

Project Prospectus:

Cultural Differences between America and China — Based on Media Analysis

By Ci Song

Advisors: Prof. Jin Liu and Prof. Richard Utz

M.S. Global Media and Cultures – Chinese

Georgia Institute of Technology

May 2020

Prospectus Outline

1. Four potential internship opportunities (telecommuting)
 - a. A Chinese media company, based in Washington D.C.
 - b. Georgia Tech Research Institute, Chinese translator
 - c. Global Atlanta, Events Coordinator Intern (Received the formal offer)
 - d. Georgia Tech Industry Collaboration, Chinese Course Development Project Assistant (Received the formal offer)

2. Working Period

Summer 2020

Global Atlanta, 8-10 hours/week 3 audit credits

Georgia Tech Industry Collaboration, 15-20 hours/week, 9 audit credits

3. Work duties
 - a. English-Chinese translation
 - b. News gathering
 - c. Video editing
 - d. Events coordination

4. Experience
 - a. Video editing software: Adobe Premiere
 - b. GRA work: translated promotion materials into Chinese and coordinated school events
 - c. Background investigation: two course projects about COVID-19 outbreak

5. Preparation
 - a. Research news channels
 - b. Analyze recent news

6. Future plan

Reflection (during and after receiving the credits from the internships)

The COVID-19 outbreak has attracted extensive attention of readers from around the world. I assume I will need to translate a large amount of news about COVID-19. Also, Georgia Tech Research Institute is serving on the State Task Force to increase COVID-19 testing. They are creating a website and will need some standard English information translated into several languages, including Chinese. Thus, my two of my course projects this semester laid the foundation for any of the potential internships listed above.

The first project discussed how social issues came out on social media during COVID-19 outbreak in China. The project examined three sections: transformation of public opinion, censorship and anti-censorship, and cultural exchange and integration. I made a chart to show the social media triangulation of Authority, Audience, Witness, and their inter-relations. This structure could apply to the U.S. as well, if we think of the Witness as the doctors and nurses who report on conditions in their hospitals. Experts like Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, could also be a witness, while the Trump administration is in the position of Authority. The third section explored the cultural exchange between America and China, which focused on the feature of news and mask culture.

The second project specifically discussed about the mask culture in America and China. In essence, this essay presented how and why people from America and China hold different opinions about masks.

In researching these two projects, I read a number of articles from the cross-cultural perspective, familiarized the terminology in the field of epidemiology, and earned the experience of news gathering.

Next, I will list news channels and assess their reliability. I will also collect 20 pieces of recent news about COVID-19 and summarize features of them.

There are numerous news media platforms from China and America. The two lists “News Channels in China” and “News Channels in America” are collecting news platforms which have original news reports and stable audience bases. Choosing mainstream platforms is mainly determined by the property of the internship positions, because the articles will be translated for the general public. The specific features of each platform will be introduced.

News Channels in China:

1. 央视新闻 CCTV News

CCTV News is the news website of China Central Television, which is the predominant national television. This website is “constantly updated with news from China and around the world.”¹ The CCTV News website is state-owned and publishes for the ruling party, Communist Party.

2. 人民网 People.cn

People.cn is the website of People’s Daily, the largest newspaper group in China. It is also one of the most comprehensive Internet media. The major function of this website is to introduce the policy and information from the Communist Party. Since the Communist Party is the ruling party, the reports posted on this website present the Authority².

3. 新华网 Xinhua.net

Xinhua.net is website of Xinhua News Agency, which is the official state-run press agency. Besides being hugely influential, Xinhua “operates more than 170 foreign bureaus worldwide and maintains 31 news bureaus in China³.” Xinhua’s worldwide network establishes its dominance of news gathering and content creation.

4. 澎湃 The Paper

According to the official introduction⁴, *The Paper* measures itself as a news platform based on original news reports. The predecessor of this website is a traditional media, but *The Paper* transformed into an online news platform, focusing on the field of current politics, finance and economics, culture and ideology. This website received the investment from private companies,

¹ <http://news.cctv.com/>

² <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/104580/index.html>

³ <http://www.xinhuanet.com/company/intro.htm>

⁴ https://www.thepaper.cn/about_paper.jsp

and it is making profits on advertisement. As of 2017, the mobile application of *The Paper* had been downloaded by over 100 million people.

5. 凤凰网 Ifeng.com

Ifeng.com is the website of Phoenix Satellite Television, a leading global Chinese language TV network based in Hong Kong. Phoenix New Media Limited became a public company in 2011, and its headquarters is in Beijing⁵. The audience of this website is Chinese-speaking people from around world. Corporate Profile introduces that as of 2016, Ifeng. Com has over 279 million monthly visitors, covering half of the population of Chinese netizens⁶.

6. 南方网 Southcn.com

Southcn.com is the website of South Media Group, including South newspapers like South Daily and South magazines like South Weekly. The public data shows that over 30 million people visiting this website daily⁷. This website is managed by the government of Guangdong province, and the local news from Guangdong takes a large part in the webpage. The relatively free speech of the newspapers and magazines under the South Media Group makes this website special⁸.

News Channels in America:

1. ABC News

ABC News is the news production of American Broadcasting Company (ABC). ABC is a commercial broadcast radio and television network belonging to the Walt Disney company. There are 10 sections listed in the homepage of the website, including national news section and international news section⁹.

2. CNN News

CNN news is the website of Cable News Network (CNN), a pay television channel owned by Warner Media News & Sports. The Warner Media is actually a subsidiary of multinational

⁵ <http://ir.ifeng.com/investor-faqs>

⁶ <http://ir.ifeng.com/corporate-profile>

⁷ http://www.southcn.com/aboutus/aboutus/content/2014-06/09/content_101727308.htm

⁸ No research evidence showing this, but many reports online shows. For example, the Sin Chew Daily reported an article "China, Human Rights and Media Freedom, the President Obama designated the Interview from South Weekly" in 2009. The article pointed out the South Weekly was warned by the government many times due to their politically sensitive news reports and articles.

⁹ <https://abcnews.go.com/>

conglomerate holding company AT&T. According to the CNN Press Room, CNN has most-watched month in 15 years¹⁰. The dramatic live coverage of breaking news and efforts to be nonpartisan make it special¹¹. Additionally, CNN has a professional international network, which establishes its dominance of global news.

3. Fox News Channel

Fox News Channel (FNC), a conservative cable television news channel, owned by Fox Corporation. Fox News mainly delivers breaking, political, and business news. Joyella (2019) pointed out that Fox News had its highest-rated year in prime time, and the total audience population is 2.5 million¹². It also provides service to many other countries in the world, such as China and Japan. Fox News has been described that the reports tend to be in favor of the Republican Party¹³, the party to which the setting president belongs, and which currently hold the majority of the U.S. senate.

4. New York Times

The New York Times (NYT) newspaper is privately owned by the New York Times Company. NYT holds the esteem of American media and highest total number of Pulitzer Prizes the paper has received¹⁴. It has also suffered from some controversies like fake news production, which have affected its reputation and public perceptions of credibility. In general, NYT is influential worldwide. Additionally, NYT has a Spanish-language version and a Chinese-language version.

5. NBC News

NBC News is the news division of the National Broadcasting Company managed by NBC Universal Media conglomerate. The number-one-rated newscast¹⁵ and longest-running television series¹⁶ establish the professional status of NBC. Furthermore, NBC has four major bureaus and numbers of minor bureaus and foreign bureaus.

6. NPR

¹⁰ <https://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2020/04/28/cnn-has-most-watched-month-in-15-years/>

¹¹ Maza, Carlos (April 17, 2017). "CNN treats politics like a sport — that's bad for all of us"

Also, the President Trump publicly complained CNN several times, which shows its distance from the ruling party.

¹² Joyella, Mark (December 11, 2019). "Fox News Ends 2019 With Biggest Prime Time Ratings Ever"

¹³ Adams, Taylor; Ma, Jessie; Thompson, Stuart A. Opinion Trump Loves 'Fox & Friends.' Here's Why.

¹⁴ <https://www.nytc.com/company/prizes-awards/>

¹⁵ NBC Nightly News, Masonhall, Erika (2013) "'nbc nightly news' ratings win"

¹⁶ Meet the Press, premiered on November 1947.

National Public Radio (NPR) publishes news reports on the website. NPR is a private but publicly founded non-profit media organization established by an act of U.S. Congress. NPR receives the public sponsorships and station dues and fees. As of March 2018, two NPR programs have attracted 14.9 million and 14.7 million audiences per week respectively¹⁷.

7. The Washington Post

The Washington Post newspaper was sold to the founder and CEO of Amazon, Jeffrey Preston Bezos in 2013¹⁸. It distinguishes itself through political reporting among daily newspapers. The Washington Post is famous for the reports about Watergate Scandal and number of Pulitzer Prizes. Even though its circulation and popularity are not the broadest ones, it is one of a few newspapers that has foreign bureaus.

The purpose of these two news channel lists is to prepare some reliable news platforms as resources for the internships. It is always worth translating original and professional news reports to the public for the other country. Also, these two lists provide an overview of media ecology in America and China.

Traditional media have been transformed to online platforms, which is the global trend. These websites are actually based on the traditional media production. Either their employees are trained traditionally, or the reports are moved from the physical newspapers or televisions. Also, both national and regional media from these two countries value the international news. In addition to similarities on news professionalism of the platforms, the differences between Chinese media ecology and American media ecology can be seen from the background of their mainstream media.

Firstly, the ownership of each media landscape is different. Major Chinese news channels are controlled by the government, and some independent media are managed by the government, while American news channels are all owned by private companies. Secondly, Chinese media and American media are different in their profitability. Even though some Chinese news platforms make profits from the advertisements, they are not completely

¹⁷ <https://www.npr.org/about-npr/597590072/npr-maintains-highest-ratings-ever>

¹⁸ Irwin, Neil; Mui, Ylan Q. (2013). "Washington Post Sale: Details of Bezos Deal."

surviving based on the views. Most news reports are free to the public in China, while American media are more commercial. Some American media require subscriptions before presenting the whole articles. The ownership and profitability matter the operation of these channels. With respect to the news production, these two factors might affect the style and selection of news reports. The next section will specifically address about the features of Chinese news and American news based on selected news articles.

News Analysis

The channels itemized on the lists above are representative of the mainstream media ecology in both two countries. The data illustrating the features of news from Chinese media and American media will be obtained manually from several platforms above. Chinese news will be downloaded from *Xinhua.net* and *The Paper*. In fact, there are not many different voices on Chinese media. *Xinhua.net* is one of the most comprehensive channels, and *The Paper* is not assigned to popularize the information from the ruling party. In contrast, American news platforms come with various edges. Considering *Fox News* and *NBC News* have similarities with Chinese ones, pieces of American news will be downloaded from these two platforms. NBC is a national news channel, and it is similar with *Xinhua.net* which has bureaus at home and abroad. Fox news has the reputation that it is the “mouthpiece” of the current administration.

Since this project is taking place during the Coronavirus pandemic, Chinese media and American media should have a multitude of news reports about this global health crisis. Using “Coronavirus” as the key word, ten Chinese articles from *Xinhua.net* and *The Paper*, and ten English articles from *Fox news* and *NBC News* are collected in the folder attached. It is ideal to collect articles in a same period from these platforms, but *The Paper*, *Ifeng.com*, and *Southcn.com* do not offer information retrieval services. In this case, the most updated articles on May 7th are collected. The analysis results are shown below.

Ten Chinese articles

Number	Channel	Positive	Negative	Problem	Suggestion	Attitude
--------	---------	----------	----------	---------	------------	----------

1	Xinhua.net	1	0	0	0	Neutral
2	Xinhua.net	1	0	0	0	Neutral
3	Xinhua.net	1	0	0	0	Neutral
4	Xinhua.net	0	0	0	0	Neutral
5	Xinhua.net	0	1	0	0	Neutral
6	The Paper	1	1	0	0	Neutral
7	The Paper	0	1	0	0	Neutral
8	The Paper	0	0	0	0	Neutral
9	The Paper	0	1	0	1	Pessimistic
10	The Paper	0	1	0	0	Neutral

Ten English articles

Number	Channel	Positive	Negative	Problem	Suggestion	Attitude
1	Fox News	0	1	1	0	Neutral
2	Fox News	1	0	0	0	Neutral
3	Fox News	0	0	0	0	Neutral
4	Fox News	1	0	0	0	Neutral
5	Fox News	0	1	0	0	Neutral
6	NBC	0	1	1	0	Neutral
7	NBC	0	1	1	0	Pessimistic
8	NBC	0	1	1	0	Neutral
9	NBC	0	1	1	0	Neutral
10	NBC	0	1	0	0	Neutral

("1" means "yes", "0" means "no")

Based on the samples from both two languages, it can be seen that most articles are neutral, which means news writers mainly cite other reports and opinions from their interviewees rather than interpret the stories by themselves. Also, for both two countries, very

few news writers provide their own opinions in the news articles, as they seldom offer suggestions in the end. However, audiences can still understand tendency of news from the topics covered and orders of the materials.

Compared to American news, Chinese news authors tend to tell the stories in a more formal way based on the language style. There are more quotes from interviewees in American news articles, which usually contain distinct views. Perhaps due to the platform's ownership, American news articles covers more local news and uses more sources from social media. Essentially, more Chinese news articles are positive, since the COVID-19 outbreak at the time of this research is controlled in mainland China. The negative news articles are showing the international situation and maintain a serious tone.

Even though the articles in this study are selected randomly, two of them are related to both these two countries. These two news articles show the huge difference between Chinese society and American society. The first article is about the tracing issue of confirmed cases. Chinese news article number 6 (Title: The updated number of daily new COVID-19 cases outside China is zero, Jilin Province reports one local confirmed case.) from The Paper specifically reports the everyday route of an infected citizen. The American news article number 1 (Title: Dr. Scott Atlas knocks contract tracing push: 'it's the improper tool at this point in this infection.) from Fox News shows that the method of contact tracing is still debatable in American society. The second article is about the whistleblower. The American news article number 3 shows that GOP lawmakers propose renaming the street that Chinese Embassy sits on in Washington, D.C. for coronavirus the whistleblower doctor Wenliang Li. Dr. Li is one of the eight doctors who tried to warn their friends to be careful about a novel virus during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. This is why Dr. Li was regarded as the whistleblower. However, Chinese people chose to memorialize Dr. Li in different ways. For example, numerous citizens made their own farewells for Dr. Li at the day that he died as an infected patient, and he was honored as martyr. Also, such a proposal for changing the road name is not common to be reported in Chinese news platforms.

The current data just provided an overview, but it reminds everyone who works on the international affairs to be prudent with the cultural difference. The last position from Georgia

Tech Industry Collaboration exactly requires the employees to be familiar with both Chinese culture and American culture. The initial focus of the course “Innovation and Technology Commercialization Professionals” is in mainland China, so the promotion materials need to be made appropriate for the Chinese market. In the meantime, as a Chinese assistant, knowing American culture is the prerequisite for working on the project from America. Since the target audience are not expected to speak English fluently, the course materials need to be translated into Chinese. When it comes to English-Chinese translation, there are even more concrete examples which could illustrate the importance of cultural differences. Take the linguistics aspect as an example. Some English words like “offer” do not have their literal translations in Chinese, which is why verbatim translation does not always work. Thus, the ability of adaptation and flexibility is essential for this kind of position and the goal of this project is to prepare for such cultural tasks in the future.