

INTER-MEDIA AGENDA SETTING AND SOCIAL MEDIA:
UNDERSTANDING THE INTERPLAY AMONG
CHINESE SOCIAL MEDIA, CHINESE STATE-OWNED MEDIA AND U.S. NEWS
ORGANIZATIONS ON REPORTING THE TWO SESSIONS

By

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To Tian Wu

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CPPCC CPPCC is the abbreviation of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. It is a political advisory organization in the People's Republic of China. Its representatives are made up of members from different political parties, as well as independent members. The conference usually gathers along with the National People's Congress.
- NPC NPC stands for the National People's Congress. It is the highest legislative organization, the most powerful organ of state in the People's Republic of China. The Congress holds annual conferences along with the Chinese Political Consultative Conference.

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When examining inter-media agenda setting effects among different media, a considerable body of study focuses on whether online media news agenda is influenced by other media, such as newspaper and TV network. With the boom of social media platform, this study started to examine whether social media could act as an influencer. This study explored the inter-media agenda setting effects among Sina Micro Blog, two Chinese state-owned news media – *People’s Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency*, and two U.S. news organizations – the *New York Times* and the *Associated Press* on covering the 2013 Two Sessions in China. Content analysis and cross-lag correlation analysis were applied to determine whether evidence of inter-media agenda setting influences existed among the selected media channels.

The results indicated that Chinese social media might set news agenda for Chinese state-owned media throughout the whole examined time span. However, reciprocal effect was not found. The propaganda tools of Chinese government seemed to have no impact on the news agenda of social media platform. In terms of the international news flow, U.S. news organizations had no influence on all the Chinese

media channels when covering this political event. However, both Chinese social media and state-owned news media impact the agenda of U.S. news media through the first two time periods. The inter-media agenda setting effects were partly supported.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For Internet users, since the debut of Facebook in 2004 and launch of Twitter in 2005, the booming social media have significantly changed both the landscape of Internet and people's daily life. According to statistics, till the second quarter of 2008, three quarters of internet surfers had become social media users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Breaking geographic boundaries, the boom of social media has now been an international phenomenon, which is not only taking place in the United States. In the most populous nation, China, social media is playing a more and more influential role in mass communication industry. In 2009, the Twitter's Chinese version Sina Micro Blog (Sina Weibo) was born and soon gained national wide popularity. According to "2012 Sina Micro Blog Development Report", the number of Sina Micro Blog users was up to 368 million in 2012, showing a rapid growth when compared with 6.03 million in 2009 (Sina Micro Blog, 2013).

In addition, Micro Blog is playing a significant role especially in promoting social change and international communication in China. For example, in 2012, an environmental protest took place in a small southwestern Chinese town of Shifang, where the local government permitted Honda Company to build a copper refinery. According to China's Ministry of Environmental Protection, this project would "refine 40,000 tons of molybdenum and 400,000 tons of copper a year" (McDonald, 2012). Residents soon began to boycott this project by demonstrations since July 1st, fearing that the pollutants from the copper refining processes would cause environmental pollution and increase health risks. The demonstrations in a small town successfully gained national attention overnight because of social media in China. About 5.25 million

posts were on Sina Micro Blog containing the keyword “Shifang”, including around 400,000 photos and 10,000 video clips (Qian, 2012). Most of the voices on social media supported the protesters’ demand of stopping the construction, and condemned the police’s armed crackdown toward protesters. These postings gained a large amount of attention from and got covered by both national and international news organizations. Finally, the government officially announced it was terminating the copper plant project and releasing detained protesters (Bradsher, 2012).

There are two points worth mentioning in this case. First, both protests occurred in undeveloped and rural regions which are usually ignored by news media. However, social media acted as the most influential platform of disseminating information and helped local residents draw attention from large news organizations. Secondly, social media played a role as an important news resource for international news media. Large international news organizations – BBC, CNN, The New York Times, Reuters, and The Wall Street Journal etc. – participated in reporting the Shifang protests. Those news organizations utilized Sina Micro Blog as an access to understanding the developments of public opinions. Some of them, such as Wall Street Journal, also posted their relevant news reports on their Sina Micro Blog accounts. From an academic perspective, McLuhan points out “the medium is the message”. The characteristics of media will influence how the messages are disseminated and perceived. As argued by McPhail (2010), the Internet now is a powerful mass medium where users uniting as a global communication environment. From the Shifang protest case, a question is raised whether international news organizations are impacted by social media. In other words, can social media set the agenda for international news organizations in international

news communication? Or, on the contrary, can social media be a window for Chinese people to know how international society interprets them? From this perspective, Chinese social media platforms may play a role in international news communication as well. The news reports of the incident show that in China, where news reports and information dissemination are strictly censored and controlled, social media have provided some opportunities for international news organizations to find newsworthy stories and public opinions among individuals' and other news media's postings.

As for the relationship between national image and international news coverage, some scholars have argued that international news coverage impacts national images. For instance, Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) found that the more media coverage a nation received, the more important Americans would think this nation was. Similarly, the more negative coverage one nation received, the more likely Americans were to have a negative impression of this nation. In this way, understanding the role of Chinese social media may help understand and enhance the national image of China.

Previous studies have begun to examine the inter-media agenda-setting effects between online media and other media (Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002; Ku, Kaide, & Pfau, 2003; Lee, Lancendorfer, & Lee, 2005; Lim, 2011). A study in 2002 found that news reports in traditional media were sources for internet users to discuss on electronic bulletin boards (Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002). In 2003, scholars found that in presidential election campaigns, presidential candidates' websites set the agenda for news media (Ku, Kaide, & Pfau, 2003). Another study conducted in 2005 found that the newspaper would influence users of the Internet bulletin boards at the first level of

agenda-setting; while in turn, the latter would have an impact on the former on the second level of agenda setting (Lee, Lancendorfer, & Lee, 2005).

In general, previous research demonstrated inter-media agenda-setting effects between online media and other media. However, the 2002 study put online media in a relatively passive role which was influenced by traditional news media; while other studies examined online media as an active influencer, which transferred issue salience or attribute salience to other secondary media. The difference might result from the fast growth and the rise of the Internet. Traditionally, print media and TV were major news providers for publics. In this way, people firstly got news from traditional news media, and then discussed them online. However, now publics more and more turn to online media to look for news reports. Thus, online media have begun to set agenda for traditional news media. However, none of the mentioned studies focus on the inter-media agenda-setting effects of social media. Nowadays the landscape of the Internet has changed dramatically with the boom of social media. Thus, it is necessary to re-examine the impact and influence Internet might have in the era of social media.

The purpose of this study is to examine the inter-media agenda-setting effects between Chinese social media, Chinese state-owned news organizations and U.S. news organizations' coverage on China. The meaning of this study lies in three aspects: first, it detects whether the media environment in China has changed; second, it configures how China, as an important nation, influences international news coverage; third, it examines potential ways for China to build and promote its national image.

The author selected one topic on social media during March 2013: “the Two Sessions” (Lianghui) of 2013. The Two Sessions, also known as Lianghui, refers to the

annual meeting of two highest organizations that make national-level political decisions in China. It is made up of the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The democratic system in China is that Chinese people have the right to elect delegates to speak for them at different levels of people's congress. NPC is "the most powerful organ of state." It consists thousands of delegates "elected by China's provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and the armed forces" (How China is Ruled). The delegates of NPC have the rights to vote for the leaders of the nation and make proposals to the government during the conference. CPPCC is a political advisory organization in China. The members of this conference are from a wide range of political parties and organizations.

As the most significant political event during the year, "the Two Sessions" was covered by both U.S. media and state-owned media in China. Additionally, it was actively discussed by netizens on social media as well. The author examines whether transfers of salience would take place among Chinese social media platform (Sina Micro Blog), large state-owned news organizations (People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency), and U.S news organizations (the New York Times and the Associated Press) while covered these two events.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The International News Flow

In the stream of research on international news coverage, scholars have noticed an uneven news flow of covering foreign nations (Masmoudi, 1979; Wu H. D., 2000; Golan G. J., 2010; Robinson & Sparkes, 1976; Golan & Wanta, 2003). Simply saying, both scope and volume of international news coverage have been limited in a limited number of “elite nations”, leaving the majority of nations in the world ignored by the news media (Masmoudi, 1979). Not all nations in the world can get reported by news media in other countries. Professionals must make their own value judgment and select a few events as more newsworthy than others from the endless stream of international events, because of the limitation of time and space (Golan G. J., 2010; Wanta & Golan, 2010). In this way, news media in every nation depict a distorted image of the real world (Wu H. D., 2000) because of “the inequalities of distribution of communications resources and the imbalances of information and news flow among nations” “people, countries, and events are presented unevenly” (Weaver, Porter, & Evans, 1984, p. 397)

As early as the 1950s, scholars found that the international news agencies were inclined to focus on hard news and several “elite nations” (Robinson & Sparkes, 1976). Weaver, Porter, and Evans (1984) conducted a ten-year analysis of international news flow on the United States’ national network television news. They found that ABC, CBS, and NBC networks distributed 32.4% of international news coverage on the Middle East; while other three regions in total – Asia (9.5%), Africa (6.7%) and Latin America (6.2%) – accounted for 27% of the international news coverage. Recent scholarship into international news flow indicated a changing scope and nature of global news coverage

(Golan G. , 2006). According to a content analysis of more than twenty thousand newscast items, it was found that both the scope of international news coverage and the coverage of developing countries were decreasing. Furthermore, developing countries were mostly framed negatively (Riffe & Budianto, 2001). Another content analysis indicated that among 1300 television newscasts in the United States, 20 nations took up over 80% of the international news coverage (Golan, 2003). Golan and Wanta (2003) examined all the elections between 1 January 1998 and 1 May 2000, and found 102 elections were ignored by four major U.S. television newscasts and received no coverage at all. Wu (2000) studied the international news coverage in 38 countries. The conclusion indicated that the United States was the most-covered nation in 23 of the 37 countries (excluding the United States). By this token, the United States is the unquestionably “single superstar” “on the stage of the news world”.

The nature of international news flow has drawn considerable attention from academics. The stream of international news coverage has received extensive research focusing on various aspects (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Wanta & Golan, 2010; Wu H. D., 2000). Within this research field, scholars pay much attention to the determinants or predictors of international news coverage (Golan G. J., 2010).

To explore the determinants which predict whether a country or an event will be reported by international news organizations, scholars have found three approaches:

The context-oriented approach focuses on “the interactive relationship of the foreign nation where events occurred with contextual elements” (Chang & Lee, 2010, p. 72). Variables such as location in the world system/prominence, relevance to the home

country, international interactions were categorized under the umbrella of contextual variables (e.g. Chang T. K., 1998; Golan G. J., 2010; Wanta & Golan, 2010).

The event-oriented approach takes a look at the event itself, analyzes the internal characteristics of an event which make it newsworthy (Chang & Lee, 2010). From this approach, factors such as normative deviance, potential for social change deviance, U.S. involvement were investigated (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Chang & Lee, 1992; Chang & Lee, 2010)

The last one, organizational approach, examines factors internal to news organizations. It argues that internal factors of news institutions will affect media coverage (Chang & Lee, 2010).

Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger published “a landmark study” in the area of international news flow in the 1980s (Chang & Lee, 2010, p. 71). It was assumed that “regardless of the content per se”, international news could be predicted by some variables which were external to the media (p. 409). Based on this assumption, they summarized seven predictive variables that might affect U.S news media’s international news coverage. These independent variables were either context-oriented or event-oriented. The results showed that event-oriented factors including normative deviance of an event, relevance to the United States, potential for social changes, and geographic distance were significant predictors. Though the geographic distance was a significant predictor of international news coverage, most of the contextual variables such as language affinity, press freedom, and economic system were poor predictors (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987). Since then, the theoretical framework proposed by Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger was reexamined and expanded (e.g.

Chang & Lee, 2010). Scholars have concluded several event-oriented variables/predictors that might influence news media's judgments of newsworthiness.

The Event-Oriented Predictors

Deviance variables

The concept of deviance was first generated by Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger in 1986. An event was deviant when it broke the norms of the United States or when it "threatened the status quo" (Chang et al., 1987, p.403) of the United States. Based on this conception, there are normative deviance and potential for social change deviance that would predict the international news report. It was argued that the variable of deviance was an underlying construct of newsworthiness (Shoemaker et al., 1991). That is to say, "deviant people, events or even deviances itself" were part of the definition of the newsworthiness (Chang & Lee, 2010, p. 75).

By comparing covered and uncovered events in 1984, "normative deviance" of an event and "potential for social change" deviance were found to be a significant discriminator between covered and uncovered events. In addition, comparing with other event-oriented variables, normative deviance contributed the most to the news selections (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987). A more recent study confirmed this result with the conclusion that events deviant from American values were more likely to be covered by U.S. news media; furthermore, the variable of deviance was more powerful than country-oriented factors (Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991). However, as time goes by, scholars have found contradictory results. For example, when reexamining the theoretical framework of Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger's study, Chang and Lee (2010) found that normative deviance, the strongest determinant in the original study, was no longer significant. Chang and Lee

offered two explanations to this contradictory: firstly, what was deviant in 1984 might not be deviant to U.S. as time went by; secondly, the large number of deviant events took place in the world would make a single deviant event trivial to American news media (p. 84).

Involvement of the United States

An event was coded as “relevant” when the United States was involved or related (Chang et al., 1987). It often occurred in “diplomatic activities” (p. 404). The study found that relevance to the United States was part of the significant variables which distinguished covered and not-covered events. Chang and Lee (2010) further divided the events carrying the attribute of U.S involvement into non-threatening events relevant to U.S and threatening events relevant to U.S.

Chang and Lee (1992) conducted a national survey of 279 newspaper editors in the United States. The answers to the questions of "measuring the importance of different criteria in foreign news selection" showed that two relevance variables – threat to the United States and U.S. involvement – were considered to be important in making choices. Editors would identify an event as important when American security and national interests were involved.

The Context-Oriented Predictors

Relevance variables

As mentioned before, an event was coded as relevant when the United States was involved (Chang et al., 1987). However, further research by other scholars have expanded the notion of relevance and added more variables as subclasses under the umbrella of relevance. Unlike U.S involvement in an event, these sub-variables were more context-oriented than event-oriented which focused on the relationship between

the host and home nations. Often-investigated relevance variables are trade with home nation (Rosengren & Rikardsson, 1974; Wu H. D., 2000; Wu H. D., 2003; Golan G. J., 2008; Golan & Wanta, 2003), geographical distance/physical proximity (Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Barnett & Choi, 1995; Kim & Barnett, 1996; Chang & Lee, 2010; Wu H. D., 2000; Golan & Wanta, 2003), cultural affinity/cultural proximity (Golan G. J., 2008; Golan G. J., 2010; Wanta & Golan, 2010). Among the three relevance variables, geographical distance/physical proximity and trade with home nation were found to have mixed effects on international news coverage.

Trade. The influence of variable of trade differed according to different studies and approaches. Some scholars argued that trade variable was an important predictor of international news coverage. For example, Rosengren and Kikardsson (1974) found the relationship between trade and news flow was closer than the relationship between population and news flow (p. 106). Wu (2000) examined the influence of several determinants on international news coverage in 38 countries and found that trade volume along with the presence of international news agencies were two “primary predictors of the amount of news coverage” (p. 110). In the same vein, Wu (2003) compared the determinants of international news flow between developed and developing nations, finding that trade volume was the “dominant predictor” of international news flow “regardless of the nation’s development level”(p. 9). When examining American media’s coverage on African nations, Golan (2008) found that trade with the U.S. was one of two key predictors of coverage of Africa countries. A nation with larger trade volume would be more likely to get covered from U.S. television networks. Interestingly, in another study the effects of trade were opposite. By analyzing

international elections on American network news, Golan and Wanta (2003) found that U.S media were focusing on nations which were relatively unknown to American publics. Thus, elections of countries with low trade with the US would be more likely to receive coverage from American network news. On the contrary, some scholars argued that the influence of trade was either various or not powerful. As cited by Wu (1998), Cassara (1993) found economic connection not a decisive variable when U.S. regional newspapers decided which news from abroad were going to be covered. In another study, it was found that the roles of trade in shaping international news coverage were different in different countries (Robinson & Sparkes, 1976).

Geographical distance. Geographic Proximity was another significant discriminator between covered and uncovered events in the field of international news coverage according to Chang, Shoemaker, and Brendlinger's study (1987). However, the influence of geographical distance was mixed and contradictory according to different research.

Barnett and Choi (1995) suggested that physical distances could be calculated with the variables of latitude and longitude. Using regression analysis, they revealed that physical distance accounted for more than 17 percent of the international telecommunications network structure. By the same approach, another study echoed their findings by arguing that the structure of international news flow was affected by the variables of language and geographical proximity (Kim & Barnett, 1996). However, Chang and Lee (2010) found that the effects of physical distances were not pervasive. Geographical proximity served only as the fourth determinant for network broadcast in the field of international news coverage. Its influence was not significant for newspapers.

On the contrary, some studies rejected the influence of geographic proximity. Golan and Wanta (2003) analyzed all 138 elections held between 1 January 1998 and 1 May 2000. Their findings were: on one hand, elections in the Far East or Middle East regions were more likely to be covered than elections in some closer regions by U.S. media; on the other hand, Elections in Latin America, a region very close to the United States, received a significant amount of coverage in America as well. This result showed that for the U.S. media, geographic proximity could not influence international news coverage. As cited by Wu (1998), he studied international news reporting in four industrialized countries and “found no impact of geographic distance on international coverage” (p. 500).

Wu (2000) noticed that the effects of geographical distance in international news coverage might differ in developing and developed nations. He found that all the nations that had “geographic distance as one of their predictors of international coverage” were developing countries (p. 125). Wu (2003) investigated the determinants of traits of nation, interaction and relatedness, and logistics of news gathering and distribution. The results supported his previous study: population and geographic proximity were predictors only in developing nations.

The different or contradictory findings might result from two reasons: firstly, the way of calculating geographical distance varied: some studies used distances between two capitals while some used rough estimated data. Secondly, these studies investigated different types of news topics (Wu H. D., 1998).

Cultural affinity/Proximity. The variable of cultural affinity/cultural proximity includes factors such as the number of immigrants (Wanta & Golan, 2010), language

(Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Golan G. J., 2010), religious composition (Golan G. J., 2010), and press freedom (Golan G. J., 2010; Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987). Though examined as a potential determinant of international news flow, cultural affinity was found to have little influence on global news coverage in most studies (Chang et al., 1987; Wanta & Golan, 2010).

However, several studies supported the conclusion that cultural affinity would impact news media's selection on international news. For example, a study on Canadian daily newspapers found a remarkable cultural affinity. Newspapers in French language, whose readers often saw themselves as French descendants and saw France as their homeland, produce more news reports on France. Similarly, newspapers in English selected more global news coverage on UK. (Kariel & Rosenvall, 1983). Johnson (1997) collected data from thirty-four American newspapers. It was found that the amount of coverage on Mexico was positively correlated with the percentage of Mexican heritage among audiences.

Location in the world system

From the context-oriented approach, scholars have recognized “the notion of hierarchy among countries in international communication” (Chang T. K., 1998, p. 529). All the nations are not equal in the international communication. The world system theory provides a powerful explanation of the unevenness of international news flow. It suggests that the world is “an interconnected network in which the countries of the world are arrayed along a center-peripheral dimension” (Kim & Barnett, 1996, p. 328). An extensive body of research is based in this theory. In terms of international news flow, the world system theory indicates that all nations around the world are located in three interactive zones of countries: core nations, semi-periphery nations and periphery

nations. Countries which belong to core nations or western industrialized countries are “dominating international news flow” (Kim & Barnett, 1996, p. 344) and more likely to be covered by nations of the other two colleagues (McPhail, 2010; Chang T. K., 1998; Chang, Lau, & Hao, 2000; Wanta & Golan, 2010). It is clear that significant unevenness exists extensively in “economic, political, cultural, media, technical, labor capital and social levels” (McPhail, 2010). Core nations are frequently covered by the international news media while peripheral nations are often out of the “game”.

In this research field, scholars have explored a cluster of different variables which may affect/predict a nation’s position in the world system.

A study of network analysis finds that the “Western industrialized countries” are at the center of the world system; while most “African, Asian, Latin American, and Oceanian countries” are marginalized as peripheral nations (Kim & Barnett, 1996, p. 344). In the field of international news flow, the structure of the world system is characterized by a nation’s economic development, language, physical location, political freedom and population (Kim & Barnett, 1996, p. 347).

Golan (2010) predicted that a country’s position in the world system was affected by “a nation’s GNP (gross national product), exports, military expenditures, population, and geographic size” (Golan G. J., 2010, p. 133). A nation with a large amount of GNP, exports, military expenditure, population, and geographic size would be more likely to be covered by international news media. Generally speaking, “large wealthy powerful nations are more likely to receive coverage than small poor nations” (Golan G. J., 2010, p. 140). However, the result of this study was mixed. Though the variables of population

and military size had a significant positive relationship with media coverage, other variables failed to show stable influence on international news coverage.

According to Chang (1998), the chances of core nations to be covered by news media were much higher than the other two kinds of countries. For the semi-peripheral nations, keeping close interactions with core nations would increase their possibilities of being reported. For the peripheral nations, they were “largely out of the loop” (p. 557), when the international communication just involved a few countries. Thus, the best chance for peripheral nations took place when the international communication involves “a bigger crowd” of nations (p. 557). In this case, the peripheral nations might share some spotlight of core and semi-peripheral nations. In addition, not only inequity existed between different kinds of nations, the imbalance also lay within a colleague of nations.

Based on the international news reporting of U.S. news media, Wanta and Golan (2010) proposed a model of international news coverage on the foundation of the world system theory. According to this study, at least three conclusions could be drawn: firstly, non-core nations with closer international interactions with the United States would be treated as more newsworthy than other non-core nations. Additionally, international trade with the United States and ancestral tied to the United States are attributes which could predict the amount of coverage a non-core nation would receive. Secondly, certain “international attributes would make some peripheral nations more newsworthy than others” (p. 120). These attributes included population, gross domestic product, oil production, nuclear arms capability and military expenditures. Those nations which carried one or several international attributes significantly would draw more attention from the United States’ news media.

The Organizational Approach

The organizational approach explores how internal factors of a news organization impact international news reporting. Scholars have noticed that factors such as circulation size, reliance on wire services, gatekeepers might have influences on international news coverage.

Circulation size/ Organizational size

Scholars noticed that circulation size of a newspaper was one of the internal factors which would influence the news space of global news (Lacy, Chang, & Lau, 1989). By an analysis of U.S. newspaper's coverage on Mexico, Johnson (1997) argued that the circulation size of a newspaper was one of the two strongest predictors of coverage on Mexico. Furthermore, circulation size was the only predictor of the length and source of news reports.

Analyzing 114 U.S. newspapers, Lacy, Chang, and Lau's (1989) research found that large newspapers were more likely to publish international news, because they were able to afford the expensive cost of gathering foreign news. It was also argued that organizational size was "the dominant influence on the news organization's commitment to specialization" in international news reporting (Lowrey et al., 2003, p. 41).

Dependency on wire service

News media's reliance on wire service is another inter-media factor which impacts international news coverage according to past research. It was found that the more foreign news items received from the wire services, the more foreign news would be reported by Indiana small newspapers (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1983). As mentioned before, besides the factor of circulation size, reliance on wire services was another strong predictor for news space assigned to global news (Lacy, Chang, & Lau, 1989).

Cho and Lacy (2000) conducted a study on local daily newspapers in Japan. They found that newspapers which depended on wire services assigned more space to international news and produced more international news stories on conflict and disaster; on the other hand, they argued that circulation size did not affect international news coverage.

Gatekeepers factors

It is professional news editors and reporters who determine which news will be broadcasted or appear in print media (Wu H. D., 1998). Thus, the factors of gatekeepers might have an impact on international news coverage. Kim (2002) researched U.S. television journalists' judgments in international news. It was found that national networks and local television stations were different. National network journalists produced international news with diverse themes while local television reporters chose international news based on a local angle.

It is worth noticing that gatekeepers' decision in international news coverage is influenced by some extra-media factors. For example, the size of the city/ the size of the community might influence the space of international news coverage (Lacy, Chang, & Lau, 1989). Johnson (1997) also found that the more Mexican heritage in population, the more local newspaper covered Mexico. From this perspective, gatekeepers' news selection would be influenced by factors such as timeliness, market/audience demands, and local relevance (Kim S. H., 2002).

Inter-media Agenda Setting & International News Flow

Concluding the three approaches in examining the determinants of international news coverage, it shows that the newsworthiness of international news mainly results from "gatekeepers' assessment of country-based or event-based variables" (Golan G. ,

2006, p. 323). Besides those gatekeeping factors mentioned before, some scholars have noted that inter-media agenda setting is a possible influential factor that impact the “complex international news selection process” (p.324). Golan (2006) analyzed the international news agenda of the morning New York Times and three evening television news programs. Significant correlations were identified, thus scholars argued inter-media agenda setting should be considered to be an influential factor in determining international news coverage.

Also focusing on international news coverage, the current study is aiming at examining the inter-media agenda setting effect of Chinese social media on the agendas of American news media’s coverage on China.

Inter-media Agenda Setting

According to agenda setting theory, publics learn “how much importance to attach” (McCombs M. E., 1972, p. 176) to an issue from the amount and position of coverage the issue received from news media. There are two levels of agenda setting. The first level is “the transmission of object salience”, and the second level of agenda setting is “the transmission of attribute salience” (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001, p. 68). For over four decades, research in agenda setting theory has expanded their scope from public agenda to the factors which shape the media agenda (Golan G. , 2006). Inter-media agenda setting refers to “the influence that mass media agendas have on each other” (Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998, p. 225). In other words, the core argument of inter-media agenda setting theory indicates that salience can transfer from one medium to another.

From the explanations of agenda setting theory, it is clear that media salience is “the key independent variable in agenda setting research” (Kioussis, 2004, p. 71). How to

measure the variable of media salience? Kiousis (2004) proposed three core elements: attention, prominence, and valence. Attention is usually “gauged by the sheer volume of stories or space dedicated to topics” in the media (p. 74); Prominence means that the importance of issues is communicated through “the positioning of a story within a media text” (p. 74). The last one valence refers to “affective elements of news” (p. 75). As for inter-media agenda setting research, the author argued that the attention approach “has been valuable for measuring salience” (p. 74). Thus, this study will adopt the attention approach to measure media salience on different platforms.

Similar with agenda setting theory, inter-media agenda setting also focuses on the transfer of salience; however, it has several differences with agenda setting theory. Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008) pointed out three main differences: (1) agenda setting theory involves “individuals” and “personal priorities” while inter-media agenda setting deals with “institutions/organizations”. (2) It is “attitudinal” when media set the public agenda for individuals; while it is a “behavioral process” when one medium transfer salience to another. (3) Agenda setting usually is “an unconscious process”; however, inter-media agenda setting is “a deliberate action” (p. 861). Based on these three points, it was argued that scholars could not simply apply the explanations for public agenda setting to inter-media agenda setting.

Several reasons were provided to explain why news media learn issue attention from each other. Firstly, Dearing and Rogers (1996) argued that when news professionals did not have much contact directly with their audience, they turned to learn an issue’s priority from other news media. Secondly, when other media imitate a medium’s decision to consider an issue as newsworthy and cover it, the first medium’s

news selecting decision is validated indirectly. That is to say, inter-media agenda setting effect helps “uphold the news norms within the journalistic community” (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008, p. 860). Thirdly, due to the competitive environment of media markets, one medium is likely to emulate peer media’s decision when the decision has been proven to be popular and beneficial (Mathes & Pfetsch, 1991).

A considerable body of studies has proved the influential role of inter-media agenda setting on the media agenda. The effect of inter-media agenda setting exists and differs in different fields of mass communication.

The potential and power of setting agenda are different according to different types of media. In terms of health communication, when covering the drug issue, scholars found that newspapers had inter-media agenda setting on television networks (Reese & Danielian, 1989). Protes and McCombs (1991) found that elite newspapers would influence the media agenda of local newspapers and television news programs. Another study identified significant correlations between local and national newspapers and television on the second-level of agenda setting (McCombs et al., 2000). Generally speaking, when examining medium type and inter-media agenda setting effect, it was argued that newspapers had stronger inter-media agenda setting effects on television than the inter-media agenda setting effects of television on newspapers (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008).

In the area of political campaign, inter-media agenda setting effect was confirmed by quite a few studies. It was noted that political advertising agenda established by political candidates had significant inter-media agenda setting effect on coverage on election issues of both newspapers and television news programs during the 1990

Texas gubernatorial campaign (Roberts & McCombs, 1994). This conclusion was confirmed by another study. A study examined both the first and the second levels of the inter-media agenda setting effect of political advertising in the 1995 Spanish Elections (Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998). They supported the conclusion that political advertising was an influential factor which influenced newspapers and television's agendas in both first and second level of inter-media agenda setting. Also focusing on political advertisements, Boyle (2001) analyzed 116 political advertisements, 818 newspaper stories, and 101 network stories during the 1996 presidential election in the United States. It was found that major party candidate advertisements influenced media's news agenda. However, a more recent study suggested a changing situation: during the 2004 presidential election, advertisements did not impact the media agenda (Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta, 2008).

Online Media and Inter-media Agenda Setting

With the boom of online media, scholarship into inter-media agenda setting also started to look at the influence of online media on other types of media's agenda.

During the 1996 fall political campaign in the United States, Roberts and Santa (2002) found that related coverage from five news media showed an apparent inter-media agenda setting effect on electronic bulletin boards. Another study conducted in South Korea also extended inter-media agenda setting research into the environment of online media. Lim (2006) compared the issue agendas of two online newspapers and one online wire service in South Korea. The result indicated that the leading online newspaper influenced the secondary online newspaper and the online wire service at the first level of agenda setting. Lee, Lancendorfer, and Lee (2005) explored both levels of the inter-media agenda setting effect of Internet bulletin boards on newspaper

coverage during the 2000 general election in South Korea. The results implied that the Internet not only set public agendas, but also affected media agendas. More specifically, during the election, newspapers had inter-media agenda setting effects on Internet bulletin boards at the first level; while the Internet bulletin board in turn set media agenda at the second level of agenda setting. Sweetser, Golan and Wanta (2008) found “strong correlations between blogs and the media agenda” (p. 197); and suggested that media had inter-media agenda setting effect on campaign blogs. More specifically, in terms of the relationship between blogs and television news, a reciprocal inter-media agenda setting effect was found. Another study focused on the inter-media agenda setting effect between online media and print media in China. It was found that online chat room picked and responded to news stories reported by foreign international news agencies more quickly than traditional print media. Furthermore, online media could set media agenda for the newspaper (Li, Qin, & Kluver, 2003).

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As mentioned before, websites, chat rooms, electric bulletin boards, etc. were often-examined types of online media. However, though scholars have begun to research online media's potential of impacting and being influenced by other types of media, they have not expanded their scope much to the social media yet. This study focuses on the effect of inter-media agenda setting between Chinese social media Sina Micro Blog, Chinese state owned news media, and U.S news media. Specifically, as mentioned before, we select media's coverage on the Two Sessions (Lianghui) to examine the two research questions below:

RQ1: What are the inter-media agenda setting effects, if any exists, between Chinese social media (Sina Micro Blog) and state owned news media?

RQ2: What are the inter-media agenda setting effects, if any exists, between Chinese social media (Sina Micro Blog) and U.S media's coverage on China?

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

This study aims at understanding the inter-media relationship among Chinese social media (*Sina Micro Blog*), state-owned news organizations (*People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency*), and U.S news media (*the New York Times* and *the Associated Press*). Micro Blog postings and news coverage were gathered during four time periods. There is a 1 day time lag between each period. All the data were examined using content analysis, and the inter-media agenda setting were measured with cross-lagged correlation tests.

Sampling

According to the study design, three Chinese media – social media Sina Micro Blog, newspaper *People's Daily* and news agency *Xinhua News Agency* and two U.S. news media – newspaper *the New York Times* and *the Associated Press* were selected.

Sina Micro Blog, also known as Sina Weibo, was born in 2009. It has become the most popular micro blog platform in China. A statistical figure showed that in 2011, 40.2% internet users in China had at least one micro blog account (Lv, 2012). Among all the micro blog platforms, Sina Micro Blog is the most popular one. According to iResearch (2011) – a leading market research firm focusing on China's internet industry, Sina Micro Blog took up to "56.5% market share on active users basis and 86.6% browsing time basis". By the end of 2012, Sina Corporation announced that it had 503 million registered users, and 46.2 million daily active users (Mozur, 2013). Sina Micro Blog often serves as a virtual town square for people to have public discussions with "a level of freedom not elsewhere in the country" (Mozur, 2013). Thus, the author assumed that this medium on one hand might have some inter-media influence on other media; on the

other hand, it might be very sensitive and would quickly respond to other media's agendas.

People's Daily is one of the most important propaganda tools of the Communist Party of China. Born in 1946, this daily paper is a part of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Thus, its articles are always thought to be consonant with the voice of the Communist Party of China. Established in 1931, *Xinhua News Agency* is China's "leading integrated news company" and the state news agency (McPhail, 2010). It has been providing censored news articles to state-owned newspapers and broadcast organizations for more than half a century. Now it has started its online business and provided news articles towards publics.

The contents provided both by *People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency* have always been labeled as strictly censored by the Party and the government. In addition, these two media are active media users on the Sina Micro Blog. From this perspective, understanding the inter-media relationships between them and the social media, may shed some light on understanding how the Chinese government disseminates information and responds to public voices.

As to U.S. news media, *the New York Times* and *the Associated Press* were chosen. *The New York Times* is one of the most-examined newspapers in the scholarship of inter-media agenda setting. Furthermore, strong evidence has been found to confirm that it has powerful agenda setting power on other media such as other newspapers, television networks and electronic bulletin boards (Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002; Golan G. , 2006). *The Xinhua News Agency* was chosen as the sample of Chinese news agency, and *the Associated Press (AP)* was selected as the sample of

U.S. news agency. *The Associated Press* has its own Sina Micro Blog account with more than 90,000 followers and over 5,000 postings. Thus, it may be sensitive to the communication circumstances on Sina Micro Blog. From this perspective, I assume that *the New York Times* and *the Associated Press* will influence or be influenced by China's social media platform Sina Micro Blog.

To measure the media agendas of U.S. newspapers and two Chinese state-owned news organizations, the unit of analysis is each news report that related to the Two Sessions (Lianghui). All the news reports were selected from these four media's database. Firstly, all the news reports which mentioned the Two Sessions, the Two Meetings, Lianghui, the National People's Congress, and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference were picked out from the databases. Then, the articles whose main theme were not the Two Sessions -- for example, articles reported President Xi visited Russia after the Two Sessions -- were filtered out.

To measure the media agendas of Sina Micro Blog, each posting related to the topic is considered to be the unit of analysis. Sina Micro Blog publishes the lists of top 100 most influential postings and top 100 most discussed topics of the recent 24 hours every day. The data were collected at noon each day. In the two lists, all the postings and topics that related to the Two Sessions (Lianghui) were selected. Some postings/topics stayed on the list for more than one day, these postings/topics were coded only once when the first time it appeared on the lists.

Time Lag

The time frame is one of the most essential factors when testing agenda setting effect (Wanta & Hu, 1994). According to Winter and Eyal (1981), generally speaking, "the optimal effect span" is four to six weeks (Winter & Eyal, 1981). But scholars have

also noticed that the optimum time lag varied according to different types of media. Wanta (1997) stated the optimal time lag varied from four to five days for national network news to eight weeks for news magazines. Another study conducted by Wanta and Hu (1994) examined five news media. They found different optimal time lag for different media: for national network newscast is one week, for local newscast is two weeks, for regional newspaper is three weeks, and the longest is eight weeks for national news magazines. Additionally, results showed that optimal time lags for all media were shorter than previous studies.

In terms of inter-media agenda setting, most previous studies used fixed lags and did not try to find out the actual lags in the inter-media agenda setting process (Vliegenthart & Walgrave, 2008). But scholars believed that short time lags were more appropriate for inter-media agenda setting research. It was unlikely for an editor to “wait for weeks before picking up an issue that received considerable attention in another medium” (p. 861).

However, several studies promoted an even shorter time lag when online media platforms were involved in the inter-media agenda setting process. Roberts, Wanta, and Dzwo (2002) noted “the time lag for traditional news media to affect online discussions should be relatively short” (p. 455). Sweetser, Golan, and Wanta (2008) asserted that blogs decreased salience time lags, because blogs allowed for instant published reactions to media coverage. This characteristic of blogs is similar with social media such as micro blog. Another study on Korean election also assumed that the time span for examining inter-media agenda effect should be shorter when examining inter-media agenda setting effect between online media and traditional news media (Lee,

Lancendorfer, & Lee, 2005). Previous studies on online media adopted various time lags from one day to one week. However, as a rising type of media, the platform of social media enabled immediate information exchange and discussion. The author also noticed that after the two sessions ended, the relative discussions were quickly replaced by other hot topics. Based on the unique characteristics of social media, the author assumes that the time lag should be very short. As a result, this study adopted a relatively short time lag - one day - to examine inter-media agenda setting effects among different media.

Time Frame

The time frame is another consideration when conducting agenda setting studies. According to Lee, Lancendorfer, and Lee (2005), when examining the inter-media agenda setting effect between the Internet and newspapers, four time periods had stronger evidence than two time periods. Following this result, the time frame of this study was made up of four time periods which were around the duration of the Two Sessions.

As mentioned before, the time lag examined in this study was one day. Thus, we divided a time span of 23 days into four time periods (Time 1, Time 2, Time 3, and Time 4). Time 1 is from Feb. 28th to Mar. 4rd. Time 2 is from Mar. 6th to Mar. 10th. Time 3 starts on Mar. 12th and ends on Mar. 16th. The last period Time 4 is from Mar. 18th to Mar. 22th. Each time period lasts for five days.

Coding

After a preliminary examination of data, each unit of content analysis was coded into different categories based on its theme. In total there were seven categories: conference services and schedule, achievements, reform, social issues, leadership,

representatives and influences. Any unit which contains more than one theme was coded into only one category according to its main theme.

To insure the reliability of the coding process, 25% of the data (25 social media postings/topics, 90 state-owned media news articles, and 10 news reports from U.S. media) were randomly selected to test the inter-coder reliability. Examples of each category were provided to help coders categorize each analysis unit. Two independent coders, including the author, coded these selected data, and inter-coder reliability was tested. The inter-coder reliability was 86.4% in this study. The disagreements resulted from a considerable body of news articles with more than one theme. It was difficult for the coders to decide the central theme of the news story. For example, some news stories from *Xinhua News Agency* covered a proposal for reform/legislation made by famous representatives. It was difficult to decide whether this article should be classified in the category of representatives or reform. However, the inter-coder reliability exceeded a desirable amount of 75% (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006), thus it was acceptable in this study.

Data Analysis

In most traditional inter-media agenda setting studies, scholars applied cross lagged correlation and Rozelle-Campbell baseline to measure the influence of one medium on another (e.g Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Lopez-Escobar et al. 1998; Lee, Lancendorfer & Lee, 2005; and Lim, 2006). To assess consistency of issue agendas, Tedesco (2005) adopted Pearson correlations. Since these approaches proved to be reliable in previous research, this study will also adopt them to explore the inter-media agenda setting effects among different media.

Based on the time frame mentioned before, three cross-lagged correlation analyses can be conducted: Time 1 – Time 2, Time 2 – Time 3, and Time 3 – Time 4. The cross-lagged correlation allows “causal inferences to be made from correlational data” (Lee, Lancendorfer, & Lee, 2005, p. 65). When examining the inter-media agenda setting relationship between media X and Y from Time 1 to Time 2, researchers need to calculate three types and six correlations: the synchronous correlations $X1/Y1$ and $X2/Y2$, the autocorrelations $X1/X2$ and $Y1/Y2$, and the cross-lagged correlations $X1/Y2$ and $X2/Y1$ (Kenny, 1973). The theoretical model is shown in Figure 4-1.

The Rozelle-Campbell baseline set one of the criteria of correlations. It refers to “the level of correlation to be expected on the basis of the autocorrelations and synchronous correlations alone” (Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998, p. 233). The formula for the Rozelle-Campbell baseline is:

$$\frac{X1/Y1 + X2/Y2}{2} \sqrt{\frac{(X1/X2)^2 + (Y1/Y2)^2}{2}} \quad (4-1)$$

To test the inter-media relationship by using cross-lagged correlation and Rozelle-Campbell baseline, two conditions need to be satisfied: firstly, the cross-lagged correlation between influencing medium and influenced medium needs to exceed the autocorrelation of the influenced medium; secondly, the cross-lagged correlation needs to exceed the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (Tedesco, 2005). Simply speaking, when $X1/Y2 > Y1/Y2$ and $X1/Y2 >$ the Rozelle-Campbell baseline, scholars can suggest the existence of inter-media agenda setting effects of medium X at Time 1 on medium Y at Time 2. Similarly, medium Y at Time 1 set agenda on medium X at Time 2, when $Y1/X2 > X1/X2$ and $Y1/X2 >$ the Rozelle-Campbell baseline.

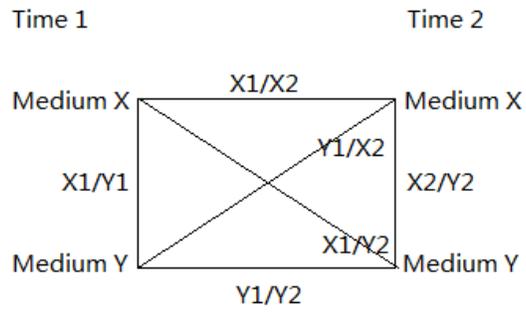


Figure 4-1. Cross-lagged Correlation Model

CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

In total, 498 units of analysis were identified. 105 news articles and postings were found in Time 1. The amount of coverage reached a peak with 186 units in Time 2, and then slightly decreased to 163 in Time 3. In time 4, the amount of media attention dropped sharply. Only 44 articles and postings were found. Generally, five days before its opening, the Two Sessions began to receive media coverage (Time 1). The greatest amount of media attention focused on the first half of the event (Time 2). And after the conferences ended, there was a rapid decline in the amount of media coverage which indicated that media's attention quickly turned to other newsworthy events. Table 5-1 to 5-3 shows the agenda of each kind of news media in each time period.

The Sina Micro Blog Agenda

A total amount of 100 postings/topics on the Two Sessions was found on the platform of the Sina Micro Blog. 23 postings/topics on the Two Sessions were in the top 100 lists in Time 1. The number reached a peak in Time 2 with 39 postings/topics. In Time 3, media attention received by the Two Sessions on Micro Blog decreased to 28, and when the Two Sessions ended, only 10 postings/topics got great attention from Sina Micro Blog users.

In more detail, in Time 1, Reform was the most concerned issue on social media platform, whose proportion got to 52.17%. More than half of media attention was on what changes might occur and what proposals might be discussed. Conference Services, Achievements, Representatives got the same amount of media attention. Each of them took up 13%. In Time 2, Reform still got the greatest amount of attention from Sina Micro Blog users, with a proportion of 53.85%. Meanwhile, Representatives

and social issues came into public view. They took up 17.95% and 12.82% respectively. It indicated that the public started to become concerned about who were speaking for them and what social problems the nation was facing. In Time 3, 8 hot postings and 7 hot topics on Reform took up 53.57% of all the 28 hot postings/topics on the Two Sessions. During this time period, President Xi and Premier Li were elected to be the new leaders of the nation. Moreover, the new lineup of the State Council was endorsed by the NPC. Sina Micro Blog users began to discuss the transaction of power. Thus, the category of Leadership accounted for a proportion of 17.86%, becoming the second most-discussed issue during this time period. In Time 4, the public's attention on the Two Sessions faded out sharply. Social Issues, Achievements, and Influence received no media attention at all. However, the discussion on leadership stayed heated in Time 4. 50% of the selected postings/topics focused on the new leaders of the nation.

Overall, Reform, Representatives, and Leadership were the most discussed issues on the social media platform. These three categories accounted for 50%, 16%, and 12% of all the selected hot postings/topics respectively. On the contrary, the influence of this event received no media attention at all, since no hot postings or topics fell into this category through all the four time periods.

The Chinese State-Owned Media Agenda

There were 359 news reports on the Two Sessions from *the Xinhua News Agency* (161 news articles) and *People's Daily* (198 articles). Similarly, the amount of news coverage peaked in the Time 2 period with 137 news reports in total. In the other three time periods, there were 76 (Time 1), 117 (Time 3), and 29 (Time 4) articles respectively.

Time 1 lasted from three days before the Two Sessions till the second day of the People's Political Consultative Conference. In this phase, the conference services and schedule drew lots of media attention from the state-owned news organizations. 26 articles accounted for 34.21% of all the selected data in this period. The state-owned news media also wrote a considerable body of news stories on those delegates who were speaking for Chinese people at the conferences and what changes might be brought after the conferences. As a result, the categories of reform and representatives respectively took up 25% and 14.47% of all the state-owned media's coverage of the Two Sessions during this time period. In Time 2, reform became the most covered issue. 39 news articles were classified into this category with a proportion of 28.47%. However, unlike Sina Micro Blog whose attention was highly concentrating on the reform issue, the state-owned news organizations also divided their attention to the social issues and the achievements which the government had made. News articles on social issues accounted for 27.01%. Slightly less than social issues, 30 news reports on achievements took up a proportion of 21.90%. In Time 3, almost half of the news reports (51 out of 117 articles) focused on the issue of reform. Social issues (20 articles) and conference services and schedule (18 articles) ranked second and third. In the last time period, there was a significant decrease in the amount of media coverage. Leadership became the most covered issue. Its nine articles took up 31.03% of all the 29 articles.

Throughout the four time periods, reform was the most covered issue out of the seven categories, with 116 news reports from the state-owned news media. This category took up 32.32% of all coverage on the Two Sessions from this type of news

media channel. Following the category of reform, social issues and conference services and schedule ranked as second and third most-covered issues. Social issues received 61 news articles which accounted for a proportion of 16.99%. This proportion is much larger than Sina Micro Blog's 9%. 57 news reports (15.89%) fell into the category of conference services and schedule.

The U.S. News Media Agenda

As international news organizations, U.S. news media's coverage on Chinese Two Sessions were much less than domestic media in China. 39 news articles were found in total. Unlike domestic media, whose number of news reports peaked in Time 2, U.S news media had the largest number of news articles in Time 3 with 18 news stories. Time 1 only received 6 news stories. Time 2 and Time 4 received 10 news articles separately.

In Time 1, social issues and leadership were the only two covered issues. Each took up 50% of the 6 news stories. In Time 2, reform, social issues and conference services and schedule got covered by the U.S. media. Half of the news reports focused on the reform which might take place during and after the conferences. 40% of the news reports covered the social issues and 10% was about conference services and schedule. In Time 3, the Two Sessions got the largest number of news reports from the U.S. news media. One third of them were focusing on social issues. Both reform and leadership got four news reports. Each of them took up a proportion of 22.22%. 5 news reports were found in Time 4. Both social issues and leadership took up 40% of all the news articles in this time period. Reform got one piece of news coverage, which accounted for 20%.

Generally, social issues, reform and leadership were the most covered issues of the U.S news media. Social issues got 15 news reports, which was 38.46% of all the 39 news reports. Reform was the second most-covered issue with 10 news stories, which took up a proportion of 25.64%. The third one was the leadership of China. 9 news articles accounted for 23.08%. On the other hand, the achievements that the Chinese government had made and the representatives who attended the Two Sessions were the least concerned issues of the U.S. news media. Only 1 news article talked about the achievements of Chinese government. And the representatives received no coverage at all.

Pearson Correlations

Table 5-4 shows agenda correlations between different types of media and between different time periods. Throughout the whole time span, 12 pairs of news agendas were tested to be strongly correlated. They are: the social media news agendas in Time 1 and Time 2 ($r=.951$), in Time 1 and Time 3 ($r=.867$), in Time 2 and Time 3 ($r=.942$); the U.S. news agenda in Time 1 and Time 3 ($r=.772$), in Time 1 and Time 4 ($r=.923$), in Time 3 and Time 4 ($r=.908$); the social media news agenda in Time 1 and the state-owned media's news agenda in Time 3 ($r=.912$), the social media news agenda in Time 2 and the state-owned media's news agenda in time 3 ($r=.870$), the social media news agenda in Time 2 and the U.S. news agenda in Time 2 ($r=.769$), the social media news agenda in Time 3 and the state-owned media's news agenda in Time 3 ($r=.822$); the state-owned media's news agenda in Time 2 and the U.S. news agenda in Time 2 ($r=.791$), the U.S. news agenda in Time 2 and the state-owned news media's agenda in Time 3 ($r=.869$).

As shown in Table 5-4, correlations of the Sina Micro Blog at Time 1 with Time 2 ($r=.951, p<.01$), Time 2 to Time 3 ($r=.942, p<.01$) were strongly significant. Though the correlation between Time 3 and Time 4 was not significant ($r=.407$), Sina Micro Blog's news agendas were consistent at most of the time, especially during the event.

Interestingly, the agendas of Chinese state-owned media were not consistent throughout the four time periods. The Pearson correlations – Time 1 and 2 ($r=.104$), Time 2 and 3 ($r=.710$), and Time 3 and 4 ($r=.141$) – were not significant. From this perspective, the news agendas of state-owned media might be influenced by other factors. To examine *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* separately, Pearson Correlation showed that *Xinhua News Agency* maintained a consistent news agenda from Time 2 to Time 3 ($r=.812, p<.05$). However, the correlations between Time 1 and Time 2 ($r=.312$), Time 3 and Time 4 ($r=.345$) were not significant. Correlations of *People's Daily* news agendas were not significant through all the four time periods. Within *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily*, the correlation of *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* were significant in Time 1 ($r=.804, p<.05$). In Time 3, the correlation between *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* were strongly significant ($r=.895, p<.01$). It implied that the two state-owned news media maintained similar news agendas in Time 1 and Time 3.

In terms of the U.S. news media agenda, between Time 1 and Time 2, the Pearson Correlation was 0.182. Between Time 2 and Time 3, the correlation was 0.732. Both of them were not significant, which showed that U.S. news agendas on the Two Sessions were not consistent from Time 1 to Time 3. However, there was a strongly significant correlation between Time 3 and Time 4 ($r=.908, p<.01$). It indicates that U.S.

news media failed to maintain consistent agendas most of the time. There were two strongly significant correlations within the two U.S. news media. Between Time 3 and Time 4, news agendas of *the Associated Press* were strongly correlated ($r=.966$). Similarly, the correlation of *the New York Times* at Time 2 with Time 3 ($r=.943$) were strongly significant, which showed that it kept consistent news agendas during the event. Furthermore, in Time 1 the correlation between *the Associated Press* and *the New York Times* were strongly significant ($r=1.000$). In Time 2, the correlation between the two U.S. news organizations were significant ($r=.806$). It implies that at Time 1 and Time 2, U.S. news organizations kept similar news agendas on covering the Two Sessions of China.

Overall, comparing the agendas of three different kinds of news media, Chinese social media maintained more consistent news agendas than state-owned news media and the U.S. news organizations throughout the four time periods.

Results of Cross-lagged Correlation Analyses

Research question 1 explores the inter-media agenda setting effects between Sina Micro Blog and Chinese state-owned news media. To answer this question, the cross-lagged correlations were performed and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline was calculated. The results of cross-lagged correlation were shown in Figure 5-2.

As mentioned before, when media X in Time 1 has inter-media agenda setting effect on media Y in Time 2, the Pearson correlation of X1 with Y 2 must both exceed the correlation of Y1 with Y2 and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline. As shown in Figure 5-2, from Time 1 to Time 2, the correlation between Sina Micro Blog in Time 1 and Chinese state-owned media in Time 2 was 0.677. It exceeded both the autocorrelation of the state-owned media ($r=.104$) and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.404$). Thus,

Sina Micro Blog in the first time period had inter-media agenda setting effects on the state-owned media in the second time period. From Time 2 to Time 3, the cross-lagged correlation of Sina Micro Blog in Time 2 with state-owned media in Time 3 ($r=.807$) was larger than the autocorrelation of state-owned media in the two time periods ($r=.710$). Meanwhile, it exceeded the Rozelle-Campbell baseline, which was 0.608 at this time. The researcher suggests that Sina Micro Blog in Time 2 set the news agenda for the Chinese state-owned media in Time 3. Similarly, from Time 3 to 4, the correlation between Sina Micro Blog agenda in Time 3 and Chinese state-owned media in Time 4 ($r=.337$) was larger than the autocorrelation of Chinese state-owned media ($r=.141$). It exceeded the calculated Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.197$) as well. The inter-media agenda setting effects existed throughout the whole time span. The author concludes that Sina Micro Blog had inter-media agenda setting influences on Chinese state-owned news media when covering the Two Sessions.

To test whether the inter-media agenda setting effects were reciprocal, the author analyzed whether *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* set agenda for Sina Micro Blog. From Time 1 to Time 2, the cross-lagged correlation ($r=.308$) exceeded neither the autocorrelation of Sina Micro Blog ($r=.951$) nor the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.404$). Thus, the inter-media agenda setting didn't exist between these two time periods. Similarly, from Time 2 to Time 3 and from Time 3 to Time 4, the cross-lagged correlations were smaller than both the autocorrelations of Micro Blog and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline. Thus, there was no evidence showing that the state-owned media impacted the news agenda of social media platform.

To sum up, the cross-lagged correlation analysis provided evidence of Sina Micro Blog's inter-media agenda setting effects on Chinese state-owned news media throughout the four time periods. The researcher suggests that Sina Micro Blog set the news agenda for the Chinese state-owned news media on covering the Two Sessions in 2013. However, the reciprocal influence was not found.

Research question 2 concerned whether there was inter-media agenda setting influence between Chinese social media (Sina Micro Blog) and U.S. media. The results of cross-lagged correlation analysis were shown in Figure 5-3.

From Time 1 to Time 2, the cross-lagged correlation of Sina Micro Blog in Time 1 with U.S. media in Time 2 ($r=.727$) exceeded the autocorrelations of U.S. media in Time 1 and Time 2 ($r=.182$). At the same time, it exceeded the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.131$). Thus, Sina Micro Blog in Time 1 had inter-media agenda setting influences on U.S. media in Time 2. At the Time 2 to Time 3 period, Sina Micro Blog in Time 2 and U.S. media in Time 3 had a correlation of 0.299, it was smaller than both the autocorrelation of U.S. media and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline. It indicated the inter-media agenda setting effects didn't exist during this time period. During the Time 3 to Time 4 period, though the correlation of Sina Micro Blog in Time 3 with U.S. media in Time 4 ($r=.303$) exceeded the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.281$), it was far less than the autocorrelation of U.S. media ($r=.908$). As a result, no evidence proved the existence of any inter-media agenda setting influence.

The author also examined whether U.S. media had any inter-media agenda setting influence on Chinese social media. At Time 1 to Time 2 period, there was a negative correlation between U.S. media in Time 1 and Sina Micro Blog in Time 2 ($r=-$

.197), which is much less than the autocorrelation of Sina Micro Blog ($r=.951$) and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.131$). During Time 2-3 period, the cross-lagged correlation from U.S. media to Sina Micro Blog ($r=.642$) exceeded the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.463$). But it was less than the autocorrelation of Sina Micro Blog ($r=.942$). At Time 3 to Time 4, the correlation of U.S. media in Time 3 with Sina Micro Blog in Time 4 ($r=.183$) failed to exceed the autocorrelation of Sina Micro Blog ($r=.407$) and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.281$). The researcher concludes that no evidence showed any inter-media agenda setting effect from U.S. media to Sina Micro Blog.

To answer the Research Question 2, according to the cross-lagged correlation analysis, in most of the time, there was no inter-media agenda setting influence between Chinese social media platform and U.S. news organizations. However, during the Time 1 to Time 2 period, the Sina Micro Blog had inter-media agenda setting influence on the U.S. media.

Through the cross-lagged correlation analysis, the researcher suggests that among Sina Micro Blog, Chinese state-owned news media, and U.S. news organizations, the Sina Micro Blog was the most powerful media in influencing the issue agenda of other news media. Throughout the four time periods, Sina Micro Blog was influencing the issue agendas of state-owned news media on covering the Two Sessions. The agenda of Sina Micro Blog in Time 1 had inter-media agenda setting effect on the agenda of U.S. media as well. On the contrary, the other two types of news media seemed to have no influence on social media at all.

Table 5-1. Issue Agenda of Sina Micro Blog

	Sina Micro Blog Agendas			
	2.28-3.4	3.6-3.10	3.12-3.16	3.18-3.22
Social Problem	2	5	2	0
Conference services and Schedule	3	2	0	1
Achievement	3	2	2	0
Leadership	0	2	5	5
Representatives	3	7	4	2
Reform	12	21	15	2
Influence	0	0	0	0
Total	23	39	28	10

Table 5-2. Issue Agenda of Chinese State-Owned Media

	Chinese State-Owned Media Agendas			
	2.28-3.4	3.6-3.10	3.12-3.16	3.18-3.22
Social Problem	4	37	20	0
Conference services and Schedule	26	11	18	2
Achievement	7	30	13	3
Leadership	2	2	10	9
Representatives	11	14	3	0
Reform	19	39	51	7
Influence	7	4	2	8
Total	76	137	117	29

Table 5-3. Issue Agenda of U.S. Media

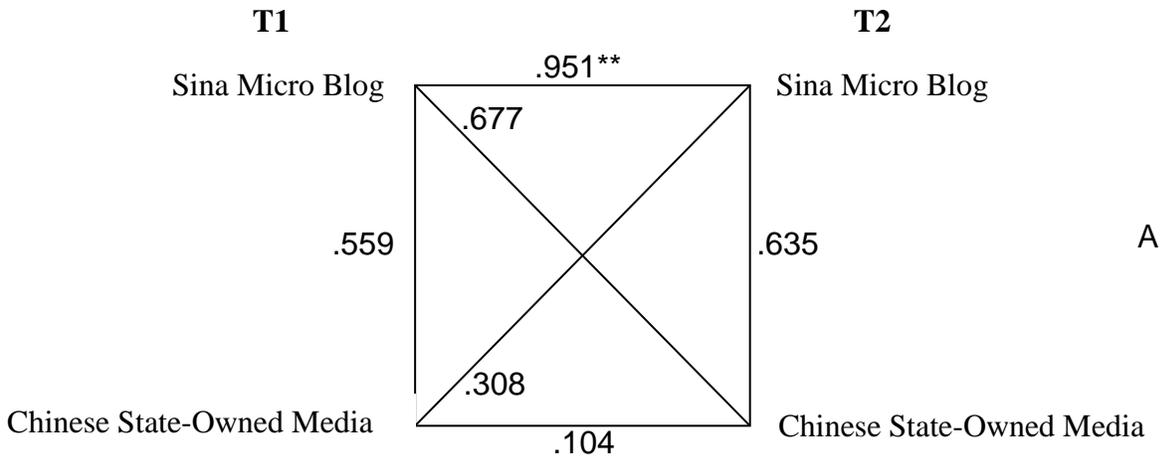
	U.S. Media Agendas			
	2.28-3.4	3.6-3.10	3.12-3.16	3.18-3.22
Social Problem	3	4	6	2
Conference services and Schedule	0	1	2	0
Achievement	0	0	1	0
Leadership	3	0	4	2
Representatives	0	0	0	0
Reform	0	5	4	1
Influence	0	0	1	0
Total	6	10	18	5

Table 5-4. Issue Agenda Correlation Matrix

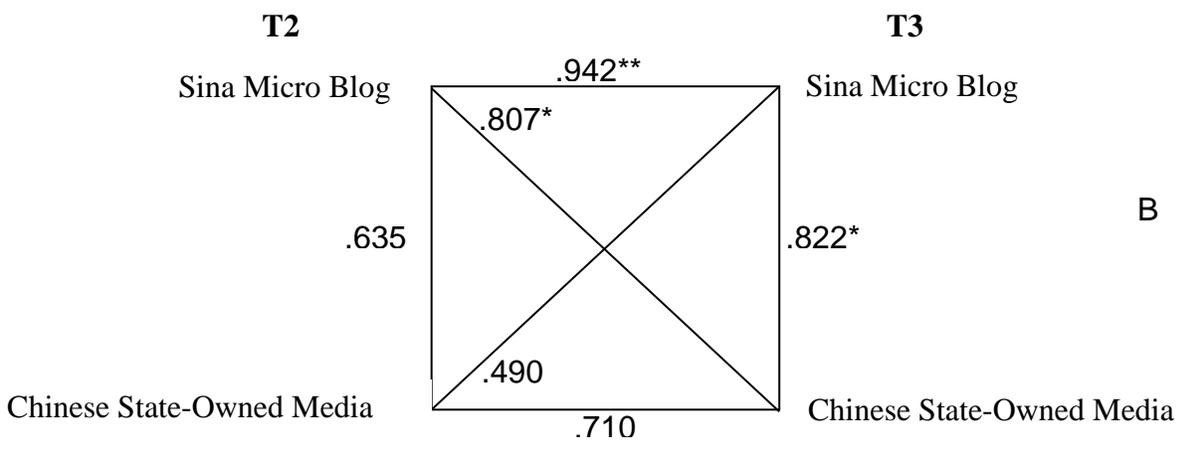
	Micro Blog T1	Micro Blog T2	Micro Blog T3	Micro Blog T4	State-Owned Media T1	State-Owned Media T2	State-Owned Media T3	State-Owned Media T4	U.S. Media T1	U.S. Media T2	U.S. Media 3	U.S. Media T4
Micro Blog T1	1	.951**	.867*	.003	.559	.677	.912**	.040	-.384	.727	.188	-.018
Micro Blog T2	.951**	1	.942**	.157	.382	.635	.870*	.082	-.197	.769*	.299	.174
Micro Blog T3	.867*	.942**	1	.407	.211	.490	.822*	.337	-.066	.642	.328	.303
Micro Blog T4	.003	.157	.407	1	-.133	-.407	.049	.473	.404	-.141	.183	.470
State-Owned Media T1	.559	.382	.211	-.133	1	.104	.469	-.176	-.619	.254	-.192	-.471
State-Owned Media T2	.677	.635	.490	-.407	.104	1	.710	-.374	-.003	.791*	.448	.216
State-Owned Media T3	.912**	.870*	.822*	.049	.469	.710	1	.141	-.071	.869*	.534	.290
State-Owned Media T4	.040	.082	.337	.473	-.176	-.374	.141	1	.064	-.090	.090	.197
U.S. Media T1	-.384	-.197	-.066	.404	-.619	-.003	-.071	.064	1	.182	.772*	.923**
U.S. Media T2	.727	.769*	.642	-.141	.254	.791*	.869*	-.090	.182	1	.732	.478
U.S. Media T3	.188	.299	.328	.183	-.192	.448	.534	.090	.772*	.732	1	.908**
U.S. Media 4	-.018	.174	.303	.470	-.471	.216	.290	.197	.923**	.478	.908**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

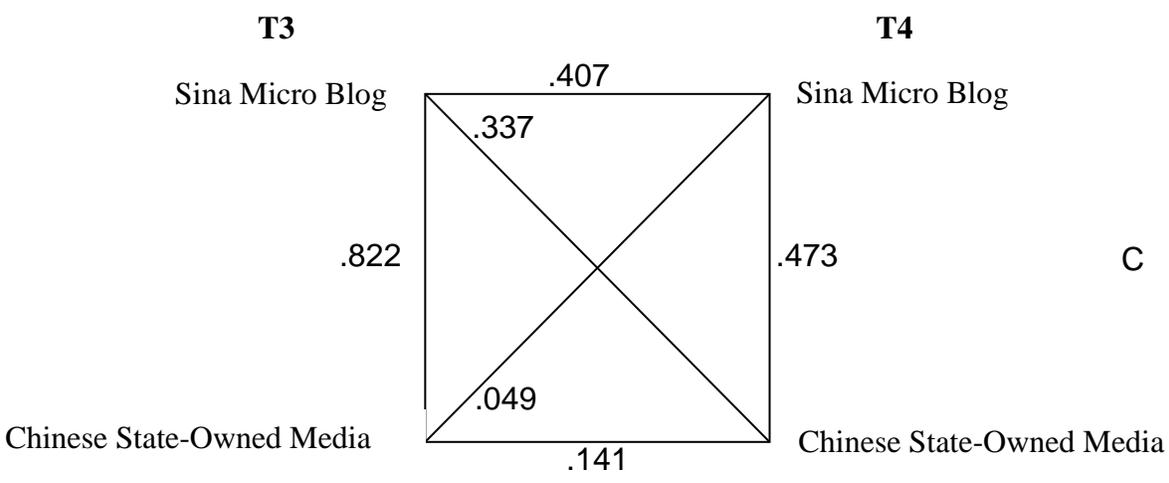
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



The Rozelle-Campbell baseline= .404



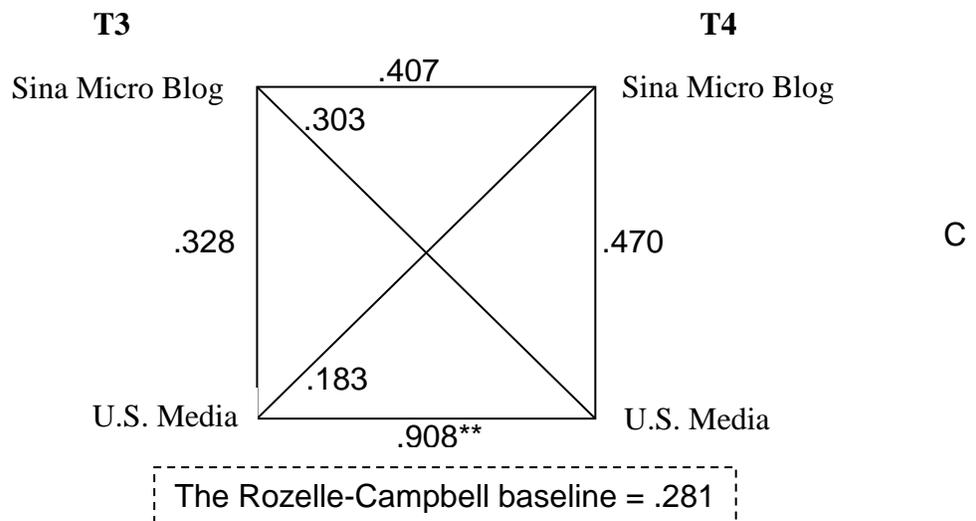
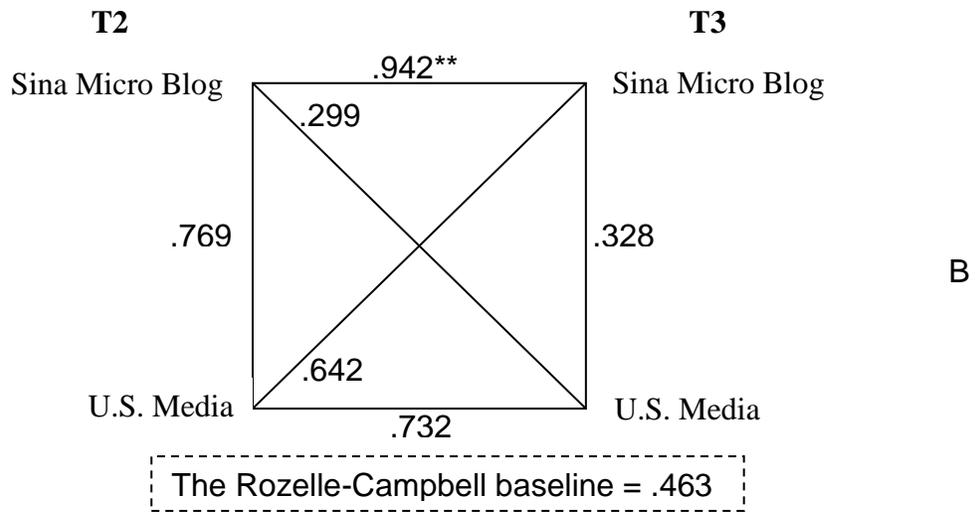
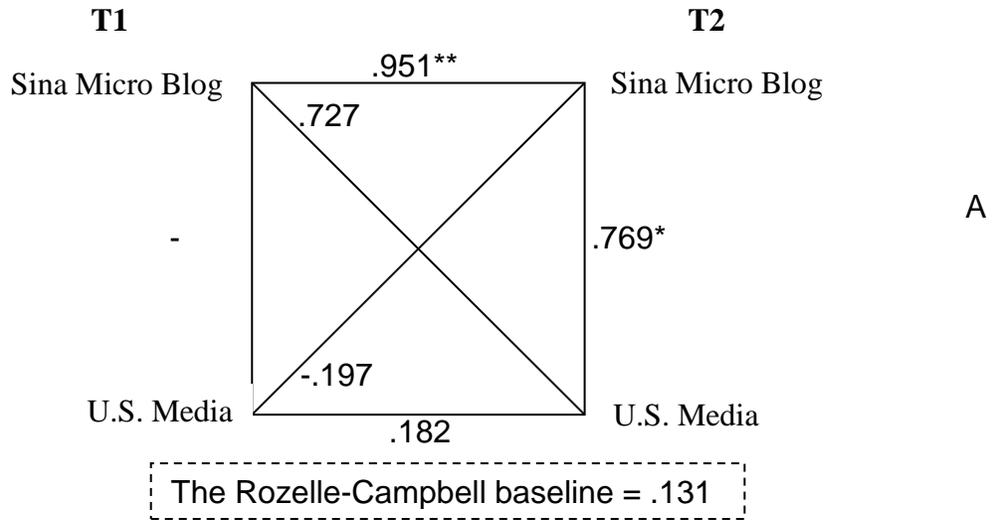
The Rozelle-Campbell baseline= .608



The Rozelle-Campbell baseline= .197

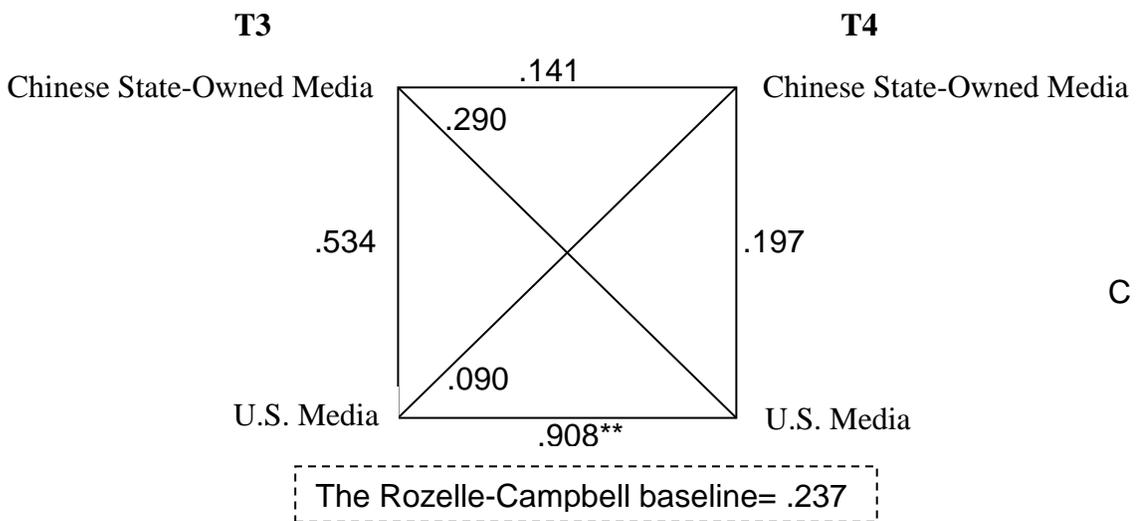
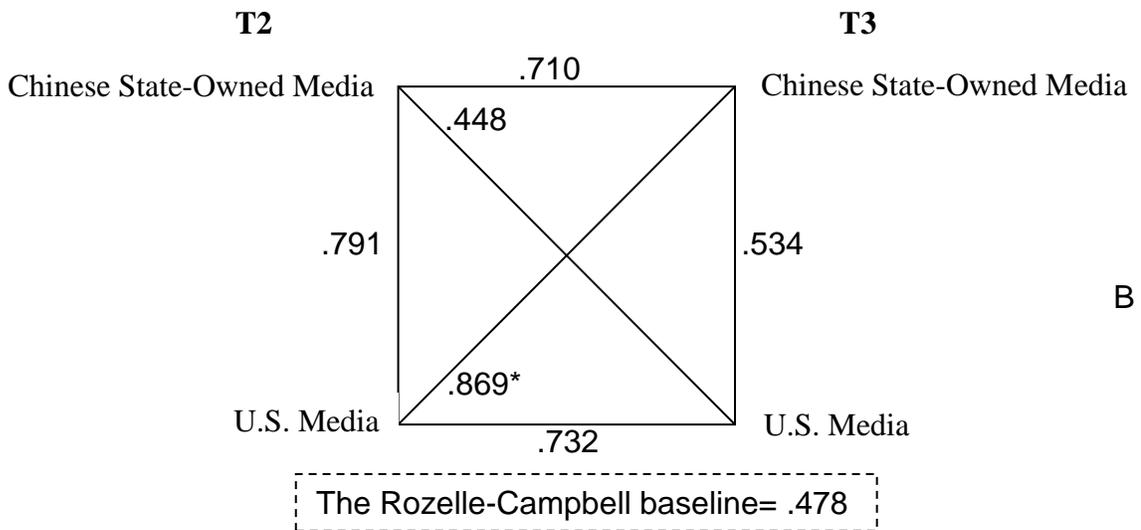
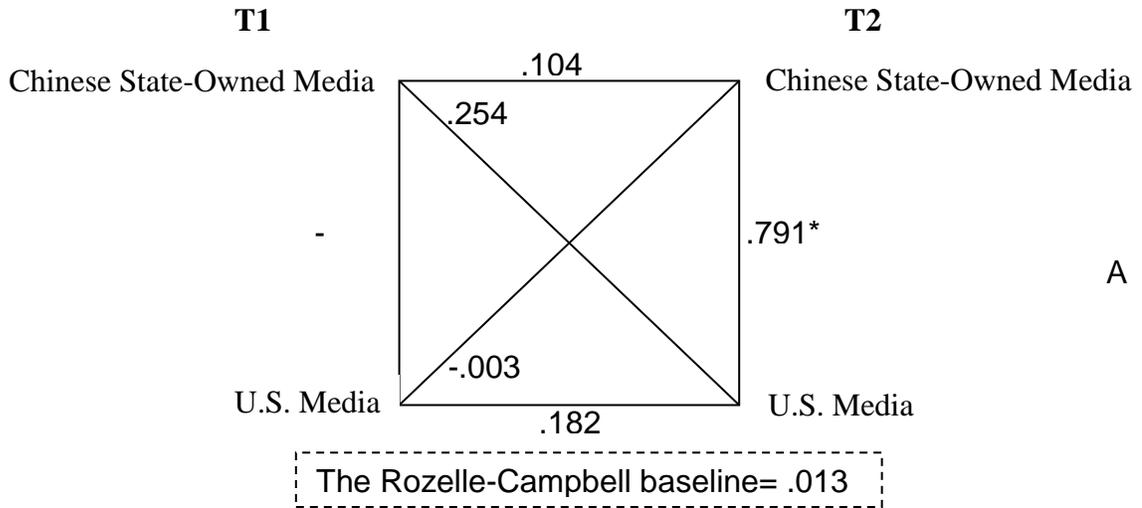
** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Figure 5-1. Issue Agenda Correlations for Sina Micro Blog and State-Owned Media



** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Figure 5-2. Issue Agenda Correlations for Sina Micro Blog and U.S. Media.



** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Figure 5-3. Issue Agenda Correlations for State-Owned Media and U.S. Media

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

Media Agendas

According to the content analysis, the most concerned issues were different according to different types of media. On social media platform, reform and representatives were the most discussed issues. It shows the opinion of social media users in China, which was at least 46.2 million daily active users, towards the NPCI and CCPPCC. Chinese people cared most about what changes might take place after the two conferences. In the category of reform, micro bloggers discussed a lot about the proposals which parliamentary representatives made to the government. Many legislative proposals, like legalizing gay marriage, were debated on social media platform, though NPC didn't pass these proposals. On social media, the users' discussions on the representatives of the two meetings revealed the public's attitude toward democracy. An example was the discussion on Jilan Shen, who had been a parliamentary representative ever since the 1st NPC. During an interview, she said she was proud of never voting no in NPC. After this interview was released, there was strong criticism on her on the Sina Micro Blog. During the discussion, the public began to think and debate who should be elected to the Two Sessions to speak for the public interest.

According to the Chinese state-owned media, the most covered issues were reform and social issues. Like Sina Micro Blog, state-owned media paid great attention on reforms. But the second most-covered issue of state-owned media agenda was different from social media platform. *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* wrote a considerable number of news stories on what social issues the government needed to

deal with. Most of them implied that these issues would be discussed during the Two Sessions and actions would be taken to solve the problems. For the state-owned news media, on one hand, it was a way to show the government's awareness of important social issues. On the other hand, it indicated potential social changes in the future. Thus, public's dissatisfactions towards the government might be reduced. In addition, the proportion of coverage on achievements of the state-owned media news articles (14.76%) greatly exceeded the social media platform's (7%) and the U.S. media's (2%) coverage on the same issue category throughout the whole time span. It implied that the Chinese state-owned media were building a more positive image of the Chinese government than the other two types of media.

From this perspective, the news articles from state-owned were still tools of the government to ease the social tensions.

For the U.S media, the category of social issues in China was the No.1 important issue in covering the Two Sessions, followed by the category of reform. On one hand, the U.S media wrote quite a few news stories to report the social issues and problems, such as pollution and corruption. On the other hand, the topic of achievements was mostly ignored by the Western media (only 1 news article throughout the time span). This imbalance is consistent with the findings of previous studies that in international news flow, the majority of stories about the Third World usually focused on negative news (Masmoudi, 1979). Negative coverage of a nation often leads to negative perceptions of that nation (Wanta et al., 2004). This imbalance in news coverage might bring negative perceptions towards China from American viewers.

Inter-media Agenda Setting Effect

The result of RQ 1 implies that the social media nowadays in China may serve as an influential platform. It sets the news agenda for state-owned media. This result is consistent with the conclusion of Lee, Lancendorfer, and Lee (2005), who argue that Internet affected media agendas during the 2000 general election in South Korea. There is a tendency that online platforms are becoming more and more influential.

The result also revealed some practical implications for the media system in China. Traditionally, Chinese state-owned media were thought to be an organ of Chinese government, the voice of the government and the Communist Party of China. However, the result of this research showed that public opinions on social media could, to some degree, affect the state-owned media. From this perspective, the social media, where the public may express their opinions, can serve as a channel to facilitate the communication between government and the public. When the public's opinion becomes so important that the state-owned media cannot ignore, the news stories from the state-owned media will make the government aware of this public opinion. On the other hand, these news reports delivered the messages from the government as well. In fact, nowadays major state-owned media in China also have their Sina Micro Blog account. And their postings are usually interpreted as political implications by social media users.

The result of RQ 2 showed that American news organizations can hardly influence the Chinese social media platform. It is not difficult to understand. Since Sina Micro Blog was a platform with low entry barriers, most of the users were illiterate in English. Sina Micro Blog users did not have the habit of reading news stories from international news media. Moreover, the media censorship in China also played a role

in limiting the influences of foreign news media. Min Jiang (2010) identified four main deliberative cyberspaces in China: central propaganda spaces, government-regulated commercial spaces, emergent civic spaces, and international deliberative spaces. The forth one means that some websites and services which are hosted beyond China are blocked by Chinese government. In China, some *New York Times* news articles were filtered by the Great Firewall in China. Social media users could not get access to them, unless circumvention tools were applied. Thus, international news media can hardly influence any social media platforms nowadays.

Interestingly, when examining whether U.S. news media were affected by Chinese social media platform, it was found that from Time 1 to Time 2, the correlation of Sina Micro blog in Time 1 with U.S. media in Time 2 ($r=.727$) exceeded both the autocorrelation of U.S. media ($r=.182$) and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.131$). So did the Chinese state-owned media. As showed in Figure 5-3, the within-media correlation of state-owned media in Time 1 with U.S. media in Time 2 ($r=.254$) was larger than the autocorrelation of U.S. media ($r=.182$) and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline ($r=.013$). Since Time 1 was before the Two Sessions. The agendas of Chinese media might be a guide for the U.S. media professionals to know what would be newsworthy during the conferences. This finding also supported the findings of previous studies that gatekeepers would be a factor that influence the international news flow.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, though staticstical analysis suggest that social media in Time 1 set news agenda for U.S. news media in Time 2, it is noticed that during Time 1 and Time 2, U.S. news media agenda was so concentrating on certain topics that quite a few issues received no coverage at all. The lack of variety might

inflate the correlations between agenda of social media and agenda of U.S media, and thus hurt the cross-lagged correlations. Second, every unit of content analysis was coded into only one issue category according to its main theme. However, the author found that news stories from the U.S. news media were often quite long, containing more than one theme; on the contrary, messages from social media were quite short and concentrating due to the 140 characters limitation. Coding each U.S. media's news story into only one theme might result in neglect of important information. Some important issues covered by U.S. news media might fail to appear in the analysis of U.S. news agendas. And this limitation may also influence the results of statistical analyses.

The study reveals some topics of future research. For example, the power of social media needs further examination.

First, this study examined only the inter-media agenda setting at the first level. Though the social media news agenda influenced the agenda of state-owned media, the attributes these media focused on might be different. Also take Jilan Shen, a member of NPC, as an example, on social media, public quoted and highlighted her saying that she was proud of never voting No during the conferences. However, the state-owned media paid attention to her achievements on striving for women's rights. From this perspective, even on covering the same issue, social media platform and state-owned media may adopt different tone, emphasize different attributes of the issue. As a result, the power of social media is limited.

Second, the agenda of social media platform might be manipulated by the government. Since China is often thought to be a country with strict media censorship and lack of media freedom, it is possible for the government to manipulate the hot

postings and hot topics on social media. Actually, sometimes sensitive messages in social media might be labeled as “not appropriate for publishing” and then filtered out. A previous statistical analysis of 56 million messages from Sina Micro Blog showed that 212,583 messages had been deleted (Bamman, 2012). To check whether all the voices on the Two Sessions were checked and tailored by the government, the author randomly selected a posting on March 14th. It was about the reform of the Ministry of Railways. The latest 100 comments were analyzed and classified into positive, negative, and neutral, according to their tones. The result shows that 47 of them were negative, 12 were neutral, and the remaining 41 were positive. The fact that there were more negative comments than positive ones showed that social media did allow the public to express its dissatisfaction toward the government. However, though it indicates that the social media to some degree allow the freedom of speech, this single example cannot accurately define the freedom on social media platform. Further research could help determine whether there is a trend toward freedom in topic board.

Third, this paper chose the Two Sessions as the topic. Further research is needed to find out whether social media still have inter-media agenda setting influences on other media platforms when covering other types of issues.

Conclusions

This research examined the inter-media agenda setting influences among Chinese social media platform Sina Micro Blog, Chinese state-owned media, and U.S. news organizations, when these three types of media covered the 2013 Two Sessions of China. The findings showed that Sina Micro Blog influenced the agenda of Chinese state-owned media. Most of the time, there was no evidence of inter-media agenda setting effects between social media platform and the U.S. media platform, nor between

state-owned media and the U.S. media. However, during the first half of the event, the news agenda of U.S. media was influenced by the other two media.

APPENDIX
CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING SHEET

Variable	Instruction	Code
Article/Posting ID	Consecutively number each news article/ Micro Blog Posting/Micro Blog Topic	
Coder	The Coder's Name	
Media Source	The media channel which made the news product 1=Sina Micro Blog 2=The Xinhua News Agency 3=People's Daily 4=The New York Times 5=The Associated Press	
Time	The date on which the news product published 1=Time 1 2=Time 2 3=Time 3 4=Time 4	
Issue Category	Classify these news products according to their themes. 1= Social Issues (The social issues/problems that the Chinese government was facing. For example, air pollutions, corruption, human rights, etc.) 2= Conference Services and Schedule (For example, the schedule of National People's Congress on March 14 th ,) 3= Reform (Reform plans that made by the government or proposal for social change made by representatives) 4= Achievements (The achievements that Chinese government had made. For example, technological progress, Agricultural development, etc.) 5= Leadership (The leaders of the nation and the lineup of the State Council.) 6= Representatives (News products focused on who was speaking at the conferences) 7= Influence (The national and international influence of the event)	

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