<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Save our students”: contesting discourses of racist attacks against Indians down under</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baidu, Weibo and Renren: the global political economy of social media in China</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging identities through religious television contents: Javanese female descendants, Islamic viewing and Malay identity projection</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be aware of superbugs: Newspaper coverage of NDM-1 in India, UK, and the USA</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of negative emotions on motivation and communicative action: Testing the validity of situational theory of problem solving in the context of South Korea</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESEARCH ARTICLE

“Save our students”: contesting discourses of racist attacks against Indians down under

Purba Das*

Department of Communication Studies, Ohio University, Southern, Ironton, OH, USA

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This paper seeks to understand the dominant civic discourses of accusation of racism leveled against the Australians as expressed by the victims of racist attacks and Indian Government officials in the *Times of India* and *Outlook India* news magazines. The aim of the paper is to understand how the logics of the discourses have constituted the racially motivated attacks on the Indian diaspora in Australia, and how the nationalistic sentiments are fostered among the diasporic Indians and the Indians in India. The paper argues that there is a mutual production of diasporic and homeland nationalism in the face of a crisis that hits the Indian diaspora in Australia. This analysis also brings to fore the ideology of multiculturalism in Australia.

**Keywords:** Indians in Australia; racist accusation; diasporic nationalism; dominant civic discourses; media discourses; new racism

In 2009, a series of attacks on Indians, particularly students in various cities of Australia brought about a diplomatic crisis between Australia and India. On 9 May 2009, the first documented attack was on an Indian student who was beaten up by a group of young men in a train in Melbourne. The attacks continued, and such incidents triggered an intense protest launched by Indian media, terming such attacks on Indian students as racist. The mainstream newspapers presented statements and arguments of the Indian officials, Bollywood personalities, the victims’ families, and the members of the Indian community. These different groups represented debates about Australians’ attitude toward Indians, and what the Indian Government’s course of action should be. Such open discussion in the mainstream media demonstrated that these attacks struck a raw nerve in how the Indian nation reacted to attacks against Indians abroad, and how such attacks are construed as racist attacks in India. These incidences of accusations of racially motivated attacks on Indians in Australia propel me to look more closely at how racism is drawn into the wider discourses of the Indian nation, and how the nationalistic sentiments are fostered among the Indian diaspora in Australia and Indians in India.

In this study, I examine how the competing discourses of racist attacks against Indian students in Australia construct the re-establishment of a link between the Indian diaspora in Australia and Indians in India in the *Times of India* (henceforth, *TOI*), and the *Outlook Magazine*. Following Drzewiecka and Halualani’s (2002) call to examine “the interrelationship between the structural and cultural aspects of diasporic politics...
(p. 343), I argue that in the face of a crisis, the diasporic nationalism is a co-construction of the diasporic Indians in Australia, the structures of Indian political brass, and the Indian media. This paper will show that the Indian Government and the diasporic Indian population are both engaged in formulating and fostering nationalism and national cohesiveness with distinct political motives through symbolic appeals to each other in the context of racist attacks against Indians in Australia. This paper seeks answers to the following question: How have the discourses of racial attacks on Indian students in Australia been represented in the TOI and Outlook India?

The data
The data is collected from the TOI, the largest selling English daily newspaper in India, and Outlook India, a news magazine, whose online version carries daily news. TOI has a circulation of 2.4 million copies and as Kohli (2003) explains, its audience is ‘a trendier younger post-liberalisation generation’ (p. 26). Outlook India, a center-left news magazine weekly is one of India’s top-selling English-language magazines with a circulation of 1.5 million (Wade, 2010) and is widely popular among ‘thinking’ Indian middle class.

Racist motives of attacks
The most prominent theme that emerged from the articles is that the attacks against Indians, particularly students in Australia, are racially motivated. Both TOI and the Outlook India magazine cite direct quotes from the victims in their articles, highlighting the racial nature of the attacks. Racial comments were printed which were targeted at Indian students during the attacks such as, ‘Hey, you Indian bastard, why don’t you go back home?’ and ‘F*** off bastard, go back to your country and work’ (Sharma 2010). In an article in TOI, a Sikh victim explains:

I was going home from the university in the train when a group of six youngsters came up to me and asked for cigarettes. When I told them that I did not smoke, they started hurling racial abuses at me. Suddenly, they started beating me. They punched me in my face and kicked me while people around did nothing. (Times of India, 2009c).

As the statements of the victims suggest, the attacks have been based on the observable physical attributes, and visible cultural symbols associated with Indians, such as facial features, skin color and turban (it is a headgear that adherents to Sikhism wear). This follows the old logics of racial discrimination based on inherited biological differences where an individual’s physical appearance demarcates him or her from the others, and identified as ‘different.’ The racial slurs and abuses indicate that the attackers, by identifying the attacked as Indians, inflicted those aspersions. Explaining how the attacks are outright racist attacks, an article in TOI, quotes another Indian student, ‘There’s a name for this, “curry bashing,” let’s go curry bashing.’ (Times of India, May 30, 2009). Further, the article explains that there have been at least 20 incidents of ‘curry bashing’ in Sydney but most attacks on Indian students went unreported out of fear. The term ‘curry bashing’ is racist slang used against Indians in Australia. The construction of the term ‘curry bashing’ connotes a specific attribute to the cultural group, Indian, whose
well-known cuisine is ‘curry.’ By referring to a student’s turban, the student is differentiated on the basis of wearing a symbolic piece of religion clothing.

To further bring out the insecurities of the Indian students, a TOI article quotes another student:

We are not feeling safe basically in Australia, we are not feeling safe at all. They told us that it is a multicultural country, you know, but after living here for three years, I will just say it is a multi-racism country you know. (Times of India, 2009c)

Such a statement that calls into question the multiculturalism of Australia, points to the extant serious debates in the political discourse of Australia about the issues of multiculturalism and racism. Multiculturalism has been the official policy for Australia since 1972; however, it is highly debated in Australia, especially in recent times. Jakubowicz (1994) and Jayasuriya (1997) argued that that Australian media put immigration issues at the forefront, as Australia has seen a steady increase in ethnic diversity due to the active encouragement of multiculturalism by the Australian Government. However, there is a debate whether these programs undermine or contribute to national cohesion. In a study on constructing racism in Australia, scholars (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004) suggested that 45% of Australians expressed that cultural diversity was a threat to the notion of Australian nationhood. Earlier, in 1988, Fitzgerald’s report showed that the perception of and attitude toward immigrants reflected considerable resistance. This resistance is demonstrated in the media articles that investigate the reasons behind such racially motivated attacks. Jayasuriya (2006) showed that several opinion leaders in Australia have argued that the ideology of multiculturalism brings into question the ‘traditional way of “imagining Australia”’ (p. 21), which is a White Australia. Such attacks are symptomatic of new racism where the newcomers pose a threat to the cultural integrity of the dominant group. Cultural uniqueness or homogeneity has been the basis of Australian national identity and the influx of immigrants into the nation has destabilized the Australian sense of national identity.

Most of the articles in the newspaper and the magazine explained that one of the primary reasons of such racial attacks is the perceived better positions of Indian students as compared to White Australians. An Australian resident is quoted, ‘the government’s education policy of getting students from India and other countries is depriving our local boys of a chance to get into universities,’ (Sharma 2010). Further, the Australian resident fulminates:

Not only are these Indian students taking away the seats in colleges and universities, they are also taking away the jobs that could have gone to an Australian student. In addition, by staying back and getting a permanent residency in Australia, they are becoming a serious threat to white Australians in the job market. (Sharma 2010)

The arguments here clearly point to the fact that the native Australians are threatened by the economic recession, which is further exacerbated by jobs going to the immigrants. Such statements are based on the White perception of who the Indian students as a cultural group are, and how their presence in Australia affects the Anglo Saxon (White) Australians. In another article in TOI, a student expresses, ‘Though there is racial discrimination in Australia, it had never taken a violent turn till recession hit the country’ (Times of India, 2009c). Australian economy had been impacted by the global economic
turndown, and in this context, the immigrants who are perceived to be in better economic positions have experienced backlash against them by the Australians. Earlier, research has shown that the Australians put the blame on immigrants for taking away jobs that could have gone to the native Australian workers (Fitzgerald, 1988, also see Gershevikitch, 2010).

Due to rapid globalization and booming of India’s economy, middle-class Indians have more opportunities and financial strength to choose foreign universities, and Australia is a preferred destination for many Indian students. Hence, the influx of Indian students in Australia has increased manifold in the last decades. To increase the financial strength of Australian universities, the Australian Government has provided the necessary incentives to the Indian students, and has marketed Australia as a much desired educational destination. In 2009, there were 97,000 Indian students studying in Australia, comprising one fifth of all international students (Baas, 2009). Typically, Indian students also do odd jobs such as work at McDonalds while carrying on with their education (Sahoo, 2007). The visibility of Indians in economic sectors gives an impression to native Australians that they are in better economic positions than the Australians. Such perception may have exacerbated the attacks against them.

**Denials of racism by the Australian authorities**

While the majority of the articles in the newspaper and the magazine concentrated on reporting on the ‘racially’ charged attacks, there were certain voices in the media that questioned the racist motive of the attacks. The oppositional voices came from two significant sources: the Australian authorities who blamed the Indian media of ‘sensationalizing’ the events and a small section of Indian diaspora in Australia.

Blaming the Indian media, particularly the ‘voracious’ 24-hour cable news channels for the ‘negative coverage’ of the attacks, an Australian envoy said that the relationship between the two nations will take time to recover. As *Outlook India* reports, ‘McCarthy said that due to such coverage by India’s TV channels, fear and outrage was being created among Indians in both the countries’ (*Outlook India*, 2009c). Further, the Australian envoy explains, ‘while our bilateral relationship with India – including talks over a free-trade agreement – would probably remain quarantined from the fallout, the new, negative perception of Australia would linger’ (*Outlook India*, 2009c). Some Australian media professionals expressed their disappointment over the Indian media reports. The Deputy Commissioner of Melbourne, Kieran Walshe said there was no indication that a rise in assaults and robberies against Indian students in Melbourne was due to ‘race hate’ (*the Times of India*, May 29, 2009). As *TOI* quotes him, ‘I don’t think they are racist crimes in general… more opportunistic activity. We think they are vulnerable, we don’t think it’s racial, we think they are a weak target’ (*the Times of India*, May 29, 2009). Explaining the lack of proof, an Australian authority explains, ‘In Australia, an attack is not deemed racial till it can be established that the intent was such, and not purely criminal’ (*The Outlook*, February 8, 2010).

Some of the denials of racism by a section of Australian authorities are indicative of van Dijk’s (1991) assertion that it is the strategy of the dominant group to deny or play down the prevalence of racism in the society. Further, by attributing that Indians were attacked because of being ‘vulnerable’ or a ‘weak target,’ a tendency that blames the victim as van Dijk (1991) would argue. Baas (2009) opined that since the attacks are
explained via the trope of Indian victims as being ‘weak,’ the terminology contains racist connotation and attributes such a characteristic to the Indians. The Australian authorities’ attempt at downplaying the racist nature of the attack points to the research on acts of racism being blamed on the individual and not on the structure of the state. Winant (1997) explained that racism is located in individuals due to the narrow definition of the term, thereby ignoring the functioning of the system. In a study of rhetoric of race in California, Flores, Moon, and Nakayama (2006) contended that the location of racism in individuals or groups rather than the system has paved the way to a ‘discourse of tolerance and multiculturalism’ (p. 183). Further, in a climate of ‘raceless diversity,’ individuals both discursively pull away from and move toward race to suit their individual experiences. The authors further argued that this ‘co-articulation of race, as both structure and group agency, problematically de-emphasizes the structural conditions of race and indicts specific racial/ethnic groups for racial exclusions, racist behavior, and racial/ethnic entrenchment’ (p. 72). To emphasize the racial privilege in the USA, Halualani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, and Dodge (2004) revealed how a diversity discourse denies race and through the trope of multiculturalism undermines claims of racism, thereby affirming and sustaining racial privilege. This reiterates Goldberg’s (2008) argument that structural inequality based on race persists ‘while the racially privileged do nothing to delimit or reverse it’ (p. 1714).

In the context of Australia, the country’s official policy of multiculturalism makes it difficult for racist attacks to be noted, and they fall in danger of being explained as an individual act of violence, rather than a systemic racist act. Although Marcus and Dharmalingam (2008) explained that there is a change in belief among the Australians that multiculturalism and diversity add value socially, culturally, and economically, Gershevitch (2010) pointed out that at the structural level, ‘Other than the RDA, multicultural policy, and various laws and programs at the second tier of government, Australia lacks any other way of addressing the persistence of racism other than what could be described as moral suasion’ (p. 245). Essentially, the author argued that the race-related violence is often ‘dismissed’ as violence limited by certain small groups. This dismissal also enables the dominant group to subvert the systemic problems of racism, as seen in the case of the Australian authorities.

**Not all attacks were racist**

Although most of the articles concentrated on the apparently racist attacks against students, only a couple of the articles printed opposing views stating that not all attacks were racist in nature. An article in *Outlook India* printed some opposing views of the Indians living in Australia. For example, an Indian in Australia has been quoted, ‘the furore over racism is also a case of mismatch in perceptions. Most attacks are seen back in India as racial, even though some can be purely for robbery’ (Sharma 2010). Here, the Indian resident in Australia clearly points out the difference in perception of the attacks in India and in Australia. The article explains that there is no unanimity among Indians whether or not these attacks are racist in nature. The article quoted Vasan Srinivasan, president of the Federation of Indian Association of Victoria, ‘I have been living here for the last 23 years, but have never experienced any racial slur from the Australians. I have two young daughters; if they were racist, do you think I would have stayed in this country’ (Sharma 2010). This indignant opinion that denies the racist nature of the attacks
stands in exact opposition to the views expressed by the Indian students. It is important to note that this view is submerged within the overwhelming overtones of the article, overtones which attest to the fact that the attacks against Indian students are indeed racially motivated. The article’s counterargument invokes the opposing voices of the Indian diaspora that it is the ‘rich Indians’ who decry that the attacks are not racially motivated, thereby, subverting the oppositional views and rendering them as insignificant.

*TOI* prints comments by Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader:

The attacks on Indian students are disappointing but only a handful of people were behind it. It would be wrong to generalise the entire country or society as racist on the basis of a few incidents. In my view, this is wrong. (*Times of India, 2009b*)

This is a strong endorsement by an internationally renowned personality pointing out that naming all assaults to have racial intention may be an over generalization of the issue and indeed falls into the trap of stereotyping an entire nation and its peoples. However, apart from a short article in *TOI*, there was no mention of the views that some attacks may not have any racial overtones in any other articles. Voicing concerns that attacks against Indian students may be a reflection of socioeconomic inequality embedded within the Australian society, Yechury (2009), a communist party leader in India, opined in the party mouthpiece *People’s Democracy*, ‘Racist outrages are an expression of a deeper malaise’ (para. 5). Elaborating on that, he explained that since Australia had aggressively marketed itself as a lucrative education destination where 18% of the entire student community consists of Indians, the apparent racist attacks needed to be understood within the context of global recession.

*We the Indians: the production of long-distance nationalism*

Another prominent theme that emerged from the newspaper and magazine articles is an evocation of sense of patriotism and a ‘we feeling’ among the Indians in Australia and in India. Both the diasporic Indians and Indians in India symbolically utilize nationalistic feelings and language to create a cohesive Indian nation.

The racially motivated attacks aroused a sense of community feelings among the Indian diaspora, and the Indians protested against such attacks in Australia through sit-ins and slogans aiming at the Australian Government. For example, an article in *TOI* explains:

shaken by a wave of racial assaults, thousands of Indian students chanting ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ [Hail Mother India] on Sunday rallied here demanding justice for victims of recent attacks as Australia scrambled to contain the rising anger and frustration within the community. (*Times of India, 2009c*)

Emphasizing ‘Mother India’ fosters not only a sense of community among the diasporic Indians but it also establishes a direct link to their homeland, India. The usage of Mother India is quite significant in this context. The term was used generously by the Indian students during the colonial times and also by Indian women (Sinha, Mayo, & Sinha, 2000). Eventually, the nationalist leaders forged their nationalist movement with that of the women’s movement, symbolically attributing ‘mother’ status to the Indian nation. In
this context, the utilization of a popular nationalistic slogan evokes patriotic fervor that calls for the homeland’s attention and intervention.

Further, repeated usage of the words ‘community’ and ‘we Indians’ establishes a bond among diasporic Indians and Indians in India. Lindridge, Hogg, and Shah’s (2004) study on South Asian women in Britain explained that community acts as a cultural support framework, and influences, reinforces, perpetuates, and monitors public behavior. This bonding of all diasporic Indians was exhibited by actions of the Indian community in Australia especially in Sydney and Melbourne. The community members circulated text messages advising Indians to travel in groups to safeguard against attacks. *Outlook India* reported that a text message was passed to the community members that stated, ‘all Indians are to travel in the first compartment of the Connex train as ‘Desi Dabba’ (the Indian compartment) of the train. That way we can be in numbers and help each other at any time day or night’ (*Outlook India*, 2009b). This is indicative of the argument that diaspora establishes solidarity through some common experiences of mistreatment as shown in a study on Chinese transnational identity in the context of diaspora and anti-Chinese racism by Chiang (2010). In this case, the Indian diaspora connects with all Indians in Australia as they face a crisis in their adopted land.

*TOI* prints various slogans that were chanted, and displayed on placards in Australia when the Indian students took to the streets in protest. The signs read as, ‘We want justice for the victims of racist violence,’ ‘Save our Students,’ ‘Stop Racist Violence,’ ‘We want Justice,’ ‘We are the Economy Builders,’ and ‘End Racist Attacks’ (*Times of India*, 2009c). Again, in another article, one of the signs read, ‘SOS: Save our students’ (*Times of India*, May 29, 2009). The slogans by the diasporic Indians are symbolic representations of nationalistic appeals to their homeland and calls for help. One of the six criteria specified by Safran (1991) in regard to diaspora argues that ‘continu[ing] to relate, personally or vicariously, to the homeland … in a way that significantly shapes one’s identity and solidarity’ (p. 83–84). Through these untoward incidents, I would argue, following Fortier (1998), Panossian (1998), and Panagakos (1998) that the Indian diaspora used the untoward incidents to strategically engage in new and renewed forms of appeal to the ‘homeland’ to authenticate their identities as Indians, and reclaim their cultural and national a sense of belonging.

Further, the strategic appeal for ‘help’ by the Indian community extended to the UN. An article prints comments by a parent, whose son is studying in Australia, ‘The UN must intervene as such incidents may take place in other countries where Indian students are doing extremely well’ (*Times of India*, 2009c). In all the above instances, by using of ‘racist,’ ‘justice’ and ‘UN,’ the diasporic Indians are appropriating the old colonial language of racism and Human Rights issues as described by the UN. Accusation of racism carries a more universal meaning that characterizes a human rights violation and is recognized by the UN. The evoking of the category of racism is an attempt to emphasize the means of accountability from the Australian Government as well as insisting that the Indian Government exert diplomatic pressures on the Australian Government. Therefore, by using these terms, the Indian diaspora attempts to elicit condemnation worldwide in the globalized context of transnationalism and diaspora.
Indian political response: homeland nationalism?

The articles in the print media have shown considerable support from the Indian political brass. The racially motivated attacks against the Indians have compelled incited the Hindu right wing party, Shiv Sena, to threaten not to allow Australian cricketers to play matches in the Indian Premier League (IPL) hosted by India. Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray says, ‘No matter how big an Aussie player in IPL team is, he should removed and told that it is impossible to keep him in the team till the blood of innocent Indians is shed on his country’s soil’ (Outlook India, 2009a). The blatant declaration of banning of Australian players in India clearly shows hyper-nationalistic fervor. By demanding allegiance from the organizers of IPL, which allows foreign players to play in its league, Shiv Sena attempts to garner support for their political logic of Indian or Hindu first. Shiv Sena has simplified the values of Hinduism by appropriating some of its symbols to create a collective identity and thereby fostering patriotism (Heuze, 1992). Heuze explained that the ‘Shiv Sena is easily described as the prototype of the nation without caste or class, as world without inherent structure, as a pure world’ (p. 2259). By using the words ‘blood of innocent Indians’ in the statement above, the Shiv Sena leader is evoking a sense of national belonging, and adherence to the Indian nation that strategically pulls the diasporic Indians back to their roots, where they belong.

The Indian High Commissioner to Australia has warned of long-term consequences unless more action was taken to prevent attacks against the Indians. Outlook India printed a statement by the High Commissioner, where he made an accusation that Victoria (one of the places where attacks took place) was in ‘a state of denial’ (Outlook India, 2010a). TOI reported that the Indian Prime Minister said that the attacks were ‘unacceptable.’ TOI quotes him, ‘I do agree that our students have been subject of unacceptable attacks’ (Times of India, 2009a). Such acknowledgment from the Prime Minister of the state legitimizes the claims of attacks against the Indian students, and gives an assurance to the Indian diaspora in Australia. However, it is important to note that the Prime Minister did not claim that the attacks on Indian students had racist intentions. Voicing concerns, the Indian external affairs minister, SM Krishna, called for security for the Indian students in Australia. For example, Mr Krishna expressed his concerns for the plight of Indian ‘diaspora’ in ‘alien’ land (Times of India, May 29, 2009). The usage of ‘diaspora’ and ‘alien’ simultaneously distinguish the diaspora from the native Australians by rendering them as ‘alien.’ In essence, even if the Indians in Australia did not possess a community feeling, such evocation of ‘alien’ and ‘diaspora’ draw the community together as one that stands in opposition to the native Australians. In the face of such a crisis in an ‘alien’ land, the Indian nationalist feeling is recuperated through the appeal to the homeland, and also through the homeland government’s assertion that diasporic Indians dwell in an ‘alien’ land, even if the Prime Minister and the external affairs minister did not term the attacks as racist. This reiterates Anderson’s (1991) assertion that as the world becomes increasingly mobile, the ‘imagined communities’ of nation-states draw their diaspora within their fold.

The nationalistic overtones of the media discourse bonded the Indians living both in India and Australia, and gave them a sense of belonging especially in light of racially motivated attacks against Indians by native Australians, which may have made the Indians feel insecure in a ‘foreign’ land. It also gave the impression to the diasporic Indians that India is still their original ‘homeland’ that supports the sons and daughters of
the soil. This signifies a realignment of the relationship between the homeland and the diasporic population through a homogenizing and nationalizing logic.

Analysis
The mainstream newspaper revealed multilayered and opposing discourses that ranged from calling all attacks to be racist, denial of racism, demonstration diasporic nationalism and support of homeland government. The study has two significant implications. First, it demonstrates how the diasporic population and homeland reclaim each other and role of Indian newspapers in highlighting racism issue in Australia. Second, it brings to fore the ideology of multiculturalism in the context of Australia.

I argue that the apparent racist attacks against the Indian students in Australia have both the diaspora and homeland reclaiming each other. According to Ono and Sloop (2002), logics of discourse are the principles that guide reasoning in discourse. The strategies of the dominant discourse worked on the basis of the logics of nationalistic feelings and victimization of Indians in Australia due to racist attacks. These logics affirmed and reestablished nationalistic feelings among Indian diaspora in Australia and Indians in India. The logics of ‘we the Indians’ and the claim of ‘racist attacks’ worked to foster long distance nationalism and to strategically draw international attention. Specifically, the diasporic nationalism has been cocreated, and renegotiated symbolically with the structural elements the homeland government, and the media, in an effort to garner political support, and increase international leverage of the issue. For diaspora, the motive is to gain political support from homeland and exert pressure on the Australian Government externally to take actions. For the Indian nation-state, the political motives entail not only gaining popularity with the domestic subject but also showing a paternalistic claim toward her subjects living elsewhere, and using the universal language of racism to garner international attention. Further, I argue that the ethnic differences among subgroups of Indian diaspora are rendered insignificant, as expressed through the sense of ‘we’ feeling fostered in the wake of accusation of racist attacks against Indians. Here the blurring of borders between Indians in India and Australia is a deliberate and strategic attempt on the part of the diasporic population as well as the Indian media. The discourses reclaimed the diasporic groups by foregrounding ‘unity’ as primary definers of Indians living in India and in the Australian nation in the face of a crisis: apparent racist attacks against Indians.

The Indian media played a significant role in fostering this long-distance nationalism, and the study contributes to the understanding of the complex functions of the Indian press. Media are perfect sites for the reaffirmation (at times forceful) of the hegemony of national unity, togetherness, and homogeneity. The Indian print media highlighted the racist nature of the attacks, acting as the mouthpiece of Indian diasporic students in Australia. Ryan (1990) and Sonwalkar (1996) contended that there is tension between two traditional roles of the Indian press: a role based in the tradition of formal opposition to the government, and the new post-Independence role as an exponent of government policy in uniting the country to work for democratic and social progress. The analysis offered in the present study revealed that the press leaned toward keeping the ‘unity’ discourse by advancing the racist motives behind the attacks and uniting the Indians in different geographical locations. In other words, the Indian press forged a nationalistic unity or alliance against the cleavages of nation-state boundaries, and subverted the
oppositional discourse that some attacks were not racially motivated. During the early
years of postcolonial India, Chatterjee (1993) and Roy and Rowland (2003) argued that
the project of Indian nation-building through the constitution of ‘unity’ out of Indian
‘diversity’ by weaving the fragments into a viable nation-state has continued in India
even after independence. This period, which embodies what one may call, albeit
somewhat imprecisely, the Nehruvian vision of the national, has been simply glossed over
as ephemeral in light of the broader divisions. The analysis confirms the argument that
newspapers reproduce, or reinforce the feelings of nationalism through rearticulation of
dominant logics of discourses. The newspapers worked discursively within the same
ideological framework as the politicians, officials, and Indian diaspora in Australia who
decried racist attacks against Indians through strategies of subversion of alternative
realities that the attacks could have been nonracist in nature. The analysis supports
Fairclough’s (1989, 1992) argument that the media texts are linked to societal and cultural
processes and structures and that discourse not only shapes and reshapes social structures,
but also reflects them (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Importantly, the media omitted the
details of the attackers, their ethnicity and overwhelmingly highlighted the racist motives
behind the attacks.

The discourses also exposed the issue of multiculturalism in the Australian context.
As the influx of immigrants into the Australia increased, the notion of cultural uniqueness
or homogeneity has been questioned and destabilized Australian sense of national
identity.

Australia’s ideology of multiculturalism is based on ‘a liberal political culture such as
equality, exercise of basic freedoms, mutual tolerance, rule of law, etc.’ (Jayasuriya, 2006,
p. 22). This ideal of Australia is diametrically opposite to the legacy of White Australia
with a British heritance, on which Australian nation was imagined. However, with the
altering of the immigration policy, the migration from the nonwhite nations, primarily,
Asia increased and economic and political relation with Asian countries was forged. The
influx of Indians to Australia has also established new political and economic ties
between the two nations. In such a climate, the accusation of racist attacks could
potentially jeopardize Australia’s political image in Asia and have long-term economic
implications. Although some officials condemned such racist attacks against Indians, the
analysis also showed that a section of the officials denied the attacks to be racist. Such
denials potentially bring to fore pertinent questions surrounding Australian sense of
national identity, immigration, and multiculturalism; what does it mean to be an
Australian and who is an Australian?

Conclusion
My study is specifically grounded in the context of diaspora and homeland relationship
where accusation of racism against Indian students by Australians was highlighted in the
Indian media by fostering symbolic appeals to homeland. The discourses that emerged
reveal that the newspaper and the news magazine mostly represented the views of the
victims, Indian Government officials who supported the assertion that the attacks against
the Indian students in Australia were indeed racially motivated. A few of the reports have
represented the views of the Indians in Australia who expressed that the Indian media
have been ‘sensationalizing’ the racist attacks. However, these reports were submerged
within the dominant discourse of racially motivated attacks. In that regard, such
oppositional claims were never prominent in the articles. In this context, both TOI and Outlook India have tried to evoke the colonial rhetoric of projecting racism onto the ‘western’ other. I am not suggesting that none of the attacks were racially motivated. But it is important to mention that the articles where these overarching themes emerge, they do not represent the Australian views substantially except for a few of Australian authorities’ denial of attacks being racially motivated. Instead, the articles foregrounded the nationalistic discourse which is most acceptable in the modern world; the Indian version of discourse of postcolonial nationalism through the construction of Mother India, the unity among all Indians including Indian diaspora in Australia, and the racism committed by ‘westerners’ on Indians. Further, the news medium reinstated the media as powerful agency to reconstitute India’s diverse peoples through the obliteration of differences between the diasporic Indians and natives of India. This also created an opportunity for the diasporic Indians to maintain a sentimental link to the homeland, and construct community boundaries with the Indians and the Indian Government. This analysis clearly revealed that the nation-state and diaspora are not mutually exclusive, autonomous entities but they exist in relation to each other, and the meanings surrounding Indian nationalism and diaspora is constructed vis-à-vis each other. The national humiliation because of racist attacks is used as a symbolic resource to reconstruct and restrengthen the ‘we feeling.’ In essence, the cultural and structural dimensions of diasporic politics produce each other and blur the borders that separate diaspora from its homeland. Further, the analysis reveals that the diaspora is a multidimensional construction that is continually ‘in motion’ and rearticulated. In essence, diaspora and diasporic nationalism is in a constant flux and needs to be analyzed within the contexts, and map how the network of forces both inside and outside adopted nation and homeland interact, influence, and potentially transform the constitution of diaspora.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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The task of this work is to conduct a global political-economic analysis of China’s major social media platforms in the context of transformations of the Chinese economy. It analyses Chinese social media’s commodity and capital form. It compares the political economy of Baidu (search engine), Weibo (microblog) and Renren (social networking site) to the political economy of the US platforms Google (search engine), Twitter (microblog) and Facebook (social networking site) in order to analyse differences and commonalities. The comparative analysis focuses on aspects such as profits, the role of advertising, the boards of directors, shareholders, financial market values, terms of use and usage policies. The analysis is framed by the question to which extent China has a capitalist or socialist economy.

Keywords: social media; China; capitalism; Weibo; Baidu; political economy of communication

1. Introduction

Six of the world’s 20 most accessed World Wide Web (WWW) platforms are based in China: Baidu, QQ, Taobao, Sina, Hao123 and Weibo. Thirteen are US companies.¹ This circumstance is indicative for what some have termed the rise of China (Hsiao & Lin, 2009; Li, 2008; Schmitt, 2009). The six companies that operate the major six Chinese WWW platforms – Alibaba, Baidu, Sina and Tencent – are all privately owned capitalist corporations listed on stock markets. They are predominantly listed on US stock markets (Alibaba: NYSE, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; Baidu: NASDAQ, Sina: NASDAQ, Weibo: NASDAQ, Tencent: Hong Kong Stock Exchange).

These social media companies are symbols of China’s economic transformation: The 1954 Chinese Constitution defined as ‘the main categories of ownership of means of production in the People’s Republic of China’: ‘state ownership, that is, ownership by the whole people; co-operative ownership, that is, collective ownership by the masses of working people; ownership by individual working people; and capitalist ownership’ (article 5). Capitalist ownership was seen as transitory: the state would aim at ‘gradually replacing capitalist ownership with ownership by the whole people’² (article 10). In contrast, a 1998 amendment to China’s 1982 Constitution defines capitalism as a compliment to socialism: ‘The State permits the private sector of the economy to exist and develop within the limits prescribed by law. The private sector of the economy is a complement to the socialist public economy’ (Amendment 1).³
The Chinese Internet stands in the context of capitalism in China. The task of this work is to conduct a political-economic analysis of China’s major social media platforms in the context of transformations of the Chinese economy. It first focuses on how to theorise and define what is social about social media (sections 2 and 3). It then discusses social media’s capital and commodity form in China (section 4). Section 5 analyses the role of governments and policies in the political economy of social media. Section 6 provides an interpretation of the empirical results. Section 7 draws some conclusions. Search engines, microblogs and social networking sites are three important forms of contemporary social media (Fuchs, 2014b). In Western countries, Google, Twitter and Facebook are the major representatives of these three kinds of platforms. The methodological approach taken in this work compares the political economy of major Chinese search engine Baidu to Google, the political economy of the major Chinese microblog Sina Weibo to Twitter and the political economy of the major Chinese social networking site Renren to Facebook.

In 2013, state-owned companies made 17.1% of the profits in the Chinese manufacturing industry, collective enterprises 0.9%, share-holding enterprises 42.0%, enterprises controlled by foreign investors 16.4% and private Chinese enterprises 23.5% (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014). In contrast, there were no foreign investors and almost 100% collective and state ownership in 1978 (Qiu, 2009, p. 89, Table 4.2). Huang (2008, p. 79) shows that the share of large privately owned township and village enterprises (TVEs) in total TVE employment increased from 6.8% in 1985 to 26.3% in 2002, whereas the one of collectively owned TVEs decreased from 59.5% in 1985 to 28.6% in 2002, and the number of TVEs run by small households increased from 33.7% in 1985 to 45.0%. A decreasing share of communist ownership and increasing shares of private-capitalist and petty bourgeois enterprises shape the structure of TVEs.

Huang (2008, pp. 13–19) uses two different data sets (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Guangdong Statistical Manual) and concludes that based on the first data set the share of capitalist value-added in China increased from 28.9% in 1998 to 44.7% in 2001 and 71.2% in 2005, whereas in the second data set it increased from 31.8% in 1998 to 38.8% in 2001 and 50.8% in 2005. In both cases both indigenous and foreign-owned companies were included. Both analyses conclude that China’s economy has an increasing share of capitalist ownership and is predominantly capitalist. State-owned enterprises and collective enterprises that have a mixed ownership status so that only a part of it is shareholder-owned were in both analyses counted as being capitalist if the capital share in ownership was larger than 50%. One can therefore say that the estimates are conservative and that actual capitalist ownership shares exceed the estimations. If a company is for example to 49% owned by capitalist shareholders and to 51% by workers it is to a significant degree shaped by capitalist ownership.

If the data are correct, then capitalist, state and communist (worker-controlled) forms of ownership and combinations thereof each control specific shares of the Chinese economy. There are indications that non-capitalist ownership is not dominant and has decreased. If this is the case, then China is at least pre-dominantly a capitalist society. Given that China is to specific degrees embedded into and shaped by global capitalism, the question that arises for this paper is how the reality of capitalist social media (such as Baidu, Weibo and Renren) looks like in China and how it is related to capitalist social media in the West (such as Google, Twitter and Facebook).
2. De-Westernising social media theory and research

Social media research has in recent years emerged as a specific subfield of Internet research and media and communication studies. This has been indicated by the publication of books that focus on the analysis of media phenomena such as blogs, social networks, user-generated content-sharing sites, wikis and microblogs. Topics of scholarly concerns in social media research and theory have for example been social media in the context of advertising and economics (Albarran, 2013; Turow, 2012), convergence (Meikle & Young, 2012), creativity (Gauntlett, 2010; Shirky, 2010), ideology (Lovink, 2011; van Dijck, 2013), labour and class (Lanier, 2013; Scholz, 2013), participatory culture (Burgess & Green, 2009; Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013), politics and activism (Castells, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012; Murthy, 2013; Papacharissi, 2010), privacy and surveillance (Andrejevic, 2013; Fuchs, Kees, Anders, & Marisol, 2012; Trottier, 2012), technological determinism (Morozov, 2011, 2013), history (Standage, 2013), teenagers (Boyd, 2014), commodification and branding of the self (Marwick, 2013), the critique of public relations (Mendelson, 2012), philosophy (Wittkower, 2010) and society (Weller, Bruns, Burgess, & Mahrt, 2013).

None of these books have a profound focus on the analysis of social media use in China or on Chinese social media platforms. The focus tends to be on US platforms such as Google, Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogger, Instagram, Reddit, Pinterest and Tumblr and how they are used in Western countries. One the one hand this Western-centrism of social media research and theory may come as a surprise because Chinese platforms such as Baidu, Taobao, Qq, Sina, Weibo, Tmall and Hao123 are among the world’s most used WWW sites. On the other hand such a focus is no surprise at all, but rather a reflection of the power structures of the field of media and communication studies that is dominated by Western scholars. Also language barriers play a role. Important English books that discuss the Internet in China have however been published in recent years (for example: Hjorth & Arnold, 2013; Hong, 2011; Qiu, 2009; Yang, 2011; Zhao, 2008), but books on Chinese social media and social media in China have thus far remained rare. A recent special issue of the *Asian Journal of Communication* (Vol. 24, No. 1, 2014), focusing on the topic Social Media Interaction Between Public and Government in Asia-Pacific (Lee & Park, 2014), is one of the contributions that has contributed to overcoming this gap.

There have been debates about ‘de-Westernising’ media and communication studies (Curran & Park, 2000). Ma (2000) has in this context rejected the assumption of a Chinese exceptionalism in media and communications, argued that critical media studies analyses corporate, state and ideological power, and that ‘the articulation of power, money, and media’ (p. 26) and the existence of a ‘state-market complex’ (p. 28) make China an excellent case for a modified application of the critical paradigm. Debates have shown that the relationship of cultural particularity and human universality is a key issue for global media and communication studies (Wang & Kuo, 2010). Sparks (2013) has argued that the challenge for global media studies is to avoid both ‘unreflective universalism’ and relativist particularism (p. 129) in order to construct critical theories of the media that ‘will illuminate not only the media of emerging world powers but also help us better to understand those of the advanced global North itself’ (p. 130). Hu and Ji (2014) warn that there is a danger that the study of Chinese media imitates administrative forms of Western communication research and marginalises critical approaches. Social media in China poses new opportunities for civil society (Hu, Xu, & Ji, 2015;
Sparks, 2015), but is at the same time an object where the fusion of state and corporate power and its contradictions are manifested. It is an important question how Chinese social media should be studied and if scholars engaging in such studies will rather adopt administrative or critical perspectives with Chinese characteristics. In considering this question it is furthermore important to see the importance of articulating the universal and the particular in a dialectical way when conducting critical studies of the media.

If non-Western, international and global studies just imitate the Western positivist and administrative tradition, then global media and communication studies is just a science of domination and not a science that scrutinises domination. A shift of the distribution of power within media and communication studies towards more global and more critical research is needed. The political economy of communication (PEC) is a specific critical approach within media and communication research that studies ‘the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources’ (Mosco, 2009, p. 2). Because of the global nature of capitalism and communications, PEC has in recent years given more and more attention to the global PEC, which has followed a general trend of stronger internationalisation of media and communication studies (Thussu, 2009) and has resulted in the formation of the approach of the transnational political economy of global communications that analyses ‘questions in global communications in the context of economic integration, empire formation, and the tensions associated with adapting new privatized technologies, neoliberalized and globalized institutional structures, and hybrid cultural forms and practices’ and gives attention to ‘communications and power in a global market economy […] including the formative role of ownership and regulation of communications industries and processes and the asymmetric structures of power within the world system’ (Chakravartty & Zhao, 2008, pp. 10–11).

PEC is therefore a well-suited approach not just for studying social media critically (Fuchs, 2014b), but for also giving attention to the global dimension of social media, such as the international division of digital labour into which it is embedded (Fuchs, 2014a, 2015). This paper therefore applies this approach for contributing to the study of Chinese and global social media.

3. What is social about social media?
Social media has since some years become a term that has in everyday use become more common than the original terms ‘web 2.0’ and ‘social software’. Most people mean by the term ‘social media’ blogs, microblogs, social networking sites and user-generated content-sharing sites. The implication is that the information- and link-focused websites that dominated the WWW in the 1990s were not social and that the WWW has in the first decade of the 2000s become social.

The problem of such reasoning is however that there is no clear-cut understanding of what it means to be social and non-social. The question ‘What is social about social media?’ can only be answered by engaging with different understandings and meanings of sociality (Fuchs, 2014b, chapters 2 and 11; Fuchs, 2015, chapters 8 and 9). It therefore requires an engagement with social theory (Fuchs, 2014b, chapters 2 and 11; Fuchs, 2015, chapters 8 and 9.).

Sociality can mean that (1) human thought is shaped by society, (2) humans exchange symbols by communicating in social relations, (3) humans work together and thereby
create use-values and (4) humans form and maintain communities. These definitions of sociality correspond to the social theory concepts of social facts, social relations, co-operation and community (Fuchs, 2014b, chapter 2). Described as information processes, sociality can be expressed as a threefold interconnected process of cognition (a), communication (b) and co-operation (c, d) (Fuchs, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). Media and online platforms reflect these forms of sociality to different degrees:

- **Cognition:** Reading books, watching the news or a film on TV and listening to the radio involves just like Internet use the engagement with texts that reflect social contexts in society.
- **Communication:** Online communication is not new: Ray Tomlinson sent the first Internet email from one computer to the other in 1971.\(^5\)
- **Co-operation:** Online communities are not new, already in the 1980s there were bulletin board systems such as the WELL. Computer-supported co-operative work (CSCW) became an academic field of studies in the 1980s, reflecting the role of the computer in collaborative work. The 1st ACM Conference on CSCW took place in December 1986 in Austin, Texas. The concept of the wiki is also not new: Ward Cunningham introduced the first wiki technology (the WikiWikiWeb) in 1995.

Online sociality is not new. A specific aspect of Facebook and related platforms is that they integrate tools that support various forms of sociality into one platform. They are tools of cognition, communication and co-operation. How has the landscape of the WWW changed in the past 10 years? Table 1 presents an analysis of the most used websites in the world in 2002 and 2013. The data show that whereas in 2002 there had been 11 American, 6 South Korean and 3 Chinese platforms among the world’s 20 most accessed WWW sites, in 2013 the importance of South Korea (0 platforms) dwindled and the one of China (6 platforms) increased. In both years US platforms dominated the top 20, which shows that importance of US corporations in the Internet economy. In 2013, there was only one non-commercial platform in the top 20 (Wikipedia), which is an indication that the WWW is dominated by capitalism. It should also be noted that US-based organisations run all dominant Western social media platforms (Google [including YouTube and Blogspot/Blogger], Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, LinkedIn). They are based in Mountain View (Google, LinkedIn), Menlo Park (Facebook), San Francisco (Wikipedia, Twitter), which are all Californian cities. ‘Western’ social media is therefore in fact predominantly based on a US and Californian model of capitalism. Europeans have unsuccessfully tried to copy the Californian capitalist model without realising that Europe’s strength in the media is public service media and that it would be more promising to develop a European public service social media model (for a discussion of social media, the public sphere and the public service, see Fuchs, 2015, chapter 8).

In 2002, there were 20 information functions and 13 communication functions and one cooperation function available on the top 20 websites. In 2013, there were 20 information functions, 15 communication functions and 5 cooperation functions on the top 20 websites. The quantitative increase of collaborative features from 1 to 5 has to do with the rise of Facebook, Google+, Wikipedia and LinkedIn: collaborative information production with the help of wikis and collaborative software (Wikipedia, Google Docs) and social networking sites oriented on community-building (Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn). There are continuities and discontinuities in the development of the WWW
in the period 2002–2013. The changes concern the rising importance of co-operative sociality. This change is significant, but not dramatic. One novelty is the rise of social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, MySpace, etc). Another change is the emergence of blogs (Wordpress, Blogger/Blogpost, Huffington Post), microblogs (Twitter) and file-sharing websites (YouTube), which have increased the possibilities of communication and information sharing in the top 20 US websites. Google has broadened its functions; it started as a pure search engine (in 1999), introduced communication features in 2007 (gMail) and its own social networking site platform (Google+) in June 2011.

Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, Renren, etc. have not introduced sociality to the WWW, but have rather simultaneously preserved and transformed different forms of sociality. Profiles on such platforms foster and reflect the convergence of different social activities (cognition, communication, co-operation/community) and the convergence of different social roles (employee, citizen, family member, friend, fan, consumer, etc.) that expresses itself in the contemporary online world (Fuchs, 2014c). It is a contradiction that dominant

### Table 1. Information functions of the top 20 websites in the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Primary information functions</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Primary information functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>yahoo.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>google.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>msn.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>facebook.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>daum.net</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>youtube.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>naver.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yahoo.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>google.com(^a)</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>baidu.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>yahoo.co.jp</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>wikipedia.org</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>passport.net</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>qq.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ebay.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>amazon.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>microsoft.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>live.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>bugsmusic.co.kr</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>taobao.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>sayclub.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>twitter.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>sina.com.cn</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>linkedin.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>netmarble.net</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>blogspot.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>amazon.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>google.co.in</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>nate.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>sina.com.cn</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>go.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>hao123.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>sohu.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>163.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>163.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>wordpress.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>hotmail.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>ebay.com</td>
<td>cogn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>aol.com</td>
<td>cogn, comm</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>yahoo.co.jp</td>
<td>cogn, comm, coop:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

cogn: 20, comm: 13, coop: 5

\(^a\)Google’s main communicative feature, the email service gMail, was launched in 2004.

social media platforms support online sociality in the form of sharing, communication, collaborative work and community-building (Fuchs, 2014b, chapter 2), but are at the same time not socially controlled by the users, but by profit-making private companies that commodify personal data (Fuchs, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). Social media’s contradiction between particularistic, capitalist ownership and social use-value points towards the need for alternative, truly social media (Fuchs, 2014b, chapter 11; Fuchs, 2015, chapters 8+9).

4. Capitalist social media in China: a comparative analysis

China has more than 600 million Internet users, double the number of the USA. It is by far the country with the largest number of Internet users in the world. Table 2 gives an overview of the most used web platforms in China in 2014. It shows the 15 Chinese sites ranked among the 100 most accessed platforms in the world. For-profit companies run 12 of them. The Chinese state owns three of the dominant platforms. Two of them use advertising and have therefore commercial character. Commercial and profit logics dominate the Chinese Internet and Chinese social media just like it dominates the Internet in Western countries (Fuchs, 2014b; Jin, 2013).

Search engines, microblogs and social networking sites are three important forms of contemporary social media (Fuchs, 2014b). In this section, we will compare the political economy of the most important Chinese search engine (Baidu), microblog (Sina Weibo) and social networking site (Renren) to the political economy of US equivalents (Google, Twitter, Facebook). Data show that in terms of global usage, these six platforms are the dominant Chinese and US search engines, microblogs and social networking sites in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baidu.com</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Baidu Inc.</td>
<td>Search engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qq.com</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Tencent Holdings Ltd.</td>
<td>Instant messaging, online portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taobao.com</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Alibaba Group</td>
<td>Online market place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sina.com.cn</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Sina Corp</td>
<td>Online portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hao123.com</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Baidu</td>
<td>Online portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weibo.com</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Sina Corp</td>
<td>Microblog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sohu.com</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Sohu.com Inc.</td>
<td>Online portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360.cn</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Qihoo 360</td>
<td>Anti-virus tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163.com</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>NetEase Inc.</td>
<td>Online portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soso.com</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>Tencent Holdings Ltd.</td>
<td>Search engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gmw.cn</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Guangming Newspaper, Chinese state</td>
<td>Online newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xinhuanet.com</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Non-commercial</td>
<td>Xinhua News Agency, Chinese state</td>
<td>News site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people.com.cn</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>People’s Daily, Chinese state</td>
<td>Online newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youku.com</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>Youku Inc.</td>
<td>Video hosting platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>china.com</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>China.com Inc.</td>
<td>Online news platform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

China and the USA, respectively. Financial data were obtained by collecting annual financial reports and proxy statements for various years for all six companies. The analysis focuses on profits, the role of advertising, the boards of directors, shareholders and financial market values.

Also video-sharing sites such as YouTube, Baidu Video and Youku are important social media. In the analysis that follows, we do not compare YouTube to Youku, but rather the analysis of the political economy of Baidu and Google includes the analysis of Baidu Video (http://v.baidu.com/), one of the largest video-sharing sites in China, and YouTube that is owned by Google.

4.1. Search engines: Baidu and Google

Baidu is a Chinese search engine and web portal created in 2000 by Robin Li and Eric Xu. Baidu Inc. owns and operates it. Baidu became a public company listed on the NASDAQ in 2005. Its share-offering price was US$27. NASDAQ is focusing on tech companies. Figure 1 shows that Baidu’s profits have been rising steeply since 2004. There is a uniform income tax rate of 25% for all Chinese enterprises, no matter if they are foreign-funded or not. There are however exceptions for specific companies in key industries. Some of Baidu’s subsidiaries are considered to be high and new technology enterprises that have a preferential tax rate of 15% (Baidu SEC Filings, Form-20F 2013, 78) and some of its subsidiaries are considered key software enterprises that pay a preferential tax rate of 10% (79). In 2013, Baidu’s combined tax rate was 15.01% (79).

According to empirical data, Google in January 2014 accounted for 89.0% of all Internet searches, Yahoo! for 2.7%, Bing for 4.0% and Baidu for 0.9%. In China, Baidu had 81.6% of the search share in 2013 (Baidu SEC Filings, Form-20F 2013, 39). Not just Google’s share of searches were larger than Baidu’s, also its 2013 profits were with 12.9 billion US$ (Google, SEC Filings, Form-10K 2013) more than 7 times as large as the ones of Bing (1.7 billion US$).

![Figure 1. The development of Baidu’s profits.](image-url)
Online advertising and marketing are the major sources of Baidu’s revenues: 99.9% in 2011, 99.7% in 2012 and 99.6% in 2013 (Baidu SEC Filings, Form-20F 2013, 74). In 2013, 91% of Google’s revenues came from advertising (Google SEC Filings, Form 10-K 2013, 9). Baidu uses pay for placement (P4P), which allows advertisers to place advertisements as popular search results that show up in association with specific keywords.

Table 3 shows that both Baidu and Google’s board of directors are interlocking with other companies, especially venture capital and financial firms such as Dodge & Cox Funds, GSR Ventures, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, Madrone Capital Partners, Monex Group Inc., Sherpalo Ventures LLC and other technology and media companies such as Cisco, GluMobile, Intel, Lenovo, NetDragon, Netflix, NetQin Mobile Inc., Zynga. This shows on the one hand that finance capital firms obtain decision power within companies. On the other hand it also shows that the interlocking is especially with companies that do not compete with Baidu and Google, but that sell services or hardware that are complementary to search engines.

Table 4 shows Baidu and Google’s main shareholders. The data indicate that CEOs and the main directors tend to hold relatively large amount of shares and therefore also large shares of votes. In the case of Baidu, the CEO Robin Yahong Li holds 31.6% of all stocks, whereas Google’s CEO Larry Page controls 41.0% of class B stock. Handsome Reward Limited is a company owned by Robin Yahong Li that is based in the British Virgin Islands. Also financial investors such as Baillie Gifford & Co, BlackRock and Fidelity own significant amounts of shares.

Table 5 shows the development of Baidu and Google’s share values on the NASDAQ stock exchange. There has been a long-term growth of both stock values. Both witnessed a large slump in 2008 after the start of the global financial and economic crisis. Google’s stock value has been multiple times the one of Baidu, but the multiplication factor has become smaller over the years.

### 4.2. Microblogs: Sina Weibo and Twitter

Sina is a Chinese web portal founded in 1998. Sina Corp owns and operates it. Sina became a public company listed on the NASDAQ in 2000. It launched the microblog Weibo in 2009. Figure 2 shows that Sina has been struggling and making losses during the new economy crisis in 2000, then consolidated and grew its profits up to 412 million US$ in 2009, then during the global economic crisis made again losses in 2010 and 2011, and in 2012 and 2013 again achieved profits. Weibo can be seen as the Chinese microblogging equivalent of Twitter. Twitter has also been struggling financially: it became a stock-traded public company in November 2013, although its annual net losses were US$ 645.32 million in 2013 (Twitter SEC filings, form 10-K 2013) and US$ 577.82 million in 2012 (Twitter SEC filings, form 10-K 2014). Weibo – a subsidiary of Sina – made losses of US$ 116.74 million in 2011, 102.47 million in 2012, 38.12 million in 2013 (Weibo SEC filings, form F-1 registration statement) and 62.63 million in 2014 (Weibo SEC filings, form 6-K: March 2015). Sina in 2012 paid an effective tax rate of 18% for its Chinese operations (Sina SEC filings, form 20-F for financial year 2012).

On 31 December 2013, Weibo had 129.1 million monthly active users (Weibo SEC filings, form F-1, registration statement) and Twitter 240.9 million (Twitter SEC filings, form 10-K: annual report for 2013); 85% of Twitter’s revenues came from advertising in
Table 3. Baidu and Google’s board of directors and their interlocking positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baidu’s board of directors</th>
<th>Involvement in other companies</th>
<th>Google’s board of directors</th>
<th>Involvement in other companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Yanhong Li, Chairman and CEO</td>
<td>Larry Page, CEO and Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Xinzhe Li, Chief Financial Officer</td>
<td>Sergey Brin, Co-Founder and Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Decker, Independent Director</td>
<td>Eric E. Schmidt, Executive Chairman of the Board of Directors</td>
<td>L. John Doerr, Director</td>
<td>Kleiner Perkins Caufield &amp; Byers, Amyris Inc., Zynga Inc.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Ding, Independent Director</td>
<td>GSR Ventures, NetQin Mobile Inc., Huayi Brothers Media Corporation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobuyuki Idei, Independent Director</td>
<td>Diane B. Greene, Director</td>
<td>Intuit Inc., MIT Corporation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul S. Otellini, Director</td>
<td>Intel Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K. Ram Shriram, Director</td>
<td>Sherpalo Ventures LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shirley M. Tilghman, Director</td>
<td>Princeton University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nikesh Arora, Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David C. Drummond, Senior Vice President, Corporate Development, Chief Legal Officer, and Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick Pichette, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2012 and 89% in 2013 (Twitter SEC filings, form 10-K: annual report for 2013), and 78.8% of Weibo’s revenues were in 2013 derived from advertising and marketing, 12.2% from games and 5.9% from VIP membership services (Weibo SEC filings, form F-1, registration statement).

Table 6 shows that both Weibo and Twitter have directors who are either members of financial investment firms or other media companies in the sectors of mobile payments, entertainment, online shopping or online storytelling.

Table 7 shows that both Sina and Weibo’s stock values have been fluctuating. After reports that Weibo lost 28 million users in 2013, Sina’s share lost value in February 2013.\(^{13}\) Weibo argued that the rise of Tencent’s mobile messaging application WeChat had to do with this loss.\(^{14}\) In 2014, Weibo – a subsidiary company of Sina – became a public company listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange.\(^{15}\) Weibo’s stock value was US$20.24 on the day of its public offering (17 April 2013). It dropped to US$12.83 on 30 March 2015, which reflects the fact that Weibo’s losses almost doubled during 2014.

### Table 4. Baidu and Google’s main shareholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Baidu’s stock (A and B)</th>
<th>Google’s stock A</th>
<th>Google’s stock B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Yahong Li</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All directors and executive officers</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handsome Reward Limited</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailie Gifford &amp; Co</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Page</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergey Brin</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric E. Schmidt</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. John Doerr</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members of the board of directors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlackRock</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources: Baidu SEC filings, form 20-F 2013; Google; SEC filings; Proxy statement 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Baidu’s stock value</th>
<th>Google’s stock value</th>
<th>Multiplication factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 August 2005</td>
<td>US$ 9.50</td>
<td>US$ 145.01</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 August 2006</td>
<td>US$ 7.20</td>
<td>US$ 184.43</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 December 2007</td>
<td>US$ 39.29</td>
<td>US$ 345.33</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 December 2008</td>
<td>US$ 10.91</td>
<td>US$ 142.14</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 January 2010</td>
<td>US$ 41.69</td>
<td>US$ 275.28</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 January 2011</td>
<td>US$ 117.68</td>
<td>US$ 305.80</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 January 2012</td>
<td>US$ 127.41</td>
<td>US$ 312.81</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 March 2013</td>
<td>US$ 86.49</td>
<td>US$ 405.56</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 April 2014</td>
<td>US$ 149.35</td>
<td>US$ 545.25</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2015</td>
<td>US$ 210.54</td>
<td>US$ 561.14</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Yahoo! Finance.
Twitter and Weibo have in common that they are both companies struggling to make wins with the help of targeted advertising. They both have become publicly traded companies although they made losses. There is a divergence between their positive stock values and their actual monetary losses. This divergence could be indicative of the existence of a social media financial bubble, in which financial values diverge from profits. If this

Figure 2. The development of Sina’s profits.

Table 6. Weibo and Twitter’s boards of directors and their interlocking positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weibo’s board of directors</th>
<th>Involvement in other companies</th>
<th>Twitter’s board of directors</th>
<th>Involvement in other companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Chao, Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dick Costolo, CEO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Du, Director</td>
<td>CITIC Capital Holdings Limited</td>
<td>Peter Fenton</td>
<td>Benchmark Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yichen Zhang, Independent</td>
<td>FountainVest Partners</td>
<td>Peter Chernin</td>
<td>Chernin Entertainment LLC, Chernin Group LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Kui Tang, Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaofei Wang, CEO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Yi Zhang, Chief</td>
<td></td>
<td>David Rosenblatt</td>
<td>1stdibs.com Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evan Williams</td>
<td>Medium, Obvious Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jingdong Ge, Vice President</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marjorie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scardino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yajuan Wang, Vice President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Business Operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bubble bursts, a financial crisis of the Internet economy could be the result. Twitter and Weibo are prototypical examples of the financialisation of social media.

4.3. Social networking sites: Renren and Facebook

Renren is a Chinese social networking site founded in 2005 by Joseph Chen. Renren Inc. owns and operates it. Renren became a public company listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 2011. Its share-offering price was US$14. Figure 3 shows that Renren’s profits have been fluctuating between losses and wins.

In contrast to Renren, Facebook has had a steep growth of profits, culminating in a net income of 1.5 billion US$ in 2013 (Facebook SEC filings, form 10-K for financial year 2013). On 31 December 2013, Facebook had 1.23 billion monthly active users (Facebook SEC filings, form 10-K for financial year 2013). At the end of 2013, Renren had 206 million registered users (Renren SEC filings, form 20-F for financial year 2013). Renren is a very large platform, but has nonetheless less than a fifth of the number of Facebook users.

Software enterprises are in China exempt from paying income tax for two years if they have made losses in one specific year and a year later become profitable. Renren has been classified as a software company and therefore is due to previous losses exempt from income tax in 2013 and 2014 and enjoys a 50% tax reduction from 2015 to 2017, which means an effective tax rate of 12.5% because the enterprise income tax is 25% in China (Renren SEC filings, form 20-F for financial year 2013).

---

Table 7. Development of Sina (NASDAQ) and Twitter’s (NYSE) stock values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Sina’s stock value</th>
<th>Twitter’s stock value</th>
<th>Multiplication factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 April 2000</td>
<td>US$ 20.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 April 2001</td>
<td>US$ 1.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April 2002</td>
<td>US$ 1.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April 2003</td>
<td>US$ 10.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April 2004</td>
<td>US$ 35.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 April 2005</td>
<td>US$ 27.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April 2006</td>
<td>US$ 27.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 April 2007</td>
<td>US$ 32.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April 2008</td>
<td>US$ 41.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 April 2009</td>
<td>US$ 27.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April 2010</td>
<td>US$ 37.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 April 2011</td>
<td>US$ 124.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 April 2012</td>
<td>US$ 58.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April 2013</td>
<td>US$ 46.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7 November 2013</td>
<td>US$ 76.04</td>
<td>US$ 44.90</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 December 2013</td>
<td>US$ 77.31</td>
<td>US$ 40.78</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 January 2014</td>
<td>US$ 85.72</td>
<td>US$ 66.29</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 February 2014</td>
<td>US$ 67.12</td>
<td>US$ 65.25</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 March 2014</td>
<td>US$ 72.41</td>
<td>US$ 53.71</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 April 2014</td>
<td>US$ 56.36</td>
<td>US$ 43.14</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2015</td>
<td>US$ 32.33</td>
<td>US$ 49.89</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Yahoo! Finance.
Facebook generated 89% of its 2013 revenues from advertising (Facebook SEC filings, form 10-K for financial year 2013). Renren has a business segment for social networking and one for online games. In 2013, the social networking segment accounted for 45.5% of Renren’s total net revenues (in comparison to 62.4% in 2011). The online game segment made up 54.5% of Renren’s total net revenues in 2013 (37.6% in 2011). Renren’s social networking market derived in 2013 70.3% of its total net revenues from advertising (85.6% in 2011) and 29.3% from services such as virtual gifts on its video platform 56.com (acquired by Renren in 2011) as well as virtual gifts and VIP memberships on renren.com (all data: Renren SEC filings, form 20-F for financial year 2013). Whereas Facebook relies relatively purely on commodifying user data and is almost exclusively an advertising company, Renren has a mixed capital accumulation model that commodifies content, access and users. Within its social networking business, it derived just like Facebook the vast majority of its revenues from targeted advertising.

Table 8 shows that some of directors of Renren and Facebook are also involved in financial investment firms such as Doll Capital Management, Business Growth Fund, General Atlantic, Andreessen Horowitz, BDT Capital Partners, Carousel Capital, Morgan Stanley, Thiel Capital, Founders Fund, Clarium Capital Management and other companies. The latter comprise especially tech and media firms such as SoftBank, Walt Disney, eBay, HP and Netflix. Table 9 shows that Renren and Facebook’s CEOs Joseph Chen and Mark Zuckerberg own significant amounts of shares. Also financial firms such as Fidelity and Doll Capital Management control substantial quantities of shares. SB Pan Pacific Corporation, a subsidiary of SoftBank Corporation, is Renren’s main shareholder. Joseph Chen holds the second largest amount of shares, followed by David Chao and Doll Capital Management. SoftBank is a Chinese Internet and telecommunications enterprise. Doll Capital Management is a Californian venture capital firm. Directors, finance capital enterprises and tech firms are the most important owners of Renren. Especially directors and financial corporations control Facebook’s shares.

Table 10 shows that Renren’s stock has quickly lost value after the company’s IPO on the NYSE in 2011, whereas Facebook has increased its stock value since its IPO in 2012. Since 2013 Renren’s share value has remained relatively constant, whereas the one of Facebook has been more fluctuating. After there were fears that Facebook may loose users to mobile chat applications such as WhatsApp or WeChat, it bought WhatsApp for US$19 billion in February 2014. This purchase may have been one of the factors...
Table 8. Renren and Facebook’s boards of directors and their interlocking positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renren’s board of directors</th>
<th>Involvement in other companies</th>
<th>Facebook’s board of directors</th>
<th>Involvement in other companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Chen, Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and CEO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Jian Liu, Executive Director</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sheryl K. Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer and Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David K. Chao</td>
<td>Doll Capital Management</td>
<td>David A. Ebersman, Chief Financial Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katsumasa Niki</td>
<td>SoftBank Corp</td>
<td>Marc L. Andreessen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Nimetz</td>
<td>General Atlantic LLC, Knight Capital Group Inc.,</td>
<td>Erskine B. Bowles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuanfu Wang</td>
<td>BYD Company Limited</td>
<td>Susan D. Desmond-Hellmann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui Huang</td>
<td></td>
<td>Donald E. Graham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jing Huang</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reed Hastings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Liu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peter A. Thiel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cao Miao</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripley Hu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Zhou</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

resulting in Facebook’s stock value climbing from US$ 53.53 on 29 January 2014 to US$ 72.03 on 10 March 2014. A month later, the share value was however down again to around US$ 55.

5. Governments, policies and the Internet
Three important topics of Internet politics and policies that will be discussed in this section are (1) surveillance and censorship, (2) taxation and (3) terms of use/privacy policies.

A relatively arbitrary grab for a bunch of books into one of my shelves dedicated to Internet research immediately results in a multitude of liberal Western authors decrying Internet surveillance and censorship in China: China is ‘operating extensive filtering practices’ and ‘has one of the most sophisticated and pervasive filtering systems’ (Nash, 2013, p. 453). ‘Countries like China want as much control as they can get’ in order to ‘create the first information and communication technologies (ICT)-enhanced police state’ (Sullins, 2010, p. 125). China censors the Internet because it is ‘fearful of the effect of freely flowing information on their authoritarian control regime’ (McNair, 2009, p.

Table 9. Renren and Facebook’s main shareholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Renren’s stock</th>
<th>Facebook’s stock A</th>
<th>Facebook’s stock B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark Zuckerberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All executive officers and directors as a group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dustin Moskovitz</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Saverin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Chen</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB Pan Pacific Corporation [Softbank Corporation]</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doll Capital Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Jian Liu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David K. Chao</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 10. The development of Renren (NYSE) and Facebook’s (NASDAQ) stock values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Renren’s stock value</th>
<th>Facebook’s stock value</th>
<th>Multiplication factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 May 2011</td>
<td>US$ 16.80</td>
<td>US$ 38.23</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 May 2012</td>
<td>US$ 6.01</td>
<td>US$ 38.23</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May 2013</td>
<td>US$ 2.85</td>
<td>US$ 57.96</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 December 2013</td>
<td>US$ 3.00</td>
<td>US$ 72.03</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March 2014</td>
<td>US$ 3.97</td>
<td>US$ 56.75</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 April 2014</td>
<td>US$ 3.30</td>
<td>US$ 83.12</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2015</td>
<td>US$ 2.39</td>
<td>US$ 83.12</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Yahoo! Finance.
The Internet in China has ‘profound statist regulation and content surveillance’ and is ‘monitored by the Propaganda Department, which bans all original content online’ (Volkmer, 2003, p. 321). ‘Iran, China and Malaysia […] have instituted various kinds of restrictive internet policies’ (Moore, 1999, pp. 41–42).

It does not much matter who these authors are as they were arbitrarily chosen and they are ideological sock puppets replaceable by thousands others who make similar arguments in comparable publications. My criticism is also not that what they are saying would be factually wrong or that China should not be criticised. The point is rather that their arguments idealise the West in a highly ideological and cultural imperialist manner. Their arguments imply that the West is not operating Internet filtering, does not control the Internet, does not have ICT-enhanced police states, does not have authoritarian control regimes and does not have restrictive Internet policies. Such arguments present the Chinese Internet as unfree and controlled and the Western Internet as free.

Such liberal authors do not want to see that there is not only a state control of the Internet and free speech, but also a market control of the Internet and free speech that is instituted by capitalist companies that control power, visibility, attention, reputation and capital in the context of the Internet and thereby deprive others of these resources. In addition, Edward Snowden’s revelations have shown the existence of a surveillance-industrial companies, in which Western state institutions such as the National Security Agency (NSA) in the USA and the Government Communications Headquarter (GCHQ) in the UK collaborate with private security firms and Western communication companies, including Aol, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, Paltalk, Skype and Yahoo!, in order to collect user data ‘directly from the servers of these U.S. Service Providers’. 19

Snowden also revealed the existence of a surveillance system called XKeyScore that the NSA can use for reading e-mails, tracking web browsing and users’ browsing histories, monitoring social media activity, online searches, online chat, phone calls and online contact networks and follow the screens of individual computers. According to the leaked documents XKeyScore can search both the meta-data and content data. 20 The documents that Snowden leaked also showed that the GCHQ, a British intelligence agency, monitored and collected communication phone and Internet data from fibre optic cables and shared such data with the NSA. 21 According to the leak, the GCHQ for example stores phone calls, e-mails, Facebook postings, and the users’ website access history for up to 30 days and analyses these data (ibid.). Further documents showed that in co-ordination with the GCHQ also intelligence services in Germany (Bundesnachrichtendienst BND), France (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure DGSE), Spain (Centro Nacional de Inteligencia, CNI) and Sweden (Försvarsmaktens radioanstalt FRA) developed similar capacities. 22

Secret services have obtained detailed access to a multitude of citizens’ activities in converging social roles conducted in converging social spaces. Global surveillance is framed by the fact that since 9/11 there has been a massive intensification and extension of surveillance that is based on the naïve technological-deterministic surveillance ideology that monitoring technologies, big data analysis and predictive algorithms can prevent terrorism. User data are both in China and the West’s surveillance-industrial complexes first externalised and made public or semi-public on the Internet in order to enable users’ communication processes, then privatised as private property by Internet platforms in order to accumulate capital and finally particularised by secret services and the police who bring massive amounts of data under their control that are made accessible
and analysed with the help of profit-making security companies. Internet surveillance is a political-economic reality that combines state control and capitalist control in both China and the West and other parts of the world.

The state’s surveillance capacities have also in the West been used against political activists; A report has shown that US counter-terrorist agencies have infiltrated and monitored the Occupy movement, including their Internet and social media profiles. It is quite likely that they have for this purpose used surveillance technologies such as Prism and XKeyScore were used. They equated left-wing activists with terrorists and attempted to crush the Occupy movement. In the UK, a video documented in 2013 how the police tried to hire an activist to spy on Cambridge student activists. Other revelations showed the Metropolitan Police Service operated a Special Demonstration Squad that in the years 1968–1980 monitored hundreds of political groups such as the anti-Vietnam war movement, black justice campaigns, the families of people killed by the British police, Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE), Militant tendency in the British Labour Party, Greenpeace London, the Socialist Workers Party and many others.

The social media surveillance-industrial complex shows that a negative dialectic of the enlightenment is at play in contemporary societies in the West and the East: the military-industrial complex constantly undermines the very liberal values of the enlightenment, such as the freedoms of thought, speech, press and assembly as well as the security of the people’s persons, houses, papers and effects. Snowden has shown how in supposedly liberal democracies dangerous forms of political-economic power negate enlightenment values. Given these revelations, the argument that the Internet is politically free in the West and politically controlled in China has become ridiculous. Both in China and the West the Internet and social media are highly controlled by economic and political power.

It should also be noted that Internet control in China is taking place under a predominantly capitalist economic system, which shows that capitalism does not bring along with it democracy. In the West, neoliberal capitalism has also been accompanied by repressive state power that wages wars and has based on the techno-deterministic ideology that surveillance can reduce crime and terrorism erected an extensive surveillance system. Both in China and the West, ‘the market liberals depend on the repressive state’ (Lin, 2013, p. 93).

The reality of the Internet and social media both in the West and in China is that there are strong forms of economic and political control that are connected with each other and part of surveillance-industrial complexes.

Another aspect of political regulation is taxation. I have pointed out in section 4 that software companies tend in China to enjoy tax exemptions and that Baidu, Sina and Renren therefore pay tax at rates that are lower than the standard enterprise income tax of 25%. Google has its European headquarters in Ireland, from where it organises its European revenues. From Ireland profits are transferred to the Netherlands and from there to the Bermuda Islands, where Google does not need to pay any corporation tax. Companies such as Google, Amazon and Starbucks had to appear before the UK Public Accounts Committee in late 2012 for discussing the question if they avoided paying taxes in the UK. Amazon has 15,000 employees in the UK, but its headquarters are in Luxembourg, where it has just 500 employees. In 2011, it generated revenues of £3.3 billion in the UK, but only paid £1.8 million corporation tax (0.05%). Facebook paid £238,000 corporation tax on a UK revenue of £175 million (0.1%) in 2011. Google has
its headquarters in Dublin, but employs around 700 people in the UK. Google’s Managing Director for the UK and Ireland Matt Brittin admitted that this choice of location is due to the circumstance that the corporation tax is just 12.5% in Ireland, whereas in the UK it was 26% in 2011. Google had a UK turnover of £395 million in 2011, but only paid taxes of £6 million (1.5%). While large media companies only pay a very low share of taxes, governments argue that state budgets are small, implement austerity measure and as a result cut social and welfare benefits that hit the poorest in society.

Social media companies both in the West and China enjoy low- or no-tax regimes, although we live in times of exploding social inequalities everywhere in the world that require, as the analysis of the French political economist Piketty (2014) has shown, to increase corporation taxes in order to lower inequality (for analysis of the implications of Piketty’s study for media and communication, see Fuchs, 2014d).

A third important issue of Internet policies is besides (1) monitoring/censorship and (2) taxation is the issue of (3) terms of use and privacy policies.

Legally, targeted advertising is enabled by privacy policies and terms of use that are published on the websites of the platforms and to which users agree when registering their profiles. We can compare such policies and terms of Chinese and US platforms:

- Baidu Privacy Notice: ‘Baidu will also provide you with a personalized service, such as to show you more relevant search results, or the more relevant marketing advertising of results’.
- Google Privacy Policy: ‘We use the information that we collect from all of our services to provide, maintain, protect and improve them, to develop new ones and to protect Google and our users. We also use this information to offer you tailored content – like giving you more relevant search results and ads’.
- Weibo Privacy Policy: ‘In addition, you acknowledge and agree that: within the scope permitted by existing laws and regulations, the microblog might use your personal non-privacy information for marketing and other use, including but not limited to: show or provide advertising and promotional materials on the microblogging platform; inform or recommend the microblogging service or product information to you; and other such information that we think you might be interested in depending on your usage of the micro-blogging service or products’.
- Twitter Terms of Service: ‘The Services may include advertisements, which may be targeted to the Content or information on the Services, queries made through the Services, or other information’.
- Renren Terms of Service: ‘Notices can be sent to users via e-mail or regular mail. The Thousand Oaks Company can send emails to users: information about changes of the Terms and Service, service changes or other important things. The Thousand Oaks Company reserves the right to present commercial advertising to all users of Renren.com’.
- Facebook Data Use Policy, 15 November 2013, accessed on 7 April 2014: ‘We use the information we receive about you in connection with the services and features we provide to you and other users like your friends, our partners, the advertisers that purchase ads on the site, and the developers that build the games, applications, and websites you use. For example, in addition to helping people see and find things that you do and share, we may use the information we receive
about you: [...] * to measure or understand the effectiveness of ads you and others see, including to deliver relevant ads to you; [...] We may also put together data about you to serve you ads or other content that might be more relevant to you. [...] So we can show you content that you may find interesting, we may use all of the information we receive about you to serve ads that are more relevant to you’.  

- WeChat Terms of Service, 6 January 2014, accessed on 7 April 2014: http://www.wechat.com/en/service_terms.html ‘You also agree that, as explained in more detail in our WeChat Privacy Policy, we use targeted advertising to try to make advertising more relevant and valuable to you. [...] We may use your information for the purpose of sending you advertising or direct marketing (whether by messaging within our services, by email or by other means) that offer or advertise products and services of ours and/or selected third parties’.

The comparison shows that Chinese and US social media companies use relatively similar terms of use and privacy policies that allow them to use and commodify a multitude of personal user data for commercial purposes. Commodification of user data is thereby a reality of social media usage in China and the USA. Chinese and US social media privacy policies and terms of use not only share similar economic goals, but also use a comparable ideological language that presents targeted advertising as advantageous for users by speaking of ‘relevant marketing advertising’, ‘more relevant ads’, ‘delivering relevant ads to you’, ‘ads that might be more relevant to you’ and ‘targeted advertising make[s] advertising more relevant and valuable to you’. Advertising and targeting are presented as desirable because they would allow users to get information about and to purchase relevant commodities. This ideology of ‘relevant ads’ masks that advertising can have negative effects, such as the concealment of negative features and effects of products, the discrimination against competing products, the advancement of the concentration of the economy, the manipulation of human needs and desires, the statistical sorting of users into consumer groups so that the weak, the poor, people with low purchasing power and people of colour are discriminated, the enforcement of e.g. racist or sexist stereotypes, the fostering of mass consumption of non-renewable resources that generates waste and aggravates the ecological crisis (for an overview see the contributions in Turow & McAllister, 2009).

An interesting exception is the mobile chat application WhatsApp that says in its Terms of Service: ‘We are not fans of advertising. WhatsApp is currently ad-free and we hope to keep it that way forever. We have no intention to introduce advertisement into the product, but if we ever do, will update this section.’ ‘These days companies know literally everything about you, your friends, your interests, and they use it all to sell ads. [...] Remember, when advertising is involved you the user are the product’. Given this criticism of advertising, it is interesting that WhatsApp was sold to Facebook for US$ 19 billion in February 2014. Facebook derives 89% of its revenues from advertising (Facebook SEC filings, form 10-K for financial year 2013). WhatsApp will be compelled to find a commodification strategy that allows making profits and the future will tell whether this will mean the introduction of advertising and the change of WhatsApp’s values towards advertising or not.
Combining the data presented in the previous sections allows us to conduct a comparative analysis of the political economy of corporate social media in China and the USA. Commercial and profit logic dominate the Chinese Internet and Chinese social media just like it dominates the Internet in the USA. The major social media companies in China such as Baidu, Sina Weibo and Renren are capitalist companies whose operations and economic structures are very similar to the ones of Google, Twitter and Facebook. Both Weibo and Twitter have until 2014 not made any profits. Renren’s profits and losses have been fluctuating, whereas Facebook’s profits have been constantly growing. Baidu, Weibo and Renren are just like Google, Twitter and Facebook publicly traded companies. They reach out to international investors and are therefore like their US equivalents listed on US stock exchanges, which shows that they aim to attract US finance capital. As discussed in section 4, US capital is mainly interested in China as a cheap pool of labour for assembling phones, computers, computer equipment and finishing clothes that are then exported to the West. China’s information economy is therefore dominated by hardware-exporting companies, whereas software and Internet companies play a subordinated role. Given China’s embedding into the capitalist world economy as exporter of manufactured goods and a relatively cheap manufacturing labour pool, the interest of Western investors and finance capital to buy shares of Chinese companies and the interest of Western companies to advertise on Chinese social media may be limited. Baidu, Weibo and Renren are platforms with a large Chinese user base, but given their relatively pure focus on China their profits and revenues can hardly compete with the ones of Western social media corporations that attract advertisers and investors in many countries. The political economy of the Internet also has to focus on political and policy issues such as (1) control, (2) taxation and (3) privacy policies: Liberals and conservatives in the West like to display China’s Internet as controlled and the Internet in the West as free. The analysis has shown that both realms are shaped by surveillance-industrial complexes that combine capitalist and state control. Furthermore, social media companies enjoy low- or no-tax regimes as part of neoliberal modes of regulation. The comparison shows that Chinese and US social media companies use relatively similar terms of use and privacy policies that allow them to use and commodify a multitude of personal user data for commercial purposes.

Sparks (2014) shows data that evidence that total advertising spending and ad spending per person in the ‘BRICS’ (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries are only a small fraction of the ad volume in the USA. He argues that this circumstance has to do with the fact that the average consumer in the BRICS countries is rather poor. As an effect the ad revenues stay limited in these countries. One consequence is that indigenous social media platforms published in national languages have profits that are just a fraction of comparable US social media platforms.

Section 4 has shown that similar to Google, Twitter and Facebook, large parts of Baidu, Sina and Renren’s revenues are generated by targeted online advertising. The basic capital accumulation model of social media companies both in China and the West is to turn user data (user-generated content, profile data, interest data, browsing data, social network data) into a commodity that is sold as a commodity to advertisers (Fuchs, 2014a, 2014b). Baidu, Sina and Renren are just like Google, Twitter and Facebook primarily not a communication platform, but large advertising agencies. The logic of
commerce, capitalism and advertising dominates the Internet and social media both in China and the USA. Free platform use makes it difficult for users to see the commodity logic underlying these platforms and the role their use has as unpaid digital labour that generates economic value. The basic exchange that social media corporations in China and the USA organise is that they receive money in exchange for providing access to ad space that is targeted to users’ interests.

Both in China and the USA, social media corporations’ chair people and CEOs tend to be its largest shareholder, which gives them large financial and decision power. People such as Robin Li (Baidu), Larry Page (Google), Charles Chao (Weibo), Jack Dorsey (Twitter), Joseph Chen (Renren) or Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) are not just managers working for a wage for the company in order to grow the business, but are simultaneously capitalists owning parts of the company and being partly paid in the form of shares. Finance firms hold significant amount of shares and are via interlocking directorates represented in the board of directors of many Chinese and US social media corporations. This circumstance is an indication that the capitalist information economy is both in China and the USA not independent from the finance industry, but dependent on its investments, support and loans, which results in an interconnection of informational capitalism and finance capitalism and a dependence of informational capital on finance capital. Also technology and media companies that do not directly compete, but complement social media are connected to Chinese and Western social media corporations via interlocking directorates, which is an indication for the vertical integration of the capitalist media industry in China and the USA.

Baidu, Sina/Weibo and Renren are just like Google, Twitter and Facebook listed on US stock markets and thereby connected to and dependent to finance capital that is invested in the form of share purchases into the social media corporations. So social media corporations have two economies: the advertising economy, in which they sell ads in order to accumulate capital, and the finance economy, in which they sell shares to investors and try to increase their stock market values. Baidu and Google have seen a long-term growth of their market value with a slump when the global capitalist crisis started in 2008. Renren’s stock value has first dropped and then remained constantly low. Facebook’s market value has since 2011 been rising, but is also fluctuating. Twitter and Weibo have in common that they are both companies struggling to make wins with the help of targeted advertising. They both have become publicly traded companies although they have until 2014 only made losses. There is a divergence between their positive stock values and their actual monetary losses.

Financial crises can start if finance bubbles burst because there is a large divergence between actual profits and stock market valuation and investors lose confidence. The dot.com crisis in 2000 was an earlier expression of the high financialisation of the Internet economy, in which actual profits could not keep up with the promises of high stock market values. A new round of financialisation in the Internet industry has enabled the rise of social media while the ongoing world economic crisis showed us how crisis-prone financial markets are. It is not easy to make profits with targeted advertising because the average click-through-rate is around 0.1% (Comscore, 2012); users only click on every 1000th online ad presented to them. And even then it is not sure if such clicks on targeted ads tend to result in purchases or not.
Targeted advertising is a high-risk business. Also Chinese social media corporations have realised this circumstance and express warnings in their financial reports. Weibo writes:

If we fail to retain existing customers or attract new advertisers and marketing customers to advertise and market on our platform or if we are unable to collect accounts receivable from advertisers or advertising agencies in a timely manner, our financial condition, results of operations and prospects may be materially and adversely affected. [...] Privacy concerns relating to our products and services and the use of user information could damage our reputation, deter current and potential users and customers from using Weibo and negatively impact our business. [...] The monetization of our services may require users to accept promoted advertising in their feeds or private messages, which may affect user experience and cause a decline in user traffic and a delay in our monetization. [...] New technologies could block our advertisements, desktop clients and mobile applications and may enable technical measures that could limit our traffic growth and new monetization opportunities. (Weibo SEC filings, form F-1, registration statement)

Baidu says: ‘[T]hird parties may develop and use certain technologies to block the display of our customers’ advertisements and other marketing products on our Baidu.com website, which may in turn cause us to lose customers and adversely affect our results of operations’ (Baidu SEC Filings, Form-20F 2013, 5).

The future of the social media economy in China and the USA is uncertain. It is clear that it is both in China and the USA a highly financialised capitalist industry that depends on the influx of investments on finance markets and the confidence of advertisers that advertising works. There are many uncertainties associated with advertising capital accumulation models, especially concerning users’ privacy concerns, the use of ad-block technologies and other limits to advertising and the question if targeted ads are effective or not. The possibility of a dwindling confidence of investors after some trigger event and a resulting social media crisis cannot be ruled out because financialising and corporatising the Internet is accompanied by huge risks that both China and the West are facing.

6. Conclusion

Hu and Ji (2014) argue that this economic opening up was accompanied in media and journalism studies by the appropriation of Willbur Schramm-style administrative communication methods and theory that resulted in a ‘marginalisation of the critical school’ (Hu & Ji, 2014, p. 10). They call for a critical examination of this development and see the emergence of foundations of alternative paradigms. Thussu (2014, p. 33) argues that although there are counter-flows from developing countries, the ‘US entertainment and information networks are the movers and shakers’ of global media. The question that arises is therefore if with increasing importance of China and India in the world, they can draw on their alternative traditions to strengthen critical media studies and a ‘development perspective less affected by the colonial mindset’ (Thussu, 2014, p. 40).

Critical media studies envision a media and Internet landscape that is not ruled by capitalist and state power. This work has tried to show that US and the Chinese ‘social’media are not so different at all, but that rather both experience forms of capitalist and political control. A comparative political-economic analysis of the profits, the role of advertising, the boards of directors, shareholders and financial market values of Baidu,
Google, Sina Weibo, Twitter, Renren and Facebook shows important commonalities of informational capitalism in China and the West.

Zhao (2008) points out that neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics and Chinese digital neoliberalism do not signify a sealed fate, but are contested in the form of social struggles. Qiu (2009) points in this context out the emergence of working-class ICTs in China. So there is an alternative reality of struggle in the context of Chinese social media.

Without ‘any historically formed obsession with patents and copyrights, China can also be a relatively easy place to promote open source, open access, ad free information as a public good. The experimental project of Chinese socialism has the potential to encompass the intrinsically interconnected ideas of the commons, community, communism, communication and common culture’ (Lin, 2013, p. 166). To make the Internet a truly and fully social medium, the world’s workers as users and users as workers need to unite and struggle for an alternative global societal framework and working-class social media that upon their full realisation transcend the concept of class and enable an alternative Internet.

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37. nese: ‘百度还会向您提供个性化的服务，例如向您展现相关程度更高的搜索结果或者推
38. 广告结果。’
41. nese: ‘此外，您已知悉并同意：在现行法律法规允许的范围内，微博可能会将您非隐私的个人信息用于市场营销、使用方式包括但不限于：在微博平台中向您展示或提供广告和促销资料，向您发送或推荐微博的服务或产品信息，以及其他此类根据您使用微博服务或产品的情
42. 况所认为您可能会感兴趣的信息。’
45. 件传送。千橡公司会通过邮件服务发报消息给用户，告诉他们服务条款的修改、服务变
46. 更、或其它重要事情。同时，千橡公司保留对人人网用户投放商业性广告的权利。’
40. Tencent Holdings Limited is a Chinese company operating online services such as the instant messenger QQ (launched in 1999) and the mobile phone-chat application WeChat (launched in 2011). WeChat is one of the first Chinese social and mobile media applications that is fully available in English and is therefore aimed at commodifying personal data on an international market of users.

Notes on contributor
Christian Fuchs is a professor at the University of Westminster’s Communication and Media Research Institute and the Centre for Social Media Research. He is editor of the Journal tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique (http://www.triple-c.at) and author of around 250 publications in the field of the political economy and critical theory of media, communications and the Internet. http://fuchs.uti.at, @fuchschristian.

References


Bridging identities through religious television contents: Javanese female descendants, Islamic viewing and Malay identity projection

Lily El Ferawati Roflı, Md Azalanshah Md Syed and Azizah Hamzah

Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT
This study explores the uses of Islamic television content in bridging the gap between Javanese and Malay identity among the Malay women of Javanese descent in Malaysia. Malaysian religious television programmes have constantly promoted the Islamic identifications of Malayness, enabling the Malay audience to reconstruct the culturally religious identity. While the reconstruction of Islamic identity through television viewing simply represents a lived experience for the majority of the Malay society, it has some cultural meanings for certain Malay sub-ethnic communities, such as the Javanese. This ethnographic study on a Malaysian Javanese community reveals that the interpretive engagement of this particular community in Islamic television viewing serves the purpose of negotiating Malay identity. The results of this study suggest that religious content can serve as an engaging platform to construct multi-ethnic identities beside popular and ethnic-related contents.

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Introduction
The purpose of this study is to explore the way Javanese female descendants in a Malay rural community interpret Islamic television content in relation to their identity construction. Firstly, this study questions to what extent Islam in Malaysia constitutes Malayness and what are the impacts of TV-adopted Islamic piety on the sub-ethnic groups in Malay society. The impacts of Islamic resurgence on the Malaysian broadcasting system have been widely discussed in relation to the political power (Abd-Ghani, 2008; Mutalib, 1993; Muzaffar, 1986), and the effects of the campaign on Malay society have been mentioned in several literatures (Nagata, 1980; Ong, 1995; Stivens, 2006). However, as the Malay society is derived from different ethnic origins in which non-Islamic elements might be influential during the pre-Islamic period, it is important to explore their negotiation of the influence of Islamic resurgence in projecting Malay identity. For instance, the Javanese descendants who have been granted Malaysian citizenship live within the social construction of Malay identity and culture while maintaining some semblance of
Javanese customs and traditions (Miyazaki, 2000; Mohamed, 2001; Mohd-Yasin, 1996; Sekimoto, 1994).

The debates of Malay identity construction can be understood within two contexts: ‘authority-defined’ and ‘everyday-defined’ social realities (Shamsul, 1996). The former represents the ruling government’s project of Malay and bumiputera (sons of the soil) identity (Shamsul, 1996, 2001; Tan, 2000) and the colonial-invented definition of Malay racial entity (Kahn, 2006; Reid, 2004; Vickers, 2004). The latter refers to the rural convention of Malayness, encompassing Islam and adat (traditional customs) as the cultural underpinnings (Nagata, 1974; Ong, 1995). While the socio-political scholars discuss the construction of the ‘more Islamic’ Malayness in relation to state power, we seek to revisit the omnipotence of television as a cultural source for the members of Malay society to imagine and redefine their identity in the context of everyday lives. Apparently, the ramification of popular media consumption among the Malay audiences has raised public debates mainly on to what extent Islamic identifications on Malay identity have been challenged (Rahim & Pawanteh, 2010; Shamshudeen & Morris, 2014; Syed, 2012). Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap in the study of the correlations between popular consumption and Malay identity construction in Malaysia with the focus on Islamic television viewing among the sub-ethnic women in the Malay society.

This study adopts an ethnographic approach in audience studies with critical thematic analysis into the subjects’ interpretations of Islamic television content. Drawing upon the conceptual framework of the ‘interpretive identity practices’, this study reveals that the Javanese female descendants engage in Islamic viewing to imagine the redefinition of Malay identity in which the reinforcement of Islamic values and norms take place. Their engagement in Islamic television content somewhat portrays the attempts to bridge the cultural gap between their Javanese and Malay identities.

**Malaysian television and the state discourses on Islamic and Malay identity**

The Malaysian broadcasting system serves as a social agent to disseminate the state agenda in promoting national identity (Karthigesu, 1986), which de facto includes the imposition of Malay identity. The notion of ‘Bangsa Malaysia’ (Malaysian nation) that supports Malaysian multiculturalism in which ‘the people should start accepting each other as they are, regardless of race and religion’, in fact concerns the political interests of the Malay to retain some Malay identifications (Tan, 2000, p. 469). The designation of Bahasa Malaysia (which is actually the original language of the Malay populace) as the national language and the recognition of Islam as the religion of the Federation confirm the attempts to ‘Malaynise’¹ the multicultural Malaysians (Arakaki, 2004; Tan, 2000). Particularly, in reinforcing Islam as the appropriate ‘way of life’ for the Malaysian society, the ruling regime exercises its power over the broadcasting system.

The Islamisation of Malaysian television and radio began at the pitch of the Islamic resurgence in the 1970s–1980s. The campaign that was initiated by Western-educated Muslim Malays and politically endorsed by the opposition Pan Islamic Party (PAS or Parti Islam se-Malaysia) claimed to promote the dissemination of Islamic piety into the state’s social and political sphere (Camroux, 1996; Mualib, 1993; Muzaffar, 1986). In response to the growing consciousness of Islamic fundamentalism among the urban...
middle-class Malays, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) embraced the idea of ‘back to the Koran’ to maintain the political support of the Malays (Camroux, 1996; Muzaffar, 1986). The state manifested its initial move by airing the Azan (the call for Islamic prayers) on the state-run radio and television channels (Muzaffar, 1986). It was followed by broadcasting weekly Islamic-themed programmes for the purpose of ‘educating Muslims and non-Muslims alike about the pristine ideals of the religion’ (Muzaffar, 1986, p. 59).

In the early development of Malaysian television, sensitive issues pertaining to religion and race were not allowed to be discussed on television (Karthigesu, 1986), and Islamic programmes on the state-run Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM) were relatively small (Abd-Ghani, 2008). Since the Islamic resurgence, RTM had added more Islamic broadcasts on its networks due to the pressure from the Islamic fundamentalists (Abd-Ghani, 2008, pp. 63–64). Interestingly, only Islamic religious programmes are permissible on the Malaysian broadcasting channels (Abd-Ghani, 2008; Barraclough, 1983; Schumann, 1991), but non-Islamic contents in various genres, especially the ones that are imported are still allowed on television to cater for the multicultural and multilingual audiences (Yousif, 2004, p. 32). The allocation of special airtime to Islamic broadcasts indicates that the religion is given the status of symbolic prominence to be the ‘general moral code for all Malaysians’ (Barraclough, 1983, p. 968).

Islam holds a very special position in the Malaysian constitution in which it also constitutes the definition of Malay identity. According to the 1963 Federal Constitution, a Malay refers to a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay adat (Abdullah, Martinez, & Radzi, 2010; Kahn, 2006; Nagata, 1974; Vickers, 2004). By this definition, the concept of Malayness becomes an ‘inclusive culture’ (Reid, 2004), which enables the Muslim migrants from pre-independent Indonesia, such as the Javanese, to be part of the inclusive Malay society. Apparently, the Javanese migrants who came to the Malay Peninsula prior to the independence of Malaysia were Muslims and shared the same set of orthodox customs or customary laws, which originated from the pre-Islamic culture, with the Malays (Vickers, 2004). As they integrated into the Malay society, the migrants gradually withdrew some un-Islamic elements from their culture (Miyazaki, 2000; Tamrin & Bohari, 1980) and observed the Malay adat, which has been adapted in accordance with the Islamic tenets (Abdullah et al., 2010).

In Malaysia, the acceptance of Islam is often misunderstood as one becoming Malay or masuk Melayu (Nagata, 1974; Nah, 2003; Tan, 2000). Nah (2003, p. 528) notes that the Islamisation of Orang Asli (indigenous groups) through dakwah (missionary activity) has turned them into Malays and blurred their ethnic attachment. In other words, once non-Malays decide to embrace Islam, they have to deal with the cultural and social expectations of becoming Malay. In addition, these expectations of Islamic identity expand beyond religious aspects if they are women.

Muslim women in Malaysia are heavily subject to the state-defined gender construction, affected by the implementation of the National Economic Policy and Islamic resurgence. Through these discourses, the government expected Malay women to be highly educated and involved in workplace, but at the same time, they needed to restrain themselves from transgressing the social and cultural norms set in adat and Islam (Nagata, 1997; 1980; Omar & Che Dan, 2007; Ong, 1995; Stivens, 2006). They have to represent the ‘Islamic femininity’ by adorning themselves with Islamic modest attire (Omar &
Che Dan, 2007, p. 49), adhere to the state’s project of ‘family values’ in establishing happy families (Stivens, 2006, p. 359), and maintain the ‘integrity of their bodies, families and the body politic’ (Ong, 1995, p. 272). In negotiating these cultural expectations, they are exposed to the television images of ‘ideal mother’ (Ong, 1995), and of ‘ideal Malay/Muslim women’ (Omar & Che Dan, 2007) which have some local underpinnings. As such, television enables Malay women, regardless of their ethnic origin, to imagine the governmental construction of Malay identity.

Interpretive identity practices: interpreting television and imagining identities

Audience are the active meaning makers of television text (Hall, 1999) who can naturally activate their interpretive reasoning about the world (Gillespie, 1995). They use their situated norms and values to decode television messages, by placing themselves in either ‘dominant-hegemonic position’, ‘negotiated position’, or ‘oppositional position’ (Hall, 1999, pp. 515–517). In dealing with a range of manifold messages, the audience adopt to accept, oppose or negotiate the meanings in the messages based on their understanding of social and cultural agencies (Tuchman, 1994). These agencies construct the imaginary space where prior knowledge and experiences as well as cultural embedding intertwine to form imagery for realities (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992).

As part of their own ‘interpretive communities’ (Fish, 1980), audience are able to create meanings in the same manner as their fellow communions interpret the mediated world. Fish (1980, p. 9) argues that ‘a reader’s activities are interpretive’ which is either influenced by the constitutional normality or prompted by prior legitimate expectations. The members of interpretive communities cannot recognise the limits of their imaginary communities, yet they can imagine their fellow communions through mediated symbols or culture (Anderson, 2006). This notion of ‘imagined communities’ enables society to conceive of their identity by imagining the symbolic practices of their communions (Anderson, 2006, p. 35).

In the age of globalisation, when identifications with the local culture tend to minimise Western cultural influences (Banerjee, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003), television finds its strategic position in a religious community. For this reason, Lindlof (2002) suggests examining the inquiry of interpretive communities in studying the relationships between media and religion. Lindlof (2002, p. 67) argues that the situated religious values can possibly lead television audience to watch a specific religious genre. Gillespie’s audience ethnography in a London’s Punjabi youth community points out that the family viewing of ‘sacred soaps’ places the diaspora youth in the situated negotiation of traditional values (Gillespie, 1995, p. 87). In Italian Catholic communities where religion is a cardinal point of identity, religious programmes bring Sunday mass at home for the community members to learn the Catholic morality and ethics (Ardizzoni, 2005). To counterbalance misrepresentation of religious and cultural aspects of the race by the Western media, the British-based South Asian Muslim communities demand for ethnic-produced Islamic programmes, raising awareness of their intended religious identity (Saha, 2012). All these studies concern the subject matter pertaining to the construction of religious identity.

The presence of television in the discourse of religious identity substantially relates to the state’s concern of religious nationalism. Abu-Lughod (2005) analysed that Egyptian
television serials constantly represent the Islamic model of national identity in order to influence the local audience to deal with the identity politics. In India, programmes such as *Ramayan* expose the idea of Hindu nationalism and significantly influence the multi-religious audience to redefine their own religious discourses of self and ‘other’ in negotiating national identity (Mankekar, 2002). Malaysia is no exception, in which some aspects of Malay nationalism – where Islamic identity is concerned – embed in the notion of *Bangsa Malaysia* (Arakaki, 2004; Tan, 2000), and the Islamic morality is promoted through the broadcasting system as the national ethic codes (Abd-Ghani, 2008; Barraclough, 1983; Schumann, 1991).

As media provide a range of images, narratives and texts, consisting of social, cultural, economic and political commodities to the audience to interact with (Appadurai, 2006), media essentially facilitate them to create the meanings of their collective identity. In the Malaysian contexts, the local and the regional contents play a dominant role in re-shaping and redefining the national and collective identities (Banerjee, 2002; Rahim & Pawanteh, 2010). However, the deregulation and the splitting of cultural industries into three different ethnic-based media systems hamper the production of ‘national culture’ (Banerjee, 2000, pp. 41–46). The major ethnic groups – Malays, Chinese and Indians – have their own television programmes that are produced to cater to the respective target audience culturally and linguistically (Abdul Latif, Wan Mahmud, & Salman, 2013; Banerjee, 2000). For example, the Malay audience have choices of programmes which are delivered in *Bahasa Melayu* and established based on the Malay cultural underpinnings. Among the television broadcasts targeted to the Malay society are Islamic programmes, which make up some 13.5% of all the programmes in five free-to-air television channels (Buyong & Ismail, 2011). Islamic talk shows dominate the airtime (Buyong & Ismail, 2011; Wahab, 2011) and become the platform of Islamic identity reconstruction for the Malays to assume some improvement in practising Islam (Abd-Ghani, 1998; Wok, Ismail, Azman, & Latif, 2012). It is understood that Islamic television substantially facilitates the process of becoming in relation to the re-construction of Islamic vis-à-vis Malay identity and reinforces the sense of belonging to the community.

In modern days, people’s sense of belonging becomes more reflexive, depending on how they present self-identity (Barker, 1997; Giddens, 1991). As Giddens states, ‘all human beings continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities as a feature of doing what they do’ (Giddens, 1991, p. 35). Barker (1997) argues that audience’s reflexive interpretation of television contents signifies the process of meaning making instead of monitoring. In his study on the correlation between soap talks and hybrid identity construction among the British Asian and Afro-Caribbean girls, he describes that the diaspora girls actively reflect their experiences in the cosmopolitan society on the depiction of soap opera characters (Barker, 1997, p. 613). As identity is always in production (Hall, 1990), every person goes through a process of subjectivity (Barker, 2012). This subjectivity refers to an individual process of becoming a person who is involved in the experiences of social, cultural and political construction of self (Barker, 2012, p. 220). Therefore, the construction of identity is also a process of becoming (Barker, 2012; Hall, 1990).

Audience’s interpretation of television is complex as it relates to their identity construction. At first, they belong to certain interpretive communities in which social and cultural agencies constitute their interpretation of realities and the representation of realities. Television as encoded text, on the other hand, provides them with images of realities to be
decoded in accordance with the situated sociocultural values and knowledge. These values and knowledge are shared among the community members, which they might have never seen. As television presents the images of their communions, the audience can reflect on their identity and their communions’ practices of identity. Ultimately, they are able to project that communal identity by exercising the ideas of the communal identifications and practices, depicted on television. Hence, the audience’ projection of identity is actually the interpretive identity practices.

Research methodology

This study is a preliminary report on an on-going ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Kampung Parit Tujuh Baroh, in the district of Sabak Bernam, northwest Selangor, which is located 120 kilometres away from the capital city Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The selection of Kampung Parit Tujuh Baroh as the research site is due to specific reasons. First, like many other Javanese villages in the state of Selangor, one of the prominent features of Kampung Parit Tujuh Baroh is that the Javanese descendants make up the majority of the Malay population. Second, the Javanese community in the village particularly, and in Selangor generally, has assimilated into the Malay society, but they maintain a strong attachment to their Javanese culture and identity (see Mohamed, 2001; Sekimoto, 1994). Hence, their mode of identity construction in relation to the state is worthy as a subject of study.

The fieldwork that began in April 2013 employed one-on-one interviews and intensive participant observation as the data collection instruments. Ten Javanese female descendants aged 43 to 71, from the second generation of Javanese pioneer settlers were selected through snowball sampling. The ten informants were a purposive sample that met two specific criteria: women of the second generation of the Javanese migrants and are heavy television viewers. The first informant who was randomly selected on a convenient basis referred us to some other informants that were suitable for inclusion in the sampling. Similarly, the other informants also suggested some other potential informants and so forth until an appropriate size of the sample was reached.

As women are recognisably perceived as heavy viewers due to their domestic attachment (Honeyford, 1980; Press, 1991), they appear to be appropriate for this study. However, it should be noted that this study does not attempt to debate their gender roles in relation to their male counterparts. Instead, this study presents an analytical interpretation of women’s engagement in television consumption, which leads to their negotiation with cultural and national identity project as promoted by the state. The women of the second generation of the Javanese migrants were recruited based on the assumption that they have a strong association with their ancestor’s culture (Itzigsohn, 2000). This strong link to the past history and lives might put them in a more complex negotiation of identity construction where the cultural milieus from two different entities and television contents interweave in interpretive space. The television content here refers to the elements of messages or meanings derived from news, soaps, reality shows, and other television programmes that the study informants engage in.

This study employs applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) with inductive coding. This method of analysis suggests that the researchers interpretively describe the explicit and implicit ideas within the themes (Guest et al., 2012, p. 10).
analysing the data, we use a ‘double hermeneutic’ approach (Barker, 1997) to decipher the informants’ interpretation of television content and establish the patterns of meaning within the interpretation. We analyse the informants’ narratives of life history, everyday culture and television consumption in relation to the notions of identity politics as discussed earlier in this article. The ability of the interviewers to speak the Javanese language greatly assisted the whole process of data collection and analysis, facilitating the personal connection between the researchers and the researched. This connection and our prior ‘local knowledge’ (Geertz, 1973) about the Javanese cultural norms enable us to initiate self-reflection, which is appropriate in qualitative analysis (Alasuutari, 1999; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2002).

Interpreting Islam within the cultural boundaries

The Javanese female descendants in this research watch Islamic programmes with specific intentions. As it is intentional viewing (Rubin, 1984), they follow the programme with a sense of purpose to seek knowledge, recall the Islamic teachings and experiences as well as spend time within the Islamic norms as projected by the programmes. They are most likely to tune in Islamic programmes to learn *tajwid* (the rules of proper pronunciation of the Koran recitation) and *Fiqh of Salah* (the practice of ritual prayers) to be practised in their daily lives.

... I watch a programme on TV1, *taranum* (the beautiful recitation of the) Koran. Someone recites (a verse in the Koran) and the *ustaz* (male religious teacher) gives comments. I loved watching that programme. We can correct our ways of recitation. (50-year-old part-time teacher)

We learn a lot about the additional practices of *Salah* (prayers) from television. For example, it is appropriate to offer *doa* (prayers) and recite the Koran after performing *Salah*. I asked my children to do the same. I even sat by their side when they are reciting the Koran to correct their *tajwid*. (54-year-old self-employed seamstress)

As Muslims, they have acquired such kinds of knowledge and other teachings of Islam from schools and their Javanese parents. However, they need to keep updated with the latest augmentation of such knowledge and be reminded of the actions that need to be reviewed. For instance, an informant says:

We already know that we should recite the Koran regularly, be faithful to our husband, respect the neighbours, but sometimes we take it for granted. We do not do it properly. That is why we watch Islamic programmes, and listen to Islamic sermons, so that we are kept reminded of the Islamic norms. (43-year-old homemaker)

Muslim Malays in general indeed watch Islamic programmes to enhance their knowledge and get inspired to become better persons (Abd-Ghani, 1998; Wok et al., 2012). However, engaging in Islamic viewing has extensive cultural meanings for Javanese women because it relates to their Malay identity negotiation. As Islamic identifications also define the Malay identity (Abdullah et al., 2010; Kahn, 2006; Nagata, 1974; Vickers, 2004), they find that observing Islamic teachings is also one of the interpretive Malay identity practices. Furthermore, in the event of Islamic viewing, they interpret Islamic contents within the cultural boundaries by which they pursue an interest in Islamic practices that are locally acceptable.
In appreciating Islamic values and teachings that they have learnt from television, they also consider cultural norms set in Malay *adat*, which constitutes the social interactions among the members of the society. For example, in practising optional fasting in the month of *Rajab* (the seventh month in the Islamic calendar), an informant needs to think of the social consequences in exercising the values. She argues:

I am fasting again today and tomorrow (Friday) will be the last. I won’t fast on Saturday and Sunday because I have to attend *rewang* and a wedding party. I think fasting for three days is enough. We are not allowed to fast when we are attending a gathering. Some people might think we exhibit *riya* (show-off). Like the *ustazah* (female religious teacher) on TV said, when we are invited to an event, we should not fast to respect the host. I have to attend this *rewang* because if I do not, the people will judge me negatively. (60-year-old homemaker)

*Rewang* refers to the practice of mutual act of cooperation by a group of community members who work together to prepare an event, usually a wedding ceremony. This cultural tradition represents a traditional norm in Malaysian rural communities, especially in the villages where Javanese descendants form a majority (Mohamed, 2001). Apparently, everyone in the community who gets invited is morally responsible to attend the *rewang* due to the social implications. For example, the particular informant that we quoted just now preferred to attend the *rewang* to fasting because she was compliant with the cultural expectation of being a member of her community. In negotiating such decision, she refers to a message from her favourite Islamic programme, *Tanyalah Ustazah* (Ask the *Ustazah*).

Most of the informants in this study follow the moderate teachings of Islam as promoted by the state through television discourses. In fact, the television channels that dominantly belong to the UMNO-led government and its affiliates (Nain & Wang, 2004) deliver moderate ideas about Islam which have been adapted to the local ways of living. Television constantly represents the government’s stand on the rejection of Islamist extremism, especially in the political contexts. This national representative image of Islam essentially influences the local audience to deal with the extreme views of Islamic teachings. For example, in the case of UMNO–PAS debate over the essence of Islamic practices that became the headlines in the national television channels some time ago, an informant commented:

PAS (leader) said that the prayers of the UMNO members would not be accepted by God. Why does an *ulama* (Islamic scholar) say that? Is he God? Why would he say that? If I could phone-call the news anchors, I would ask them how could an *ulama* utter such negative words, about something that precedes God’s will. (71-year-old homemaker)

The Javanese women in this study also adapt themselves to the national-invented Islamic identity in reading Islamic morality. In interpreting the Islamic morality depicted on television, the respondents tend to relate it to local wisdom, influenced by the concept of state-defined Malay identity. For example, this particular informant who is the mother of a police officer likes to distance herself to the television images that portray the lives of destitute Muslim families.

I like watching *Bersamamu*, but I hate it when the people (depicted in the programme) say that they are so poor and they have no food to eat at all. In my opinion, Malaysia is a prosperous country. Everything is available here. We should make an effort. If we work hard enough, *Insha Allah* (God willing) we won’t be poor like that. (65-year-old homemaker)
**Bersamamu** is a reality programme aired on TV3, which presents a picture of the poor local families and offers charity to help them out. Though it is not labelled as an Islamic broadcast, this programme constantly portrays the lives of the unfortunate Malays especially in remote settings – except for some special episodes during the non-Muslim festive days which deliver the images of the poor from the non-Muslim communities. In this sense, we consider the study informant’s engagement to the Islamic content in **Bersamamu** as a form of Islamic viewing. Furthermore, the informant’s reflexive viewing describes her negotiation with the oppositional representations of Malay identity.

Islam encourages Muslims to be economically successful so they do not depend on other people or other modes of welfare by the state, which might lead them to un-Islamic practices. The particular informant retains this Islamic morality in her mind and somehow relates it to the idea of Malaysian modernity. Apparently, during the development of Malaysian modernisation, the Malays were encouraged to be economically advanced, while maintaining Islamic values and Malay cultural norms, so that they did not become second-class citizens (Omar & Che Dan, 2007). This idea of Malay modern identity influenced her to work hard in order to elevate herself from her previous socio-economic status when she lived with her poor Javanese migrant family.

As she associates herself with the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006) of modern Malay society, she disapproves of the fact that there is a section of Malays who still live in poverty, like the ones shown on **Bersamamu**. She is mindful of the country’s expectations of building a developed Malay society and the Islamic morality of sustainability. Thus, she expects the Malays to continue efforts to earn a better living like her family did. Despite her association with the modern Malaysian society, she still retains the connections with her Javanese community such as participating in rewang and speaking Javanese on a daily basis. At the same time, she likes to remain connected to the Indonesian Javanese depicted in her favourite Indonesian Islamic soap opera, **Islam KTP** (Non-practising Muslims). Through the representation of the poor Muslims in the soap, she imagines that Javanese Muslims in Indonesia are not as fortunate as the Malaysian Javanese Muslims.

Indeed, most of the informants have religious and cultural self-reflexivity (Barker, 1997) in interpreting the Indonesian soaps. However, they draw a clear line between them and Indonesian Javanese. In reflecting their identities on the depiction of Indonesian Javanese Muslims, they perceive that they are similar in culture and religion, but the national-defined Islamic identity makes them distinctive from each other. In other words, in terms of Islamic identity, they feel closer to the ‘imagined community’ of Malay society rather than Indonesian.

The Javanese female descendants in this study engage in Islamic ‘devotional viewing’ (Gillespie, 1995) in which they interpret the religious content pertaining to Islamic values and teachings to form what this study suggests as ‘interpretive identity practices’. As Muslim Malays – and Javanese – they are aware that they must observe Islamic tenets and live in accordance with the Islamic teachings as set in the Koran and **Hadith** as well as the cultural expectations to be a Malay. For them, Islamic television content provides guiding information for pursuing the sense of becoming Malays who submit to Islam and comply with Islamic laws and norms.

It is interpreted that Islam serves to bridge the gap between their Javanese culture and Malay culture, and television has made it easier to interpret Islam. Growing up as Malaysians living in the Malay majority, they feel obligated to observe Malay ways of living,
including the practice of Islamic norms and values. However, they adapt to Islam as practised by the Malays in a negotiating mode so as to accommodate with their Javanese culture and beliefs. They belong to the imagined communities of the modern Malay society, but they persistently maintain their Javanese customs. Their attachment to their origin remains strong, but they understand their duties as Malaysian citizens.

Interpreting Islam in the process of becoming Malay

The literatures of ethnic identity construction in Malaysia suggest that when someone embraces Islam, the person is considered to have accepted the Malay way of life (Nagata, 1974; Nah, 2003; Tan, 2000). The non-Malay Muslim converts usually have to deal with the social expectations of becoming Malay. In the case of Javanese Muslims’ identity negotiation, it is the other way around: to be Malay is to become more Islamic (Miyazaki, 2000; Mohamed, 2001; Tamrin & Bohari, 1980).

As identity is always being developed in production, the construction of identity involves a process of becoming (Barker, 2012; Hall, 1990). The Javanese women go through this process while adapting to new identifications of Islamic identity as deemed appropriate by Malay hegemony throughout their lives. This is due to their perception that, as Javanese, they are seen less Islamic compared to the Malay society, as this informant said:

The Javanese are less Islamic compared to the Banjarese who strongly adhere to Islamic teachings. When we were young, we did not really wear tudung (head scarf) and we like to wear kebaya. I did not use tudung. I just started using tudung some years ago. We only knew the importance of wearing tudung and Baju Kurung by watching television and decided to follow Islamic practices. (61-year-old homemaker)

The act of being modest such as wearing Baju Kurung and putting on tudung was never forced on Malay women till the Islamic resurgence (Muzaffar, 1986). It can be said that before the 1970s, Malay women in general used to dress in slightly revealing attire. They are accustomed to the national dress which loosely covered the whole body except the hands, feet, neck and face, but covering their hair with scarves seemed to be an inconvenience. Likewise, this current informant emphasises that she used to wear the old Javanese-styled kebaya, a kind of lacy fitting blouse that is body hugging. When she was young, she lived with her Javanese peasant parents in a remote paddy village. At that time, her family did not have any access to media, and she never attended school either. Therefore, she was not aware of the Malay Baju Kurung. She then moved to the current village after she married, and started to learn about the Malay way of dressing when she started to mix with the indigenous Malay Muslims. She eventually covered her hair when she realised that the headscarf was consistent with the moral standards in Islam within Malay society.

Similarly, another informant also interprets that the tudung is an Islamic practice, which has been a part of the Malay cultural norms. She perceives that revealing aurat (body parts that should be covered in modesty) does not represent the Malay culture and should not be exposed on national television. She expressed,

I do not like it when television shows (portrayals of characters in) revealing clothes. In the past, I did not wear tudung, but now I know we should wear it. Isn’t that our (Islamic)
religious teaching? Therefore, television should not depict women who do not cover *aurat*. (58-year-old self-employed seamstress)

The study informants’ understanding of Islamic practices often interferes with their perception of Malay cultural norms. This misunderstanding leads them to the interpretation that to be welcome into Malay society, they have to be seen overtly practising Islam. Consequently, they need to upgrade their *iman* (faith), Islamic knowledge and moral standards. As they were born Muslims, they have no difficulty with this identity negotiation. Moreover, they find Islamic viewing helpful in guiding them into becoming better Muslims. This indicates that Islamic programmes are an instrumental platform to exercise their Malay/Islamic identity.

In becoming better Muslims, the Javanese descendants must withdraw themselves from being involved in un-Islamic elements that are embedded in their cultural traditions and customs. The women in this study are mindful of their ancestors’ pre-Islamic practices, but they decide to distance themselves from such acts because it is in direct conflict with the teachings of Islam. Unexpectedly, some elements that bear resemblance to such practices sometimes appear in Indonesian soap operas. Engaging in oppositional viewing, an informant comments,

Sometimes there is a story about people who keep pesugihan to become rich instantly. I know this kind of practice. My (Javanese) grandparents used to tell me. But that is only for trivial knowledge. I believe that some Javanese in Indonesia still do that, but here, we do not because it is forbidden in Islam. (62-year-old homemaker)

This informant who likes to watch Indonesian Islamic series *HidayahMu* rejects the idea of paganism depicted in the soap, but she still manages to acquire knowledge from the content. The series basically presents a different story every week with the same theme: every wrong-doer will be guided to the right path. From this series, she perceives that those who still practise a pre-Islamic life have not achieved religious enlightenment and she believes that no Malay Muslims would believe in such practices.

All the informants admit that they have never witnessed those pre-Islamic practices, but some of them have witnessed old Javanese religious practices. An informant recalled that her Muslim father used to practise *Puasa Pati Geni*, an orthodox Javanese practice of fasting, which started at dawn and ended in the late evening. While the common Islamic fasting ends at dusk, which is marked by the breaking of fast with various food and beverages, the adherents of the Javanese fasting are only allowed to consume white rice and plain water near midnight. This practice is no longer seen in the Malaysian Javanese cultural life due to their total submission to Islam. As an informant acknowledges:

We have become Malaysian citizens so we do not practice those kinds of things anymore. Our parents were Javanese so they did that. Besides, as Muslims, we should only practice Islam that is acceptable in this country. (62-year-old farmer)

It is noted that the study informants negotiate some representative and oppositional depictions of Islamic practices in the process of searching for the essential characteristics of becoming Malay. They interpret that the ideal Malays are those who practise true Islam and reject un-Islamic attachments. While the religious congregations that they attend every Friday teach them the basic knowledge about Islamic and un-Islamic practices, television seems to project life in the real world which may be un-Islamic.
Conclusion

The decline of global influences in local television (Banerjee, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003) and the presence of religious contents in reconstructing local identity (Ardizzoni, 2005; Gillespie, 1995; Mankekar, 2002; Saha, 2012) confirm the intersections between media and religion in interpretive communities (Lindlof, 2002). In the Malaysian contexts, television ubiquitously promotes Malay nationalism in which Islamic identity is deeply embedded (Abd-Ghani, 2008; Barraclough, 1983; Nain & Wang, 2004; Schumann, 1991). While the images of Islamic modernity are constantly presented to redefine the identity of Malay women (Omar & Che Dan, 2007; Ong, 1995), the audience remain to use their own situated cultural and religious agency in interpreting the images (see Rahim & Pawanteh, 2010; Shamshudeen & Morris, 2014; Syed, 2012). The Malay audience’s engagement in Islamic viewing has the purpose of reinforcing the Islamic identity (Abd-Ghani, 1998; Wok et al., 2012) which we term as the acts of ‘interpretive identity practices’.

The Malay society with its ‘inclusive culture’ of Malayness (Reid, 2004) enables Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds to claim the Malay identity as long as they follow the Malay adat and have gone through the Malay-defined cultural and religious localisation (Kahn, 2006; Nagata, 1974; Nah, 2003; Tan, 2000; Vickers, 2004). In this sense, the aspects of becoming Malay and Muslim are intertwined in complicated ways. Particularly, the negotiation of Islamic identity among the Javanese female descendants in this study is a substantial process of becoming Malay. Therefore, they continually seek to enhance their understanding of Islamic principles and practices, including engaging in Islamic viewing, and restraining from the Javanese old traditions, to strengthen their self and collective identifications to the Malay society. Their interpretive views of Islamic contents correspond with the ideas of the Malay identity construction and their Islamic identity practices represent the projection of Malay identity. In other words, their engagement in Islamic viewing and their interpretation of Islamic contents define their negotiation of the interpretive identity practices of Malay identity.

With this notion of the interpretive identity practices, we suggest that Islamic contents play a significant role in bridging the cultural gap between the Javanese and the Malay identity. While the thesis of popular culture and diaspora recognises popular contents as the mediators of hybrid identity construction (Barker, 1997; Gillespie, 1995), the efficacy of religious contents in mediating multiple identity construction should be taken into consideration. As this study employs a qualitative methodology with a limited number of research subjects, a thorough, extended investigation needs to be done to confirm the constancy.

Notes

1. This term ‘Malaynise’ here refers to the praxis of the Malaysian constitutional ethnic metanarrative in integrating the multi-ethnic society. The Malaysian Federal Constitution grants a special position for Malay and Islam to be privileged on top of other ethnic groups and religions. This stipulation compels the non-Malays and non-Muslims to embrace the Islamic and Malay moral virtue as the proper merit of identity projection (see Arakaki, 2004, p. 131).
2. The teachings, the deeds and the sayings of the Prophet.
3. Banjarese is another ethnic group of Indonesian origin that constitutes Malay society. The Banjarese and Javanese in Sabak Bernam live side by side but they are very distinct from one to another.

4. Baju Kurung is a set of the Malay traditional outfit, which loosely covers all parts of the female body except the head, hands, and feet. Baju Kurung is appropriate for Muslim women because it follows the Islamic convention about body covering.

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Notes on contributors

Lily El Ferawati Roﬁl is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya. Her field of study is related to media and ethnic communities.

Md Azalanshah Md Syed, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer in the Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya. His research interests include television and film studies, women and media, and audience studies.

Azizah Hamzah, Ph.D., is a professor in the Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya. Her areas of expertise include media product marketing, media studies, publishing organization management, and media and gender studies.

ORCID

Lily El Ferawati Roﬁl http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2002-7975

References


Superbugs, or antibiotic-resistant bacteria, are a serious global health threat. One of the greatest achievements of modern medicine is the discovery of penicillin and other antibiotics to treat deadly infections caused by bacteria (Nerlich & James, 2009). However, the past several decades have witnessed an increase in the number of antibiotic-resistant superbugs such as methicillin-resistant \textit{Staphylococcus aureus} (MRSA), \textit{Enterococcus faecium}, \textit{Klebsiella pneumoniae}, \textit{Acinetobacter baumannii}, \textit{Pseudomonas aeruginosa}, and \textit{Enterobacter} species (Moellering, 2010). These superbugs make standard medical treatment ineffective and lead to extended illness and higher mortality rates (DeSilva, Muskavitch, & Roche, 2004). In the USA, each year around 2 million people developed hospital-acquired infections, mostly due to antibiotic-resistant pathogens, and 99,000 of them will die (Infectious Diseases Society of America, 2011). Antibiotic-resistance costs the US health system $20 billion annually (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). In the European Union, more than 25,000 people die from antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections each year, and the annual economic loss is estimated to reach at least 1.5 billion Euros (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011a). Superbugs present an especially pressing risk in developing countries, where lack of regulation on antibiotic use has been a major cause of the emergence and spread of superbugs (Sosa, 2005). Due to the high risks of superbugs, the World Health Organization launched a worldwide
campaign calling on governments to combat the global threat posed by antibiotic resistance in 2011 (WHO, 2011b).

One recent superbug is New Delhi metallo-β-lactamase-1 (NDM-1), a pan-resistant enzyme that makes bacteria resistant to a broad range of antibiotics (Moellering, 2010). First identified in New Delhi, India in 2008 (Moellering, 2010), antibiotic-resistant bacteria containing the NDM-1 enzyme have struck other areas of India, Pakistan, and the UK. To date, infections caused by bacteria carrying NDM-1 have been reported in many other countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Kenya, China, South Korea, Japan, among others (Luo et al., 2013; Yoo et al., 2013).

News media play a pivotal role in communicating health-related risks to the public, especially to non-expert audiences (Courtney, 2004). Framing theory suggests that the manner in which an issue is presented in news reports can make a big difference on how it is received. By representing reality from different angles, media reports largely determine people’s perception of reality in relation to the issue as well as how they make judgments and decisions about it (Scheufele, 1999; de Vreese, 2005). Therefore, news media’s portrayal of superbugs can shape individuals’ risk perceptions and behaviors. Therefore, news media’s portrayal of superbugs can shape individuals’ risk perceptions and behaviors. It can also influence public policies and funding decisions related to scientific research on superbugs as well as public health campaigns to educate the public about such risks. Nerlich and James (2009) analyzed the popular antibiotic apocalypse discourse and argued that, with metaphors such as war, battle, apocalypse, kill, fight, race, and contest, this discourse could highlight the seriousness of the issue, create public fear of superbugs, influence policy-makers’ judgments and help scientists to secure research funding. However, science communication researchers have yet to study how media contribute to this discourse. To fill in the gap in the literature, the current study evaluates the coverage of NDM-1 in English-language newspapers in India, the UK, and the USA. It unpacks the dimensions of risk communicated in the newspaper coverage of NDM-1 in India, the UK, and the USA based on the psychometric paradigm. Furthermore, it adopts the community structure approach to study the communication of health risks of NDM-1 and identifies several community level variables that might explain how risks of NDM-1 are communicated differently in different countries. Theoretically, the case of NDM-1 supports the community structure approach in its prediction that characteristics of media coverage are consistent with specific communication structure features. Practically, the findings of this study provide extensive descriptions of the news coverage of NDM-1, which are not only of interest to the scientific community but also useful to policy makers in both developing and developed countries.

**Literature review**

**Psychometric paradigm**

People’s perception of risk has an enormous impact on their decision-making process and risk management behaviors (Slovic, 2000). The psychometric paradigm is the predominant model used in studying public’s perceptions of various risks associated with technologies and natural hazards such as nuclear power, mad cow disease, avian flu, and so on.
This model identifies a set of risk characteristics that determine the level of perceived risk, including dread, catastrophic potential, controllability, and familiarity, among others. It also predicts public’s acceptance of the risk based on these characteristics (Slovic, 2000).

Recently, researchers have started to apply the psychometric paradigm to the study of media coverage of risks (e.g. Fung, Namkoong, & Brossard, 2011). People’s risk perceptions can be influenced by how the risk is portrayed in the media, especially when the coverage is biased (Slovic, 2000). For example, Fung et al. (2011) used the psychometric paradigm to guide their analysis of the news coverage of avian flu in terms of five risk characteristics (catastrophic potential information, dread-evoking information, uncertainty, controllability, and familiarity). Furthermore, they examined the relationship between social proximity and level of risk presented and found that social factors, such as geographic distance and journalistic culture, strongly influenced how the risk of avian flu was covered in the news. Based on the original theorization of the psychometric paradigm and Fung et al. (2011)’s initial attempt to apply it to the context of news reporting, this paper identifies several factors as especially relevant in examining how media construct the risk associated with superbugs, including dread, uncertainty, familiarity, and uncertainty.

Dread: Dread measures the extent to which a risk evokes fear and terror. Perception of dread is amplified if the risk is potentially fatal, unfairly distributed, or globally catastrophic (Slovic, 1987). The higher a hazard’s score on the dimension of dread, ‘the higher its perceived risk, the more people want to see its current risks reduced and the more they want to see strict regulation employed to achieve the desired reduction in risk’ (Slovic, 1987, p. 283). The effect of covering health risks as dreadful has been extensively examined in the studies of the use of fear appeals in the social influence literature (Dillard & Anderson, 2004). The level of dread in a health message might influence how it is processed: too much or too little fear might turn audiences away from the message. Furthermore, people’s prior knowledge or attitude might mediate the relationship between the level of fear and information processing route used (Averbeck, Jones, & Robertson, 2011).

Uncertainty: Uncertainty is another dimension of risk perception based on the psychometric paradigm. Uncertainty arises because information is ‘inadequate, unavailable, or inconsistent’ (Goodall, Sabo, Cline, & Egbert, 2012, p. 342). The public may feel uncertain about the dangers, outcomes, and solutions of an emerging disease, especially when the disease has the potential to become a pandemic (Fung et al., 2011). Sustained representation of uncertainty increases audience’s sense of risk. According to Brashers (2001), covering health risks as highly uncertain might lead to negative emotions such as anxiety or fear, which, in turn, might result in people avoiding seeking further information. Other scholars argue, however, high uncertainty might motivate people to reduce uncertainty by seeking out additional information (Afifi & Weiner, 2004).

Familiarity: A familiar risk is more acceptable than an unfamiliar one. According to the psychometric paradigm, the following factors will influence the perceived familiarity of a risk: (1) perceived difficulty in observing the risk, (2) immediacy of consequences, (3) novelty of the issue, (4) lay people’s knowledge about the risk, and (5) experts’ knowledge about the risk (Slovic, 1987). An unfamiliar risk is especially difficult to deal with, as the public cannot compare it to known and familiar risks that they have encountered previously (Fischhoff, Slovic, Lichtenstein, Read, & Combs, 1978). Bomlitz and Brezis (2008)
argued that a novel and emerging health risk is more likely to be considered more journalistically newsworthy than other commonly known risks.

**Controllability**: Controllability is the extent to which a health risk can be contained on individual or collective levels. Perceived uncontrollability leads to emotional stress (Freudenburg, 1988). According to the theory of planned behavior, presenting a health risk as controllable might increase the audience’s perceived behavior control, which, in turn, increases their intentions to perform the recommended preventative measures (Ajzen, 2002).

To examine these four dimensions of risk communicated in newspaper coverage of NDM-1 in India, the UK, and the USA, we ask the first research question:

Research Question (RQ)1: How do newspapers in India, the UK, and the US communicate the dread, uncertainty, familiarity, and controllability in covering the risk associated with NDM-1?

**Community structure approach**

The community structure approach examines how demographic characteristics of a community are related to the contents of its newspapers (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). The theory has mostly been used in studying characteristics of major cities in the USA to identify the ‘antecedents of newspaper content’ (Pollock & Yulis, 2004, p. 284). The same logic, however, can be applied to the study of news coverage on the national level. For instance, Pollock et al. (2008) studied the news coverage of AIDS in a number of African countries and found that community demographic variables such as poverty level, size of population living with AIDS, and health access were negatively correlated with the use of the community responsibility frame, while infant mortality rate was positively correlated with the use of the progress frame. Several variables identified in existing community structure literature are especially relevant in the current study comparing the reporting of risks associated with NDM-1 in different countries. These variables will be discussed in detail next.

**Vested economic interest**

Vested economic interest is a prominent community structure feature that influences the media coverage of critical issues. According to the protection hypothesis of the community structure approach, the more economically vested a community is in an issue, the more likely its news coverage of the issue will favor its interests (Pollock & Yulis, 2004). When a community has a heavy reliance on a risk-related industry, media discourse about that risk can become highly sensitive (Griffin & Dunwoody, 1995). However, the direction of the relationship between economic interest and risk coverage can be very complex. For instance, in studying the news coverage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Pollock (1995) found that the higher the percentage of labor force employed in the manufacturing industries in a city, the more positive the city’s news coverage of NAFTA was, as the latter was believed to bring jobs and incomes to the manufacturing sector. In another study of the newspaper coverage of local toxic releases from manufacturing industries, Griffin and Dunwoody (1995) found a curvilinear relationship between a community’s reliance on manufacturing and the amount of newspaper coverage of toxic releases so that communities with a moderate reliance on manufacturing were mostly likely to see such reportage.
In reporting health risks, it can be logically deduced that the economic interests associated with a risk will influence the extent to which news coverage of the risk is likely to emphasize its dreadfulness. Compared to the UK and the USA, India is likely to have the highest vested interests in NDM-1. By September 2011, there were 143 NDM-1 cases in India, 88 cases in the UK (Health Protection Agency, 2011), and 13 cases in the USA (Hardy, Mermel, Chapin, Vanner, & Gupta, 2012). On the one hand, when a risk is likely to have a high impact on a community’s economic interest, its news media might emphasize the dreadfulness of the risk to raise awareness about it. On the other hand, it might also be possible that the news media are going to downplay the dreadfulness of the risk to protect the community’s interests. This leads to RQ2:

**RQ2:** How does the news coverage of NDM-1 in India, the UK and the US differ in terms of the level of dread communicated?

**Level of health care available**

According to the community structure approach, the extent to which people have access to health care in a community influences the favorability of the news coverage of medical issues (Pollock & Yulis, 2004). In terms of the coverage of health risks, level of health care available might affect the level of controllability communicated. In a community where health care infrastructure is highly developed and health care is readily available to its population, the risk might be reported as more controllable.

The UK and the USA have much more developed health care systems than India. In terms of governmental expenditure on health, the UK and the USA spend 15.1% and 18.7%, respectively, of their government budgets on health, while India only spends 4.4% (World Health Statistics, 2011). The National Health Service (NHS) of the UK provides preventive medicine, primary care, and hospital services to all citizens and legal residents of the country (Boyle, 2011), and the government pays for 82.6% of the country’s health expenditure (World Health Statistics, 2011). The USA spent more money on health care per capita than any other countries, yet it still faces challenges to expand health insurance coverage and to reduce financial burden for many families (Murray & Frenk, 2010). About 47.8% of the health expenditure in the USA is paid by the government (World Health Statistics, 2011). Indian government only pays for about a third of the country’s health expenditure and only an estimated 3–5% of Indians have any form of health insurance (Rao, 2005, p. 5). As a result, individuals’ out-of-pocket expenditure is high, although India has a large impoverished population (WHO, 2006). Hence, health care is more readily available in the UK and the USA than in India, which leads to the first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** News coverage of NDM-1 in the US and UK is more likely to present the risk as more controllable than news coverage in India.

**Health care stakeholder**

Health care stakeholders refer to those who are affected by a particular disease or health risk. For instance, senior citizens are health care stakeholders on the issue on physician-assisted suicide because they are more likely to be affected by its legalization (Pollock & Yulis, 2004). According to the community structure approach, the larger the number of
stakeholders on a particular health issue in a community, the more likely its news coverage will emphasize the issue and represent the interests of the stakeholders (Pollock & Yulis, 2004). When only a small percentage of people are affected by a health risk such as a superbug, journalists tend to lack precise first-hand information about the risk. Consequently, news coverage of the risk tends to be uncertain. Similarly, when only relatively small percentage of the population is at risk, the news media are likely to present the risk as unfamiliar, and thus, are more likely to compare the risk to other known risks as well as the same risk in other communities.

Among the three countries examined in this study, India is most threatened by NDM-1. Not only was the superbug first found in India, the country has the most reported cases of NDM-1 infection. Furthermore, the Indian population is at larger risk because of the misuse of antibiotics. Research has found that inappropriate use of antibiotics creates an ideal environment for superbugs to emerge and spread (Sosa, 2005; WHO, 2011a). India has the highest rate of antibiotics usage at 39–43% (Kotwani & Holloway, 2011), compared to 24% in the USA and 15% in the UK (Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy, 2007, p. 8). India, like many other developing countries, lacks regulation on the use of antibiotics. According to a 2011 WHO study, 53% of Indians take antibiotics without a doctor’s prescription (WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, 2011).

Thus, based on the reported cases of NDM-1 and the prevalence of antibiotic abuse, it can be deduced that a larger proportion of Indian population are at risk compared to those in the UK and the USA. Based on this comparison, we propose the second and third hypotheses:

H2: News coverage of NDM-1 in the UK and the US is more likely to be more uncertain than the coverage in India.
H3: News coverage of NDM-1 in the UK and the US is more likely to present it as unfamiliar by referring to other superbugs and other countries than the coverage in India.

In summary, based on the community structure approach, we propose that three communication structure characteristics: level of vested economic interest, level of health care available and size of health care stakeholders, are likely to influence how the risks associated with NDM-1 are covered in the news in terms of level of dread, controllability, familiarity, and uncertainty communicated.

**Method**

**Sampling**

We chose to examine the coverage of NDM-1 in newspapers. Compared to other media such as radio or television, newspapers have the ability to communicate lengthy, complex, and detailed information (Rains, 2007). Newspaper was chosen also because of the availability of news articles published in multiple countries in electronic databases.

Newspaper articles were retrieved from the LexisNexis Academic database using the key terms ‘NDM-1’ and ‘NDM1’. Only English-language newspapers were included in this study due to the following reasons. First, newspapers in India are published in not only English and Hindi, the two official languages of the country, but also nearly 30 other vernacular languages. Those vernacular newspapers are usually only consumed by a local readership. The only nationally circulated newspapers are the English-language
press (Billett, 2010, p. 4). English newspapers also hold the largest market share of revenues and the most powerful economic influence. During the period studied in this paper, English-language newspapers in India occupied 40% of the market, outpacing the Hindi and any other vernacular language markets (Kumar & Sarma, 2015). Furthermore, we chose to study the English-language newspapers in India so that we can compare the languages used in communicating the risks associated with this superbug in these newspapers with the newspapers in the USA and the UK, which were also published in English. Such comparative study allowed us to create a list of loaded words and a list of uncertain words for future research, as well as to make comparisons across the three countries. This could not have been done if multiple languages were involved. Finally, we chose to analyze the English-language newspapers only due to the constraints of the database used. LexisNexis was used in collecting our data, which only included English-language newspapers published in India. Thus, the sample for this analysis came from English-language newspapers published in India, the UK, and the USA between August 2009 (when the first newspaper article covering the issue appeared in The Guardian) and December 2011 (when data were collected). Duplicated and unrelated articles were excluded. Only hard-news stories, features, or health column stories were included for analysis, meaning that incidental mentions, letters to editor, and corrections to former news reports were excluded.

**Codebook**

Based on the instruments developed by Fung et al. (2011), eight variables were coded to measure the four dimensions of risks. Four variables were coded to measure dread: worst-case scenarios, loaded words, risk magnitude information about human infection/death, risk magnitude information about financial loss to society. Two variables were coded to measure controllability: personal protection information and societal protection information. The use of uncertain words was coded to measure uncertainty. Two variables were coded to measure unfamiliarity: comparison to other known superbugs, and comparison to other countries.

- **Worst-case scenario:** This variable examined whether or not a news article provided information on the most negative possible outcome of NDM-1 (Dudo, Dahlstrom, & Brossard, 2007). For example, a statement such as the following would be coded as worst-case scenario information: ‘We are essentially back to an era with no antibiotics.’

- **Loaded words:** This variable examined whether a news article used ‘emotionally charged language’ (Dudo et al., 2007, p. 438). We used the list of emotionally loaded words identified in Dudo et al. (2007) and Fung et al. (2011) as a starting point, including words such as life-threatening, fatal, deadly, kill, alarming, untreatable, etc. Each article was coded for whether or not it included these loaded words. We used a grounded theory approach to allow additional loaded words to emerge in the process.4

- **Risk magnitude information about human infection/death:** This variable examined whether a news article provided information on the extent of human infection or death. This could include narrative discussion or statistics (e.g. ‘at least 3% of people infected’) (Fung et al., 2011).

- **Risk magnitude information about financial loss to society:** This item examined whether a news article provided information on the financial consequence of the...
NDM-1 superbug. This could include narrative discussion (e.g. ‘suffered a deadly blow’) or statistics (e.g. ‘dropped by 30%’) (Fung et al., 2011).

**Uncertain words**: This item examined whether a news article used any words to describe NDM-1 related issues as uncertain or unknown based on the list developed by Fung et al. (2011), such as not sure, unsure, unknown, questionable, undetermined, remains to be determined, remains to be seen. We used a grounded approach to allow additional words to emerge and recorded them.5

**Personal protection information**: This variable examined whether a news article included personal protection measures to decrease personal risk of NDM-1, such as washing hands and using antibacterial surface wipes (Dudo et al., 2007; Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

**Societal protection information**: This variable examined whether a news article contained information on any actions that would be taken by domestic and/or foreign governments or international organizations to prevent NDM-1 (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Fung et al., 2011). For example, statements such as the following would be coded as societal protection information: ‘The government began to make efforts to reduce antibiotic abuse’ or ‘The World Health Organization warns on misuse of antibiotics on World Health Day, today.’

**Unfamiliarity**: This variable included two questions: (1) whether a news article compared NDM-1 to other superbugs (e.g. MRSA, MSSA (methicillin-sensitive S. aureus), C. difficile), and (2) whether it discussed NDM-1 in other countries (Fung et al., 2011).

**Coding and intercoder reliability**

Two graduate students served as coders for this study. First, both coders coded 20 randomly selected articles for a pilot coding. The intercoder agreement was good for most questions, except for two items: worst-case scenarios and societal protection information. After further discussion and training, both coders independently coded another 20 articles. Cohen’s Kappa was calculated based on the first 40 articles coded: worst-case scenario (.71), loaded words (.89), risk magnitude information about human infection/death (.87), risk magnitude information about financial loss to society (.85), uncertain words (.90), personal protection information (.87), societal protection information (.71), comparing NDM-1 to other superbugs (.90), and discussion of NDM-1 in other countries (.95). In general, a $\kappa$ statistic between .61 and .80 is interpreted as substantial agreement, and a $\kappa$ between .81 and 1 is considered almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Finally, one coder coded about one third of the remaining 226 articles (70 articles) and the other coder coded two thirds (156 articles).

**Results**

Among the 266 news articles included in the sample, 55.6% were published in India ($n = 148$), 36.5% were published in the UK ($n = 97$), and 7.9% were published in the USA ($n = 21$). The average lengths of news articles measured by word count in India, the UK, and the USA were 511.95 (SD = 259.35), 422.36 (SD = 319.44), and 572.86 (SD = 339), respectively. Among the Indian newspapers included in the source list were The Times of India (TOI), Hindustan Times, Indian Express, The Pioneer, and so on. The UK sample of newspapers included The Guardian, Daily Mail, The Daily Express, and...

First, descriptive statistics were calculated and a series of chi-square tests were run to answer RQ1 and to offer an overall comparison of the risk characteristics communicated in newspapers in India, the UK, and the USA (please see Table 1 for descriptive statistics and results of chi-square tests). Holm’s sequential Bonferroni procedure was used to adjust the \( p \)-value as multiple tests were run simultaneously (Abdi, 2010).

Dread is one of the most important dimensions of risk identified by the psychometric model. The level of dread carried in newspapers’ coverage of health risks is influenced by several factors: the discussion of the worst-case scenario, the discussion of risk magnitude (human infection risk and financial loss), and the use of emotionally loaded words that instill fear. It was found that 17.3% of the articles \((n = 46)\) evoked worst-case scenarios, and 69.5% of the articles \((n = 185)\) used emotionally loaded words that can induce fear. Human infection consequences \((n = 160, 60.2\%)\) were discussed much more than financial losses \((n = 5, 1.9\%)\). A series of chi-square tests indicated that overall there were significant differences among the newspapers in these three countries in the discussion of human infection risk \(\chi^2(2, n = 266) = 57.28, p = .00, \text{adjusted } p = .00\); and the use of emotionally loaded words, \(\chi^2(2, n = 266) = 34.67, p = .00, \text{adjusted } p = .00\). There was no significant difference among their discussion of worst-case scenarios or financial losses.

Uncertainty is another important aspect of the psychometric model. Overall, the news coverage of NDM-1 showed low level of uncertainty. Words indicating uncertainty were only found in 10.5% of the articles \((n = 28)\). In addition, there was significant overall difference among newspapers in India, the UK, and the USA in their use of uncertain words, \(\chi^2(2, n = 266) = 22.78, p = .00, \text{adjusted } p = .00\).

Presenting a health risk as controllable mitigates the potential dread the audience might feel. Discussion of personal protection measures and social protection measures can potentially increase perceived controllability. Our data suggested that societal protection measures were mentioned more frequently \((n = 115, 43.2\%)\) than personal protection measures \((n = 40, 15.0\%)\). Furthermore, there was significant overall difference among the newspapers in the three countries in their discussion of social protection measures,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk characteristics</th>
<th>India n (%)</th>
<th>UK n (%)</th>
<th>USA n (%)</th>
<th>(\chi^2) *</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>Adjusted (p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dread</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst-case scenario</td>
<td>18 (12.16)</td>
<td>22 (22.68)</td>
<td>6 (28.57)</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human infection consequence</td>
<td>59 (39.86)</td>
<td>83 (85.57)</td>
<td>18 (85.17)</td>
<td>57.28</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial loss</td>
<td>3 (2.02)</td>
<td>1 (1.03)</td>
<td>1 (4.76)</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loaded words</td>
<td>81 (54.72)</td>
<td>86 (88.66)</td>
<td>18 (85.71)</td>
<td>34.67</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain words</td>
<td>17 (11.49)</td>
<td>3 (3.09)</td>
<td>8 (38.09)</td>
<td>22.78</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controllability</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal protection measures</td>
<td>15 (10.14)</td>
<td>19 (19.59)</td>
<td>6 (28.57)</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal protection measures</td>
<td>43 (29.05)</td>
<td>64 (65.97)</td>
<td>8 (38.09)</td>
<td>32.80</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Familiarity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion of other superbugs</td>
<td>26 (17.57)</td>
<td>44 (45.36)</td>
<td>7 (33.33)</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of other countries</td>
<td>64 (43.24)</td>
<td>73 (75.26)</td>
<td>17 (80.95)</td>
<td>29.61</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Degree of freedom of each chi-square test is 2.

*Adjusted \(p\)-value < .01.
\( \chi^2(2, n = 266) = 32.80, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00. \) The difference among the three countries in their newspapers’ discussion of personal protection measures was no longer significant after being adjusted for multiple testing, \( \chi^2(2, n = 266) = 7.37, p = .03, \) adjust \( p = .07. \)

In covering NDM-1, newspapers can refer to other superbugs and refer to the spread of the bacteria in other countries to increase perceived familiarity. Our data indicated that 28.9% of the articles \( (n = 77) \) in the sample referred other superbugs in reporting NDM-1, and 57.9% mentioned NDM-1 in other countries \( (n = 154) \). News articles published in India, the UK, and the USA showed significant overall differences in terms of the reference to other superbugs, \( \chi^2(2, n = 266) = 22.22, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00, \) and the reference to other countries, \( \chi^2(2, n = 266) = 24.36, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00. \)

RQ2 asked how newspapers in India, the UK, and the USA portrayed the dreadfulness of NDM-1 differently. The overall comparison has been discussed in answering RQ1. Pairwise tests were conducted to further explore the differences among these three countries in terms of their newspapers’ discussion of the worst-case scenario, human infection consequences, financial losses, and their use of loaded words. It was found that India newspapers differed significantly from newspapers published in the UK and the USA in conveying dread. More specifically, news articles published in Indian newspapers were less likely to discuss human infection consequences than news articles published in the UK, \( \chi^2(1, n = 245) = 50.23, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00, \) or news articles published in the USA, \( \chi^2(1, n = 169) = 15.59, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00. \) Furthermore, news articles published in India were less likely to use emotionally loaded words than those published in the UK, \( \chi^2(1, n = 245) = 31.09, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00, \) or those published in the USA, \( \chi^2(1, n = 169) = 7.28, p = .01, \) adjusted \( p = .03. \) There was no significant difference between the news articles in the USA and the UK on any of the four dimensions of dread (see Table 2 for a summary of the results of pairwise tests). Overall, UK and US newspapers were more likely to convey a higher sense of dread than Indian newspapers.

H1 predicted that news coverage of NDM-1 in the USA and UK was more likely to present its risk as more controllable than news coverage in India. Pairwise comparisons indicated that UK newspapers, \( \chi^2(1, n = 245) = 4.38, p = .04, \) adjusted \( p = .04 \) and US newspapers, \( \chi^2(1, n = 169) = 5.74, p = .02, \) adjusted \( p = .04, \) were significantly more likely to discuss personal protection measures than Indian newspapers. In terms of the discussion of societal protection measures, it was found that UK newspapers were more likely to discuss societal protection measures than Indian newspapers, \( \chi^2(1, n = 245) = 32.49, p = .00, \) adjusted \( p = .00, \) as well as US newspapers, \( \chi^2(1, n = 118) = 5.64, p = .02, \) adjusted \( p = .02. \) There was no significant difference between Indian and US news articles in their mentioning of societal protection measures. H1 was partially supported.

**Table 2.** Pairwise comparison of the representation of dread in the coverage of NDM-1 in newspapers in India, the UK and the USA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Compare India and UK</th>
<th>Compare India and UK</th>
<th>Compare UK and USA</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \chi^2 )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>Adjusted ( p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst-case scenario</td>
<td>4.745</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human infection consequences</td>
<td>50.23</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial losses</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loaded words</td>
<td>31.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The degree of freedom of all chi-square tests is 1.

*Adjusted \( p \)-value < .05.
According to H2, news coverage of NDM-1 in India was likely to convey a higher sense of certainty than the coverage in the UK and the USA. Pairwise comparison showed that US newspapers were significantly more likely to use uncertain words than Indian newspapers, $\chi^2(1, n = 169) = 10.33, p = .00$, and UK newspapers, $\chi^2(1, n = 118) = 25.02, p = .00$. However, Indian newspapers were more likely to use uncertain words than UK newspapers, $\chi^2(1, n = 245) = 5.51, p = .02$. Thus, H2 was partially supported.

Finally, H3 predicted that compared to newspapers in India, newspapers in the UK and the USA were more likely to portray NDM-1 as unfamiliar and thus more likely to refer to other superbugs and NDM-1 infections in other countries to reduce this unfamiliarity. Our results showed that Indian newspapers were less likely to mention other superbugs than UK newspapers, $\chi^2(1, n = 245) = 22.18, p = .00$, adjusted $p = .00$. Indian newspapers were also less likely to mention other superbugs than US newspapers, but the difference was not statistically significant. Furthermore, news articles published in India were less likely to refer to NDM-1 in other countries than news articles published in the UK, $\chi^2(1, n = 245) = 24.36, p = .00$, adjusted $p = .00$, or the USA, $\chi^2(1, n = 169) = 10.48, p = .00$, adjusted $p = .00$. Thus, H3 was mostly supported.

Discussion

Overall newspapers in the UK and the USA communicated a much higher level of dread associated with NDM-1 in comparison to newspapers published in India by emphasizing human infection consequences and using emotionally loaded words. In addition, news coverage of NDM-1 in the UK and the USA was also more likely to convey a higher level of controllability, especially in terms of personal protection measures. According to the framing theory, how the media reporting of risks posed by an emerging superbug may affect people’s perception and judgment of the superbug in different countries.

Furthermore, the findings of this study supported the notion that community structure variables (e.g. economic power) are major factors affecting newspaper activities of health-related issues on the national level. Vested economic interest and level of health care available resulted in low level of dread and controllability as well as high level of uncertainty associated with NDM-1 in Indian coverage, while the amount of stakeholders had a profound influence on the coverage pattern when combined with other two community structure characteristics.

Although the study is limited to one single type of superbug, the analysis holds important implications for future cross-national research for other epidemic diseases. Most communicable diseases are initially regional when discovered, with the possibility to cross-national and regional boundaries. Effective control of infectious diseases requires international information exchange and cooperation. Thus, the theoretical implication of the study is the use of a sociocultural perspective to understand unusual press coverage patterns of emerging diseases in the future.

Dread-evoking information

Worst-case scenarios, loaded words, and information about the human infection or death, and information about financial losses related to NDM-1 invoke dread among media consumers. This study showed that UK and US newspapers were more likely to communicate
dread than Indian newspapers through the discussion of human infection consequences and the use of emotionally loaded words. Such a difference might be explained in terms of the frames used in covering NDM-1 in these three countries. In the UK and the USA, coverage of NDM-1 has mostly adopted a public health frame, discussing the superbug as a health threat. On the contrary, NDM-1 has mainly been reported through a business frame in Indian newspapers. A considerable number of Indian articles published in 2010 rejected the health threat of NDM-1 as international slander. They criticized the naming of the superbug after the Indian capital of New Delhi and discussed how it would affect India’s medical tourism. The risk of NDM-1 gradually became recognized in India in 2011, with articles published bearing the titles such as ‘Delhi Superbug Is New Global Health Threat’ or ‘Wake Up! The “Superbug” Threat Is Real.’ Based on the community structure approach, the difference among newspapers in India, the UK, and the USA in terms of the level of dread communicated can be explained as Indian newspapers were trying to protect the country’s vested economic interest in medical tourism, which was threatened by the labeling of the superbug and the wide publicity. As a result, Indian newspapers tended to downplay the risk of NDM-1 and were less likely to portray it as dreadful. This finding reinforced the notion that local economic powers may ‘dampen the press “watchdog” function’ in health risk coverage (Griffin & Dunwoody, 1995, p. 282).

**Uncertainty**

Uncertainty is common in reporting emerging health risks, as the scientific community has not reached a definition assessment of the risk and science and health reporters may lack first-hand information about the risk (Freimuth, 2006). Of the 266 articles examined in the current study, only 28 used words implying uncertainty such as ‘unknown’ or ‘unclear’. Covering the risks of NDM-1 with such a high level of certainty may mitigate the negative emotions readers may experience when reading such news articles. It will increase readers’ perceived self-efficacy in taking personal measures to prevent infection (Hurley, Kosenko, & Brashers, 2011). However, it may also discourage readers from further information seeking (Brashers, 2001). US newspapers were most likely to use uncertain words, followed by Indian newspapers and UK newspapers. As the USA has the smallest population that had been potentially affected by NDM-1, the high level of uncertainty communicated in US newspapers was consistent with the prediction of the community structure approach. However, one surprising finding was that news coverage of NDM-1 in India was more likely to contain words that imply uncertainty than the news coverage in UK, even though this superbug was first identified in India and most cases of infection were reported in India. One possible explanation of this discrepancy is that even though NDM-1 was first found, and has most reported cases in India, it was the British researchers who first conducted and published scientific studies on NDM-1. Hence, journalists in UK actually might possess more accurate and definite information than their Indian counterparts.

**Controllability**

The extent to which a risk can be controlled influences the perceived risk level. In this study, we examined the controllability communicated on the personal level and the
societal level. Overall, our finding was consistent with Evensen and Clarke’s (2012) study of news coverage of West Nile virus and avian flu in the USA that societal protection information was more salient than individual protection information in all three countries. However, based on the data in Evensen and Clarke (2012) and the current study, readers are much less likely to learn about both societal and personal protections measures related to NDM-1 than those related to either West Nile virus or avian flu. Evensen and Clarke (2012) found that a respective 64% and 51% of the articles covering West Nile virus mentioned societal and personal protection information; similarly, in covering avian flu risk, 81% articles reported societal protection information and 55% offered personal protection information. In the case of NDM-1, personal protection measures were only mentioned in 10.14%, 19.59%, and 28.57% of news articles in India, the UK, and the USA, while societal protection measures were discussed with a little higher frequency, appearing in 29.05%, 65.97%, and 38.09% of news articles in India, the UK, and the USA. News articles in all three countries rarely mentioned that basic sanitation practices were the most important personal protection measures, suggesting that science and health reporters should be encouraged to promote hygiene practices like hand washing in covering NDM-1 and other infectious diseases. In terms of societal protection messages, our finding indicated these three countries’ unreadiness to engage in preventative measures toward a new risk. Furthermore, very few news articles in the three countries told their readers to avoid overuse or inappropriate use of antibiotics, suggesting that more measures should be taken to raise awareness about antibiotic misuse. Overall, our finding highlighted the need for more in-depth research into why certain types of protection measures are more accessible than others (Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

Newspapers in the UK and the USA were significantly more likely to present the risk of NDM-1 as more controllable than those published in India both in terms of personal protection measures and societal protection measures. This was consistent with the hypothesis based on the community structure approach: when health care is readily available, newspapers tend to frame health risks as controllable. UK newspapers were most likely to mention societal protection information such as actions taken by governments to prevent NDM-1; a significantly smaller proportion of news articles in India and the USA mentioned such information. One possible explanation is that the UK has an NHS that guarantees all citizens access to health care service; hence the risk of NDM-1 as portrayed as most controllable in the UK.

**Familiarity**

When presenting a risk as unfamiliar, newspapers are likely to compare it to known risks (Fung et al., 2011). Our data indicated that news articles about NDM-1 in the UK and the USA were more likely to include comparisons to known risks and comparison to other countries than news articles published in India. Previous research suggested that presenting a risk as familiar makes it appear to be much less worrisome and reduces the level of perceived risk (Fischhoff et al., 1978). Our data suggested that newspapers in the UK and the USA tend to portray NDM-1 as unfamiliar, which might increase its perceived risk.
Limitations and directions for future research

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, this study only examined several community structure variables. There might be other factors that still need to be examined, such as culture. Little scholarly attention has been paid to how differences in cultures may affect the journalistic practices in reporting health-related risks. One exception is Tang and Peng (2014), which found that newspaper coverage of major diseases (such as cancer or HIV/AIDS) and health risk factors (such as the side effects of medicine) in the USA and China was affected by their respective cultures in terms of attribution, temporal orientation, citation patterns and the use of statistics. For this study, it is possible that the differences in some risk dimensions were also due to journalistic and cultural differences. For instance, uncertainty avoidance is a major dimension of national culture and might affect how a country’s news media approach highly uncertain health risks such as superbugs. Moreover, as described in the methods section, this study examined Indian newspapers’ coverage of NDM-1 by analyzing the English-language newspaper articles available through an online database. Although the choice of English-language newspapers allows us to make comparisons across the three countries and to create a list of loaded words and a list of uncertain words for future research, the current analysis of Indian media’s responses is limited by the exclusion of newspapers published in Hindi and other vernacular languages. Since English-language newspapers such as TOI cater primarily to the middle and upper-middle classes of society (De Souza, 2007), their readers tend to be more educated and affluent than readers of Hindi and vernacular newspapers (Kumar & Sarma, 2015). Hence, English-language newspapers might have a more significant influence on the elite than the average Indians. Future analysis using both English-language and the vernacular press would provide a more comprehensive assessment of the framing effects on a broader Indian audience (Lee & Maslog, 2005). Furthermore, this study was also limited by the period of the evaluation. The researchers believe that new studies could also examine similar risk scenarios longitudinally and measure changes overtime. This could be particularly helpful for future research to reveal the changes of coverage in different developmental stages of public health issues.

Notes

1. These countries were chosen due to the different development stages of NDM-1 in each country. NDM-1 was initially discovered in India, first reported by UK scientists, and has received plenty of attention in India and the UK, and is emerging in the USA. By September 2011, there were 143 NDM-1 cases in India, 88 cases in the UK (Health Protection Agency, 2011), and 13 cases in the USA (Hardy et al., 2012).

2. Fung et al. (2011) investigated an additional risk characteristic in their study of news coverage of avian flu: catastrophic potential. However, catastrophic potential as part of risk communication does not apply to the case of NDM-1, as the latter does not have a death toll that can be labeled as ‘catastrophic’. Thus, the risk dimension of catastrophic potential information could not be examined in this study.

3. This rate is measured in terms of DDS/1000 inhabitants/day. A standardized measure of antibiotic consumption is DDD (defined daily doses), which is recommended by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Drug Statistics Methodology (2009). DDD is defined as ‘the assumed average maintenance dose per day for a drug used for its main indication in adults’ (WHO
Collaborating Centre for Drug Statistics Methodology, 2009, para. 2). A popular DDD index is DDDs per 1000 inhabitants per day, which can 'provide a rough estimate of the proportion of the study population treated daily with a particular drug or group of drugs' (The concept of the defined daily dose, para. 8). For example, when the antibiotic consumption in a certain population is 10 DDDs per 1000 inhabitants per day, this indicates that 1% of the population on average might receive antibiotics (The concept of the defined daily dose).

4. The loaded words we identified from this study included: Alarm, alarming, alert, danger, dangerous, deadly, deadliest, fatal, fear, frightening, horror, impossible to treat, kill, killer, lethal, life-threatening (life threatening), panic, scare, scary, serious, severe, threat, threatening, trouble, troublesome, unmanageable, unprecedented, unstoppable, untreatable, warn, warning, worry, worrying(ly), worrisome, worst.

5. The uncertain words we identified from this study included: Do not know, further studies seem necessary, impossible to say, 'It has to be seen … ', little data, need to be confirmed, no consensus on, no conclusions, no evidence, no records, not sure, there can’t be any assumptions made, too early to judge, uncertain, uncertainty, unclear, unknown, unpredictable.

Notes on contributors

At the time of writing Bijie Bie was with the Department of Communication Studies, College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA. She is currently a Post Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior at the University of South Carolina. She conducts research on health communication.

Lu Tang is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies, College of Communication and Information Sciences at the University of Alabama. Her research focuses on culture and health communication.

Debbie Treise is a Professor of Advertising, and Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida. Debbie maintains an active research agenda that centers on health and science communications.

References


The role of negative emotions on motivation and communicative action: Testing the validity of situational theory of problem solving in the context of South Korea

Kyung-Ah Shin and Miejeong Han

The situational theory of publics (STP) has been developed to explain ‘when and how people communicate and when communications aimed at people are most likely to be effective’ (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 148). The theory explains that people with some perceptual recognition on certain social or individual problems are likely to seek and attend to relevant information to communicate about those problems. It further proposes ways to define the general public into more meaningful categories based on their issue recognition. Specifically, Grunig (1978) identified four types of publics: nonpublics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics.

Kim and Grunig (2011) took this theory further and proposed a more generalized situational theory: the Situational Theory of Problem Solving (STOPS). This new theory explains that people use epiphenomenal and instrumental information for problem solving based on their situation-specific perceptions and motivations (Kim, Ni, Kim, & Kim, 2012). It showed how people engage in communicative behaviors and introduced a new motivational variable, situational motivation in problem solving, to better predict publics’ communicative behavior. It also demonstrated a mediating role of motivation in the relationship between situational perceptions and communicative behaviors (Kim & Grunig, 2011).
Situational theories posit that individuals’ communicative actions, such as information consumption, are systematic (Grunig, 1997), and that people selectively use their cognitive resources to communicate with others in a problem-solving situation (Kim & Grunig, 2011). For that reason, many studies on situational theory have focused on cognitive responses in communication without considering emotional or affective responses to the problem (Slater, Chipman, Auld, & Keefe, 1992).

However, negative emotions often function as a frame to information processing and attribution or judgment (Nabi, 2003). For example, when people see a fear message, they would allocate their cognitive resource to ‘danger control’ or ‘fear control’ to avoid risk factors involved in the issue (Witte, 1994). In other words, when fear is evoked, it can influence information people attend to or ignore.

The dual-process approaches posit that individuals have two modes of information processing by which social judgments can be formed (e.g. Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Trumbo, 2002; Zuckerman & Chaiken, 1998). Systematic processing requires cognitive efforts, whereas heuristic processing is often guided by affective reaction to a problem (Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999). Thus, a person’s affective responses to a message can show different subsequent information-processing behaviors. This suggests that an affective factor may function as motivation to subsequent behaviors.

Emotions are regarded as antecedents of attitude and behavior (Nabi, 1999) and determinants of decision-making or information processing (Slovic, Finucane, Peter, & MacGregor, 2007; Tiedens & Linton, 2001; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). A great deal of research has been conducted to understand the effects of emotion on individual behaviors (Beck & Clark, 1997; Lin, Yen, & Chuang, 2006; Turner, 2007). For example, negative emotions such as fear can motivate individuals to change their behavior in response to risky situations (Witte, 1992). It is also reported that perceived fear influences PR activities of organizations relevant to media relations and issue management (Kim & Kim, 2010).

Anxiety, another type of negative emotion, influences information processing in the following three steps: (1) a very rapid and automatic recognition of a stimulus, (2) immediate and automatic development of negative thoughts to the themes of the threat, and (3) secondary elaboration involving cognitive processing of the threat (Beck & Clark, 1997). Negative emotions can play a critical role in individuals’ responses to crisis issues (Caffray & Schneider, 2000; Gallo, Ghaed, & Bracken, 2004; Roeser, 2012). Many PR studies have examined the influence of negative emotions on people’s perception and behavior when they face crisis events (e.g. Choi & Lin, 2009; Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2007; Kim & Niederdeppe, 2013). Considering the importance of negative emotions in subsequent behaviors, the current study examines the mediating role of negative emotions in the framework of STOPs. Specifically, this study (a) tests the explanatory power of STOPs in the context of a Korean public issue, (b) explores the possibility that negative emotions can serve as a new motivational variable, and (c) examines the difference in the intensity of negative emotions experienced by different types of publics.

The STOPs

Although STPs have provided various methodological and theoretical understanding for how people become different types of publics in response to an issue, they do not
explain the process through which people participate in different types of communicative behaviors. STOPS, on the other hand, explains why and how people become active and how they participate in communication about issues in problematic situations (Kim et al., 2012).

STOPS states that people communicate actively and instrumentally to solve problems and actions are triggered by their cognitive response to the problem and motivation to overcome the situation (Kim et al., 2012). The way publics recognize a given situation can motivate people to allocate their cognitive resources to solve the problem. STOPS takes a process-driven approach to explain the relationships among cognition variables, motivation, and actions. The independent variables in STP (i.e. problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement) precede motivation to cognitively solve a problem, and the level of motivation reinforces the need for communication (Kim & Grunig, 2011).

The difference between STOPS and the original situational theory is that STOPS emphasizes the importance of motivation in predicting how publics communicate (Kim & Grunig, 2011). People start to perceive a situation as problematic when they recognize the gap between the desired and current states (Kim & Grunig, 2011). When people face a problem-solving situation, they stop to think about the problem and choose appropriate actions. By thinking about the problem, people become motivated to reduce the gap between expectation and reality (Kim & Grunig, 2011). This motivation variable in STOPS is conceptualized as a cognitive one; it is measured with (a) how often people invest their cognitive effort into the problem, (b) how interested they are in solving the problem, and (c) how willing they are to learn more about the problematic situation.

Sha and Lundy (2005) also emphasized the motivational factor and claimed that motivation to process can mediate the relationship between situational perception and the information-processing routes people choose to take. They integrated STP with the Elaboration Likelihood Model and discussed how individual factors such as problem recognition and involvement can influence one’s motivation to process and ways of processing information (i.e. dedicated or casual). The motivation in this integrated model is mainly associated with the type of the information-processing route people choose. Information processing, in their study, is measured simply with people’s evaluation and retention of messages they saw. The motivation factor in STOPS has behavioral implications as it involves different communicative actions people take to solve problematic situations.

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) also focuses on cognitive variables for predicting behavioral intention and behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Conner & Armitage, 1998; Pelling & White, 2009). TPB’s three major factors are constructed based on individuals’ attitudinal evaluations, normative beliefs, and control beliefs about a behavior in question. As does STOPS, TPB focuses on how individuals evaluate and weigh the degree of control they have over the situation or the problem. However, unlike STOPS that largely relies on perception and evaluation of an individual, TPB includes social norms of referent groups to predict behavior. Although these frameworks are widely employed by communication researchers and evaluated as useful in predicting different types of behaviors, they tended to overlook the role emotions involved in a problematic situation or a target behavior. Thus, examining the roles of emotions people experience in response to a problem-solving situation is warranted to better understand and predict publics’ communicative actions across different issues and problems.
The theoretical validity of STOPS has been tested in several studies. Kim and Grunig (2011) originally used this model to predict communicative behaviors of US college students in response to major public issues in the USA (i.e. the war in Iraq, weight loss, organ sales, and judgment of brain death). This model has also been tested with a public health issue (Kim, Shen, & Morgan, 2011). Another study tested the applicability of STOPS with a hot-issue public using an international trade-conflict issue (Kim et al., 2012). These studies have shown that STOPS can provide a useful theoretical framework in predicting communicative actions across various problem-solving situations. In order to expand such effort, the present study tests the explanatory power of STOPS using one of the important public issues in South Korea, sex crimes, and examines its usefulness in understanding Korean college students’ communicative actions in a problem-solving situation.

RQ1. Can the STOPS explain communicative behavior of Korean college students in the context of a sex crime issue?

**Emotions as motivation: its mediating role between cognition and action**

Lazarus (1991) defined emotion as 'organized cognitive-motivational-relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person-environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated' (p. 38). Izard (2009) also stated that ‘in emotional schemas, the neural systems and mental processes involved in emotion, perception, and cognition interact continually and dynamically in generating and monitoring thought and action’ (p. 2). That is, emotions can provide an operating system that helps people to cope with a problem-solving situation, directing appropriate information-processing mode and actions (Dillard & Peck, 2000; Lazarus, 1991). Some scholars have taken a cognitive approach to understand emotions. For example, Arnold (1960) suggested that emotional responses can be developed immediately and automatically following cognitive appraisal of a problematic situation. Scherer (2001) also argued that an emotional experience is based on one’s consistent appraisals of a situation. When Korean people think about the sex crime issue in South Korea, they would perceive it as a serious problem and determine necessary corrective measures. Some Koreans would also become upset about the situation and fear that it might influence their personal lives.

Negative emotions influence individuals’ perceptions and behaviors in response to a problem-solving situation (e.g. Griffin, Neuwirth, Giese, & Dunwoody, 2002; Xie, Wang, Zhang, Li, & Yu, 2011). Jackson’s (2004) study found that an appraisal of the extent of threat influences the level of anxiety people feel about a personal crime issue. In this study, people who perceived the crime issue as important were more likely to experience the greater level of fear. Choi and Lin (2009) found that negative emotions such as anger, fear, worry, and contempt associated with child safety influenced the attributions people made about child-safety issues such as playing with unsafe toys. Aldoory and Grunig (2012) conducted a series of qualitative interviews to depict the rise and fall of hot-issue publics. The results show that latent and aware publics who feel anxiety and fear about an issue are more concerned about the media coverage of the issue, and perceive the issue as more personally relevant.

Izard (2009) stated that basic emotions help organize and motivate rapid action. This premise has been tested across various contexts. For example, Betancourt and Blair (1992)
examined the relationships among cognition processes, emotion, and behavioral reaction, and showed that individuals’ attribution about a negative criminal situation generates anger about the crime. Anger, in turn, affects people's violent reactions such as physical aggression. Anger is not only an important motivator of action but also the factor that has the greatest impact on thoughts (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Beck and Clark (1997) introduced a three-stage processing model of anxiety. At the first stage, initial emotions about a situation lead to rapid information processing to simplify one’s situational perception. Once aroused by certain emotions, the person becomes motivated to solve the problem. Then, automatic and strategic processing takes place and this elaboration process involves evaluation of availability and effectiveness of one’s own coping resources. For example, feelings of anxiety can drive a person to search available information to regulate his or her emotion and to identify ways of resolving the problematic situation.

According to Nabi (2003), negative emotions influence one’s action tendency and behaviors. These negative emotions often provide accessible conditions on how one should communicate information in a given situation. For example, when hearing about an incidence of a sex crime on television news, viewers’ feelings of anger and anxiety might lead them to post relevant messages on their blogs to inform and influence others. Negative emotions can also affect an organization’s decision on how it communicates with its publics and stakeholders in problem-solving situations (Kim & Kim, 2010). Fear has been identified as a critical factor in prompting various PR activities. PR professionals reported that perceived fear increased their PR activities at an organizational level, especially in the areas of media relations and issue management. Kim and Niederdeppe (2013) examined the mediating roles of negative emotions in the relationships among crisis responsibility, relational trust, and willingness to seek information about a health crisis. They found that negative emotions lead publics to be more involved and to communicate more with others about the H1N1 influenza. According to Turner’s (2007) anger activism model, individuals in an activists group who feel greater levels of anger and efficacy are more likely to actively engage in communicative activities in a risk situation. Depending on the intensity of the negative emotional experience, individuals develop different perceptions and attitudes, which in turn, distinguish characteristics of different public groups and determine how people respond to the problem-solving situation. For example, an active public tends to express a higher level of negative emotions toward an issue than an aware public does for the same issue. Individuals identified as nonpublics would barely experience negative emotions toward the same problematic situation. Another study also supports this reasoning, as it showed that emotional reaction to a fear appeal message determined different public groups, and predicted their differential communicative behaviors (Rogers & Thompson, 1995).

People express, share, and communicate negative emotions with others more frequently in computer-based communication (CMC) environment than they do in face-to-face situation (Derks, Fischer, & Bos, 2008). Anger is more likely to be expressed through ‘anonymous’ CMC settings. Flaming is a rather an extreme example of antagonistic display of negative emotions in a problematic situation. As communication via multimedia platforms has become prevalent in our daily lives, it becomes essential for PR practitioners to understand the role of negative emotions and how they are translated in communication across various media platforms as different problematic issues arise.
In light of these studies addressed above, it is plausible that negative emotions generated from a problematic situation may mediate individuals’ situational recognition and their communicative behavior to resolve it. The situational motivation variable is an important addition to STOPS and to the situational theory. Thus, the present study proposes to add negative emotion as another motivating factor that predicts individuals’ communicative actions.

Our study proposes the following research questions. RQ2 examines the types of negative emotions people feel in response to the sex crime issue in South Korea. RQ3 addresses the mediating role of negative emotions in the relationship between situational recognition and situational motivation in problem solving. RQ4 explores whether negative emotions mediate situational recognition and communicative actions. The study accounts for the role of both emotional and cognitive motivation in predicting communication action. Finally, we examine whether the intensity of negative emotions differs across the types of publics.

RQ2. What types of negative emotions Korean college students experience in response to the sex crime issue in South Korea?
RQ3. Do negative emotions mediate the relationship between situational recognition (problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement recognition) and situational motivation in problem solving?
RQ4. Do negative emotions mediate the relationship between situational recognition (problem recognition, constraint recognition, involvement recognition) and communicative actions in problem solving?
RQ5. Does the intensity of negative emotions differ across different types of publics?

Method

To accurately test STOPS in the context of South Korea, one must select a public issue perceived by one or more Korean publics as a problem that requires communicative actions (Kim & Grunig, 2011). Thus, we pre-tested a salience of various problematic issues in Korean society with 79 Korean college students. Students were asked to list three important problems in Korea. Sex crime was listed the most frequently by the students. Possible reasons are that incidences of sex crimes have been continuously reported across different university campuses, that a film called Silenced (Dogani in Korean), which documented egregious acts of child molestation provoked massive responses from the general public, and that the number of reported victims of sexual violence has been continuously rising. The result from the pre-test reflects a high visibility and salience of the sex crime issue in Korean society.

Participants

Data were collected from several universities located in major cities of South Korea including Seoul, Ansan, Incheon, and Cheonan. Survey participants were recruited through undergraduate communication classes. In total, 372 students participated in the survey. The proportion of male participants was 42.5% (n = 158) and that of female participants was 57.5% (n = 214). The age of participants varied from 19 to 38, with an average of 22.5.
**Measures**

The key variables of STOPS including situational recognition (problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement recognition), referent criterion, situational motivation of problem solving, and communicative action were measured (Kim & Grunig, 2011) using a 7-point scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

*Problem Recognition* \((\alpha = .73)\) was measured with four items (e.g. 'How strongly do you feel that something needs to be done to improve the situation for this problem?'). *Constraint Recognition* \((\alpha = .73)\) was also measured with four items (e.g. 'Do you feel any barriers for solving this problem?'). *Involvement Recognition* \((\alpha = .87)\) was measured with three items (e.g. 'To what extent do you believe this problem could involve you or someone close to you at some point?'). *Referent Criterion* \((\alpha = .77)\) was measured with three items (e.g. 'I am pretty sure I know how to solve this problem'). *Situational Motivation of Problem Solving* was measured with two items: 'Do you often think about the problem of sex crimes in Korea?' and 'How often do you think about this problem consciously?' \((\alpha = .61)\). Finally, *Communicative Actions* were measured with 24 items with six sub-dimensions: information forefending \((\alpha = .73)\), information permitting \((\alpha = .76)\), information forwarding \((\alpha = .73)\), information sharing \((\alpha = .61)\), information seeking \((\alpha = .89)\), and information attending \((\alpha = .90)\). The items from each dimension were averaged to create an overall index.

To select appropriate emotional reactions to the sex crime issue, we conducted another pretest. We asked participants negative emotions they experience when they think about sex crimes. Three primary emotions, anger, fear, and sadness, were selected from the pretest. Then we offered nine concrete emotions derived from these three primary emotions about sex crime: fear, anxiety, nervousness, anger, annoyance, rage, sadness, unhappiness, and gloom on a 7-point scale. An exploratory factor analysis confirmed the factor structure involving three primary emotions of fear, anger, and sadness (Anger: anger, annoyance, and rage; Fear: fear, anxiety, and nervousness; Sadness: sadness, unhappiness, and gloom).

**Analysis**

A predictive model of this study was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS 18.0 using a maximum likelihood estimation. Because most of the constructs in the model were measured with multiple items, we specified a hybrid model containing both structural relationships and measurement models for latent variables (Byrne, 2001). A three-step approach was used for model estimation.

As a first step, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) of all the variables to remove low or cross-loaded items. We tested and selected the best items for each latent variable. In the second step, we specified the hypothesized structural relationships based on the final measurement models from the first step. Finally, we conducted internal consistency tests using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To assess the validity of the proposed SEM, we used several commonly used model-fit indices such as \(\chi^2\) and its degree of freedom, the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual.
Results

Measurement model

We examined sub-dimensions to verify appropriateness of measurements of each construct. Specifically, we conducted a CFA to evaluate the construct validity, discriminant validity, reliability, and internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) of each construct from the STOPS model (model 1) and our proposed model (model 2).

A second-order CFA was performed to confirm the factor structure of communicative action, which is constructed with six sub-factors: information forefending, information permitting, information forwarding, information sharing, information seeking, and information attending. We tested an overall measurement model for each of the variables listed under each subheading in Table 1. The factor loading for information sharing did not exceed the value of .40. This construct, therefore, was removed from our analytic models.

A model can be concluded as valid or reasonable when the value of $\chi^2/df$ is less than 3, the value of CFI is equal to or greater than .90, and the value of RMSEA is equal to or less than .08 (Byrne, 2001; Kline, 1998). Our final CFA for model 1 [$\chi^2(155) = 390.262$, CFI = .914, RMSEA = .064] and model 2 [$\chi^2(209) = 520.024$, CFI = .901, RMSEA = .063] achieved reasonable model fits. Thus, we interpreted each path in the model to examine the research questions.

Study 1: testing STOPS in the context of South Korea

To empirically test STOPS in the context of a sex crime issue in South Korea, we fitted a SEM using AMOS 18.0. Parameters were estimated by the maximum likelihood method. Structural relations were constructed based on the proposed research questions; STOPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second-order factor</th>
<th>First-order factor</th>
<th>Item loading</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Communicative action in problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information permitting</td>
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<td>.645</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Information forwarding</td>
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<td>Information seeking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>.692</td>
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</table>
yielded the following data-model fit ($\chi^2(159) = 402.015$, $\text{CFI} = .911$, $\text{RMSEA} = .064$). We verified that STOPS was a valid model that explains patterns of association between variables involved in the interpretation of communicative actions in the sex crime problem in South Korea (RQ1).

We investigated the relationships among STOPS variables. Our results showed significant and positive relationships among the communicative action variables and their sub-dimensions (see Figure 1). The path coefficient between communicative action and information forefending was $.570$ ($p < .001$), and that between communicative action and information permitting was $.640$ ($p < .001$). Also, the relationship between communicative action and information forwarding was significant and positive ($\beta = .698$, $p < .001$). The path coefficient from communicative action to information seeking was $.630$ ($p < .001$) and that from communication action to information attending was $.679$ ($p < .001$). This result suggests an overall increase of communication behavior related to information use such as information selection, transmission, and acquisition.

STOPS posits positive associations among individuals’ problem recognition, involvement recognition, and their situational motivation and a negative association between

![Figure 1. STOPS model with sex crimes in Korea (study 1).](image)

** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$. 
individuals’ constraint recognition and their situational motivation in problem solving. In this study, the path coefficients between problem recognition and situational motivation ($\beta = .176, p < .01$), and that between involvement recognition and situational motivation ($\beta = .459, p < .001$) were both positive and significant. The results suggest that people perceive the sex crimes issue as an important problem to resolve and perceive it as personally relevant. They are motivated to solve the problem using their cognitive resources to acquire, transmit, and find information.

Finally, stronger subscription to a referent criterion led to a greater intention to engage in communicative action for problem solving ($\beta = .360, p < .001$), and the greater level of situational motivation was associated with the stronger intention to engage in communicative action for problem solving ($\beta = .576, p < .001$). Thus, our findings overall support the applicability of STOPS in the context of the sex crime issue in South Korea.

**Study 2: the role of emotions in STOPS**

**Dominant emotions experienced about sex crime.** RQ2 was posed to identify dominant emotions felt by the Korean participants about the sex crime issue. As a result, participants, overall, experienced negative emotions toward the sex crime problem. The most dominant emotion experienced by the participants was the feeling of anger ($M = 6.36, SD = 1.02$), followed by rage ($M = 6.24, SD = 1.14$), and annoyance ($M = 5.93, SD = 1.41$). In other words, anger was the most prevalent emotion. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of each emotion.

**Mediating role of negative emotions in predicting situational motivation and communicative action.** Regarding RQ3 and RQ4, structural relations were constructed based on the proposed model (Figure 2). The SEM yielded the following data-model fit: $\chi^2(214) = 527.396$, CFI = .900, RMSEA = .063. We concluded that the proposed model was a valid model that properly explains patterns of association among variables.

**Direct paths in the proposed model.** Negative emotions were predicted from problem recognition ($\beta = .215, p < .01$). Unlike the original STOPS, this model did not show a significant relationship between problem recognition and situational motivation in problem solving. These paths indicated that when negative emotions were added to the model, the problem recognition did not influence situational motivation directly. Involvement recognition was a stronger predictor of negative emotion ($\beta = .615, p < .001$) than it was for

| Table 2. Descriptive statistics about negative emotions toward sex crimes ($N = 372$). |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Anger                           | 6.36            | 1.02            |
| Anger                           | 6.36            | 1.02            |
| Annoyance                       | 5.93            | 1.41            |
| Rage                            | 6.24            | 1.14            |
| Fear                            | 5.00            | 1.89            |
| Fear                            | 5.00            | 1.89            |
| Anxiety                         | 4.77            | 1.91            |
| Nervousness                     | 4.84            | 1.93            |
| Sadness                         | 5.10            | 1.52            |
| Sadness                         | 5.10            | 1.52            |
| Unhappiness                     | 4.63            | 1.70            |
| Gloom                           | 4.52            | 1.70            |

Note. Each item is measured on a seven-point scale.
situational motivation ($\beta = .192, p < .05$). These results seem to suggest that motivation in problem solving is affected by negative emotions as well as situational recognition. Consistent with the results of study 1, communicative action in problem solving was positively predicted by situational motivation ($\beta = .450, p < .001$). Negative emotion was a positive and significant predictor of communicative action in problem solving as well ($\beta = .198, p < .05$).

**Mediating role of negative emotions.** Formal mediation tests (Baron & Kenny, 1986) were performed to examine the mediating role of negative emotion in predicting situational motivation and communicative action in problem solving (RQ3 and RQ4). Sobel’s $z$-scores were used to test their statistical significance. The result indicates that negative emotion fully mediated the relationships among problem recognition ($z = 2.05, p = .04$), involvement recognition ($z = 3.83, p = .00$), and situational motivation in problem solving.

When participants recognized the situation as important and relevant to them, they were more likely to feel negatively about the situation and become motivated to solve the problem. Negative emotions also fully mediated the relationship between problem recognition and communicative action ($z = 2.09, p = .04$) and the relationship between involvement recognition and communicative action ($z = 4.30, p = .00$). Negative emotions
mediated the relationships not only between situational recognition and motivation but also between situational recognition and communicative action in problem solving. Thus, the mediating roles of negative emotions explored with RQ3 and RQ4 were confirmed.

**Difference in negative emotional responses across types of publics**

First, we categorized the participants into four groups – nonpublic, latent public, aware public, and active public – based on the summation method used in previous situational theory research (Kim & Grunig, 2011; Lee, Oshita, Oh, & Hove, 2014). Specifically, participants were divided into two groups based on the median of each situational recognition variable. In the case of problem recognition and involvement recognition variables, those who had a higher score than the median were assigned 1 and those who had a lower score were assigned 0. With the constraint recognition variable, those who had a higher score than the median were assigned 0 and those who had a lower score were assigned 1. Then we added up the scores of the three situational recognition variables for each participant. Participants were classified according to the score ranging from 0 to 3 (0 = nonpublic, 1 = latent public, 2 = aware public, 3 = active public). The numbers of participants in each public category are shown in Table 3.

For RQ5, we used ANOVA to examine whether different negative emotions were felt by different types of publics. As shown in Table 3, there were significant differences in the three negative emotions across the four types of publics. The overall differences across the types of publics were significant for anger \([F(368, 3) = 9.87, p < .001]\), sadness \([F(368, 3) = 12.49, p < .001]\), and fear \([F(368, 3) = 8.24, p < .001]\). A post hoc analysis indicates that the active publics feel a higher degree of fear and sadness about the sex crime issues than the nonpublics or latent publics do. Similarly, the aware publics felt a greater fear and sadness than the nonpublics and latent publics did. For anger, the active and aware publics had stronger responses to the issue than the latent publics did. These results indicate that the active and aware publics feel stronger emotional responses than the latent publics and nonpublics do.

**Discussion**

The purposes of this study are to test the validity of STOPS in the context of South Korea and to expand STOPS by adding negative emotions as another motivational variable that

| Table 3. Differences in negative emotions across public types. |
|-------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------|------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                   | Anger            |       | Sadness         |       | Fear             |       |
|                   | \(M\) | \(SD\) | \(F\)   | Post hoc | \(M\) | \(SD\) | \(F\)   | Post hoc | \(M\) | \(SD\) | \(F\)   | Post hoc |
| Non (\(N = 34\)) | 6.16 | 0.92 | 9.87*** | B < C,D | 4.23 | 1.69 | 12.49*** | A > C,D | 4.25 | 1.41 | 8.24*** | A > C,D |
| Latent (\(N = 150\)) | 5.88 | 1.12 | 4.39 | 1.83 | 5.21 | 1.72 | 5.04 | 1.31 |
| Aware (\(N = 143\)) | 6.39 | 0.80 | 5.87 | 1.23 | 5.24 | 1.53 |
| Active (\(N = 45\))  | 6.54 | 0.55 | 4.87 | 1.79 | 4.75 | 1.40 |
| Total (\(N = 372\))  | 6.18 | 0.97 | 4.87 | 1.79 | 4.75 | 1.40 |

Note: A = Nonpublic, B = Latent public, C = Aware public, D = Active public. ***\(p < .001\).
predicts communicative actions. When we tested STOPS among the Korean data, SEM suggested a considerable support for the theorized links among key variables. As hypothesized in STOPS, problem recognition and involvement recognition were positively related to situational motivation in problem solving, while constraint recognition was not statistically related to situational motivation in problem solving. The six dependent variables, except for information sharing, were positively related to communicative action in problem solving. Finally, both situational motivation and referent criterion were positively related to communicative action. These results suggest that STOPS is a cross-culturally applicable model that can explain Korean public reaction to a crime issue as well as other social conflicts (Kim et al., 2012).

In previous STOPS studies, constraint recognition and situational motivation showed a significant relationship (Kim & Grunig, 2011; Kim et al., 2012). However, our data did not support that relationship. A possible reason is that our participants might have thought that legal actions such as a strong punishment system should be enforced to prevent sex crimes rather than exerting individual efforts to prevent such incidences. For example, Kim and Grunig (2011) found that the relationship between constraint recognition and situational motivation was stronger for personal problems, such as weight loss, than it were for societal or national problems, such as the Iraq war (Kim & Grunig, 2011).

STOPS posits that problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement recognition predict situational motivation. These situational recognition variables, however, do not identically predict publics’ motivation or communicative action. In our study, involvement recognition was the strongest predictor of situational motivation, which was similar to the result of Kim and Grunig’s (2011) study that tested the issues of eliminating affirmative action, the war in Iraq, and losing weight. In another study (Kim et al., 2011), however, problem recognition was the strongest predictor of motivation in health issues such as organ sales in underdeveloped countries and diagnosis of brain death for organ donation. In our study, involvement recognition and negative emotions, a motivation variable, showed the strongest link. This finding seems to suggest that the nature of the problematic situation or the issue might influence perceived salience of situational recognition. For example, people might perceive a greater level of constraint for crime issues than they do for health issues.

The current study added an emotion variable to explore its mediating role between situational recognition variables and motivation, and its role in predicting communicative action. The situational motivation variable of STOPS is conceptualized largely based on the amount of cognitive efforts (i.e. stop to think about, want to understand more) made to solve a given problematic situation. When the negative emotion variable was added in STOPS, problem recognition showed a significant indirect path to situational motivation through negative emotion (Figure 2). Negative emotional responses about the sex crime issue preceded situational motivation, which then led to subsequent cognitive activities ($\beta = .413$, $p < .001$). This finding implies that negative emotions may be another motivational factor that predicts cognitive and communicative activities in response to a problematic situation. When comparing the strength of the relationships among negative emotions, situational motivation, and communicative action, the path coefficient ($\beta = .450$, $p < .001$) between situational motivation and communicative action was larger than that between negative emotion and communicative action ($\beta = .198$, $p$
Moreover, the negative emotion variable showed a stronger link with situational motivation than it did with communicative action. In sum, negative emotion seems to be linked more closely to situational motivation than it does with communicative action.

The results indicate that the relationships were strengthened between situational motivation and information attending when negative emotions were entered to STOPs (Figure 2). Negative emotion might motivate people to attend to information. This finding suggests a useful implication to PR practitioners that emotional appeals or tactics need to be employed at the early stages of communication to motivate people to carefully attend to relevant information. Negative emotions may also generate more active communicative actions toward an issue.

Negative emotions generated in response to the sex crime issue showed a direct path to communicative action. This result suggests that negative emotion is also an important motivating factor to action. For example, when an emotion-eliciting event occurs, individuals’ communicative actions are affected not only by cognitive arousal but also by negative emotional arousal. This seems consistent with the notion that negative emotions motivate people’s cognition and subsequent behavior (Arnold, 1960; Dillard & Peck, 2000; Izard, 2009). For example, college students who became angry about a sex crime incidence on campus might become more attentive to the problem and communicate with others to seek preventive solutions. When examining the type of emotions people felt about sex crimes, we found that people experienced a stronger extent of anger than fear or sadness. Another study identified worry and fear as dominant emotions toward crime issues (Farrall, Bannister, Ditton, & Gilchrist, 1997).

Our last research question explored whether different publics show different intensities of negative emotions. The result indicates that the active and aware publics showed stronger emotional responses than did the latent publics and nonpublics. The active and aware publics felt a greater degree of fear and sadness about sex crimes than did the nonpublics and latent publics. These seem to suggest that emotional intensity can be used to classify people into different public groups. Strengthening emotional experience in a problematic situation might help change latent publics to aware publics, and make them more interested in the issue. Generally, people are categorized as latent or disinterested publics for many social issues. Thus, PR practitioners would benefit from understanding the emotional states of publics when an issue arises. For example, a video that elicits a strong emotional reaction, negative ones in this case, may help disinterested people become more attentive to the message and look for further information. This is more likely to happen in these days when people can easily search for information using their mobile devices. When a movie presented a compelling story about sexual assaults committed by a school principal on handicapped children, people who had not been interested in the sex crime issue started communicating about it and making collective efforts to eradicate the problem. The Korean government responded to the active publics and enacted a law against the sexual assault with a minor, the so-called Dogani Law, in 2011. Future study should examine if the strength of negative emotions can function as additional criteria for categorizing individuals into different groups of publics.

There are a few limitations in our study. First, the study used a nonprobability sampling method and collected data from the college student sample. Thus, generalization of our research findings should be made with caution. The homogeneity of the study participants in this study further weakens the external validity of our findings. Future research should
examine this model with different samples and use a random sampling method to enhance the external validity of the proposed model.

Secondly, we witnessed the mediating role of negative emotion in motivating people to engage in a variety of communicative actions in a problematic situation. However, our study looked at the mediating role of negative emotions using one issue, sex crimes. In future research, various issues from different societal domains should be used to test the hypothesized model and to confirm the influence of emotional variable on publics’ motivation and action. A set of negative emotions can act as an important driving force, and more studies need to be conducted to understand how different emotions guide publics’ actions in a variety of problem-solving situations. For example, it would be useful to identify the effects of discrete negative emotions such as anger and fear on variables of STOPS.

Future research would also benefit from including other behavioral measures in STOPS. This model aims to predict publics’ communication behaviors in a given situation; however, it would provide useful implications for practitioners by including and testing other behavioral measures specific to the problematic situation. For example, a campaign designed to help culturally deprived children may include donation as an additional behavioral measure. By doing so, practitioners can obtain information about and predict different publics’ donation behavior based on the characteristics identified by STOPS.

In the present study, information-sharing variable, one of the key communication behaviors in STOPS, was removed due to the low factor-loading scores of its items. We speculate that the meaning of information sharing was not fully translated in Korean as intended. The Korean nuance of qualifiers such as ‘unless people ask me’ or ‘only when someone requests one’s opinion, idea, or expertise about problem’ are often interpreted by Koreans as ‘reluctance of’ or ‘unwillingness to communicate. A correlation analysis among the communicative action variables indicates the negative correlation between information-sharing variable and other communicative action variables. Future tests are warranted in order to obtain a valid and accurate measure of information sharing, a particularly important variable in the multimedia communication environments.

Notes on contributors

Kyung-Ah Shin received her Ph.D. in Public Relations from Hanyang University and is a Senior Researcher at National Disaster Management Institute in Seoul, Korea. Her current research focuses on risk communications, strategic communication planning and media campaigns.

Miejeong Han is a Professor in the Department of Advertising & Public Relations at Hanyang University, Korea. Her interests center on public communication including public opinion and campaigns in the new media environment. Current work explores multicultural issues and communication effectiveness in digital media.

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