BEYOND THE GREAT CHINESE FIREWALL:

A CASE STUDY OF INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING EFFECTS

BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN REPORTING ON CORRUPTION IN

CHINA

A Thesis Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Communication

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Leiyu Liu

May 2017

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ABSTRACT

This study examines inter-media agenda setting effects between Chinese and Western reporting on the single case of Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment. Through a comprehensive content analysis of 323 Chinese-language news articles from Chinese state-run media, mainland Chinese media, Hong Kong media, Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media, this paper explores how attribute agendas in different types of media's news reports are mutually correlated. Results show Chinese state-run media's agendas dramatically impact attribute agendas in mainland China and Hong Kong media's reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue, while the inter-media agenda setting effects of Chinese state-run media does not reach Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media. Also, this study content analyzes 652 Chinese-language Tweets on Zhou Yongkang's issue. Findings suggest attribute agendas of Chinese-language Tweets most significantly correlate with attribute agendas in Western media's reports on Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment, although immigrant media is most frequently referenced by Chinese-language Tweets.

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INTRODUCTION

This era of globalization has witnessed a dramatic development of the global cyber Chinese-language news environment. Although mainland China was "home to one of the world's most restrictive media environments" where the Internet was strictly regulated by the government (Freedom House, 2015b; University of California-Davis, 2007), global Chinese-language news outlets have developed a dynamic atmosphere. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, where the native language is Chinese, the local government already liberalized media and news contents there were remarkably diverse (Curtin, 2012, p. 1).

Also, overseas Chinese immigrant media significantly contributes to the diversity of global Chinese-language cyber newsroom. In the United States, nearly 100 Chinese-language newspapers existed, and a large number of them developed online service (Liu, 2005, p.305; Zhou & Cai, 2002, p. 430). Those U.S. based Internet sites could be clearly distinguished from websites based in mainland China since they carried out "a transnational approach" and maintained "a Chinese-American perspective" (Zhou & Cai, 2002, pp. 430-431). At the same time, various Western elite media organizations have built online Chinese-language platforms. Those Western media giants, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *the British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC), invested millions of dollars in recruiting Chinese-speaking employees and marketing their site to Chinese-language audiences (Huang, 2015).

Moreover, despite Beijing government's information filtering, dedicated Chinese netizens still access censored websites through the use of the virtual private network (VPN) and become active players in overseas online Chinese-language platforms. In 2013, statistics suggested "35.5 million domestic Chinese users were active on Twitter" (Xu & Feng, 2015, p. 25). According to Sullivan (2012), Twitter users in China were generally "progressive, critical and activist" (Sullivan, 2012, p. 773), and the Twitter community was sometimes seen as an "international deliberative space" of information that was censored in mainland China (Jiang in Sullivan, 2012, p. 774).

Focusing on a critical Chinese political issue, i.e. Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment, this study explores multi-nation media agendas and micro-blog discussions on a sensitive Chinese political topic. Although the Beijing government has a long tradition of restricting online editorial content (BBC, 2016), limited information is available on whether Beijing's censorship has reached to Chinese-language publications outside of mainland China. This paper, by analyzing both media agendas from various media organizations in different nations and regions and Twitter discussions, thoroughly examines global Chinese-language news scene and tests inter-media agenda setting in a Chinese-language cyber news environment. At the mean time, findings will also yield whether Chinese-language editorial content in news media outside of mainland China will lose their independence to Chinese government's censorship.

Theoretically, this study expands the reach of inter-media agenda setting, which is claimed to be the "fourth stage" of agenda setting by Valenzuela and McCombs

(2010, p. 97). Firstly, it attempts to apply inter-media agenda setting theory to Chinese-language contexts, while previous researchers mainly concentrated on political campaigns, advertisings, and news agendas in Western nations (Valenzuela &McCombs, 2010; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Funk, 2011). Also, with an in-depth examination on Chinese-language Tweets, this study manages to test news stories' agenda-setting abilities on social networking service. Moreover, this research tries to examine inter-media agenda setting effects on a multi-nation scale, which contributes to the question whether mass media's agenda-setting function could work in the global setting (Du, 2012, p. 19).

At the same time, since this study is a very first research looking at global Chinese-language cyber news scene, findings can help build a global map on cyber exchanges of political information in Chinese-language. By comparing media agendas on the same issue from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media, this paper will not only show how the news is presented in different media, but also reveal the relationship between these media's agendas. Ultimately, results will tell whether Chinese government's censorship will be effective in an international news environment.

BACKGROUNDS

According to Pew Research Center's 2016 research, officials' corruption was the top concern among Chinese citizens, which was worried by 83% of the overall survey participants (Pew Research Center, 2016). For Chinese authoritative, anti-corruption

was also a critical mission- President Xi Jinping led an intensive anti-corruption campaign since he seized the power in 2012 (BBC NEWS, 2016; Griffiths, 2016). According to one news report from BBC, more than one million Chinese officials received corruption-related punishments between 2013 and 2015 (BBC NEWS, 2016). One news story in Financial Times also called the anti-corruption campaign to be "the most powerful and far-reaching campaigns in the country since Mao Zedong's death in 1976" (Lockett, 2016). Among those convicted officials, Zhou Yongkang, "formerly a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and secretary of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee," was the most elite official being indicted in more than 30 years since the end of *Cultural Revolution* in China (Xinhua, 2015a; 2015d; 2015e).

On June 11, 2015, Xinhua News Agency, China's authoritative news service (Cheng, Golan & Kiousis, 2015, p. 2; Xinhuanet, 2016), firstly reported the story that the former Chinese security chief Zhou Yongkang was sentenced to a life imprisonment during a trial that "was held behind closed doors" (Xinhua, 2015e). As stated in Xinhua's news report, the court ruled that Zhou was convicted of "accepting bribes, abusing his power and deliberately disclosing state secrets" (Xinhua, 2015e).

According to Xinhua news reports, bribery was Zhou's primary wrongdoing. Xinhua News Agency claimed Zhou Yongkang's trial and sentence was the most notable achievement of "the country's anti-corruption campaign" (Xinhua, 2015d). The court statement said Zhou personally accepted money and property worth

731,100 Yuan (114,234 U.S. dollars) and abused his power to seek profits for five bribers (Xinhua, 2015e). At the mean time, "his wife Jia Xiaoye and son Zhou Bin" received bribes of about 129 million Yuan (21.3 million U.S dollars) without Zhou's "prior knowledge" (Xinhua, 2015e). With regards to court statements on his "disclosure of state secrets," it said that Zhou's leaking of state secrets "did not have very serious consequences" although the crime was grave (Xinhua, 2015e).

Xinhua also headlined that Zhou's trial and sentence represented a clear message from the CPC that "China pledged to advance the rule of law," which was part of President Xi Jinping's strategy to strictly govern the Party (Xinhua, 2015b; 2015d). As reflected in Zhou's trial, in today's China, no one was beyond the law's reproach. "Anyone who abuses his power, who breaks the law, or any CPC member who violates Party discipline, will feel the full force of the law" (Xinhua, 2015c). Moreover, to strengthen the rule of law, the nation required a "strict enforcement of law with no exception" (Xinhua, 2015b). All citizens, "regardless of their career and ideological status," would be handled fairly by law enforcement if they broke the law (Xinhua, 2015b).

However, foreign news sites held alternative opinions toward Xinhua's agenda. One commonly questioned fact was whether politics was involved in Zhou's imprisonment. A BBC news story wrote that Zhou's political wrongdoings were the primary reason that led to his investigation, while his failure in a political struggle with Chinese President Xi Jinping was the actual reason that put him behind bars (Lie, 2015). Moreover, Xinhua's notion that the trial advanced the rule of law was not

supported by media outside of mainland China. According to a news report in Apple Daily (Taiwan), the secret trail suggested a regression in China's law enforcement, while it remained unknown to the public why Zhou was not given a death sentence (Mai, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

AGENDA SETTING

Agenda setting studied how media impacted the public's perceptions of certain events' salience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). On the first-level agenda setting, through "the transmission of object salience," media determined which issues could reach the center of public opinion and thus influenced the public on "what to think" (McCombs, 2013, p. 2; Valenzuela & McCombs, 2010, p. 94). On the second-level agenda setting-attribute agenda setting, through "the transmission of attribute salience," media could prioritize particular news items and make audiences form their opinions accordingly, and therefore impact citizens on "how to think about" an issue (Valenzuela & McCombs, 2010, p. 94; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11).

McCombs *et al.* (1997) performed an early study of attribute agenda setting by examining how media attributes influenced voters during 1995 Spanish regional and municipal elections. Yielded by results from content analysis and survey, voters' descriptions of candidates matched candidates' image on TV and print media, which suggested a transfer "of attribute salience from the media agenda to the public agenda" (McCombs *et al.,* 1997, pp. 713-715). Craft and Wanta (2004) also found that U.S.

media had a strong second-level agenda setting effect on the American public. After comparing attributes in media agendas and people's responded concerns on 9-11 terrorist attacks, the study found "the two attributes of the 9-11 terrorist attacks that news media users expressed the most concern about were those attributes that received extensive news coverage" (Craft & Wanta, 2004, pp. 460- 461).

INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING

Inter-media agenda setting referred to the impact on news agendas between different news organizations (Roberts & McCombs, 1994, p. 250). In the 1980s, the question- "Who sets the press agenda?" was firstly raised by inter-media agenda setting, which acted as a supplementary to the original question put forward by agenda setting theory- "Who sets the public agenda – and under what conditions?" (Valenzuela & McCombs, 2010, p. 97). Inter-media agenda setting was a fruitful outcome of agenda setting theory's four-decade development since the Chapel Hill study (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2004). Exploring "the origins of media agenda," inter-media agenda setting studies significantly extended the scope of agenda-setting theory's original theoretical domain- "the interface of the mass media agenda and the public agenda" (McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 59).

In the marketplace of ideas, the perspective of inter-media agenda setting gathered a broad range of scholars' academic interests and widely correlated with other research traditions and concepts in mass communication (McCombs & Shaw, 1993, p. 60; McCombs, 2004, p. 98; McCombs & Funk, 2011, p. 907). McCombs (1992) used a model including three layers to explain contributors to this theoretical

approach. The outmost layer of this approach was the routine that journalists obtained and created news, which closely linked with "the sociology of news tradition" (McCombs, 1992, p. 816). Another layer consisted the news diffusion theory of Breed (1955) and "the gatekeeping perspective" (McCombs, 1992, pp. 816-817; McCombs & Funk, 2011, p. 907). With regards to the innermost layer, it was "the professional core of journalism itself," which consisted those "practices, values, and traditions" that every journalist was trained in his college and continued to practice on the job (McCombs, 1992, p. 817).

Findings from inter-media influence's early studies yielded that "gatekeepers and influential medias" directly contributed to the standardization of news agendas among news organizations (Rogers & Dearing in Resses & Danielian, 1989, p. 47; Roberts & McCombs, 1994, p. 250). Kurt Lewin (1947) introduced the concept of gatekeepers into communication. For any news item seeking to be published, it was required to pass "gates sections." Gatekeepers, those individuals or groups that made the decision on whether the story got "in" or "out," thus played a crucial role in determining what would be printed or broadcasted (Lewin, 1947, pp. 145-146; Lang, 1989, p. 371). White's (1949) case study on Mr. Gates' news selection and rejection process confirmed the significance of a gatekeeper in a news publication. Being a Midwestern wire news editor, Mr. Gates subjectively selected news stories according to his "own set of experiences, attitudes, and expectation" on news reality (White, 1949, p. 390). In Snider's (1967) paper, Mr. Gates remained his subjective selecting behavior 17 years later (Snider, 1967). Stated by Roberts & McCombs (1994), since a similar set

of news-selection patterns as Mr. Gates' could be seen on the overall wire service, inter-media agenda setting effects occurred at a considerable level (Roberts & McCombs, 1994, p. 250).

Inter-media agenda setting also put forward that "a few elite media outlets" dominated global "saliency of news objects within the media agenda" (Golan, 2006, pp. 324-330). After studying cocaine reports on the main newspapers and television programs, Reese and Danielian (1986) found "the major media cover issues in a similar fashion and at roughly the same time" (Reese & Danielian, 1986, pp. 37-42). Golan (2006) came up with similar findings as Reese and Danielian (1986)'s. According to Golan (2006, p. 331), news agenda in New York Times influenced news agendas in other organizations when NBC, ABC, and CBS's international news coverage was correlated to New York Times'.

Despite the Internet's immenseness and dynamic, studies have shown that inter-media agenda setting could be taken into the cyber communication environment (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; Sweetser, Golan & Wanta, 2008; Wu, *etc.*, 2013). At the same time of digital newspapers being affected by news coverage in traditional news media, causality could also be seen in particular news sites' issue agendas (Lee & Lee, 2005, p. 68; Sweetser, Golan & Wanta, 2008, p. 200). Lim (2006) compared issue agendas of "an online wire service and the two primary online newspapers in South Korea" and discovered the online wire service's issue agendas were strongly affected by the two online publications (Lim, 2006, p. 306). Therefore, high-level online inter-media agenda-setting effect existed and leading online newspapers could

determine media agendas of "both the secondary online newspaper and the online wire service" (Lim, 2006, p. 306).

ONLINE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT IN MAINLAND CHINA

China has "one of the world's most restrictive media environments" (Freedom House, 2015b). Despite the media being increasingly commercialized in China, a political liberalization was not seen in Chinese media market (Hassid, 2008, p. 414). Beijing government continues a strict regulation on online information, even though the number of Chinese netizens has been increasing dramatically. Till 2014, 618 million Chinese citizens had access to the Internet (Freedom House, 2014). However, the Chinese Internet remained a "cyberspace sovereignty," where foreign information was strongly censored, and user rights were evidentially violated (Freedom House, 2015a).

By launching strict regulations, an "online media order" was built by the government (Chan, Lee & Pan, 2006, p. 941). To maintain the authoritarian media system, Beijing government spent considerable efforts and took various actions to keep online information in control (MacKinnon, 2011, p. 37). The Great Firewall, an Internet-filtering system, was developed and utilized by the government to achieve online censorship by resisting "ideologically and politically threatening" contents and regulate foreign nations' criticisms (University of California- Davis, 2007; Zhang, 2006, p. 285). Besides, the government recruited online commentators to guide discussions. By the year of 2014, 300,000 writers were employed to actively respond to social issues and lead discussions online (Sterbenz, 2014). Also, since legislations

have already legitimized the censorship, individuals cannot comment freely on the Internet. If a post contained information that was seen "unsuitable" to be published on Weibo, a widely-used micro-blog in China, it could be deleted from the platform by the website operator in less than thirty minutes after publishing, and politically sensitive online posts could make the writer be arrested under the charge of "inciting subversion of state power" (MacKinnon, 2008, p. 34).

Controlling the media, a "system of networked authoritarianism" was built by the government (MacKinnon in Sullivan, 2014, p. 30). Although Chinese government terminated publishing news directly by any government bureaucracy, media system in China privileged organizations that were controlled by the government (Chan, Lee & Pan, 2006, p. 941). Thus, those government-operated news agencies "exerted a great agenda-setting influence on the media" (Luo, 2014, p. 1289). For instance, Xinhua News Agency, the state- ran media in China, was "one of the Chinese government's main news outlets and propaganda arms" (Perlez, 2017; Troianovski, 2010). Xinhua was the most leading press in China, which also built and maintained websites of the central government (Xinhuanet, 2016). Moreover, agendas in government-controlled news sites considerably affected general media's agendas, especially in covering politics news (Luo, 2014, pp. 1305-1308). With regards to the training of Chinese journalists, one essential ideology that was repeatedly emphasized during the process was "the importance of the Party," which referred to the idea that the journalists should follow the Party's principles and not go against the Party's willing (Hassid, 2011, p. 816).

Based on previous findings, I put forward the following hypotheses:

H1: Attribute agendas in mainland-Chinese media reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue will have a high correlation with Xinhua's attribute agendas.

NEWS MEDIA IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN

Although Hong Kong and Taiwan shared "the same historical origin, language, and the cultural resources" with mainland China, they developed in different paths from the mainland and set up various media systems (Lo, Chan & Pan, 2005, pp. 155-156). Hong Kong, a special administrative region of China and a former British colony, had a "partly free" media system (Freedom House, 2016). Although the law honored freedom of the press, the free media system "continued to be undermined by mainland and local authorities who emphasized Beijing's ultimate sovereignty" (Freedom House, 2016). In late 2015, five employees of Might Current Media, "a Hong Kong publishing company and bookstore specializing in books about the sex lives and corruption of China's top leaders," were reported missing (Forsyth, 2016). In January 2016, Gui Minhai, one of the five missing booksellers, confessed on a mainland Chinese television for "violating his probation in a fatal drunken-driving accident" which happened in 2004, and claimed "he had voluntarily returned to China to face justice" (Forsyth, 2016).

Recent years have witnessed a "growing self-censorship" in Hong Kong publications (Freedom House, 2015). Negative coverage on the CPC declined as the territory's leading papers concerned about their business in the mainland (Levin &

Law, 2016). In December 2015, the *South China Morning Post*, the leading

English-language newspaper in Hong Kong, was bought by Alibaba, an e-commerce

giant from mainland China (Levin & Law, 2016). Recognizing the pressure from the

mainland, journalists maintained a strong self-censorship to blank information that

was aggressive to Beijing (Hassid, 2008, p. 428). However, when Hong Kong was

ruled "under the last colonial government," it "was virtually a free port for

information" where the rule of law was preserved (Lo, Chan & Pan, 2005, p. 156).

Taiwan's media environment was "one of the freest in Asia" (Freedom House,

2015d). Even though Taiwan was under Kuomintang (KMT)'s authoritarian rule

before the 1980s, Taiwanese politics started liberalizing since 1980s, which produced

an independent mass media (Tu, 1996, pp. 1127-1128). Till 2015, more than 360

privately owned newspapers existed in Taiwan, and diverse political opinions existed

in both print and online media (Freedom House, 2015d). Among Taiwanese

newspapers, *Liberty Times* was leading in circulation, and *Apply Daily* ranked the

second largest (Hsu, 2014, p. 515).

In contemporary democratized Taiwan, political parties could not control

newspapers directly (Hsu, 2014, p. 115). However, the ruling parties − the

Kuomintang (KMT), a pro-China party, and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP),

a pro-Taiwan party, - still influenced newspapers' political orientations (Copper, 1990,

pp. 6-9; Hsu, 2014, p. 115; Rigger, 1999, pp. 58- 60). Although Taiwan was

historically a colony of China (Hsu, 2014, p. 94), demoralization opened spaces for

diverse media ideologies. Due to the growing of Taiwanese identity among

Taiwanese citizens, the market shares of pro-China media decreased significantly. Circulations of the *United Daily News* and the *China Times*, two newspaper that maintained pro-China positions, gradually decreased, while pro-Taiwan newspapers continuously increased their market share, such as *Liberty Times*, *Apple Daily (Taiwan)*, the *Independent Evening Post, etc.* Hsu, 2014, p. 117). Noticeably, despite the majority of leading pro-Taiwan newspapers' claim to be neutral on Chinese issue, *Apple Daily (Taiwan)* maintained "a firm stance of opposing the authoritarian Chinese government" (Hsu, 2014, p. 107).

In sum, I formulate the following hypotheses:

H2: Attribute agendas in Hong Kong news reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue will have a high correlation with Xinhua's attribute agendas.

H3: Attribute agendas in Taiwanese news reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue will have a low correlation with Xinhua's attribute agendas.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM

International journalism was "an ideological war" between nations since national interests were usually highlighted in news report, and governments' ideologies and agendas were often supported by mass media (Lee, *etc.*, 2001, p. 346; Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 87). With regards to U.S. media organizations, they "were effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion" (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 306). One commonly held agenda in U.S. journalists' international

politics reports was that the United States was "a righter of wrongs around the world, in pursuit of tyranny, in defense of freedom no matter the place or cost" (Said, 1993, p. 5). For example, U.S. mainstream media's reports on the U.S-Iraq War between 2002 and 2003 claimed the United States was "fighting the war against terror as a consequence of the attacks of 9/11." The media also legitimized the war by calling Saddam "the tyrant and madman" who "seriously violated freedom and human rights" and illegally owned weapons of mass destructions that threatened the safety of United States (Lehmann, 2005, pp. 83-85).

Moreover, news coverage showed "a systematic and highly political dichotomization" (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 35). Domestic power interest dominated the process of news' content selection. For the purpose of cooperating with elite interests as well as generating advertising values, media neglected victims that could not be described in liberal contents (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, p. 35). Under this concept, mass media in U.S. represented "a highly selective culling of facts and much outright lying" to initiate a systematic propaganda (Chomsky & Herman, 1979, p. 295). Within this propaganda system, media organizations displayed "a general avoidance of invidious language and a sympathetic understanding for the difficult problems faced by the terrorizing elites backed by the United States." While referring to those countries that were not in Western interest, they "were thrust into the limelight" labeled under "'enemy' terror and the evils of Communism" (Chomsky & Herman, 1979, p. 295).

Furthermore, imbalanced and distorted concepts were prominent in U.S.

journalistic practice, especially while covering foreign news (McManus, 1994, pp. 150-151; Hackett, 1984, pp. 230- 231). According to Hackett (1984, p. 230), imbalanced biases were those that were "preferential, one-sided, and partial," and distortion referred to "warped, distorted, indirect, and stereotyped" content. One example of imbalanced and distorted biases was the not-balanced "presentations between pro-and anti-American (especially Communist) viewpoints" in American news reports (Hackett, 1984, p. 231). Westerstahl (1983)'s also found that "when the word 'enemy' was used" in media reports between 11 February and 9 March 1968, "in 90% of the cases it referred to the NLF (National Liberation Front) or to North Vietnam" (Westerstahl, 1983, p. 421).

Media coverage on Hong Kong's handover from Britain to China in 1997 was consistent with this viewpoint (Lee *etc.*, 2001). Suggested by findings from Lee *etc.* (2001)'s content analysis on six prestige American papers' coverage on the issue during a three-week period in 2001, the ideology of democracy was the main focus of the publications, while social and cultural background were mostly ignored by the media. A general frame was that the handover was "marked not only by an imminent erosion of freedom and democracy in Hong Kong under China's pressure but also by an eventual victory of Hong Kong's capitalist democracy over China's socialist authoritarianism," and the United States was a "new guardian" of Hong Kong (Lee *etc.*, 2001, p. 362).

The end of Cold War did not make U.S. news coverage more independent when the press behaved in a more "watchdog fashion" in post-Cold War era "than during

the Cold War proper" Goodman (1999, p. 406). In general, news coverage in prestige press embraced official U.S. government's U.S.-China agenda, and news content embraced and legitimized government policies (Goodman, 1999, p. 406). Between 1985 and 1993, "press coverage" in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* "tended to portray events or issues as severely threatening China's status quo." Issues like "human right charges against the Chinese government," including "the mistreatment of political prisoners," received a high amount of coverage (Goodman, 1999, pp. 405- 406). Zaller and Chiu (1996)'s research also suggested a strong correlation between government policies and media coverage. A close link could be found between "the slant of press coverage of foreign policy crises and the positions taken by officials within the government," and journalists manipulated their coverage according to "the range of opinion that existed within the government" (Zaller & Chiu, 1996, p. 399).

Furthermore, mass media behaved "as agents of social control by varying their coverage of political groups in relation to how deviant they perceived the groups to be" (Shoemaker, 1984, p. 66). News content ridiculed deviant political groups by evaluating them less favorably and describing them to be less legal (Shoemaker, 1984, pp. 70-71). Youssefi, Alireza, and Amire (2013) conducted research on Western print media's display of Iran sanctions. Their findings suggested that Western newspapers misrepresented "Iran and individuals or firms associated with Iran" in their headlines and showed a significant ideological bias by negatively portraying "Iran and Iranian officials/organizations in an attempt to justify and legitimize the sanctions imposition

against the country" (Youssefi, Alirez & Amire, 2013, pp. 1348-1349). Also, in Li and Cyr (1998)'s research, a content analysis of *The New York Times* from 1987 to 1997 yielded that *The Times* "increasingly continued its coverage of human rights in China" regardless of the growing prevalence of U.S.- China trade (Li & Cyr, 1998, p. 5).

OVERSEAS CHINESE-LANGUAGE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

By 1990s, more than 300 daily newspapers, "weeklies, biweeklies, and magazines" were "published outside China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao" (Zhang & Hao, 1999, p. 23). To serve local Chinese communities in the destined nation, foreign Chinese-language publications contained contents and categories with high similarities (Shi, 2009, p. 597). With 2 million Chinese immigrants, U.S. was "the largest center for Chinese-language publications outside Asia" (Hooper & Batalova, 2015; Yin, 2009, p. 60). As early as 1854, Chinese immigrants already established the *San Francisco News,* which was the first overseas Chinese-language newspaper.

Overseas-Chinese populations were significantly impacted by foreign Chinese news publications. One factor was that a vast number of Chinese immigrants kept a primary concern on news stories happening in their previous homeland (Yin, 2009, p. 62). Moreover, Chinese-language media acted was the source for Chinese immigrants to receive information, regardless of their English fluency (Hwang & He, 1999). A 7-day systematic observation of 10 Chinese-immigration families in Silicon Valley done by Hwang & He (1999) yield that objects read news published in Chinese to

"maintain their cultural identity and heritage," and showed a priority news concern to events happening in Taiwan and China (Hwang & He, 1999, p. 17).

As a result of globalization and the widespread use of the Internet, recent years witnessed a significant number of Chinese-language presses "expanded onto the Internet" and developed a global influence (Zhou & Cai, 2002, p. 430). With easy access, politics stories could be effectively spread through cyber communications methods worldwide (Zhang & Hao, 1999, p. 26). Self-claiming to be "the largest Chinese-language newspaper outside of mainland China and Taiwan," *Epoch Times* published in 35 countries, and 25 million visitors viewed the official website of the newspaper monthly (Epoch Media Group*, 2016).

Therefore, I will examine the following hypothesis,

H4: Attribute agendas in Western media reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue will have a high correlation with immigrant Chinese media's attribute agendas.

CROSS-NATION AGENDA SETTING

Cross-nation agenda settings in political actions have been widely studied by political scientists (Livingston, 1992; Pollack, 1997; Saidman, 1994; Sevenanas & Vliegenthart, 2016). According to Saidman (1994, p. 280), international agenda setting affected domestic political agendas by influencing politicians' "position-taking opportunities." Therefore, elites of a state might attempt to control the agenda of foreign policy (Saidman, 1994, p. 281). Livingston (1992), by examining "the Reagan administration's attempt to remove North-South relations from the international

agenda in the early 1980s" (Livingston, 1992, p. 313), stated that successful political

agenda settings were able to alter international politics, and the issue of North-South

relations was shaped by both agenda status and agenda politics (Livingston, 1992, p.

325).

Political agendas and media agendas were closely connected since issues that

caught media attention had a higher chance of leading to a political action (Sevenans

& Vliegenthart, 2016, pp. 198-199). Claimed by Werder (2002, p. 231), in different

nations, media using the same sources could promote "different positions about the

same issue." By content analyzing coverage of the "birth of the Euro" currency in

leading British newspapers and German newspapers during a period between 1

December 1998 and 30 January 1999, Werder (2002, pp. 229-231) found British news

stories mostly concerned about "Britain's leading position in Europe and the world"

while German media was more likely to concentrate on facts and updates "in the

banking and stock trading arenas."

Hence, I formulate the following hypotheses,

H5: There will be high correlations between attribute agendas on Zhou

Yongkang's issue reported in Taiwanese, Western Chinese and immigrant Chinese

news media.

H6: Attribute agendas in Chinese and Hong Kong media reports on Zhou

Yongkang's issue will have low correlations with attribute agendas in Taiwanese

news sites, Western news sites and immigrant Chinese media's reports.

TWITTER IN POLITICS COMMUNICATION

Although technical advancement already blurred those distinctions between receivers and sources and allowed netizens to discuss and re-distribute information actively (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2012), media coverage remained to be primary information sources for individuals to use in their online discussions (Roberts, Wanta & Dzwo, 2002, p. 464). Concerning social networking (SNSs), it was argued to provide quality deliberations, influenced politics, and promoted democracy (Robertson, Vatrapu & Medina, 2010, p. 13; Camaj and Santana, 2013, p. 23). Twitter, a U.S-based popular micro-blog platform, was considered as being significantly influential in the flow of global political ideas (Dann in Sullivan, 2012, p. 773).

Despite Twitter being used for political communication, Twitter users tended to keep their original ideology regardless of the existence of diverse opinions (Himelboim, McCreery & Smith, 2013, pp. 157- 158). Part of this phenomenon was because users treated the platform as a "professional environment with potential professional costs" (Marwick, 2010, p. 125). Consequently, they carefully managed what they would say, and matched their Tweets closely with their believed positions (Marwick, 2010, pp. 125-126). Besides, Twitter users self-selected information by following like-mind accounts, which increased the possibility of the user being exposed to his pre-held opinion (Himelboim, McCreery & Smith, 2013, p. 158).

Colleoni, Rozza & Arvidsson (2014, p. 317) investigated "political homophily on Twitter." Their findings revealed that if Twitter was seen as a social platform, data supported the existence of "high levels of homophily and an echo chamber-like

structure of communication." Moreover, when researchers looked at Twitter as a news medium focusing on Democrats alone, they could as well find "higher levels of homophily about among the democratic public" (Colleoni, Rozza & Arvidsson, 2014, p. 328).

Moreover, the salience of attributes on Tweeter discussions was strongly correlated with traditional media's agenda (Hong & Nadler, 2012). By comparing mentions of 2012 U.S. Presidential candidates in 22 days by Twitter and news websites- "ABC News, the BBC, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, *the Kansas City Star*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, *My San Antonio* (the online portal of the *San Antonio Express* news), the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Reuters*, *USA Today*, and the *Washington Post*" (Hong & Nadler, 2012, p. 458), the study found strong evidence on the positive associations between times a politician being mentioned by traditional media and times a politician being mentioned by Twitter (Hong & Nadler, 2012, p. 459). Thus, this research will be looking at the following research questions,

RQ1: Which media type will be most frequently mentioned by Tweets?

RQ2: Which media's agenda will be positively predicting agendas in Tweets?

METHODOLOGY

To test the six hypotheses and two research questions, researchers content analyzed Tweets and news stories from influential websites that related to Zhou

Yongkang's case. The unit of analysis was a complete article or an individual Tweet. Also, since not all attributes were mutually exclusive from others, an article or Tweet could possibly include multiple attributes.

Sampling

To examine the first six hypotheses, researchers collected all online news stories published in selected news sites between June 11 and June 17, 2015. On June 11, 2015, Xinhua News Agency firstly reported Zhou's sentence, and the seven-day period witnessed a broad range of online discussions on that issue. In total, the author collected 323 news articles from 27 news media.

Specifically, 33 news stories were collected from seven Western media giants' Chinese-language sites- the *New York Times* (Chinese), the *Wall Street Journal* (Chinese), *Reuters* (Chinese), BBC (Chinese), *Financial Times* (Chinese), *Deutshe Welle* (Chinese) and VOA (Chinese). A total number of 167 news reports were collected from five overseas Chinese immigrant news websites- *New Tang Dynasty Television* (NTDT), *Epoch Times*, *World Journal*, *Myactimes*, and *Lianhe Zaobao*. All these five websites are highly popular among overseas Chinese populations. 32 news stories were collected from five leading Hong Kong news sites- *Wenweipo*, *South China Morning Post*, *Apple Daily* (Hong Kong), *Radio Television Hong Kong* (RTHK), and *Sing Tao Daily* (STD). With regards to Taiwan, 32 news reports were collected from five major news sites- *China Times*, *Special Events Television Network* (SETN), *Apple Daily* (Taiwan), *ETtoday*, and *Liberty Times*. Regarding mainland China, 59 news stories were collected from 5 news sites, which were

Xinhua News Agency, *People's Daily*, *Global Times*, *NetEase, Sina*, and *China Network Television* (CNTV).

Tweets were analyzed to test the two research questions. The time frame of Tweets analyzed in this study is a seven-day period, from June 15 to June 21, 2015. According to Roberts, Wanta & Dzwo (2002), Internet discussions occurred shortly after an event being published, and agenda-setting influence could be displayed as early as two days later (Robert, Wanta & Dzwo, 2002, p.459). To be safe, also taking Althaus & Tewksbury (2002, p.196)'s finding into account that people "adjusted their overall agendas in part to that suggested by" the news source after five days, I collected Tweets published between June 15 and June 21- five days since Zhou's imprisonment was first reported, and lasting for one week. In total, 721 Tweets directly talked about Zhou's imprisonment. After removing repetitive Tweets from those same accounts, 652 Tweets were used for analysis.

CODING SCHEME

The Coding Scheme (See Appendices, *Codebook*) includes 13 questions. In the codebook, all questions were accompanied by guidelines including synonyms, antonyms, and examples for coders to make more accurate judgments. The coding scheme was improved and refined through a pilot study in which 77 news articles and 161 Tweets were independently coded by two coders.

In the pilot study, the inter-coder reliability was calculated by Cohen's Kappa which was a commonly used method in social science for measuring the agreement between two coders (Xu & Lorber, 2014, p. 1219; Warrens, 2014, p. 8). Since all

attributes' kappa reached scores between 0.94 and 1.00 ($p < .001$), the inter-coder

reliability was "almost perfect" between the two coders (Landis & Koch, 1977, p.

165)"- "Story Number" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$), "News Source" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$),

"Location of the News Source" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$), "Is this news from

mainland/Hong Kong media or free media" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$), "Does the news story

discuss/focus on the sentencing outcomes of Zhou's trial"($k= .94, p < .001$), "If yes to

previous question, does the news story on the sentencing outcomes of the Zhou's trial

emphasize" ($k= .97, p < .001$), "Does the news story discuss/focus on Zhou's trial's

impact on the rule of law" ($k= .96, p < .001$), "If yes to previous question, how does

the news story emphasize Zhou's trial's impact on the rule of law" ($k= .97, p < .001$),

"Does the news story discuss whom Zhou leaked state secrets to" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$),

"Does the news story emphasize the potential political conflicts within elite Chinese

politicians" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$), "Does the Tweet include a link to any online news

story" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$), "If yes to previous question, what is the location of the new

source" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$), "If yes to **V11**, is the Tweet against what is stated by the

link' story" ($k= 1.00, p < .001$) (See Table 1).

Table 1. Inter-coder Reliability

Variables	Cohen's Kappa
V2	1.00**
V3	1.00**
V4	1.00**
V5	.94**
V6	.97**
V7	.96**
V8	.97**
V9	1.00**
V10	1.00**
V11	1.00**
V12	1.00**
V13	1.00**

Note *= $p \leq .05$, **= $p \leq .001$.

SECTIONS IN CODING SCHEME

News stories were analyzed by three sections- "Trail Sentencing," "Rule of Law," and "New Frame." In the sections of "Trail Sentencing," coders should firstly determine whether the attribute is present or absent by answering the question "Does the news story discuss/focus on the sentencing outcomes of Zhou's trial?" If the attribute is present, coders should code for positive valence (fair conviction) or negative valence (unfair conviction) of the attribute. If the news story emphasized on the agenda that the trial made a fair conviction on Zhou's bribery and Zhou's life-sentence was a fair sentencing, coders would code the news story as a positive valence. If the story put forward an agenda suggesting the court-convicted amount of Zhou's directly accepted bribes was not reliable or the life sentence was minor, the story would be marked as a negative valence.

The section "rule of law" first requires coders to decide whether the story discussed Zhou's trial's impact on the rule of law. If the attribute appears, coders would make decisions on how the story described the impact- whether Zhou's trial advances or violates the rule of law. In the third section- "News Frame," coders would determine whether two frames appear in news stories according to two questions- "does the news story discuss whom Zhou leaked state secretes to" and "does the news story emphasize the potential political conflicts within elite Chinese politicians?"

V11, V12, and V13 are Twitter-only questions. V11 asks coders to mark whether the Tweet includes a link from any news website. If the attribute presents, coders

should then mark the location of the news source- mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Western media or Immigrant Chinese media outside of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. After that, coders would decide whether the Tweet was against the link's statements. For example, if the Tweet claimed what was mentioned by the attached news story to be not true or untrustworthy, the Tweet would be marked as "against the link's statements."

RESULTS

The goal of this study was to assess how attribute agendas were presented in different media's reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue. Thus, researchers first calculated the numbers and percentages of issue attributes appearing (Fair Conviction for the Sentencing Outcomes, Unfair Conviction for the Sentence Outcome, Positive Impact on the Rule of Law, Negative Impact of the Rule of Law, Discussion of the Leaked State Secrets, Conflict within Political Elites) in Xinhua, mainland Chinese media, Hong Kong media, Taiwan media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media (see Table 2 & Table 3).

At the second stage, the researcher analyzed the ranking orders of attributes appearing within the media (see Table 4). After that, Pearson product-movement correlation coefficients were computed by the researcher to determine the correlations between different media types (see Table 5).

Table 2. Numbers of Stories or Tweets per Issue Attribute

	Chinese Mainland (N=59)	Hong Kong (N=32)	Taiwan (N=32)	Immigrant Media (N=167)	Western Media (N=33)	Twitter (N=652)	Xinhua News (N=9)	Total (N=975)
Fair Conviction	57	20	3	0	2	4	8	94
Unfair Conviction	0	8	27	60	25	82	0	202
Positive Impact Rule of Law	57	15	4	2	1	0	9	88
Negative Impact Rule of Law	0	8	25	127	29	197	0	386
Leaked State Secrets	2	8	6	49	3	35	0	103
Political Conflict	0	5	23	133	31	388	0	580

Table 3. Percentages of Stories per Issue Attribute within Each Media Type

	Chinese Mainland (N=59)	Hong Kong (N=32)	Taiwan (N=32)	Immigrant Media (N=167)	Western Media (N=33)	Xinhua News (N=9)	Twitter (N=652)	Total (N=975)
Fair Conviction	96.6%	62.5%	9.4%	0%	6.1%	88.9%	0.06%	9.6%
Unfair Conviction	0%	25%	84.4%	35.9%	75.8%	0%	12.6%	20.7%
Positive Impact on Rule of Law	96.6%	46.9%	12.5%	1.2%	3.0%	100%	0%	9.0%
Negative Impact on Rule of Law	0%	25%	78.1%	76.0%	87.9%	0%	30.2%	39.6%
Leaked State Secrets	3.5%	25.0%	18.8%	29.3%	10%	0%	5.4%	10.6%
Political Conflict	0%	15.6%	71.9%	79.6%	93.9%	0%	59.5%	59.5%

Table 4. Rank Order of Issue Attributes per Media Type or Twitter

Issues	Chinese Mainland (N=59)	Hong Kong (N=32)	Taiwan (N=32)	Immigrant Media (N=167)	Western Media (N=33)	Xinhua New (N=9)	Twitter (N=652)
Fair Conviction	1	1	6	6	5	2	5
Unfair Conviction	3	3	1	3	3	3	3
Positive Impact Rule of Law	1	2	5	5	6	1	6
Negative Impact Rule of Law	3	3	2	2	2	3	2
Leaked State Secrets	2	3	4	4	4	3	4
Political Conflict	3	4	3	1	1	3	1

Table 5, Rank Order Correlations between Different Media and Twitter

	Chinese Mainland (N=59)	Hong Kong (N=32)	Taiwan (N=32)	Immigrant Media (N=167)	Western Media (N=33)	Xinhua (N=9)	Twitter (N=652)
Chinese Mainland	1	.853*	-.924**	-.924**	-.924**	.851*	-.924**
Hong Kong	.853*	1	-.725	-.932**	-.828*	.694	-.828*
Taiwan	-.924**	-.725	1	.771	.714	-.703	.714
Immigrant Media	-.924**	-.932**	.771	1	.943**	-.703	.943**
Western Media	-.924**	-.828*	.714	.943**	1	-.831*	1.000**
Xinhua	.851*	.694	-.703	-.703	-.831*	1	-.831*
Twitter	-.924**	-.828*	.714	.943**	1.000**	-.831*	1

Note: * $p < .05$; **$p < .001$

XINHUA'S INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING EFFECTS ON MAINLAND CHINESE NEWS SITES

H1 predicted that attribute agendas in mainland-Chinese media reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue significantly correlated with Xinhua's attribute agendas. As shown in Table 5, this hypothesis was fully supported. Therefore, Xinhua's inter-media

agenda setting ability on mainland Chinese news sites was confirmed.

Stories' rank orders in Xinhua and mainland-China-based websites were significantly correlated (r (6)= .851, *p*< .05) (see Table 5). For stories in mainland-China-based websites, "Fair Conviction for the Sentencing Outcomes" and "Positive Impact on the Rule of Law" were the two attributes that most frequently appeared- both appeared in 57 of the 59 stories from mainland Chinese news outlets, followed by "Discussion of the Leaked State Secrets" which appeared in 2 stories (see Table 2). The other three attributes – "Unfair Conviction for the Sentence Outcome," "Negative Impact of the Rule of Law," and "Conflict within Political Elites" were not discussed by mainland-China-based websites, so they ranked at the bottom (see Table 2). For stories in Xinhua, "Positive Impact on the Rule of Law" was the most frequently discussed attribute which appeared in all Xinhua news stories, followed by "Fair Conviction for the Sentencing Outcomes," an attribute that appeared in 88.9% of Xinhua news stories. The other four attributes- "Unfair Conviction for the Sentence Outcome," "Negative Impact of the Rule of Law," "Discussion of the Leaked State Secrets," and "Conflict within Political Elites" were not discussed by Xinhua (see Table 3).

Zhou's trial's sentencing outcome and its impact on the rule of law were attributes that were widely emphasized in the mainland Chinese news stories, appearing in 96.6% of all collected news articles (N= 59). For all the stories that discussed the sentencing outcomes of Zhou's trial, they claimed Zhou's trial to be a fair conviction. Thus, a consensus appeared among mainland Chinese news websites

that they consented that the trial made a fair conviction on Zhou's bribery and the life sentence was an appropriate sentencing. The same situation persisted when it came to mainland Chinese news sites' statements on Zhou's trial's impact on the rule of law in China where the stories reached a consensus that Zhou's trial advanced the rule of law in China. At the same time, none of the news stories indicated any political conflict between elite Chinese politicians.

However, news websites carried slightly different agendas while discussing whom Zhou leaked state secrets to ($\chi 2$ (1) = 29.29, $p < .001$). As reflected in Table 2, within the 59 stories from mainland China, none of the 9 stories from Xinhua mentioned this attribute, while 2 from the 49 stories from other mainland Chinese news sites mentioned that Zhou leaked state documents to Cao Yongzheng, a fortuneteller who was trusted by Zhou Yongkang but did not have any permission to touch those state documents (NetEase, 2015).

XINHUA'S INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING EFFECTS ON Hong Kong NEWS SITES

H2 suggested attribute agendas of Xinhua news stories on Zhou Yongkang's issue highly correlated with Hong Kong media's attribute agenda. According to Table 5, this hypothesis was moderately supported. Therefore, on Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment, news agendas in Hong Kong media moderately correlated with attribute agendas in Xinhua news stories.

Although the rank orders of news attribute in Hong Kong media positively correlated with Xinhua's, the correlation was moderate and not significant (r

(6)= .694, $p > .05$) (see Table 5). Similar to attribute agendas in Xinhua, the two most commonly mentioned attributes were "Fair Conviction for the Sentencing Outcomes" and "Positive Impact on the Rule of Law," which were mentioned by 62.5% and 46.9% of news stories in Hong Kong media (see Table 3). Although Hong media did not reach a consensus on whether the trial was a fair conviction as Xinhua's stories did, the majority of Hong Kong news stories (62.5%) agreed with Xinhua's agenda that the trial's conviction of Zhou Yongkang was fair, and the difference between Hong Kong and Xinhua News Agency was not significant ($\chi2$ (1) = 2.939, $p > .05$). Moreover, 46.9% of stories in Hong Kong suggested Zhou's trial positively impacted the rule of law in China. Despite all Xinhua news stories claimed Zhou's trial advanced the rule of law in China, the difference between Xinhua and Hong Kong news stories on this attribute was minimal ($\chi2$ (1) = 4.174, $p > .05$).

Furthermore, Hong Kong news sites did not overwhelmingly explore on the attributes of "Unfair Conviction," "Negative Impact on Rule of Law," and "Leaked State Secretes"- when each of the three attributes appeared in 25% of all news stories in Hong Kong (see Table 3). "Political Conflict" was the topic that was the least likely to be mentioned by Hong Kong media which appeared in 15.6% of all news stories, and difference between Hong Kong and Xinhua news websites in the presence of that attribute was not significant ($\chi2$ (1) = 1.602, $p > .05$) (see Table 3).

XINHUA'S INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING EFFECTS ON TAIWANESE NEWS SITES

H3, which suggested attribute agendas in Taiwanese news reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue would have a low correlation with Xinhua's attribute agendas, was fully stated. According to Table 4, Xinhua's attribute agendas negatively correlated with Taiwanese media's (r (6)= -7.03, *p* > .05). Therefore, Xinhua did not have an inter-media agenda setting effect on Taiwanese news media.

As shown in *Table 3*, "Unfair Conviction" was the most commonly appeared attribute in Taiwanese news media, which was mentioned by 84.4% of all news stories in Taiwan. This was followed by "Negative Impact on Rule of Law," an attribute that appeared in 78.1% of Taiwanese news stories. "Political Conflict" was another dominant news attribute, which was talked by 71.9% of Taiwanese news reports (see Table 3).

However, for "Positive Impact on Rule of Law" and "Fair Conviction," the two attributes that were most favored by Xinhua news stories, they did not receive a large amount of coverage by Taiwanese media. Merely 9.4% of Taiwanese news stories claimed Zhou's trial to be a fair conviction, which was significantly different from how the attribute was presented in Xinhua news stories (88.9%) ($\chi2$ (1) = 24.873, *p* < .001). Moreover, 12.5% of Taiwanese news stories thought the trial advanced the rule of law in China- a figure that was significantly different from Xinhua's ($\chi2$ (1) = 22.679, *p* < .001) (see Table 3).

However, the difference was not significant between Xinhua News Agency and

Taiwanese news websites on the treatment of the question "Does the news story discuss whom Zhou leaked state secretes to" ($\chi 2$ (1) = 1.977, p > .05). The attribute was covered by 18.8% of Taiwanese news stories, which ranked the fourth among the appeared attribute (see Table 3).

AGENDAS OF WESTERN NEWS SITES AND IMMIGRANT CHINESE MEDIA

H4 predicted a high correlation between Western news sites and immigrant Chinese media. According to Table 5, H4 was fully supported. Therefore, attribute agendas in Western Chinese news sites and immigration Chinese media were significantly correlated with each other.

The correlation between attributes' rank orders of Western and immigrant Chinese news stories was significant (r (6)= .943, p < .05). In both the two media types, "Political Conflict" was the most dominant agenda, which appeared in 93.9% of Western news reports and 79.6% of immigrant Chinese news reports (see Table 3). The difference between the two media's presentations on the attribute agenda was not significant ($\chi 2$ (1) = 3.817, p > .05). Therefore, both Western and immigrant Chinese news stories tended to treat Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment as an indication of political conflicts within Chinese political elites.

The second attribute that appeared most frequently in the two media was the "Negative Impact on Rule of Law." In Western media, 87.9% of the total stories pointed out the trial's negative influence on the rule of law in China. In immigrant Chinese media, the attribute also appeared in 76.0% of the total stories. Furthermore, the two media tended to call the conviction to be unfair. The attribute "Unfair

Conviction" appeared in 75.8% of Western media and 35.9% of immigrant Chinese

media (see Table 3).

Moreover, Western news sites (10%) and immigrant Chinese media (29.3%) did

not widely discuss whom Zhou leaked state secretes to. Also, unlike mainland

Chinese news stories which overwhelmingly praised Zhou's trail to be justice and

advancing the rule of law in China, immigrant media and Western media did not shed

too much light on the positive sides of Zhou's trial. In Western media, only 6.1% of

the stories saw Zhou's conviction to be fair, and only 3.0% argued the trial positively

influenced China's rule of law (see Table 3). Immigrant media portrayed similar

agendas. The attribute "Positive Impact on Rule of Law" appeared in merely 1.2% of

the total stories, while none of the news reports in immigrant media claimed Zhou's

trial to be a fair conviction.

CHINESE-LANGUAGE MEDIA AGENDAS AT A GLOBAL SCALE

For examining global Chinese-language media agendas, H5 and H6 were tested at

this stage of research. As presented in Table 5, H5 was partially stated, Taiwanese

media, Western media, and immigrant media's attribute agendas on Zhou Yongkang's

imprisonment were moderately correlated with each other. Findings fully supported

H6, which suggested mainland Chinese/ Hong Kong media held considerably

different attribute agendas compared with Taiwanese media, Western media, and

immigrant media's, was fully stated.

According to Table 5, attribute agendas of Taiwanese media, Western media, and

immigrant media were positively correlated. For attributes in Western and immigrant

news stories on Zhou Yongkang's issue, they were significantly correlated (r
(6)= .943, *p* < .05). For the rank orders of issue attributes in Taiwanese media, they
also positively correlated with Western media (r (6)= .771, *p* > .05) and immigrant
media's (r (6)= .714, *p* > .05). However, none of the correlations between Taiwanese
media and Western media/ immigrant media was significant. Therefore, H5 was
partially supported.

Overall, the three media types held similar attribute agendas while describing
Zhou Yongkang's issue- they all widely discussed political indications of the issue,
considered the trial negatively impacted China's rule of law, and claimed the
conviction to be unfair. However, the rank orders of the three most popular attributes
were slightly different between Taiwanese media and immigrant/ Western media. In
Taiwanese media, the most frequently appeared attribute was "Unfair Conviction,"
which was talked about by 84.4% of all the news stories (see Table 3 & Table 4).
However, in immigrant and Western media, that attribute ranked at the third, which
appeared in 35.9% and 75.8% of all news stories. On the appearing of this attribute,
the difference between the three media types was significant ($\chi 2$ (1) = 9.915, *p* < .05).

With regards to the ranking order of "Negative Impact on Rule of Law," the
attribute received the same ranking in all the three media types. In Taiwanese media,
the attribute appeared in 78.1% of its total news reports (see Table 3). In Western and
immigrant media, that attribute was present in 87.9% and 76.0% of news stories
within each media type separately.

Furthermore, all the three media tended to point out the hidden political conflicts

behind Zhou's trial. Although the attribute "Political Conflict" ranked at the third in Taiwanese media's reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue, the topic remained a major topic in Taiwanese media, which was reported by 71.9% of all the news stories. "Political Conflict" was the top ranking attribute in Western media and immigrant Chinese media, which appeared in 93.9% and 79.6% of the two media's stories independently. However, a *Chi-Square* test showed that the difference between the three media's presenting on the attribute was not significant ($\chi2$ (1) = 5.412, p > .05).

On the attribute "Leaked State Secretes," it ranked the fourth in Western news sites, immigrant Chinese news media, and Taiwanese news media (see Table 4). However, this attribute was not widely mentioned in either of the three media types' stories, whose percentage of appearing was 29.3% in immigrant media, 10% in Western media, and 18.8% in Taiwanese media (see Table 3).

Moreover, all the three types of media did not regard the trial to be a fair conviction- Western news sites (6.1%), immigrant Chinese news media (0%), and Taiwanese news media (9.4%), and the difference was not significant ($\chi2$ (1) = 5.732, p > .05). Also, Taiwanese media, immigrant media, and Western media were not likely to support the trial's positive impact on China's rule of law, an attribute that was mentioned by 3.0% of news stories in Western news sites, 1.2% of news stories in immigrant Chinese news media, and 12.5% of news stories Taiwanese news media (see Table 3).

H6 was fully stated. Yield by Table 5, both Chinese media and Hong Kong media's attribute agendas negatively correlated with Taiwan, Western, and immigrant

Chinese media's. For Hong Kong media, its stories' issue attributes' rank orders were

significantly correlated with immigrant media (r (6)= -.9323, *p* < .05) and Western

media (r (6)= -.828, *p* < .05) in a negative direction. However, despite the strong

negative correlation of attribute agendas between Hong Kong and Taiwanese news

stories, the correlation was not significant (r (6)= -.725, *p* > .05). For mainland

Chinese media, its attribute agendas significantly correlated with Taiwan (r (6)= -.924,

p < .05), Western (r (6)= -.924, *p* < .05), and immigrant Chinese media (r (6)= -.924,

p < .05)'s in a negative direction. Considering the negative correlations between

Chinese media/ Hong Kong media and Taiwan/ Western/ immigrant Chinese media,

H6 was fully confirmed.

In the media agendas of mainland Chinese and Hong Kong media, "fair

conviction" was top ranking (see Table 4). 96.6% of news stories from mainland

China claimed Zhou's trial to be a fair conviction, and 62.5% of news stories from

Hong Kong made similar statement (see Table 3). However, that attribute did not

receive a similar popular treatment in Taiwanese media (9.4%), Immigrant media

(0%), or Western media (6.1%).

Another highly ranked attribute in mainland Chinese and Hong Kong media was

"Positive Impact on Rule of Law." Of all news stories in mainland Chinese media,

96.6% supported the notion that Zhou's trial positively influenced China's rule of law.

In Hong Kong media, 46.9% of all news stories admitted Zhou's trial's positive

impact on the rule of law in China. However, that attribute was not favored by news

stories from Taiwanese media (12.5%), immigrant Chinese media (1.2%), and

Western media (3.0%).

For the three attributes that top ranked attribute agendas in Taiwan, Western, and immigrant Chinese media's news reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue, they were not widely reported by mainland and Hong Kong media. "Political Conflict" was largely appeared in Taiwan (71.9%), Western (93.9%), and immigrant Chinese media (79.6%), but it was not mentioned by mainland Chinese news stories (0%), and only 15.6% of Hong Kong news stories carried that attribute. Moreover, despite "Negative Impact on Rule of Law" appeared in 78.1% of Taiwanese news reports, 87.9% of Western news reports, and 76.0% of immigrant Chinese news media, the attribute was present in 25% of news stories in Hong Kong, while none of news stories in mainland China made similar statement claiming the trial negatively influenced the rule of law in China. Furthermore, "Unfair Conviction" was present in 84.4% of Taiwanese news stories, 35.9% of immigrant Chinese news stories, and 75.8% of Western news reports, which was not present in mainland Chinese news stories and downplayed by news reports in Hong Kong (25%) (see Table 3).

Another difference lied at those media's treatment on whom Zhou leaked state secretes to. The attribute "Leaked State Secretes" ranked at second and third separately in mainland Chinese and Hong Kong news reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue, while received the fourth ranking in news reports in Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media (see Table 4).

Therefore, globally, a noticeable difference existed between mainland Chinese/ Hong Kong's news agendas and Taiwanese/ Western/ immigrant Chinese media. In

the single case of Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment, news agendas in mainland China and Hong Kong were considerably influenced by news agendas in Xinhua's news stories. In mainland China, news agendas in news websites highly correlated with news agendas in Xinhua's news stories. In Hong Kong, although news stories did not strictly follow Xinhua's news agendas, the overall news agendas of Hong Kong's news reports resemble news agendas of Xinhua news stories. However, the inter-media agenda setting effect of Xinhua News Agency did not reach news stories in Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media. Attribute agendas in Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media's news reports carried considerable correlations with each other, while negatively correlated with attribute agendas in mainland China and Hong Kong media's news stories.

TWITTER AGENDAS

The first goal of examining Twitter agenda was to study which media was most frequently mentioned in Tweets. Not surprising, of Tweets that included a link to one particular news sites, 95.4% of the links were to immigrant Chinese news sites (see Figure 1).

In total, 79.4% of Tweets included a link to one particular news site. Of those Tweets with links included, 95.4% had links to immigrant Chinese websites, 3.5% consisted of links to Western media, 0.2% had links to Taiwanese media, 0.8 of the links were to Hong Kong media, and 0.2% of the links were to mainland Chinese media (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of links included in Tweets
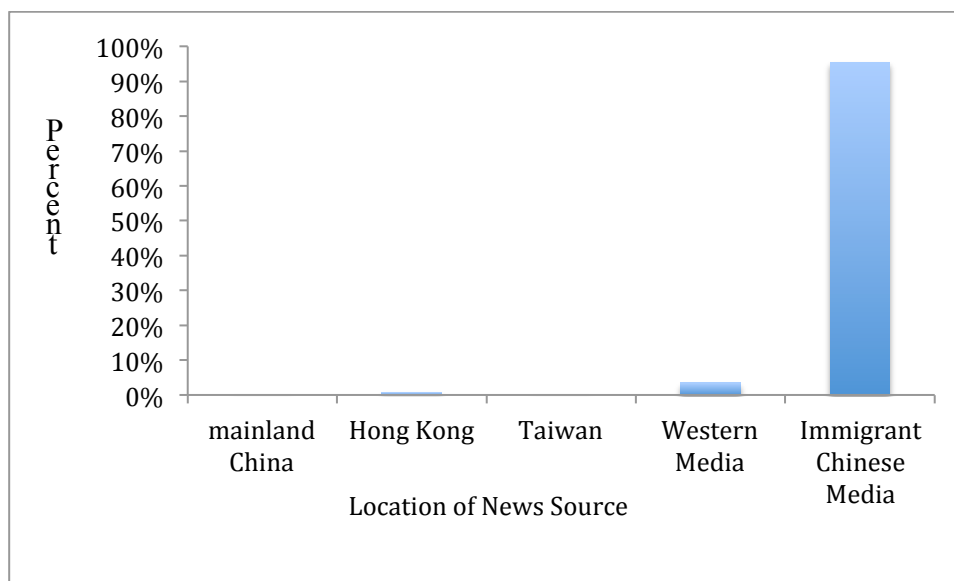
With regards to RQ2, Twitter's attribute agendas were most significantly correlated with Western media's attribute agendas (r (6)= 1.000, *p* < .001). At the same time, correlations between rank orders of attributes in Tweets and immigrant media were also significant (r (6)= .943, *p* < .05) (see Table 5). Specifically, among all Tweets, political conflict was the most commonly mentioned agenda by Twitter users- 59.5% of the Tweets emphasized that Zhou's trial indicated a political conflict among elite Chinese politicians. Moreover, 39.6 of all Tweets claimed the trial would have a negative impact on the rule of law in China. Also, although the sentencing outcome of the trial was not widely discussed by Twitter users, 20.7% of Tweets concerned the trial did not have a fair conviction in Zhou Yongkang's case, while 8.8% considered the trial to be justice. Also, the attribute "Leaked State Secretes" was not widely discussed by Twitter users, which was mentioned in 10.6% of all Tweets (see Table 3).

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper offered an in-depth examination on global Chinese-language media agendas and Twitter discussions on Zhou's imprisonment. Content analysis results yielded that Xinhua News Agency not only set the agenda of online news stories in mainland China, but also considerably influenced news agendas in Hong Kong news stories. However, Xinhua's inter-media agenda setting ability did not reach news websites located in Taiwan. Online news stories in Taiwan displayed similar attribute agendas with stories in Western media and immigrant Chinese news sites, and attribute agendas in news stories from Taiwanese, Western Chinese, and immigrant Chinese news websites considerably differed from attribute agendas in mainland Chinese/ Hong Kong's news sites. Therefore, on the single issue of Zhou Yongkang's imprisonment, Xinhua News Agency, the Chinese state-running media, successfully led the media agendas within mainland China. The influence of Xinhua's attribute agendas was also noticeable in Hong Kong media. Despite the fact that Hong Kong media discussions on the issue covered more attributes than mainland Chinese media, news reports in Hong Kong still generally followed Xinhua's news agendas by emphasizing attributes that were favored by Xinhua and downplaying attributes that did not appear in Xinhua's reports. However, the inter-media agenda setting effects of Chinese state-running media did not impact Taiwanese, Western Chinese, and immigrant Chinese media, whose media agendas negatively correlated media agendas in mainland China and Hong Kong.

This paper also discovered several facts related to Twitter. First, the majority

Chinese-language Tweets attached a link in their posts. Also, stories from immigrant Chinese websites most frequently appeared in Chinese-language Tweets, while stories from mainland Chinese and Taiwanese websites were the least likely to be mentioned by Chinese-language Twitter users. Moreover, attribute rank orders of Tweets most significantly correlated with attribute rank orders of stories in Western media, followed by attribute rank orders of stories in immigrant media. On the other hand, attribute rank orders of Tweets negatively correlated with attribute rank orders of Hong Kong and mainland Chinese media.

Overall, results from this study corresponded to previous findings on Chinese-language media agendas. According to Luo (2014, p. 1289), news agendas in mainland China were significantly affected by government-related news agencies especially in the coverage of politics news. This statement was fully supported by content analysis results in this study when mainland Chinese news sites all took Xinhua's agendas that Zhou Yongkang's case of fairly handled by law enforcement which revealed China's pledge "to advance the rule of law" (Xinhua, 2015b; Xinhua, 2015d; People's Daily, 2015; Sina, 2015).

Analysis on Hong Kong news media's reports also confirmed Freedom House (2016)'s claim that Hong Kong's media system was partially impacted by Beijing authority. On the one hand, news sites like Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) put forward the agenda that Chinese law enforcement violated the rule of law by downplaying Zhou's corruption and pointed out the possibility of political struggle behind Zhou's trial (Radio Television Hong Kong, 2015). On the other hand, the

majority news websites embraced Xinhua's agenda by admitting the fairness of the conviction, praising the trial's positive impact on China's rule of law, and disregarding arguments on political struggles (Wenweipo, 2015).

Moreover, findings supported the statement that Western press had a tendency to prioritize issues that seriously threatened status quo of China (Goodman, 1999, pp. 405-406). Among Taiwanese, Western Chinese, and immigrant Chinese news websites, Western Chinese news sites (93.9%) were the most likely to discuss the potential political struggle behind Zhou's trial- an agenda that appeared in 93.9% of stories. For example, *New York Times* argued Zhou's trial to be "a political verdict"- Zhou's "transgressions went far beyond bribery" since evidence showed that "Zhou and Bo Xilai — a former Politburo member who was tried and convicted in 2013 — had trampled on the rule of law, sabotaged party unity and engaged in nonorganization political activities" (Forsythe & Ramzy, 2015).

Results also supported the argument that immigrant Chinese-language news media performed "a Chinese-American perspective" which contained significantly different perspectives from mainland Chinese newspapers (Zhou & Cai, 2002, pp. 430-431). Immigrant Chinese-language media carried agendas that were closed to Western Chinese media, but significantly different from agendas in mainland Chinese news stories. For instance, one article in *Radio Free Asia* wrote that Xi Jinping, the president of China, battled with other elite politicians for power under the name of anti-corruption. Thus, corruption, even the court statements, did not relate to Zhou's imprisonment (He, 2015).

With regards to Twitter, since the majority of Chinese-language Tweets highlighted agendas from Western media and immigrant Chinese media, findings supported Sullivan's (2012, pp. 773- 774) claim that Chinese- language Tweets played a role as political activism against the Chinese government and a community of deliberating information that was regulated in mainland China.

Overall, this study contributed to inter-media agenda setting studies. The fact that Xinhua's agendas significantly influenced agendas in both mainland China and Hong Kong's online news stories supported an existence of inter-media agenda setting in the cyber news environment (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; Sweetser, Golan & Wanta, 2008; Wu, *etc.*, 2013; Lim, 2006). Moreover, the similarities in Taiwanese, Western Chinese, and immigrant Chinese news agendas may indicate an inter-media agenda setting effect among Chinese-language online news sources outside of mainland China and Hong Kong.

LIMITATIONS

However, this paper could not provide sufficient explanations on the directions of inter-media agenda setting effects, especially for Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media. Although considerable inter-media agenda setting effects existed in attribute agendas of Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media's reports on Zhou Yongkang's issue, this research did not provide any evidence on which media type was the most influential among the studied news websites. Future studies could look at agendas of each news sites, and then test

which media's agenda was most favored by Chinese-language news reports in Taiwanese media, Western media, and immigrant Chinese media.

Also, yielded by findings on Twitter's attribute agenda, despite immigrant media was the most frequently mentioned media type by Chinese Tweeter users, attribute agendas of Tweets most significantly correlated to attribute agendas of Western media. This finding left an interesting research topic: "Immigrant Chinese media were the media type being most frequently cited in Chinese language Tweets, but Chinese-language Tweets' attribute agendas most closely correlated with Western media's. What are the reasons behind this controversy?"

APPENDICES

CODEBOOK

Instructions on how to use Coding Scheme

Check the definitions and examples for each attribute before coding. The definitions

and examples are not exhaustive. Consider synonyms while coding.

Instructions on words/phrases in Coding Scheme

Variable1 = Coder ID:

Your coder number,

01   = Coder 1

02   = Coder 2

V2 Story Number:

Fill in the number of the story that is listed on the beginning of the story in the word

file.

V3 News Source:

1=Xinhua News Agency

2=People's Daily

3= Global Times

4=NetEase

5=Sina

6=China Network television

7= Wenweipo

8= South China Morning Post

9= Apple Daily (Hong Kong)

10= Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK)

11= Sing Tao Daily (STD)

12= China Times

13= Special Events Television Network (SETN)

14= Apple Daily (Taiwan)

15= ETtoday

16= Liberty Times

17= New York Times (Chinese)

18= Wall Street Journal (Chinese)

19= Reuters (Chinese)

20= BBC (Chinese)

21= Financial Times (Chinese)

22= Deutshe Welle (Chinese)

23= VOA (Chinese)

24= New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDT)

25= Epoch Times

26= World Journal

27= Myactimes

28= Lianhe Zaobao

50= Twitter

* News Only

V4: Location of the News Source

1=mainland China

2=Hong Kong

3=Taiwan

4=Western Media

5= Immigrant Chinese media outside of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong

Instructions for V4:

When a news story is from Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, Global Times, NetEase, Sina, or China Network Television (CNTV), it is a news story from Mainland China.

When a news story is from Wenweipo, South China Morning Post, Apple Daily (Hong Kong), Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), or Sing Tao Daily (STD), it is a news story from Hong Kong.

When a news story is from China Times, Special Events Television Network (SETN), Apple Daily (Taiwan), ETtoday, or Liberty Times, it is a news story from Taiwan.

When a news story is from New York Times (Chinese), Wall Street Journal (Chinese),

Reuters (Chinese), BBC (Chinese), Financial Times (Chinese), Deutshe Welle

(Chinese) or VOA (Chinese), it is a news story from Western media.

When a news story is from New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDT), Epoch Times,

World Journal, Myactimes, or Lianhe Zaobao, it is a news story from Immigrant

Oversea Media outside of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Coding for News Attributes

- Trial Sentencing-

V5- Does the news story discuss/focus on the sentencing outcomes of Zhou's trial?

1=yes

0=no

Instructions:

If the story discusses the sentencing outcomes of Zhou's trial, mark "1," otherwise,

mark "0."

V6- If yes to previous question, does the news story on the sentencing outcomes of

the Zhou's trial emphasize?

1-Fair conviction (positive valence)

2- Unfair conviction (negative valence)

Instructions:

1- Fair conviction:

The new story may claim the trial made a fair conviction on Zhou's bribery. And the amount of bribes that were directly received by him-731, 000 Yuan ($117,000)- was believable: If the news story cites court statement that Zhou directly accepts 731,000 Yuan ($117, 000) and agrees with the statement by saying the amount is reliable, mark "1." if the story mentions that court statement that Zhou directly accepts 731,000 Yuan ($117, 000) but disagrees with the statement by saying the amount is not reliable, mark "2" instead.

The news story may also supporting the agenda that fife sentence was a fair sentencing: If the story mentions Zhou's life sentence and supports the verdict, mark "1." Stories may include phrases like "the verdict was reasonable; supporting the judgment…" If the story mentions Zhou's life sentence but disagrees with the verdict, mark "2."

2- Unfair conviction:

The news story may suggest the court convicted amount of Zhou's directly accepted bribes -731, 000 Yuan ($117,000) – was not reliable: If the story mentions the amount but disagrees with the statement by saying the amount is not reliable, mark "2." Stories may include phrases like "the actual amount of Zhou's directly accepted bribes remained unknown; the Party downplayed Zhou's bribery

charges; Zhou should have received thousands of millions…" If the story agrees with the statement, mark "1."

If the story mentions Zhou's life sentence but claims Zhou was punished less seriously considering the seriousness of his crime, mark "2." Stories may claim the life sentence to be minor or encourage death penalty or compare Zhou with other officials who were indicated death penalty. If the story agrees with the verdict, mark "1."

- Rule of Law-

V7 Does the news story discuss/focus on Zhou's trial's impact on the rule of law?

1=yes

0=no

Instruction:

If the story discusses Zhou's trial's impact on the rule of law, mark "1," otherwise, mark "0."

V8 If yes to previous question, how does the news story emphasize Zhou's trial's impact on the rule of law?

1=Advance the rule of law (positive valence)

2=Violate the rule of law (negative valence)

Instructions:

1- Advance the rule of law: The story admits Zhou's Trial advanced the rule of law. If the news story relates Zhou's case to China's rule of law and suggests Zhou's trial advances the rule of law in China, mark "1." Stories may include phrases like "China determined to advance the rule of law; everyone stood equal before the law…" If the story mentions "China's rule of law" but disagrees with the notion that Zhou's trial advances the rule of law, mark "2."

2- Violate the rule of law: If the news story mentions China's rule of law and suggests Zhou's trial violates the rule of law in China, mark "2." Stories may include phrases like "holding a trial secretly was illegal; Zhou negotiated his crimes with the Party; Zhou's true crimes remained unveiled…" If the story does not mention "China's rule of law" or agrees with the notion that Zhou's trial advances the rule of law, mark "1."

- News frame-

V9 Does the news story's discuss whom Zhou leaked state secretes to?

1=yes

2=no

Instructions:

Mark "1" if the story discusses whom Zhou leaked state secretes to. Content may contain, but not limit to sentences, like "Zhou leaks state secretes to Cao Yongzheng,"

"Zhou tells state secretes to North Korean politicians," *etc*.

If the story does not point out whom Zhou leaked state secretes to, mark "2."

V10- Does the news story emphasize the potential political conflicts within elite

Chinese politicians?

1=yes

2=no

Instructions:

Mark "1" if the story indicates Zhou has formed a "gang" with other top Chinese

politicians like Bo Xilai, Xu Caihou, Zeng Qinghong, Jiang Zeming, *etc.*; and stories

may also suggest "Zhou has lost political struggle with Xi or Xi defeated Zhou to

strengthen his control within the Party…" If the story does not emphasize the political

conflict, mark "2."

If the story gives addition information than what has already been covered by Xinhua

News Agency but the information does not relate to political conflict, mark "2." Such

stories may look at how Zhou gets to his current position, and claims his rising to

power is a process of corruption.

Twitter Only Question:

- Link-

V11- does the Tweet include a link to any online news story?

1= yes

0= no

Instructions:

For any Tweet to be marked "1," it should contain a link to at least one online news story. If there is no link or the link(s) has (have) nothing to do which the news (e.g., spam, advertising, etc.), mark "0."

V12- If yes to previous question, what is the location of the new source?

1=mainland China

2=Hong Kong

3=Taiwan

4=Western Media

5= Immigrant Chinese media outside of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong

V13- If yes to V11, is the Tweet against what is stated by the link' story?

1= yes

0= no

Instructions:

If the Tweet includes a link and is against the link's statements, mark "1." The Tweet

may include phrases like "this is not true," "this report is untrustworthy," "the statement in the link is biased," "the news site does not have any credibility," and *etc.* If the Tweet does not include a link or include a link but is not against the link's statements, mark "0."

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