrating framing research with the specific context of political conflicts (anti-government protests in particular) and generating a comprehensive set of concrete measurements that can be used in future research. This article calls for a research agenda that revisits the protest paradigm and contemplates a renewed conception and theoretical framework.

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