Prejudice, Discrimination, and Immunology Paradigm:
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the New York Times' Reports on the Respective Responses to COVID-19 by China and Italy

by

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B.A., Nanjing Normal University, 2018

Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the

School of Communication (Dual Degree Program in Global Communication)
Faculty of Communication, Art, and Technology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Summer 2020

Approval

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Degree: **Master of Arts**

Title: **Prejudice, Discrimination and Immunology
                                        Paradigm: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the
                                        New York Times' Reports on the Respective
                                        Responses to COVID-19 by China and Italy**

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Date Defended/Approved: August 31, 2020

Abstract

During the COVID-19 outbreak, mainstream U.S. news agencies reported on different countries' responses to COVID-19. However, these articles often politicalize and racialize the healthcare issue. In this study, I ask how *The New York Times* (NYT) presents China's coronavirus responses and why through a comparative analysis. Specifically, I conduct a frame analysis and critical discourse analysis on 122 *NYT* news and opinion articles on China's and Italy's respective coronavirus responses between January and March 2020. My main finding is that the *NYT* depicts China negatively and presents Italy positively through simplified generalizations. I further explain that the othering process of China in the *NYT* reports demonstrates an immunology discrimination process in which news serves as a social immune system in the U.S. context.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis; COVID-19; Framing Analysis; The New York Times; Immunology

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List of Acronyms

ACPM	Anti-Communism Propaganda Model
BBC	The British Broadcasting Corporation
CPC	Communist Party of China
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
COVID-19	2019 Novel Corona Virus
H.K.	Hong Kong
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
NYT	New York Times
PM	Propaganda Model
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SFU	Simon Fraser University
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
WSJ	Wall Street Journals
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Chapter 1.   Introduction

In recent years, the U.S. media has presented an image of China that defined Huawei's 5G as a security threat to the U.S. and the U.K. and foregrounded China's supposed infringement on freedom of speech and religion in Xinjiang and Tibet. Recent reports focused on China's violent crack-down of Hong Kong's "peaceful" protests and the imposition of the National Security Law to justify Beijing's control (Horton, 2020). Such representations of an illiberal and authoritarian China, in Vukovich's (2019) framing, situates China against Western cornerstone values of freedom and democracy. Thus, moral high ground is set, and China is hanged.

After the outbreak of COVID-19, virus-based discrimination aggravates the resentment towards Chinese and China's government. BBC (Wong, 2020) has reported that, in Europe, Sinophobia exists in various aspects during the COVID-19 pandemic, with Chinese-looking individuals being called "virus," brutally attacked on the subway, and avoided in public. *The New York Times* (Rich, 2020) has also reported that anti-Chinese sentiment has been fueled in Asian countries, especially in tourism, where Chinese travelers were the primary drive but are now being disdained.

By presenting a racialized perspective, the U.S. media have aggravated such discrimination. In January 2020, the Wall Street Journal's opinion page published an article titled "The Real Sick Man of Asia," criticizing China's coronavirus response. That is only the start of a racialized and politicalized virus narrative. The New York Times' Twitter described China's lockdown as repressing citizens' freedom and Italy's lockdown as an honorable sacrifice for the European Union's benefit. However, it is not only Western discrimination towards China or racialized discrimination against ethnic Chinese. Foreign Chinese-language media outside mainland China have a more radical stance against China. This is especially the case in the H.K. media. Initium Media, for example, published an article titled "Virus, Revolution, and Authoritarian: The Politics of Chinese Virus" (Xin Bai, 2020). By framing China's responses to the coronavirus as a failure of the authoritarian regime, the article charged the Chinese political system for being a virus itself as China suffocated freedom, democracy, and human rights, which are air to live in a liberal democracy.

This paper fills a gap in North American communication studies on the U.S. mediated discrimination against China by critically analyzing the NYT's reports on China during COVID-19 and comparing it with the NYT's reports on Italy. I choose these two countries because China is the first country to have the major COVID-19 outbreak, and Italy is among the first Western countries imposing aggressive measures dealing with COVID-19.

This project asks how the NYT presents Sino-discourse in relation to China's COVID-19 responses and attempts to answer why. Discourse symbolizes the interrelated texts carrying out a message around certain issues. The term 'sino-discourse' here is used to represent the NYT's reports and comments on China's coronavirus responses. Although the NYT has published thousands of articles on China during COVID-19 on different topics and themes, I argue that there is a systematic coding behind the seemingly scattered themes/styles of news reports and opinion pieces fitting into Herman and Chomsky's ACPM. Throughout the paper, I try to answer the following questions: What techniques have been used in news writing? What is the message the NYT has conveyed in its Sino-discourse? What may explain the NYT's adoption of such ways of coding? What might be the possible impact of its reports?

In the following chapters, I will situate my study of discrimination discourse in relation to the critical discourse analysis school and immunology theory. I will first review news text analysis methods and introduce my research design using framing and discourse analysis. After that, I will conduct a case study analyzing the NYT Sino-discourse and comparing the NYT respective reports on China's and Italy's COVID-19 responses. In the discussion, I will draw upon the immunology metaphors to explain why the NYT constructs such a discourse and argue that news serves as the U.S. social immune system. Finally, I will conclude and critically reflect on the limit of this project.

Chapter 2.   Immunology as Social Practices: A Conceptual Exploration

Social immunology metaphors help organize my answer to my research questions. In my argument, the U.S. news media serve as the social immune system. The first process is that the immune system discriminates non-self against the self-system through the communication process. This answers how the NYT presents Sino-discourse. And not only does immunology discourse give explanations to negatively tagged 'us' and positively tagged "them," but also it answers why the NYT is in need of such Sino-discourse. In the second process of the immune system, the special T-cell creates an antibody to purge the perceived danger. In the NYT's case, its comprehensive negative coding system echoes the U.S. media's anti-communism and demonizes China's history.

Self and non-self discrimination is the major immunology discovery in the 1950s. In recent decades, medical experts and immunologists have found that the immune process is rather communication and dialogue than discrimination(Mutsaers, 2016, p. 48). This strikes me when seeing the aggravated division in human society, the fragmentation in different countries during the outbreak of COVID-19. When the coronavirus broke out in Wuhan, we have seen racial discrimination towards Chinese and Asian-looking groups and western borders being closed to shut down international travels from and to China. And later on, when coronavirus turned into a pandemic, Western countries, the U.S. specifically, blamed that China should be held responsible for spreading the virus to the world. Ideally, global communication should strive to reach peace and truce between different countries, especially when there was fragmentation in the world. But in the NYT's Sino-discourse, we only see further discrimination and misunderstanding, which serve the interests of those controlling the media but harm the human society as a whole.

This paper uses immunology metaphors in the discussion to illustrate its power in explaining the discriminatory practices in the NYT's Sino-discourse. This approach draws from scholars in political philosophy school who take it as a paradigm explaining social practices, production, relationships in various domains.

Since the late 1990s, immunology has argued that "interaction with the environment is of equal importance as protection against infectious disease" (Mutsaers, 2016, p. 443). From a classical information view, news institutions perceive what is new and communicate the outside environment with the society while also formulate communication within the nation-state or communities, depending on how borders are set for the immune system to work. Though globalization has facilitated the coverage scope, news production still speaks for nation-state in communist countries and the corporate capital that controls and funds the media in liberal democracies.

Sloterdijk and Noordegraaf-Eelens (2011) have taken a humanistic anthropology perspective on immunology. They argue that human beings are always in need of protection to counter the uncertainty in the outside world. Thus, cave, shelter, insurance system, the social relationship are all part of the "immune system" serving as the boundary and protection system between us and the perceiving danger in the exterior environment.

The German Philosopher and culturalist Byung-Chul Han(2015, p. 36) argued that we are moving away from the immunology paradigm. "The immunological paradigm proves incompatible with the process of globalization," he stated, because "It is marked by borders, transitions, thresholds, fences, ditches, and walls that prevent universal change and exchange"(Han, 2015, p. 6).

However, I would argue that the immunology paradigm has always been the theme underlining our society, especially in a globalization context. Since 2015, de-globalization, protectionism, populism, and nationalism are exactly the cases fitting into the immunology paradigm. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a public health and immune issue, it is about time to ponder and revisit the immunology paradigm.

The analogy between biology and politics has long historical practices. Sick and degeneration have been seen as a "plague" or disease to society. Modern medical understanding of immunology was developed from biological concepts. It was invented by Van Swieten, a Dutch physician in 1775 (Mutsaers, 2016, p. 32), who was trying to cure smallpox by inducing the patients with a small amount of virus to create antibody in patients' immune system to counter smallpox.

Han(2015) has stated that the immunology paradigm has been the locus of the 20th century. However, thanks to vaccine and anti-bacteria medicine development, human society has faced decreased attacks from viruses and is thus less concerned with pure immunology issues. The problem of public health was once a major concern in human society. However, fighting a virus that is different from the human self has transformed our perceptions of "others", and the division in human society was aroused. We tend to see others differently from ourselves, in case of the gender and cultural and political stances. Thus, the immunology paradigm is powerful to explain, from pure health care problems to prevailing problems in human society caused by perceptions of difference and discrimination.

War is among the most aggressive conflicts in human society based upon division and discrimination. In this way, World War II can be understood as the immunology paradigm permeating in the ethnicity issue. The social Darwinism and white German superiority were justified upon other ethnicities. Prejudice, distinction, discrimination, and race genocide have thus happened in the bio-political-cultural-social context. From a linguistic structuralism view, discourses around racism have been socially constructed and impacted the social practices in all domains. Later on, the Cold War brought the ideological differences in social recognitions and modes to the divisions in human society. We are no longer the same species but communist and capitalist "races." The divisions in societal, cultural, and political domains are far deeper than pure racial discrimination.

Though the self and non-self discrimination was once the major paradigm in immunology studies in the 1950s and it was reinforced by Burnet, the discovery of autoimmune disease has shaped immunologists' understanding of immune system. Immunology has developed from a narrow understanding that views immune system only as a response to non-self danger to one that views it as being able to attack self-tissue that has been perceived as "dangerous" or "alien", which can bring about destructive impacts on the body's immune system through the intention to protect it. This broadens the understanding of "us" and "them," self and non-self, because the boundary between self and non-self has blurred.

Derrida(2005) sees the 911 event as a global autoimmunity crisis. International conflicts and politics, in his view, are the consequences of a self-destructive autoimmune

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disease. In Mutsaers's (2016, p. 95) reflection on the U.S.'s frequent gunshot accidents, he argued that while carrying a weapon to protect oneself is a constitutionally protected right in the U.S., the insecurity prevailed in the U.S. society has led to more weapons-nonurgent shots. This is to show that if we use the immunology lens to view those social practices, we can better understand that these violent incidences are based on our aggressive instincts to protect ourselves.

The definition of autoimmune disease in social practices depends on what boundary do we set on "self" and "non-self." If we see the human species as one "self," then the divisions in ideology, nation, and race, which lead to catastrophes like war, terrorism, and genocide, should be counted as autoimmune diseases. And as Derrida's and Mutsaers's studies have shown, a defensive act for self-protection in social practices may bring about much more harmful consequences and mounted trauma and loss to the surrounding communities and human society as a whole.

Defensive immunology has seen viruses and infectious diseases as enemies to human bodies and pandemic as threats to societies in a neoliberal sense, as they bring a burden on economic performances and overdraw a nation's budget, which is normally contributed by taxations from citizens, to spend on public health. Such notions enable military discourse in the prevention and handling of the virus. "The battle against influenza" has long been presented in scientific journals like *Nature and Science*(Mutsaers, 2016, p. 58). The same discourse has been used to fight terrorism, which is also deemed as a foreign danger in an immunology paradigm. "War on terror" and "war on virus" resemble the stir in arousing nationalism and unified sacrifice to secure a win or a cure, since such discourse poses the threats of certain "antigens" to the defined identity, in this case, the nation-state.

Mutsaers(2016, p. 133) has argued that immunology is more of a truce than war, dialogue and communication in the process rather than pure defensive militarization. It is how the body negotiates with the environment; what counts as danger and what could be tolerated to co-existing is of utmost importance.

It is the same process in our human society. This is why I stress the importance of arguing that news serves as a social immune system. Through differently defined boundaries, like nation-state, race, gender, civilizational hierarchy, geography, culture,

religion, etc., we differentiate whether social conflicts are immune or autoimmune problems. The categorization lists are unlimited if we are trying to find a way to define "who we are," "who the others are," and how different the two groups are.

However, that is immunology in an ideal bio-context, which does not fit the complex reality intertwined with social-cultural-political perspectives. Mutsaers argued that humanists and post-humanists should consider that humans are "co-existence as a basis for our existence"(Mutsaers, 2016, p. 19), viewing dependency on others as essential to the being of human society. This is an age that resources have been utilized mainly to accumulate wealth while polluting the natural environment, which is shared by human society as the whole, and products only to be wasted in overproduction for the competence of production efficiency and market-monopoly. Though globalization facilitated our dependent living within capitalistic structures, the notion of co-existence means that those marginalized have to deal with everyday struggles in social inequality, which is definitely not the best nor ideal social practices meant for generations to come.

Chapter 3.   Discourses and Discrimination: An Overview

3.1. Discrimination in Critical Discourse Analysis

In Wodak and Van's study, discrimination is the representation of social inequality. Wodak (2011; 2008; 2008) examined the discursively constructed prejudice against racial minorities and marginalized groups in Europe and Australia. Wodak has used the inclusion and exclusion concept to examine discrimination in social practices in European migration's xenophobia context (Wodak, 2011). Discrimination may start from organizing people according to natural biological differences in terms of ethnicity, gender, and nationality. However, discrimination is mainly socially constructed and aggravated by the imagined boundary between "us" and "them." Furthermore, this systematic racism exists without a necessarily actually existing entity, beyond its formation within social discourse, to actually discriminate (Wodak Koller, 2008, p. 295). When reflecting upon Wodak and Koller's work, this strikes me that the anti-Semitism (the discrimination against Jews) in Poland(Wodak & Koller, 2008, p. 295) do not even need the actual existing Jews to discriminate upon to set the imagined boundary between what locals count as "us" and what as foreign danger. It is also true in Australia's case that "anti-Semitism is strongest when no Jews live in the respective area and, moreover, when the interviewees have never met any in person"(Marin as cited in Wodak & Koller, 2008, p. 295).

How do we understand what counts as "us" and what counts as "them"? Who gets to define such conceptions? Who gets to define the ways "they" treat "us" and the way "we" treat "them"? Wodak has argued that it is not a pure difference between "them" and "us" according to natural difference, but instead, the difference is fueled by social discursive construction, which leads to discrimination (Wodak & Koller, 2008, p. 295). Van (1993) argued that discrimination had been constructed through an "us/them" division in daily mediated discourses. The "justification of inequality" between "us/them" is made by negatively presenting "them" while positively representing "us." In this way Wodak & Koller argue that "discrimination is both a discourse and a practice" (2008, p. 306). "Inclusion" means she has studied the discourse from the marginalized "insider"

who has been discriminated against. "Exclusion" means that the discrimination/ difference has been legitimized through social and, at times, political discourse.

This discourse revolves around simplified generalizations of people and of difference. The simplified generalizations of differences between migrants/foreigners and local imagined communities produced everyday discrimination (Wodak & Koller, 2008, p. 295). Such simplified generalizations tag the immigrants as a "problem" without examining the nationality, age, gender, educational background, occupation difference inside the "immigrant" group. Illegal immigrants, migrant workers, political asylum fall into the same immigrant/foreigner category. Thus, "them" has been viewed as a homogenized community, and the boundary between the geographically local, nationality native group, and the immigrant group has been easily set.

Wodak and Koller (2008, p. 293) argued that such a discrimination phenomenon should be categorized as "Xeno- racism" featuring neo-fascist turning, which has developed from pure racial/ color discrimination, though it is still commonly seen in the global context. The authors named it xeno-racism because the combination of the existence of biological difference still enables the possibility to exercise racism upon and immigrants' status as the country's original outsiders, thus embodying a form of xenophobia. Xenophobia here is understood as the hatred towards a group that is alien or strange. In her case, xenophobia is the discrimination towards immigrants based on where they originated. The neo-fascist turning of xenophobia can be understood as aggressive exclusion acts in social practices. Hatred and resentment from non-Chinese towards Chinese are understood as Sinophobia in this study. Xenophobia is the hatred towards foreigners; Sinophobia is the sentiment that specifically resents the Chinese.

3.2. Discrimination in Immunology Discourse

Such expulsion resembles how we see the virus, especially in a pandemic age. This virus-based but racial/regional discrimination happens in SARS (Keil & Ali, 2006), an infectious disease with symptoms including fever and cough and, in some cases, progressing to pneumonia and respiratory failure, the 2009 Swine Flu (Gatherer, 2009), and now COVID-19. "COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered strain of coronavirus, a type of virus known to cause respiratory infections in humans" (*Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Malaysia*, n.d.).

However, It is not only the Chinese who are discriminated against in the COVID-19 pandemic era. For example, when the U.S. daily COVID-19 confirmed cases steadily rise over 20,000, Canadian residents living near the Canadian-U.S. border in BC, Surrey, also shared the same feeling (Levinson-King, 2020). They tossed garbage and even poured excrement on the cars with the U.S. driving plates, which echoes the purging instinct of non-self from the self-system in immunology discourse.

This trend reflects both the natural and social underpinnings of immunology. On the one hand, immunology refers to a practice in the natural sciences. Within this understanding, the immune system is generally defined as "a system comprises an interacting assemblage of cells and soluble molecules, whose primary function is to kill the invading microorganisms that may cause damage to the body" (Davies, 2008, p. 1). On the other hand, both as a metaphor and a set of practices, immunology also has been adopted in bio-political contexts by political philosophy and critical linguistics (Mutsaers, 2016, p. 35). For example, in Burnet's (1969) book Self and Not-Self: Cellular Immunology, he wrote that the basic human 'need and capacity to distinguish between what is acceptable as self and what must be rejected as alien, is the evolutionary basis of immunology' (Burnet, 1969, p. 23). For Burnet, there is a basic belief that the immune system helps maintain a barrier between the self, understood as natural, and the non-self, understood as a foreign intrusion. This is not simply a matter of the functioning of the natural body but a commentary on the functioning of the social body. Within this tradition, Esposito (2006) has developed an immunology paradigm to explain contemporary political culture based on the understanding that the immune system is the frontline, a defensive system purging the external threats. For Sloterdijk (as cited in Mutsaers, 2016, pp. 13–34), the immunology paradigm explains how humans come into being from a historical anthropology view. He sees humans as always in need to safeguard themselves from what they have perceived as the open world. From the cave, shelter, house to the social institution like insurance, the legal system, humans needs to protect themselves in case of uncertainty from the world-openness for security concerns. "In short, living in self-domesticated spaces is the prelude to what he later (in Spheres) terms 'immunization' strategies"(Sloterdijk as cited in Mutsaers, 2016, p. 39).

3.3. Mediated Discrimination in the U.S. History

Herman and Chomsky (2002) uphold the 'propaganda model' (PM from here on) to explain the U.S. media production system's fundamental principles. PM reveals that the U.S. political-economic network media are positioned within, "basic institutional structures and relationships within which they operate" (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 7). They argued that the U.S. media propagandize for the interest of capital that controls and finances the media, even though they hold the self-claimed that they represent a neutral and fair stance. This means that the media is prejudged and biased, serving the U.S. military-industrial-entertainment complex (Schiller, 1992) rather than pluralistic class interests(Parenti, 1997).

In the analysis of the U.S. media's war reporting, Herman and Chomsky found that the U.S. media have pre-set values determining "worthy" and "unworthy" victims depending on the country's relationship with the U.S., whether the client or enemy makes the real discursive difference (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, pp. 20–22). They examined the Vietnam War as a case study to illustrate how the U.S. media had inversed the Vietnam War history through the ideology of anti-communism, one of the five filters of Chomsky's propaganda model (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, pp. 169–200). The U.S. media justified the invasion and manipulation of Vietnam through a reversed narrative. It has established a moral stand that the American army was fighting for freeing south Vietnam from the evil communist North Vietnam. Such a narrative neglects the trauma and harm bringing to Vietnam people dying from chemical weapons, which are used to destroy south Vietnam crops and barrable farmland, not to mention thousands who died of "collateral damage."

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model distinguishes itself by focusing on the U.S. media coverage of global affairs, as most studies on the U.S. media biases (Gasper, 2011; Hamborg et al., 2019; Lee, 1990; Nyhan, 2012) tend to focus on the U.S. internal politics, e.g., presidential election, investigating how to detect media biases and how the media biases influence audience's opinions.

Given the role of the U.S. media in influencing global politics, it is important to build upon Herman and Chomsky's work by conducting more analysis of the U.S. media coverage of ongoing global issues.

3.4. Liberal Democratic Mainstream Understanding of China

In Illiberal China (2019), Vukovich reveals how China is the objectified as "other" of the West. Vukovich examines the political-economic and cultural narratives surrounding China's different representations and their logical boundaries and interrelationships. At the same time, Vukovich reflects critically on why Western liberalism presents China as a problem. I draw upon Vukovich's work because he offered an alternative approach to the West's interpretation of China. Though wishing for a more liberal and democratic China, Vukovich understands that China's current social structure requires a system to reallocate wealth and resources, which is communism governing legitimacy (Vukovich, 2019, p. 8).

3.5. Filling the Gap

Van and Wodak have proposed that the discursive "othering" process of "them" from "us" is at the core of discrimination, echoing self and non-self discrimination in the immune system. Thus, discrimination in this study is understood as the differentiation process of the imagined "us" and "them," self and non-self in various societal perspectives, including racial, cultural, nationality, gender, class, political and ideological. However, Van's and Wodak's studies are Western-centric, which only examine the discrimination to a particular group of people in the U.S. and European context, where the problems of ethnicity and immigration are at their core. Their studies failed to examine the discrimination against non-western groups inside the West, for example, Sinophobia in the U.S. This type of discrimination is neglected if it does not trigger social conflicts within the Western context, even though such discrimination is embedded in the U.S. social recognition and practices. The narrow research scope is also seen in the U.S. media bias studies. There have been few studies questioning the U.S. media stance on international affairs in the last decades other than Herman and Chomsky's work.

This research matters because the NYT Sino-discourse resonated with the long-time U.S. embedded anti-communism ideology. Anti-communism has become a self-evident political right in the U.S. during and after the Cold War, like "a religious orthodoxy than a political analysis"(Parenti, 1997, pp. 41–43). The negligence of such

anti-communism discourse being rather a manufactured consent makes anti-communism taken-for-granted in liberal pluralism ideology. And as Chomsky had predicted, PM had been dismissed from communication studies(Mullen, 2010). Thus, this study revisits ACPM to fill the gap.

Chapter 4.   Methodology and Methods

Relevant methods of news text analysis will be reviewed in the first section. After comparing different methods, I have chosen framing and discourse analysis as research methods to investigate what are the differences between the NYT's reports on China's and Italy's COVID-19 responses. This study uses critical discourse analysis as methodology to untangle the power relationships interacting with the production of the NYT's Sino-discourse and attempt to examine the impacts of such discourse.

4.1. Overview of Relevant Methods

There are various approaches to analyzing news articles: framing analysis (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010), content analysis (Staniland & Smith, 2013), narrative analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), and discourse analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Narrative and content analysis help to understand what major story has been told. Framing analysis examines how the story has been told and what focuses and perspectives of the texts have been selectively reported. Comparative Framing Analysis is one kind of framing analysis (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). It is often used to analyze certain events' descriptions in different media to investigate how the storytellings are differentiated in similar events. Research using comparative framing analysis often reveals that media assert prejudged values in presumably neutral reports. As shown in studies by Entman (1991) and Kuypers (2010), certain values or important concepts are ignored in those scripts while some are highlighted. However, framing analysis fails to investigate how the news framings transform into other genres of texts because those framings used in the news may not work in other genres of texts.

I use CDA as the methodology because It makes up the limitations of the framing analysis mentioned above. The former three text analysis schools take what happened in the media for granted, while the critical discourse analysis school views media texts as socially constructed. CDA "deals primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). It explores how the socially constructed ideas and models are created and how they are maintained, populated, reflected, and reversed the social world, viewing discourse both constitutive and constituted(van Dijk, 1993, p. 251). Norman Fairclough (2001) is one of

the most prominent figures in CDA who proposed the three-dimension model. He argued that the relationship between texts, discourse, and social practices should be analyzed to unravel the power relationship between social recognition and production (Fairclough, 1995). Compared to Van (1993) and Philips (2002), Fairclough holds a more radical and practical attitude towards CDA. He not only views that discourse has the power to shape social context but also carries out CDA to solve social inequality problems.

4.2. Research Design and Justification

To understand how the NYT present Sino-discourse, I have collected 122 pieces of the NYT reports and opinions on China's and Italy's respective responses from January to March in 2020 to conduct framing and discourse analysis. January 23 is when China's authority officially announced the lockdown of Wuhan(Stanford, 2020), a city over 10 million people, to contain the spread of coronavirus, which is found capable of human-to-human transmission at that time. And then, I have followed up media context by month intervals, which is from February 23 to February 29 and March 23 to March 31. The same period applies to data collection of the NYT reports and opinions on Italy's coronavirus responses.

The reason I choose NYT as the publication source is that it could be argued that it is emblematic of U.S. professional journalism. The NYT has won 125 Pulitzer Prizes, more than any other news organization in the U.S. ("The New York Times," 2020). Also, the NYT is positioned to the liberal side of the U.S. political spectrum. In contrast, though ranked the first in worldwide U.S. newspaper circulation among the U.S. newspaper institutions, the WSJ is considered to be more on the right and it often stands with Republicans, which can be more aggressive in the stance against China. Thus, the NYT seems to be "neutral" compared to the WSJ. The reasons I only think of those two publications are listed below. First, they are the two most circulated worldwide American newspapers, which assumingly have the most influence on global affairs. Second, I can only cover two publication sources in this study due to the work scope. And as it turns out, even one publication is too much, considering the U.S.media 's high volume reports on China coronavirus responses during the pandemic.

Table 1:   Data collection from the NTY, Factiva, SFU library Database

	China	Italy
Keywords for News query	(China OR Wuhan) AND (Coronavirus OR Virus OR Wuhan Virus or Pneumonia OR COVID) AND Foreign Desk[1]	Italy AND (Coronavirus OR Virus OR Wuhan Virus or Pneumonia OR COVID) AND Foreign Desk
Region	China NOT Italy	Italy NOT China
News Number	93	13
Keywords For Opinion query	(Coronavirus OR Virus OR Wuhan Virus or Pneumonia OR COVID) AND (Editorial OR Opinions-Columns OR OpEd)	Same as left
Opinions Number	13	3

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[1] Foreign Desk is one of the NYT section in the Factiva category, reporting on other countries' issues excluding the U.S.

Chapter 5.   A Case Study of China and Italy

This chapter is devoted to analyzing the NYT reports on China and Italy. I try to answer the question of how does the NTY present China and why. Firstly, I will introduce the major stories been discussed in the NYT's reports, establishing a timeline-based events accounts in the NYT's China COVID-19 reports. And in comparison with Italy, I will use comparative framing analysis to examine what has been selectively reported and omitted to serve the storytelling of an othered China. The NYT reports on countries differently depending on the U.S.'s relations with the targets, whether the reported country is an enemy or client to the U.S.makes the difference. I will probe into Sino-discourse and reflect on Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, suggesting that the NYT reports fits into PM, especially ACPM, featuring immunology discourse. And here, I argue that it is the political, cultural, and ideological discrimination that constructs the perception of who is a part of "us" and who is defined as "them."

5.1. China's Illiberal Authoritarianism: The Freedom Frame

Since China announced the lockdown of Wuhan, the number of NYT's reports on China's responses to COVID-19 has dramatically increased. The NYT's reports on China's responses have different focuses on various stages. After detailed coding and analysis of 122 news and opinion articles of the NYT via Nvivo, I have selected articles that best represent the NYT's Sino-discourse in each month for further analysis. The table below shows the events and themes in feature reports and editorials from January to March 2020.

Table 2:   **The NYT event-based timeline from January to March 2020**

Time	Themes	Feature Articles
Jan – Breakout and Initial Handling	Cover-up	Novel Virus Tests China's Authoritarian Bargain
	Political Failure	An Iron Fist with Flaws A Virus Can Fit Through
	Health Care System	After Days on Lockdown, Anger Boils Over, and Doctors Plead for Aid
	Sinophobia Overseas	Virus Fuels Anti-Chinese Sentiment Overseas
	Helpless Wuhan	As Fears of Pandemic Grow, China Puts 20 Million on Lockdown
Feb – Communism Nature of China's State Media	Communist Propaganda	China, in Propaganda Push, Boasts of Response to Crisis
March – Detail Analysis of China's Political-Health System	Political-Health System	China Had a Fail-Safe Way to Track Contagions. Officials Failed to Use It.

In January, the NYT's news harshly criticized China's government's responses to the COVID-19 outbreak. The NYT has established the narrative that contaminated Wuhan has been acknowledged as COVID-19 epicenter and that China has failed to contain the virus due to the flaws in the authoritarian political regime.

In February, the NYT turns to focus on the impacts of COVID-19 on China's society and specifically criticized China's media system, calling it communism propaganda boasting its coronavirus handling. The NYT criticizes China's media for declaring that it is a "people's war" against the virus when China's government take measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. The NYT further rebukes China's media for stirring up domestic nationalism, depicting it as a way of manipulation by China's government upon its people.

In March, NYT's reports analyze China's political-health system in detail, blaming that China has spread the danger to the world.

Those NYT's reports can be categorized as "freedom frame" for two reasons. First, the NTY views China's political system as illiberal authoritarianism by situating China against the Western universal value of "freedom." Second, I name it "freedom

frame" to emphasize that it is the only and narrow lens that the NYT uses to present China's coronavirus responses, which is definitely not the whole picture of what happened in China. For example, it neglects that the Chinese in the rest of China other than Wuhan feel safer when Wuhan locks down. Instead, the NYT only focuses on Wuhan's negative sentiments, which is normal when people face a non-known fatal virus. The NYT blames China's political regime for not containing the coronavirus outbreak and presents it as China's government's mishandling. This was followed by only presenting Wuhan people's negative emotions to suggest that civil society is against the repressive government. Words, tone, metaphors, and citing sources used in the NYT' reports carry out the same overarching message that China is an authoritarian government with communist characteristics.

Not only does the NYT cites Wuhan's citizens to show the dichotomy between the central government and the local people, but also does the NYT use the U.S. citizens as sources to compare China's handling to that of the U.S.. Such division between China's government and civil society is aggravated when the NYT views China's state media as part of China's government apparatus, which only propagates for the Communist Party of China(CPC from here on) while neglecting the public's voices. In this way, China's government is not only situated against the Western "freedom" value but also pinned as the enemy to its people.

These themes can be further examined in four sections. First, what are the insiders' feelings in Wuhan, and what are the outsiders and experts' evaluations? Second, why does China fails to contain the virus? Third, what is the relationship between China's government with the locals? Fourth, how does China's media report on its domestic COVID-19 outbreak and how does China's government handle it? I answer these four questions in the following sub-sections.

5.1.1. Disappointed Civil Society: Sentimental Framing in Wuhan

If we look at how the NYT reports on Wuhan, specifically where the virus first broke out and quarantined with "draconian measures," the sentimental framings are critically negative. The NYT's reports selectively chose first-hand sources to justify its view on China's COVID-19 handling. There are mainly three sentimental framings. The first framing is the anxiety towards the uncertainty of the future in the pandemic. The

second framing is the fury towards China's government's responses since the NYT uses words such as "fury," "anger," and "frustration." The third framing is the fear of being exposed to China's government's punishments if critiqued its handling of coronavirus publicly.

"Even if I say that I do not trust the government, what could I do?" Ms. Lu said. "It seems there is nothing I can do" (Syckle & Ives, 2020).

In the NYT's present of Wuhan, what the public perceives is "scared," "anxiety," "anger," "frustration," and the public feelings to China's government responses are "hastily," "carelessly," "too little too late did not fulfill its responsibility" (Syckle & Ives, 2020). Intensifying criticism is presented as the prevailing sentiment in Wuhan and as the locals' only perception of China's government's coronavirus responses.

Are you hearing any common sentiments in your interviews? Several people told me about their memories of the SARS crisis of 2003, which killed hundreds of people in China.They are worried this could erupt into a full-blown epidemic. Of course, others say they are not very concerned and have faith that China can beat this… One common theme is people say they want the Chinese government to speak honestly about the severity of the outbreak -- something that did not happen during SARS (Syckle & Ives, 2020).

The above scripts are quoted from an opinion article, in which the NYT interviews an insider reporter of the NYT in Wuhan during the Wuhan's coronavirus outbreak. These scripts show the NTY's reporters' snugging on Chinese belief in China's government. And when the NYT depicts Wuhan's common sentiments, the "several worries" have been placed at the start of the paragraph. Though numerically, the amount of "others" who has faith in China is far more than "several" who are worried. After this problematic "Of course," those who have faith in governmental handling seem odd, because, as later sentence mentioned, the common theme is still "worried." The last sentence echoed the freedom frame that the Chinese public has developed from SARS in 2003, which now demands information transparency from their government.

The NYT uses interviews with Wuhan residents and medical workers, and posts on China's social media to represent civil society opinions. Apart from the Chinese public, the U.S. athletes, the NYT's "insider" journalists, experienced Chinese workers,

and dissident lawyers have been chosen to show their feelings towards China's government's handling of COVID-19 from different perspectives.

"I fell in love with Chinese culture," he said, "and I got to be the face of American football in China", "I locked myself in. The city turned into a ghost town," Mr. Evans said. But he felt isolated, he said, and his mother, back in the United States, was worried about his safety (Jordan, 2020).

The transcripts above showed an American athlete's feeling when Wuhan COIVD-19 broke out. The NYT uses this source to represent the U.S. citizens living in China who was deported from China to the U.S. during the coronavirus outbreak. By using the U.S. athlete's source, the NYT justified that the fear and isolation is the common experience in Wuhan for he shared the same feeling as local citizens in Wuhan. In this way, the NYT illustrates the severity of the coronavirus in China and the distrust of the U.S. citizens towards China's handling of the outbreak. The NYT even draws upon the U.S. citizen's experience during the 2009 Swine Flu quarantine in China to illustrate how grateful, united, happy the interviewees were once they returned to the U.S. territory (Dell'Antonia, 2020). Such a common feeling of "coming home" or homesick has been exaggerated and utilized in a politicized context, as it tagged China with negative personal feelings and attach positive sentiments to the U.S.

5.1.2. Problematic Political-Health System

In "An Iron Fist With Flaws A Virus Can Fit Through" (Fisher, 2020), a discussion on China's political-health system, strategic reflexivity(van Dijk, 1998) is frequently applied almost every time when the article uses the concession clause. It appears nine times throughout a 1616 words article. The typical use of strategic reflexivity is to use the concession clause to present a seemingly neutral and critical view while making the negative message easier to accept after "but":

While China can mobilize a huge national response to the outbreak, its response to the crisis is also a lesson in how the country's political weak points can carry grave consequences for world health (Fisher, 2020).

The NYT uses the "While" concession clause to stress the point that mistakes have already been made because of China's deeply flawed political-health system. This

shows the NYT's underlying narrative that it should be the single country's responsibility to prevent the transmission of a naturally-evolved virus to humans. But when coronavirus became a pandemic, every country fumbled and made mistakes at initial handling. It is meaningless to attribute a public health problem to the political regime flaws of one country to justify the superiority in "us" while negatively tagging "Others."

And such blaming China is naturalized in the following paragraphs. In the NYT's narrative, it is not even a problem of how China's government handling virus nor is it China's "deeply flawed" political-health system to be the at the core of failing to contain the outbreak. It is the issue throughout China's modern history.

When you look at the coronavirus, it looks a lot like what happened with SARS. It involves a very similar template," Mr. Yasuda said (Fisher, 2020).

Those flaws, which have long frustrated Chinese leaders(Fisher, 2020).

This seeming delay was of a familiar pattern in China(Fisher, 2020).

This has been an issue throughout China's modern history(Fisher, 2020).

Any political system is better at solving some problems than others. But the coronavirus, like other health crises before it, is bringing out some of the deepest flaws and contradictions in a Chinese system that, for all its historical feats, remains a work in progress (Fisher, 2020).

Language usage in the above paragraph is problematic for it has not differentiated "China" and "Chinese." The former is a nation-state concept with territorial autonomy and border, governmental institution, and military army. The latter is a nationality and ethnicity concept. When discussing China's political-health institution, this paragraph uses "Chinese" instead of "China's." The criticized object has hiddenly shifted and thus cultivate the xeno-racism discourse. Here, I would argue that the author is deliberately using the terms "Chinese," "for all its historical feats," and later, "a quasi-imperial system." Such terms not only depict that China's handling of the outbreak fails due to the long-time backwardness in China's system but also do they confluence the features of China's government with that of Chinese, adding to the cliché of the orientalist sinology view on Chinese.

Within China, Ms. Shue added, the common good "is seen as something that should be designed from above, like a watch being engineered to run perfectly." But sometimes, the watch can be designed in ways that harm the public good" (Fisher, 2020).

The NYT shows that "common good" is not normal in China's pollical-heath system. Thus, "common good" has to be regulated and "designed from above." The NYT uses the watch metaphor to suggest that manipulation and control have been exercised in China through a top-down approach, "like a watch being engineered to run perfectly." However, the "watch" is not a suitable metaphor matching China because China is always undergoing dynamic change. This should be the metaphor for liberal democracy because once the cornerstone value of "freedom" has been set, it has become the assertive way for the "watch" to work along.

The watch metaphor fits western liberal democracy perfectly for that freedom and democracy are socially constructed and protected by constitutions, law enforcement, governmental institutions, and military complexes, though such "individual rights" of "us" are exercised upon the price paid by "other." Like David Harvey has mentioned in *The Enigma of Capital (2011),* the permanent grid in capitalism urges endless surplus value being created to stay in the "democratic competition." Such competition would result in excessive production capacity more than what the market demands. Thus, when the price collapses, economic performances boomed will crash, leaving the fragmented labor unemployed. This is what we call an economic crisis, and it is the destiny circle in the capitalist system. In such "freedom" settings, those living on paycheque to paycheque are the most vulnerable, especially when they are not entitled to the protection of public welfare and other public interest sectors to reallocate the wealth and resources to promote social equality.

The NYT's usage of the watch metaphor to describe China's political-health system is not only reflective of the negative tagging of China as the othered "them" but also shows the narrow lens of the NYT's "freedom frame" to the extent that it does not critically reflects upon whether the metaphor fits into China or not.

5.1.3. The Enemy of States: the Dichotomy in Local-Central Power Relations

"China is a much more decentralized place than it appears," said David Cowhig, a former American diplomat who served ten years in China and monitored health and science issues. "Local officials have great discretion; China is a coalition of 'little' Big Brothers," he said. "Xi realizes this and is trying to re-centralize China" (Myers & Buckley, 2020b).

By the expert's quote, the frame has been set on "manipulation and control." The perception of how China's political system works in the NYT reports has resonated with what Orwell(1954) depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, an authoritarian system repressing every corner of society. "Big Brother" refers to Leader Xi, a figure who never quite appears but exerts excessive control and surveillance in a 1984 world(Power, 2016).

In China, if a leader visits, that shows that all the government resources can be mobilized," he said (Myers & Buckley, 2020a).

The relocation of wealth and power to solve the problem of people in need is a dominant feature in communism as a way to promote social equality. However, such political will, which is operated at great cost, is closely connected with and naturalized by authoritarian traits in the NYT reports. The NYT uses this framing to illustrate that political affairs can only be decided upon and implemented from China's central to local levels. And always, "party," "government," "communist," "media" has been used as the same representation for the authoritarian regime as standing out of China's public/people/civil society.

The NYT naturalizes the dichotomy between China's government and people and presents such dichotomy as China's political system's failure. Such framing neglects that China's self-claimed legitimacy is based on people in Mao's "mass line." And since the beginning of the reform and open-up period in 1978, the capitalistic turning of China has shifted governmental tasks from keeping the purity of communism to economic construction, elevating the poor from poverty, in which case, enhancing the livelihood of the people has become part of the legitimacy of CPC's governance. Such policy turning is supported by the majority who have benefited from China's overall economic development. However, the NYT has depicted that the internal separation in people and

government is prevailing in Wuhan, showing civil society's dissatisfaction and hinting that China's government is not taking its people accountable. Following this frame, If there can be any "supportive" people in China to be depicted in the NYT's reports, they are either to be left with no choice but "stoic fortitude" as to bear with Wuhan's draconian lockdown or to be fooled to sacrifice themselves to fight the battle against the virus, with their individual rights being further exploited and infringed upon by China's government.

5.1.4. Communist Propaganda Boast

In the article named "China, in Propaganda Push, Boasts of Response to Crisis" (Hernández, 2020), the NYT criticizes China's state media's reports on China's government's handling of the coronavirus.

> The state-run news media has hailed China's response to the outbreak as a model for the world, accusing countries like the United States and South Korea of acting sluggishly to contain the spread (Hernández, 2020).

> The Chinese government silenced whistleblowers, withheld crucial information, and played down the threat posed by the new coronavirus, allowing an epidemic that has killed thousands to take hold across the country (Hernández, 2020).

In this paragraph, the NYT constructs the narrative that China's media withhold crucial information that should be disclosed to the public. By using the word "propaganda," China's media has been pre-set to be part of government administration in the NYT's "freedom frame". Thus, there is nearly no chance for China's media to deliver any truth. This serves the belief that the "Chinese pearl" is disconnected from the state media, either defied but silenced, or fooled to believe in propaganda.

The NYT, in contrast, is a presumably independent media agency, professional and neutral. Such a presumption about China's media may leave the Western audience with no choice but to blindly believe in the Western media (i.e., BBC, the NYT, and the WSJ) to get the information of China. And in a global context, such Sino-discourse makes it impossible for the Western audience to see China as the same as "us" with liberal democracy.

However, such cliché and stereotype were challenged by Herman and Chomsky's work (2002). It has been examined that the U.S. media production system well serves the need of capital controlling and funding the media, thus serves as the mouthpiece of capitalism. In essence, though the U.S. media is not directly connected to, but is the propaganda apparatus of the dominant U.S. interest groups, whether they are the conglomerate owners of media agencies or the U.S. government. The five filters of PM effectively explained how the media's biased reports and framings are produced. In particular, the propaganda model illustrates how the U.S. has inversed the Vietnam War narrative to propagandize for President Nixon and US capitalist interest in Vietnam(Herman & Chomsky, 2002, pp. 169–189).

5.2. The Italy Story: Naturalized Virus

Like any national crisis, the virus has exposed the flaws of those countries it has struck the hardest, whether it be the reflex for secrecy in China…or the initial confusion and fragmentation in the Italian response (Horowitz, 2020a).

Mistakes were made for sure, there were some flip-flopping, hesitations, but that is the case everywhere in the world," the official said. "When we see what is going on in the United States today, Europe is not the continent that's the least organized (Erlanger, 2020).

We can see a complete framing difference in the NYT's descriptions of China's and Italy's mistakes. "Reflex for secrecy in China" is seen as an automatic response for covering up, hiding information from the public. "Reflex" suggests the intinction of China running into deceiving the public in case of a hard-hit national crisis, revealing the nature of the authoritarian regime and suggesting that it is a long-time problem.

The NYT uses a "naturalized" frame in its reports on Italy's coronavirus responses. "Confusion" suggests that the Italian government does not know how to deal with COVID-19. "Initial" suggests that the Italian government's mishandling only lasts for a short period, hinting the non-confusing and non-fragmented measures will be carried out later on. In this way, the NYT justifies Italy's government's mistakes that, because of the sudden hard hit by the virus, it takes time for Italy's government to learn how to deal with coronavirus. In conclusion, such a "naturalized" frame in the NYT's description of

Italy's initial handling of COVID-19 makes it easy for readers to forgive Italy's government's mistakes. The "freedom frame" used in presenting China's mistakes has not been seen in the NYT's reports on Italy.

5.2.1. Romantic Consolidation: Sentimental Framing in Italy

Parents posted pictures of unicorns and rainbows drawn by young children with the hashtag 'It will all be OK' (Horowitz, 2020a).

In Florence, the opera tenor Maurizio Marchini serenaded the city. Danilo Rossi, who plays first viola at Milan's La Scala opera house, played music from his balcony, which was adorned with a banner that read, 'Let us not give up, we will make it.' Giuliano Sangiorgi, the frontman of the band Negramaro, played a concert for his neighbors from his balcony(Horowitz, 2020b).

Through these quotes, the NYT tells the uplifting stories of Italians, showing solidarity and optimism. The "romance" frame has jumped to NYT's presentation of Italians. Such a frame shows that Italians are "real" people who can sing and dance. There are children and parents, musicals and anchors, who lived joyful lives. In a time of uncertainty and anxiety, these stories reveal the unprecedented resilience of the Italian people.

As Italy once participated in WWII as an Axis country, it is bizarre to see the NYT presents positive stories of WWII-era Italy, which at the time was an enemy of the U.S. It a revisionist rendering, WWII has been seen as a tragedy in Italian's common memory in the NYT's reports. The following quote shows how the NYT has compared the deaths of WWII to that of coronavirus:

And while the world's attention shifts to its own centers of contagion, the sirens keep sounding in Bergamo. As the Second World War air raid sirens, they are the ambulance sirens that many survivors of this war will remember. They blare louder as they get closer, coming to collect the parents and grandparents, the keepers of Italy's memory(Horowitz, 2020b).

Sirens have belled from day to night as if it were in WWII, connecting the death taken away now to Italy's war experience in WWII. In this way, virus-related deaths have

been equated with WWII deaths. In a "naturalized" frame, not only was the virus seen as a non-human caused catastrophe, as opposed to the case of China in the NYT's reports, but also the excessive death tolls were not in any way linked to potential mishandling by Italy's government.

Such naturalized and romance frame frees the government from any responsibility to properly contain the virus from spreading and protect its citizens' lives. Instead, the NYT shows an understanding of Italy's government handling. No further questions need to be asked. These reports do not even hint at evaluating the Italian government's response to the virus. In contrast, in the NYT's reports on China, "how do we evaluate government response?" is the most frequent topic.

Not only does the general public is presented differently in the NYT's reports on China's and Italy's respective responses to coronavirus, but also the depictions of doctors and patients and their relationships are also different:

The girl's father is a doctor who has been putting in extra hours and covering shifts to make sure that people do not go without primary care. He has been sleeping in his office, where he brought in a toaster to heat up food. 'They are doing extraordinary work,' Ms. Santachiara said (Horowitz, 2020a).

When reporting on the Italian medical care workers, the NYT's reports present Italians as supportive and compassionate. Sleeping in an office while bringing a toaster to it, the Italian doctor in the NYT's report has kept his lifestyles maintained even though working extra and under pressure. Such a presentation portrays the humane side of Italian doctors.

While in China, the image of a doctor is often centered around crying for medical supplies, as showed in the title "After Days on Lockdown, Anger Boils Over and Doctors Plead for Aid"(Buckley & Qin, 2020). And the paragraph below showed that Chinese doctors are not appreciated by the public:

After beating up a doctor in Wuhan, a man was detained, and medical staff members are wearing raincoats to protect against infection (Buckley & Qin, 2020).

While the NYT has portrayed that China's stressful frontline medical workers are in short supply of protective garments, who only have "raincoat" for protection against infection, and an even more bizarre image was depicted here, "doctors been beaten up," showing that the man had no respect for doctors, especially during the COVID-19. Such a depiction of ingratitude contributes to isolate Chinese doctors as a profession.

5.2.2. Political-Health System: Solidarity Being the Only Problem

When the NYT's reports situate Italy's responses to coronavirus in the European context, the mistakes of single country's mishandling have been further justified and even dismissed. The following article title, "Open Borders, Cornerstone of the E.U., Are a Potential Hurdle to Containment"(Stevis-Gridneff, 2020), and the following paragraph, are illustrative.

> But after a fumbling start, the European Union and its institutions, including the European Central Bank, have begun to cope better with the new challenge of Europe as the epicenter of the virus. Huge issues remain to be resolved, however. The whole concept of European "solidarity" is being challenged" (Erlanger, 2020).

The concession clause here is used differently in the NYT's evaluations of Italy's responses to coronavirus, tagging Europe positively. The phrase "a fumbling start" has been used to justify that the biggest problem in the European Union's responses to coronavirus is not showing solidarity.

5.3. Summary

A complete framing difference has been found in the NYT's reports on Italy's coronavirus outbreak in comparison with that of China. First, the NYT adopts patients' personal stories in seven out of eight total sampled reports, indicating the NYT's sympathetic stand with Italians through touching storytelling, which is avoided in any China reports. Second, reporting themes focus on Italian's uplifting optimism and patriotic solidarity fighting the virus rather than evaluating the Italian government's coronavirus handling, where critical reflection should exist considering Italy's high fatality rates and large infected population. The findings suggest that the NYT's international

coverage deploys different news criteria and varied frames, depending on whether the country is defined as the "other" or one of "us."

Chapter 6.   Discussion and Conclusion

6.1. Immunology as Natural Science and as Social Metaphor

How do we understand the NYT's Sino-discourse in comparison to its treatment of Italy? Here I would argue that the news serves as part of the social immune system in the U.S. context. The immune system works to protect itself against the perceived danger from the exterior environment. Thus, the fundamental principle of immunization is the discrimination of self and non-self. In these cases, the natural biological language of immunology blends with a social discourse on belonging and not belonging. This can be seen as embodied in a variety of specific cases. For example, during the initial coronavirus outbreak, local residents shouted to Chinese immigrants in Europe, "Go back to China" (Wong, 2020).

As a metaphor, we can understand the NYT's Sino-discourse drawing from an immunology discourse that negatively tags China as "them" and positively recognizes Italy as "us." After differentiating the non-self, which is seen as an "antigen," the immune system would produce antibodies to counter it specifically. In the long history of anti-communism, the U.S.'s news media system has created antibodies to purge the non-self, perceived communism as a dangerous threat. Herman and Chomsky (2002) have developed the propaganda model to demonstrate how the U.S. media has helped to create an anti-communism consent in the U.S. public. For example, the U.S.'s news media reversed the Vietnam War narrative by claiming that the U.S. is fighting for South Vietnam's freedom, liberalizing them from the communist North. In this way, the media justified using chemical weapons and the destruction of farmland and home to thousands. Those Vietnamese dying in the war were numbers of "collateral damage," far less worthy than American soldiers sacrificed.

Herman and Chomsky's (2002) analysis in relation to the Vietnam War fits into larger long-standing trends. After WWII, communism was conceived as a threat to capitalism, with its fundamental ideology in upholding private property ownership and maintain the superior class status of capital owners(Parenti, 1997). Popular sentiments were mobilized against communism. Moreover, because there was no clear definition of what constitutes communism, the dominant media system treats communism as a tool

for anything that threatens property interests, often attaching authoritarianism as a sole outstanding feature to communism while neglecting its capability in organizing social production and distribution.

In the NYT's case, the fundamental difference between communism and capitalism has not been touched. The mobilization of resources to help Wuhan contain the virus and Wuhan's citizens who sacrificed their jobs/income/leisure activities while being locked at home has not been seen as standing solidarity with Wuhan in the NYT's reports. Nor does the NYT see the construction of "Huoshenshan" (Zhong, 2020), a camping hospital built in 10 days for quarantine, as China's overall alignment strategy for protecting the poorer and marginalized groups who may not have access to needed health care resources to cope with coronavirus. Those vulnerable cannot stand a virus like this before vaccination has been manufactured. Because even within the U.S., daily infected cases rise dramatically in July and August (Edward, 2020), whose coronavirus death toll ranked first in the world in September 2020, just passing 200,000(*Covid: US Death Toll Passes 200,000 - BBC News*, n.d.).

The NYT's Sino-discourse aggravates a long-taken for granted ideological and political discrimination. It is not the simple traditional color/racial difference or xenophobic discrimination against immigrants in the European context. Instead, the Sino-discourse this time serves as an another automatic antibody response, timely and actively, though different in contents and styles. The message conveyed remains the same, the purging instinct of communism. This only adds to the social misrecognition of the Chinese and China's government.

The NYT's Sino-discourse also interacts with other genres of texts (Fairclough, 2001) and shapes social practices. For example, it articulates with the "Chinese Virus" discourse in Trump's political speech, not to mention resonating with Republican claim that China should be held accountable for the worldwide pandemic and the U.S. should withdraw from WTO, due to its conspiration with China (*Corona Big Book*, n.d.). The long-time xenophobia deriving from the U.S.'s anti-communism history after WWII and orientalist sinology explained how such discourse is socially constructed in the NYT's coverage, which justifies the U.S.'liberal democracy superiority and neoliberalism legitimacy.

What is behind the NYT's separated China discourse is a missing reflection on everyday class struggle in capitalism and privatization infringe on the public health system. Intense racial division has seen in the Black Lives Matter Movement; Tens of thousands of precarious worker have been required to maintain basic services while exposed to the risk of getting infected; The US government's continuing cut on public health spending opens the free market to private monopoly capital while putting the marginalized citizens at risk. The study reveals the weakness of the U.S.'s news production system, who views communism as an ultimate evil, which is the fundamental principle in the U.S. media's underlying ideology, even though such narrow lens blocks learning the redistribution of wealth and power to the plural classes in need from the communism, providing real freedom and democracy to the people.

6.2. Conclusion

While the human world is struggling for a solution to a natural virus known for its danger to the human body, the viral discourse of belonging and not-belonging continues to create division and discrimination in human society. This is embodied in NYT's Sino-discourse which, as a social immune system, continues the process of othering of perceived danger and purging the "non-self" danger out of the system via demonized framing coding, using "authoritarian communism" to justify China being a threat not only to the Western democracy that spread the virus to the world but also to its people by covering up the initial outbreak, silencing the whistleblower and boasting its response through state media propaganda. The NYT has resorted to metaphors, words, and themes to carry out a dangerous image of China.

I have conducted a case study of the NYT's reports on Wuhan's and Italy's lockdown, an event-based schema analysis to understand how the NYT reports international news of a Western ally and China, a rivalry to the U.S. and sometimes enemy. The conclusion is that the NYT tags Chinese and China's government negatively via first-hand interviews while presenting Italy positively. This research has shown how the Chinese are presented as furious, anxious, frustrated, and untrusted of its government while Italians are shown to be supportive, optimistic, civilized, and trauma hit by COVID-19. The NYT criticized China's political-health system with detailed critical reflection while justifying Italy's initial mishandling of COVID-19 as "it happens all around the world." Such narrative and framing echoes the U.S. media's biased and

discriminated history in which the U.S.'s anti-communism and discrimination framing history have created a special immune auto-reaction. When recognized the non-self-component as a threat to the self, the antibody, othering, and discriminated coding process will automatically work in the news production, just like how T-antibody works in an immune system.

Without the critical reflection of what communism traits has been shown in China's handling of coronavirus, the NYT has attached the authoritarian traits to communist China without differentiation. However, this time the NYT works a bit differently, using the distorted image of Chinese, not solely of China's government, to create a credible and seemly true story that the Chinese are angry about their government's COVID-19 responses and that this is the universal truth. In this way, China's government has been depicted as the nation's enemy, both to the U.S. and Chinese people. Because the measurement of a successful "handling" of the virus has never been set in the NYT narrative, not a single country can be compared on reasonable and common ground. This makes it easier to prejudice-based case by case.

While none of us can escape from the destiny of been defined as different from others, in ways which we may not necessarily agree with, we can nevertheless continue to redefine ourselves on our own terms. This takes on new meaning in a global co-existence context. Here we can ask how we can counter the fear and anxiety that have permeated in the age of a pandemic. As a Chinese student studying abroad who witnessed the Xenophobia discourse permeating in the U.S. news-social practices, concern for another Cold War may arise from the Pacific to the Atlantic. If optimisms is not naïve, I would like to end by what Dr. Tedros, the current WHO Director-General, said, "Let us all look out for each other(*WHO Director-General's Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19 - March 11 2020*, n.d.). "

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