

A Contrastive Critical Analysis of George Floyd's Death in *China Daily* and *The New York Times*

Yingying Qiu, and Jiayun Li

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Huaiyin Institute of Technology, Jiangsu, China

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ABSTRACT: *Based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the paper conducts a critical contrastive analysis of the reports related to George Floyd's death in China Daily and The New York Times to reveal the hidden positions and ideologies of the Chinese and American media. It is found that at the description stage, China Daily objectively presents the main participants and holds a critical attitude towards the violent law enforcement, while The New York Times portrays George Floyd and the protesters as negative images and affirms the actions of the US police. In the interpretation level, specified sources and direct speeches are used more frequently in both media reports. But China Daily had a wide range of news sources, and a higher percentage of direct speeches than The New York Times. Regarding explanation, social factors and institutional factors contribute to the similarities and differences in constructing images of key players in the two media.*

KEYWORDS: Floyd's death, three-dimensional model, critical discourse analysis, ideology

INTRODUCTION

On May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, George Floyd, an American negro who was accused of using 20 dollars counterfeit money, was suffocated by a white police officer Derek Chauvin in his violent law enforcement by locking Floyd's throat with his knee for about 8 minutes and 46 seconds. The tragedy sparked massive demonstrations and protests in the United States, and even spread around the world. Protesters emphasized "Black Lives Matter" and demanded that the government should address the persistent problem of racial prejudice.

The event triggered considerable attention from the media all around the world. With the characteristics of timeliness, fast dissemination with a wide range and large amounts of information, the news media transmit certain social ideologies to the audience during news reporting, which directly or indirectly affects the audience's perception and judgment of events (Ma, 2021; Ji, 2021).

However, no report can escape the subjective thoughts and consciousness of the discourse producer, which are influenced by various aspects such as government power and social context, with the aim of subliminally exporting the reporter's own thoughts and understanding to readers or audiences. As one kind of public discourse, news discourse becomes a research hotspot for critical discourse analysis (CDA) due to its incomplete objectivity. This paper intends to conduct a critical discourse analysis of reports on Floyd's death in *China Daily* and *The New York Times* to reveal their potential ideologies.

Theoretical Framework

Language is a social practice and that one needs to explore and analyze social reality from discursive, linguistic and semiotic perspectives, explaining the relationship between power, language and ideology and revealing the underlying power operations behind the discourse (Fairclough, 1989). "As a branch of linguistics or a method of discourse analysis, the theoretical basis of CDA mainly depends on various theories of modern linguistics, especially the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) led by Halliday" (Miao, 2016: 11). In this paper, ideational function, which is concerned with the fact that language concretely expresses people's experiences in the real world, is primarily involved.

Fairclough (1989) distinguishes three stages of CDA, involving description, interpretation, and explanation. Description belongs to the domain of text analysis which can be studied in terms of vocabulary, syntax, coherence, and discourse structures, and involves the analysis of language in real-life applications and discourse communication.

Interpretation concerns the relationship between discourse and the process of discursive practice. Intertextuality, as a fundamental feature of the text, can be carried out in any news text from news sources and reporting modes. All kinds of direct, indirect quotations and other discourse in the news have different genres and stylistic characteristics, carrying ideologies of different groups (van Dijk, 1988).

Explanation is the relationship between the process of discourse practice and its social context. The process of analyzing the discourse is influenced by the institutional and social contexts in which the discourse is embedded.

This paper will use Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA as the basic theoretical framework and Halliday's systemic functional grammar as the theoretical framework and analytical tool, then combine with the data, to conduct a deeper analysis.

Research on Corpus-based CDA on News Discourse

On the one hand, previous studies chiefly examined words frequency, keywords, concordance, collocation, grammatical structures and patterns to explore the intrinsic meaning of the discourse. It was found that British newspapers adopted a negative approach to the construction of “refugees” and “asylum seekers” (Baker & McEnery, 2005) and the image of China in Afghan discourse was positive (Sangeen, 2020). The analysis of thematic words, collocation, and retrieval helped discern the discursive messages of a text, illustrating that CDA can uncover underlying ideological meanings and power relations through discourse (Xin & Gao, 2013).

On the other hand, some scholars spared no effort to explore discursive strategies employed in certain language phenomena. Samaie and Malmir (2017) examined the US news media stories of Islam and Muslims between 2001 and 2015, which aimed to investigate how the discursive strategies of nomination and predication are used in US news reports. Islam and Muslims were generally associated with religious radicalism and violence, which showed the biased representation of Islam and Muslims in the media.

Furthermore, Chinese scholars kept a watchful eye on news discourse of international and hot issues such as “the Belt and Road” and “poverty alleviation”. Yang (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of British and American mainstream media reports on BRI at three levels: textual description, discursive practice elaboration and socio-cultural practice interpretation, exploring the differences among the attitudes of the United Kingdom and the United States towards the initiative of “the Belt and Road” and reveals the consciousness and social factors behind these differences. Huang and Zhang (2022) objectively described the discourse characteristics and semantic differences between Chinese and Western mainstream media in their reports on China’s poverty reduction and alleviation by observing and analyzing the high-frequency word lists, index lines and word clusters, which revealed the attitudinal stance and ideology behind reports.

As mentioned in the above review, studies on corpus-based CDA have made great progress. Nevertheless, previous studies have limited comparative studies on news discourse in different countries and relatively few studies have been done on foreign topics in China. In consequence, this paper will take the coverage of Floyd’s death selected from Chinese and American mainstream media as the research content, trying to interpret the different attitudes and ideologies behind news discourse from a comparative perspective.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

This research selected 30 reports related to George Floyd's death in *China Daily* and *The New York Times* respectively according to media awareness and circulation from 2020 to 2021. Search terms include "protests, Floyd's death", etc. Two self-built corpora with 27166 tokens and 27819 tokens are constructed.

Research Questions

The paper addressed the following three questions from a comparative perspective: (1) What are the language features of the reports on George Floyd's death between *China Daily* and *The New York Times* corpora? (2) What are the differences regarding intertextuality? (3) What are the factors that contribute to the ideological differences?

Research Procedures

Firstly, the linguistic features of the two corpora were compared and analyzed with respect to lexical choice, and the similarities and differences in the construction of images of the main participants, including Floyd, the protesters and the American police, were explored in the two media. In terms of lexical choice, the corpus software AntConc4.1.4 was used to extract data. For example, by analyzing the frequency of the appearance of nouns (NP), verbs (VP), and adjectives (AP) that described the images of the main participants, representative or frequently occurring words were mainly selected for the comparative interpretation.

Secondly, the intertextuality differences in reports about Floyd's death were studied from the perspectives of news sources and reporting modes. Due to the large size of two corpora, this part mainly involved randomly selecting 5 texts with similar tokens from each of the two corpora for detailed reading. By manually analyzing sentence by sentence, the number of specified sources, semi-specified sources, unspecified sources, direct speeches, indirect speeches and slipping were calculated. At length, it explored the racial attitudes and ideologies behind the two media from both social and institutional factors based on historical reviews, literature analysis, observation and so forth.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Description of Linguistic Features

Language is not completely objective and is subject to a variety of subjective ideas and social factors. The emphasis of textual analysis is the description of the linguistic

representation, focusing on the linguistic features of discourse consisting of vocabulary, grammar and textual features. This paper examined the way of image construction on the major players: George Floyd, protesters, and the American police.

George Floyd

George Floyd is the protagonist of the mass protests in the United States. In terms of noun modification, in addition to the common use of “George Floyd, (Mr.) Floyd” to directly name the protagonist, *China Daily* also describes George Floyd as a “victim”, which reveals that the Chinese reporters have some sympathy for Floyd’s suffering, whereas *The New York Times* employs more words such as “a 46-year-old black man, a Black man” to refer to Floyd, invisibly reflecting the fact that African-Americans have long been at the bottom of the American society. Compared to the names of white police officers and presidents, Floyd’s full name seems dispensable.

For the verbs and adjectives concerned with George Floyd, both *China Daily* and *The New York Times* use “cried out, begged” to objectively describe the process of Floyd’s death and exploit neutral adjectives to reflect the color of Floyd’s skin and the state he was in before his death. However, *China Daily* reporters mostly choose passive words in their verb selection, for example, “was handcuffed, was pinned to the ground”, showing Floyd’s passive position in front of the white police officers. In the face of the overwhelming superiority of the white police officers who use police weapons, Floyd could only be bound to the ground and keep pleading, which also indicates the low status of black Americans.

The Protesters

The protesters, as the main participants in the demonstrations, play a crucial role. When it comes to noun selection, *China Daily* primarily uses neutral words such as “demonstrators, Black people”, defining protesters as people who participate in public protests to express collective or personal indignation. On the contrary, although *The New York Times* employs “demonstrators, Black Americans” to introduce the protesters as well, negative nouns such as “thugs, terrorists, looters” are still used. The use of these words presents readers with a negative image of protesters as criminals and unconsciously makes them believe that protesters are the villains who intend to endanger social security.

There are some differences in the use of verbs and verb phrases. The words used by *China Daily* are more objective and sympathetic, such as “clashed with, marched through”. Reporters use “call for rooting out racism, gathered peacefully” to express the protesters’ abhorrence of racial prejudice and their desire for equality. Their demonstrations are peaceful, not harmful, and they only want to display dissatisfaction

and protest against the injustice they suffer. Thus, the attitude of *China Daily* towards the protesters is positive. In contrast, the verbs and verb phrases used by *The New York Times* tend to be aggressive and confrontational. Phrases like “throw a homemade firebomb, break windows, set fire” describe the destructive behaviors of protesters, portraying a vicious image.

The adjectives used by *China Daily* are mostly just and objective, for instance, “peaceful, unarmed, biased”. Reporters believe that these protesters are discriminated in the United States and that they don’t use weapons, but rather defend their rights in a peaceful manner. Even though reporters do not agree with some of destructive behaviors during protests, the use of vocabulary diminishes the harmfulness of the actions to some extent. *The New York Times*, however, uses negative adjectives such as “destructive, outraged” to define the characteristics of protesters, which demonstrates the contempt and hostility of the reporters toward protesters. These reports focus mainly on the harm that protests bring to individuals, society and the state, instead of truly addressing the root causes of protests.

The American Police

On the nomenclature of police officers, Chinese and American reports both use some neutral official terms, such as “police officers, city police”. However, *China Daily* uses relatively negative terms such as “police brutality, police custody” to define their behaviors, vividly reproducing police violence and brutal law enforcement to readers. To a certain extent, it also resonates with protesters and indirectly reveals the truth of the incident. Conversely, *The New York Times* assigns the US police high ranking titles like “the National Guard, the United States military” that predetermine an extreme imbalance in the status of the American police and the protesters, granting police officers higher rights and status.

Given the use of verbs and adjectives, *China Daily* uses more passive words, encompassing “was charged with, arrested”, which indicates that Derek Chauvin deserves to die and the brutality of the US police in dealing with protesters. Chinese reporters objectively express their opinions that Derek Chauvin should be fired and sentenced, and that the state should defund the police. The brutal repression shows gory scenes of police enforcement in America and tends to cause readers or viewers to feel pity for protesters.

Nevertheless, verbs and adjectives used in *The New York Times* are mostly positive. American reporters usually use mild words such as “disperse, protect, dominate” to portray the police as victims in handling protests. They argue that the police will only take control measures as a last resort, and that the intent is still to fulfill their own

responsibilities. The police are “activated, influential” and they are risking their own lives to maintain order. Hence, *The New York Times* presents people with an image of selfless and courageous American police officers, enhancing the reasonableness of police enforcement.

Interpretation through Intertextuality

As the second stage, interpretation is conducive to illustrating the relationship between the text and discursive practice. Discursive practice is mainly manifested in intertextuality, which refers to the connection that exists between two or more texts. The production of any text involves the process of borrowing contents from other texts, and such references can create more authentic pictures and texts that help convince readers of the authenticity of the reported contents. Thus, this thesis analyzes the similarities and differences of intertextuality between the two corpora by examining two components of intertextuality: news sources and reporting modes. Due to the large size of the corpora, 5 samples will be selected from each of the two corpora for detailed analysis.

News Sources

News sources refer to informants who provide news reporters with news facts. Given that every news reporter wants the news they produce to be persuasive, they carefully examine the source of each fact and subsequently quote them into the news discourse. However, news sources can be specified and contents of the reports can be arranged by themselves, which prompts news reporters to incorporate their own ideologies into news.

Xin and Gao (2013) propose that news sources can be divided into three kinds: first, specified sources which elaborate on aspects such as the speaker’s name, occupation, and nationality; second, semi-specified sources which use some vague words to indirectly provide information about the speaker’s identity; and third, unspecified sources which do not provide definite information about the speaker. By analyzing the 10 articles, Table 5.1 shows the distribution of news sources.

Table 5.1 The distribution and proportion of news sources in 10 samples

Types	<i>China Daily</i>		<i>The New York Times</i>	
	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion
Specified sources	72	80%	90	71.4%
Semi-specified sources	18	20%	36	28.6%
Unspecified sources	0	0%	0	0%

According to the table above, specified sources of the news account for the largest proportion. This result shows that *China Daily* and *The New York Times* are all sparing no effort to ensure the truthfulness of news reports in order to influence readers or viewers and gain their trust. A comparative analysis shows that *The New York Times* has a higher percentage of semi-specified sources with 28.6% than *China Daily* with 20%, whereas both media generally do not use unspecified sources in these samples. Consequently, this section will be analyzed from specified sources and semi-specified sources.

(1) Specified Sources

① House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat, said on Thursday that she and Congressional Black Caucus leaders will unveil measures Monday to “address the issue of police brutality” and racial disparities in law enforcement. (*China Daily*, 2020-06-05)

② “Black lives matter and their human rights should be guaranteed,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a daily news briefing, adding that racism against ethnic minorities is a chronic disease in US society. (*China Daily*, 2020-06-02)

③ “It was a murder in full light of day, and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world to see,” Mr. Biden said of the death of George Floyd, who died after Mr. Chauvin knelt on his neck for more than nine minutes, and whose death ignited nationwide protests. (*The New York Times*, 2021-04-20)

④ Initially, Mr. Trump issued a brutal law-and-order message early Friday morning, tweeting, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.” (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-30)

In the first two examples, the reporters cite the specific names and occupations of the House of Representatives Speaker and the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson as a way of demonstrating the authority of the citation. Several examples from *China Daily* show large-scale protests and racial bias in law enforcement that the corresponding US authorities have begun to take seriously. The fact that not only Derek Chauvin needs to be dealt with, but also the three other police officers involved require being punished accordingly, implies that there are indeed some problems with the US police management system. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson’s view represents China’s position that black lives are equally important and America should protect their human rights.

The last two examples also cite the names and positions of US government officials in order to gain the trust of readers. In *The New York Times*, Trump’s side argues that the protesters’ actions are egregious and that the police act reasonably and legally, so measures should be taken to prevent the demonstrations. The side represented by Biden

believes that Floyd's death is a murder and the rights of black people also need to be respected, which brings Biden closer to the masses. As different parties in the United States, they embrace different views on the protests and respond with different strategies, but no matter how they respond, their fundamental goal is all to maintain the stability of American society.

(2) Semi-specified Sources

① Their black face masks said, "Black Lives Matter." (*China Daily*, 2020-06-08)

② "We need to make sure that black Americans see an end to the days of murder in broad daylight and of traffic stops simply because of the color of their skin," the mayor said. (*China Daily*, 2020-06-05)

③ "We know this is just beginning; this is going to be a marathon," Floyd's cousin said. (*China Daily*, 2020-06-04)

④ At least one protester attempted to throw a homemade firebomb into a police car with four officers inside, the police said. (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-30)

⑤ "Some protesters came last night with an agenda of violence," the mayor said. "They meant to attack police officers." (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-30)

In the above examples, the speaker of the source language does not be introduced via a specific name, but occupation is used as a substitute. For describing the key participants, *China Daily* uses a variety of news sources, such as government representatives, protesters and relatives of Floyd to display specific facts, while *The New York Times* merely quotes statements from police and government officials, suggesting that the scope of reports in *The New York Times* is relatively limited and lacks complete credibility.

In the first three examples, reporters of *China Daily* argue that black lives are equally lives and black Americans should not be discriminated because of the color of their skin, which implies that the US government should pay attention to this phenomenon. And in the last two examples, *The New York Times* believes that the protesters are causing damage with violent intentions, while the police are doing something to maintain law and order and ensure property safety. This shows that American reporters consider police actions to be honorable and sacred, portraying protesters as people who behave in a violent and bloody manner. The police can be regarded as the facade of the government, so upholding the honor of the police invariably helps establish a responsible image of the major country.

Overall, the extensive use of specified sources and semi-specified sources shapes the images of protesters, US police and government with variability. It is important to note that although unspecified sources do not appear in these samples, it does not mean that

they are not present in the corpora.

Reporting Modes

Reporting modes refer to whether the quotations quoted by reporters in the process of generating the news are direct or indirect, which reflects reporters' knowledge and understanding of the original texts. In Fairclough's opinion, reporting modes consist of two types, direct type and indirect type (Fairclough, 1995). The direct speech is the direct quotation of others' original words or texts, which is more authentic, whereas indirect speech is based on own understanding and perception, where reporters paraphrase others' words and incorporate personal subjective emotions. In fact, there is another kind of quotation that falls between direct and indirect speeches, which is the slipping that refers to quote some words or phrases without changing the original statements.

In order to make the news discourse more objective and convincing, most reporters will use more direct speeches in their reports. By analyzing the reporting modes, it is likely to reveal trends in reporting and the personal ideology of the reporters. Table 5.2 shows the distribution of reporting modes among the 10 samples mentioned above.

Table 5.2 The distributive frequency of reporting modes in *China Daily* and *The New York Times*

Types	<i>China Daily</i>		<i>The New York Times</i>	
	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion
Direct speech	48	58.5%	52	52%
Indirect speech	33	40.3%	46	46%
Slipping	1	1.2%	2	2%

Both Chinese and American mainstream media use a large number of direct speeches in their reports, 58.5% and 52%, which indicates that reporters are committed to making their reports authentic and feasible. The next largest use is the use of indirect speeches, accounting for 40.3% and 46%. Compared to *China Daily*, *The New York Times* uses more indirect quotes. Due to the limited use of slipping in both media, this part will focus on the role of direct and indirect speeches in constructing the images of the main participants in the Floyd's affair.

(1) Direct Speeches

① "The people who knew George the best help set the tone for Houston. They knew what he was about. He truly was a gentle giant, a sweet guy," said David Hill, a Houston community activist and pastor at Restoration Community Church, who knows the Floyd family. (*China Daily*, 2020-06-04)

② African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat condemned Floyd's death in a statement on Friday, saying, "The AU Commission firmly reaffirms and reiterates its rejection of the continuing discriminatory practices against black citizens of the United States of America." (*China Daily*, 2020-06-02)

③ "Some protesters came last night with an agenda of violence," the mayor said. "They meant to attack police officers." (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-30)

④ "I can't stand back & watch this happen to a great American City, Minneapolis," Mr. Trump wrote shortly before 1 a.m. on Friday. "A total lack of leadership. Either the very weak Radical Left Mayor, Jacob Frey, get his act together and bring the City under control, or I will send in the National Guard & get the job done right." (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-29)

In the above cases, both media quote statements of relevant government authorities, such as "Moussa Faki Mahamat, Mr. Trump and a mayor", with the intention of reporting the real news discourses. However, there are differences in the image construction between the two. In the first two examples, the African Union Commission's call to combat racial discrimination is echoed by numerous countries, including China. Floyd is a gentle and lovable man, represented by African American people who continue to undergo painful experiences, showcasing a weak and pathetic image of Floyd and protesters.

In this case, reporters of *The New York Times* quote a city mayor as saying that the protesters are radical rioters and are using Floyd's death as a reason to commit crimes and attack the police. Trump, on the other hand, believes he needs to borrow the might of the National Guard to keep the situation under control. As such, *The New York Times* supports reasonable law enforcement by the police, but portrays the protesters as thugs who endanger the stability of society.

(2) Indirect Speeches

① House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat, said on Thursday that she and Congressional Black Caucus leaders will unveil measures Monday to "address the issue of police brutality" and racial disparities in law enforcement. (*China Daily*, 2020-06-05)

② Another man hurled a second firebomb at a police cruiser, causing the back seat to ignite, the police said. (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-30)

③ But she said the demonstrations she saw in Atlanta were not a protest and not in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. but "chaos." (*The New York Times*, 2020-05-29)

The New York Times uses more indirect quotes than China, suggesting that US reporters are more inclined to incorporate their own positions and consciousness in their

reporting to influence audiences' thoughts. *China Daily* chiefly maintains a neutral attitude towards protests, yet resists racial bias strongly. In *The New York Times*, reporters are more likely to report on the destruction caused by protesters. Through the interpretation of the American police, the reporters provide a paraphrased portrayal which aims to highlight the sharp conflicts that exist between the police and the protesters and demonstrate the destructive nature of the protests.

Based on the above analysis, we can see that *China Daily* holds a sympathetic neutrality towards Floyd and the protesters, and expresses criticism for the actions of the American police and government. On the contrary, *The New York Times* portrays highly destructive protesters and endorses police enforcement with the aim of maintaining social stability and the government's image.

Explanation through Social Practice

In the explanation stage, there are certain differences in the values behind news discourses due to diverse social cultures. Explanation is concerned with the relationship between social contexts and discursive practices, and helps to interpret the ideologies and positions behind the discourses. Therefore, this thesis takes institutional and social factors as the entry points to explore the reasons for the differences in news coverage between *China Daily* and *The New York Times*.

Social Factors

Racial discrimination is one major reason. It is universally acknowledged that the phenomenon of racial discrimination in the United States has existed since the founding of the country. Blacks are at the bottom of the society and have always been treated with contempt by whites, which often contributes to intense conflicts between the two sides. Despite the intermittent emergence of a group of people against social discrimination since the 1840s, the status of blacks has not been significantly improved, in other words, they still do not have equal rights and respect in education, employment and so forth. At the same time, the government does not pay sufficient attention and concern to the existence of this phenomenon, thus prompting the emergence of large-scale protests about Floyd.

In contrast, China is firmly against all forms of racial bias and people of all colors need to be respected and treated with tolerance. Although China is a unified multi-ethnic country, it has always treated people of different ethnicities with equality. All ethnic groups are equal, which is one of the reasons for the long-term harmony and stability of Chinese society. The difference between the stance of China and the United States in treating racial discrimination affects their views on Floyd and protesters.

In the second place, the form of law enforcement is of great importance. Police violence in law enforcement has been criticized and is primarily directed at black Americans. US law tends to protect the rights of police officers, believing that the safety of the police themselves comes first. If a police officer feels threatened by others, he or she can use violent law enforcement to protect himself or herself. In addition to Floyd, incidents like the death of Tyre Nichols, an African American man in Tennessee, who died on account of the violent law enforcement by a white police officer, are commonplace.

And yet in China, police officers require ensuring the safety of the people. In the law enforcement process, the use of firearms is limited to fifteen situations, encompassing endangering public safety, and seriously disrupting the public order, and requires that the entire law enforcement activity be recorded and videotaped, thus urging the standardization of police law enforcement in the field. In this situation, the reason why *The New York Times* portrays the American police as positive and honorable, while *China Daily* condemns the violent law enforcement by criminal Derek Chauvin can be seen.

What's more, the difference in the situation of the COVID-19 epidemic between China and the United States is also a factor. At that moment, the sluggish US response leads to a sharp rise in infections and deaths, so it is urgent to maintain a national image by emphasizing the role of the police in reasonable law enforcement and ensuring public safety to reassure people. For China, the harsh quarantine and aggressive response to the outbreak contribute to a dramatic decline in new cases, thus remaining a neutral and objective position in reporting on the US demonstrations.

When reporting on the protests in the United States, the two media provide detailed descriptions of the behaviors of the main participants. In comparison, reports of *China Daily* are more truthful and objective and reports of *The New York Times* are more influenced by various factors.

Institutional Factors

Institutional context has a great influence on news discourse in terms of social practice (Fairclough, 1989). The government plays a crucial part in the news discourse. It strives to regulate the impact of news dissemination mainly through political control to ensure that the content is promoting the right political ideas and national institutions. As a result, most of the influential reports are on the side of the government and contribute to its political goals.

In order to win the trust of their audiences, both *China Daily* and *The New York Times*

adopt a more objective approach in their coverage of Floyd's death and related protests. For example, at the level of discursive practice, Chinese and American reporters both primarily choose specified sources to describe the events, increasing the reliability of the reports. Nevertheless, contents of reports are not thoroughly objective and they can be influenced by the subjective thoughts of reporters. Therefore, the similarities and differences in the image construction of main participants can be explained by institutional factors.

China Daily is not only the largest Chinese and English news medium in China, but also serves as an important window for China to understand the world and the world to understand China. It effectively enters the international mainstream society, hosts plentiful international conferences, and becomes the Chinese newspaper with the highest reprint rate in foreign media. It is recognized globally as the most authoritative English-language medium because of the large number of valuable and objective reports and commentaries published in it. In this way, *China Daily* impartially disseminates China's positions, playing an important role in telling China's story, conveying China's voice and shaping China's image.

As one of the most widely circulated newspapers, *The New York Times* is classically serious with a high status in the United States, and represents most of the government's views. It claims to be current and accurate and is particularly adept at reporting on political developments both domestically and internationally from a variety of perspectives. However, while *The New York Times* is constrained by the US government, it also caters to the preferences of audiences without compromising key ideological and government positions. That is the reason why it cannot be completely unbiased.

All in all, there are differences and similarities in news discourse and image construction between *China Daily* and *The New York Times*, which can be elucidated by institutional factors. As creators of news discourse, both Chinese and American reporters are happy to implant the attitudes and ideologies of their own government in news.

CONCLUSION

The paper conducted a critical comparative analysis of reports from *China Daily* and *The New York Times on Floyd's death* in three dimensions: description, interpretation and explanation, aiming to reveal the hidden positions and ideologies of the Chinese and American media.

At the description stage, both media use some similar terms to introduce the identities of the main participants in the protests fairly. *China Daily* objectively presented the

main participants in the incident and held a critical attitude towards the violent law enforcement; while *The New York Times* portrayed a negative image of the protagonist and the protesters, and affirmed the actions of the US police in defending the country. In the interpretation level, specified sources and direct speeches are used more frequently in both media reports. Reports of *China Daily* are more objective and fairer by employing various news sources to state facts.

As for the explanation, the institutional and social factors, including the media themselves, racial stance, police enforcement, and COVID-19, are the reasons for the differences in the image construction of the subject participants between *China Daily* and *The New York Times*.

Though this study shed some light on understanding Sino-US different views on the same incident, we should acknowledge some limitations. First, in quantitative research, some data require manual statistics, which may contribute to bias. Second, qualitative analysis is influenced by subjective thoughts, so in some aspects, excessive analysis may occur. Future research can enhance the reliability.

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