

U.S.-based Chinese Diasporic Media and "Social Myth": A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract:

Emanating from the notion of "social myth" that Frazier put forward in his ethnographic research on the black community in the United States, this paper seeks to capture the U.S.-based Chinese diasporic media's "re-coding" of news events. By comparing the reports from a Chinese diasporic newspaper and its mainstream counterpart *USA Today* about Obama hosting a naturalization ceremony, the paper uncovers and accounts for their major narrative differences, and thereby reveals the Chinese diasporic media's representations of American government and Chinese immigrants that constitute a larger picture of a "social myth". The paper employs critical discourse analysis by Fairclough as a major analytical tool, while drawing on methodologies from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. In this way, it attempts to shed light on how Chinese diasporic media actively mediate between the ethnic minority and centres of powers in mainstream society.

Keywords: American Government; American Media; Chinese Diasporic Media; Ethnic Minority; Social Myth; *USA Today*

Résumé:

Émanant de la notion des "mythes sociaux" que Frazier mit de l'avant dans sa recherche ethnographique sur la communauté noire aux États-Unis, cet article capture le recodage d'événements récents au sein des médias de la diaspora chinoise aux États-Unis. En comparant les reportages d'un journal de la communauté chinoise et son concurrent principal, *USA Today*, au sujet d'une cérémonie de naturalisation présidée par Obama, le journal dévoile et explique leurs différences narratives majeures, et ainsi révèle les représentations des médias de la communauté chinoise du gouvernement américain et des immigrants chinois qui constituent un large éventail d'un mythe social. Cet article utilise l'analyse du discours critique de Fairclough comme un outil analytique majeur provenant des méthodologies de linguistiques opérationnelles et systémiques de Halliday. De cette façon, cet article tente de faire lumière sur la manière dont les médias de la communauté chinoise négocient les minorités ethniques et les centres de pouvoir de la société dominante.

Mots-clés: Gouvernement américain; Médias américains; Médias de la diaspora chinoise; Minorité ethnique; Mythes sociaux; *USA Today*

Introduction

Media and immigration have become ever more intricately entwined in the increasingly deterritorialized world characterized by vibrant transnational flows of people and information. As Appadurai aptly puts it, they are two "interconnected phenomena" (1996: 3) whose relationship and dynamics constitute a key to understanding the link between globalization and modernity.

Diasporic media are also termed as ethnic media; the two are often used interchangeably with nuanced differences in their emphases. Normally they can be defined as "media that are produced by and for (a) immigrants, (b) racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, as well as (c) indigenous populations living across different countries" (Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-rokeach, 2010: 6). Some posit that diasporic or ethnic media emerge as a result of the misrepresentation or underrepresentation of specific issues pertaining to ethnic minorities in the mainstream media; in that vein, diasporic or ethnic groups are employing their own media outlets as coping strategies to challenge the dominant discourse and thus to make their voices heard (e.g., Alia & Bull, 2005; Chan 2005). Diasporic media, by providing news and entertainment to their respective diasporic communities, often fill the gap in mainstream media production. They report on community experiences and events in response to the misrepresentation, underrepresentation, and invisibility of minorities in the mainstream media.

However, diasporic media production does not merely counterbalance the negative or inadequate coverage in the mainstream media; more importantly, they play a significant role in immigrants' adaptation to the host society and in their identity construction. On the one hand, they serve as a means of learning about the host society, about ways to adapt to it, and about the

best possible options for immigrants to navigate unknown territories (Hwang & He, 1999; Viswanath & Arora, 2000; Walker, 1999; Zhou, Chen & Cai, 2006). On the other, they also preserve immigrants’ cultural heritage, strengthen the sense of intra-group solidarity, and maintain immigrants’ transnational ties to their homeland (e.g., Lee & Tse, 1994; Lum, 1991; Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-rokeach, 2010; Zilberg & Leshem, 1996). In addition to orienting the newcomers to the previously foreign terrain, the diasporic media “provide room for cultural expressions in the sense that cultural folklore and languages are regularly used in reporting and programming, which draw them closer to the community and give people in the community a sense of belonging” (Ojo, 2006: 351). They largely contribute to the community formation process and help immigrant groups stick to and pass on certain cultural values “to construct identities on them and to negotiate them with the established communities of host countries” (Yesil, 2013: 236). It is hence meaningful to investigate the manner in which diasporic media function in immigrants’ adaption and identity construction.

Frazier’s Notion of Social Myth: A Mediated Construct

The notion of “social myth” in this paper is borrowed from E. Franklin Frazier’s research on the black community in the United States back in the first half of the 20th century, in particular, from his book *Black Bourgeoisie* (1965). Frazier (1965) used this notion to describe a widespread phenomenon he observed in the black community, namely the emergence of “false ideas concerning the importance of Negro business” especially in the black middle-class circles. He noted that “the capital investment represented by Negro business was insignificant from the standpoint of the American economy” (Frazier, 1965: 153), and yet the self-purported significance of “Negro business” to American economy claimed by black bourgeoisie had propagated among black people, becoming a very crucial element “in the world of “make-believe”, which the black bourgeoisie had created to compensate for its feeling of inferiority in a white world dominated by business enterprise” (Ibid).

The black people’s press played a central role in constructing such a social myth, and further a world of “make believe”. According to Frazier, “its exaggerations concerning the economic well-being and cultural achievements of Negroes, its emphasis upon Negro ‘society’ all tend to create a world of make-believe into which the black bourgeoisie can escape from its inferiority and inconsequence in American society” (Frazier, 1965: 174). In this light, for members of the black community back then, their own ethnic media constructed a safe place into which they could retreat in order to recollect the positive aspects of their ethnic identity and to regain the lost respect for their community. Their media helped to form a public sphere where identities and meanings were negotiated, eventually leading to a reconfiguration of what it meant to be black. Frazier’s notion of “social myth” thus becomes a point of departure for this paper, which seeks to cast light on the role of the Chinese diasporic media in the immigrant community they serve.

Chinese Diasporic Media in the United States: A Historical Review

Chinese diasporic media in discussion here refer to organizations engaged in media production in Chinese (both Mandarin and Cantonese), a language shared by people from Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Most, if not all, of the Chinese diasporic media in the U.S. appeal to all these different sub-groups of Chinese immigrants. Chinese-language diasporic media have been

around in the U.S. since the late 19th century, but have grown into an influential ethnic institution fairly recently. At first in isolated old Chinatowns, Chinese-language media did not emerge as a significant ethnic institution due to the low levels of literacy among immigrants in ethnic enclaves, the prevalent face-to-face interaction patterns, and the limited scale of ethnic economies (Zhou, Chen & Cai, 2006). Only irregular or back issues of newspapers and magazines, initially published in China and reporting almost entirely on China-related issues, circulated among a small bunch of Chinatown elites; irregular community newsletters were also published, but the limited circulation hardly went beyond ethnic enclaves (Ibid).

“Not until the late 1970s did Chinese-language diasporic media start to take root on North American soil. They have burst into full bloom since the 1990s” (Zhou, Chen & Cai, 2006: 44). In the beginning, the Chinese-language newspapers circulating in the U.S. market primarily included weeklies and monthlies founded by Taiwan and Hong Kong immigrants, as well as U.S. editions of Chinese-language newspapers headquartered in Hong Kong and Taiwan, which entered major China Towns in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (Fang, 2006). Since the 1980s, Chinese language newspapers founded by Chinese Mainland immigrants began to surface and develop. Today, the most popular Chinese-language newspapers in the U.S. mainly include *World Journal*, *Singtao Daily*, *Mingpao*, and *Qiaobao*. The history of different Chinese language newspapers in the U.S. ranges from 10 to 30 years. They have been developing rapidly, with their circulation steadily increasing (Peng, 2009). Among them, *World Journal* enjoys the utmost popularity, as proved by a previous study on Chinese immigrants’ media use that demonstrates that nearly all the subjects in scrutiny read the newspaper, spending an average of 30 minutes on it and having most of their “information needs satisfied” (Hwang & He, 1999). The newspaper, with its extensive coverage on news events happening in the U.S., the Greater China, and the rest of world, informs and alerts the readers of the most relevant issues worthy of their attention.

Media Representation or “Re-coding”

Concerned about the media representation of social events, the paper probes into the role of Chinese diasporic media in the U.S. in an attempt to answer the following research questions: a) (How) Do Chinese diasporic media, in certain ways, construct a “social myth” among the diasporas/immigrants?; b) How do the U.S.-based Chinese diasporic media represent the two parties, the federal government, and Chinese immigrants, especially when reporting on issues that involve the immigrants’ own interests?; and c) How do such reports potentially influence the relations between the American mainstream society and the Chinese immigrants as an ethnic minority group?

Research on Chinese diasporic media is still comparatively wanting, leaving large space and demand for further inquiries. Peng (2012) summarizes the weaknesses of current research on the U.S.-based Chinese diasporic media as follows: a) the current research is largely characterized by a Western/U.S. perspective; b) there is a general lack of attention on the characteristics of the media per se under scrutiny; and c) there is generally insufficient innovation, largely due to the language barriers. The paper seeks to overcome the aforementioned limitations by approaching the topic through the following perspectives: a) it employs a comparative approach in order to highlight the distinct angle of the Chinese diasporic media; b) it pays close attention to the characteristics of the media (e-newspapers in this case) per se by examining the media texts; and c) it is based on micro-level scrutiny instead of the

macro-level discussions pervasive in previous Chinese research which places emphasis on the general development and strategies of the diasporic media.

Besides, one of the major concerns of the paper is what Cheng (2006) calls "re-coding" based on Hall's encoding/decoding theory. The paper seeks to find out whether (and how) the Chinese diasporic media, when translating, editing, or writing reports on U.S. national affairs, re-code the news sources/events by filtering or assigning certain meanings. Hall posits: "there is no space of representation, including theoretical space, which exists outside ideology" (1984: 11). According to Hall (1973; 1993), the ideology in media representation wants to negate polysemy, and media representation, by assigning particular meanings, seeks to enhance the determinate cultural order. This paper thus attempts to capture the meanings that Chinese diasporic media assign to national events/issues.

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics

The study employs the analytical paradigm of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which was previously used by a number of scholars including Fowler and colleagues (1979), van Dijk (1993; 1996), and Fairclough (1992a). CDA originates from critical linguistics, which is not satisfied with merely providing description of discourses but goes further to explain how and why certain discourses are produced, and thereby reveal sources of power, dominance, and inequality and how these sources are initiated and maintained in particular political, economic, social, and historical contexts (van Dijk, 1998). The paper in specific follows Fairclough's three dimensional framework for CDA. To critical discourse analysts such as Fairclough, "discourse is not only a product or reflection of social processes, but is itself seen to contribute towards the production (or reproduction) of these processes" (Teo, 2000: 11).

According to Fairclough (1995), the discourse consists of texts, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice. The top socio-cultural practice provides conditions for both the process of text production and consumption in discourse practice. The text may be oral or written, spoken or/and visual; the discourse practice means the "process in which the text is produced and consumed by human subjects"; and the socio-cultural practice means "the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of" (Ibid: 57). These three dimensions of a discourse require three stages or levels of analyses, namely description, interpretation, and explanation.

In the first stage, a textual analysis or description within the text is required. Many have followed Fairclough (1989) in drawing on the systemic functional linguistics (SFL), particularly Halliday's (1994) theorizing and methodologies to conduct analysis in this stage, which highlights the three meta-functions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, based on which scholars may approach texts by systematically examining a wide range of aspects that mainly include patterns of transitivity, modality, transformation, and classification. Transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types, which Halliday (1994) identifies as material, mental, relational, behaviour, verbal, and existential processes, which exhibits a particular world-view that explains the participants and circumstances involved. Modality displays the intermediate degrees between positive and negative poles of probability, usuality, obligation, and inclination. Transformation in generative grammar is used to capture the relationship between the deep structure and the surface structure.

Classification or categorization is generally reflected in the lexical choice in describing people and things.

In the second stage, the relationship between text and discourse practice is explored through a linguistic analysis that Fairclough calls “intertextual analysis” (1995: 61). The paper seeks to conduct such an analysis by examining news sources and modes of representation.

In the third stage, the relationship between discourse practice and socio-cultural practice is explored. The explanation of social context is needed to uncover different ideologies embedded in different language uses and to make clear the relationship of language, power, and ideology.

Analytical Tools for the Study

Based on the CDA and SFL methodologies and in line with Fairclough’s description-interpretation-explanation framework, the study seeks to compare the selected news reports in terms of classification (lexical choice), modality (probability, usuality, obligation and inclination) in the first stage; news sources and modes of representation (direct and indirect speech) in the second stage; as well as social background analysis in the final stage.

To give full emphasis to the news discourses compared in the paper, the two most typical texts are picked for analysis. By employing a predominantly qualitative methodology, the paper is more concerned with meaning than quantity of the reports. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that a larger sample for analysis might be more helpful in capturing the “social myth”. Despite such a limited sample, the current paper with an eminent concentration on a single news event could lead to helpful tentative findings, paving the way for similar research in the future, which might benefit from a larger sample, a wider scope, and mixed methodologies. Besides, considering the fact that a given newspaper usually maintains a consistent style in its reports, the current paper lays the foundation for more conclusive findings about the role of Chinese diasporic media.

Texts for Analysis: Reports on Naturalization Ceremony

Ethnic political issues constitute a frequently reported topic for diasporic media, particularly newspapers. Vassady (1989) notes that diasporic or ethnic newspapers reflect inter-ethnic political conflicts in their reports. Laska posits that the diasporic or ethnic press “fought against images in the native press and lobbied for ethnic political issues” (1982: 139-140). The paper picks for analysis two reports from the websites of *USA Today* (English) and *World Journal LA Edition* (Chinese) respectively on the same news event that carries certain political implications: Obama hosted a naturalization ceremony at the White House on March 25, 2013. The reasons for choosing the two newspapers for comparison mainly include: a) *USA Today* is one of the most widely circulated newspapers in the U.S. and *World Journal* is the most popular Chinese newspaper in North America, covering major Chinese immigrant communities (Shen & Mei, 2011); and b) among the reports from numerous major newspapers on the same news event (both mainstream and ethnic newspapers), the two provide the most substantial and basically symmetrical amount of information.

USA Today’s report is titled *Obama Wants Immigration Overhaul “As Soon As Possible”*. On the upper-left corner, there is a small photo in which Obama (in focus) is standing at the podium looking ahead at those attending the ceremony (out of focus). No caption is

provided below the photo except its source. In the left-hand column run the highlighted points of the news report. The main body of the report occupies the rest of the web page. In the following analysis, this report is named “Text 1” for convenience.

In comparison, the online version of *World Journal* is available as a PDF scanned document, which allows the readers to see the exact page layout of its printed version. The news information centring on the event is divided into two parts. The first half is placed on the front-page with a title in large bold font: *To Consolidate Courage, Obama Expects to Sign the Immigration Bill Soon* (literal translation, the original title in Chinese: *Nin Ju Yong Qi, Ou Ba Ma Pan Su Qian Yi Min An*). The words “*To Consolidate Courage*” (*Nin Ju Yong Qi*) are highlighted. The main body of the report takes up the upper half of the front page with a big photo on the right whose caption reads: Obama is shaking hands with an Asian American marine attending the naturalization ceremony. Below the photo it reads: Refer to A3 for more relevant reporting. The second half of the news on page A3 is placed in the right-hand column, with a title: “*Obama Expects the Bill to Crater*”: *Republican Senators Spread Conspiracy Theories*. No photo is provided. The division and arrangement of the news information on this event reflect the editor’s value judgment on the news contents. Due to the fact that the two are closely related and together constitute a comprehensive report, the two parts as a whole are treated as a single text in the following analysis, named “Text 2”.

News Discourse Analysis

Lexical Choice

Fairclough argues that, “[a] text’s choice of wordings depends on, and helps create social relationships between participants” (1989: 116). The wordings of a text usually reflect its latent ideological meanings. Hence the analysis of lexical choice or classification helps to reveal the two newspapers’ different representations of participants involved in the same news event.

The choices of verbs in the two texts differ from each other in a number of ways, constructing different images of major characters in the news story. The chart below details the verb use in the two texts, particularly in terms of their depiction of Obama/White House vis-à-vis that of Republicans/opponents. The Chinese words in *World Journal*’s report are literally translated for convenient comparison.

It is not difficult to find out the differences between the two texts in terms of their verb choices. The verbs in Text 2 are comparatively richer in variety and colour. When describing Obama, such verbs as “delivered (a speech)” and “issued (a statement)”, with high degrees of formality, highlight Obama’s role as a political leader. Repetitious and quasi-synonymous verbs describing Obama’s wish to push the immigration reform forward have been used, including “urged”, “demanded”, “hoped”, “expected”, and “anticipated”, most of which are stronger in colour than “want” and “call on” in Text 1. Besides, many verbs used in Text 2 carry positive meanings in a way that construct a positive image of Obama. Such verbs in Text 1 as “press” and “threaten”, which imply Obama’s pushiness have never appeared in Text 2. Instead, Text 2 employs other strong verbs such as “shouted” to highlight Obama’s firm stance in immigration reform in response to the Republican’s opposition on this matter. A series of similar verbs carrying positive connotations such as “promoted”, “praised”, and “felt pleased” are used to showcase Obama’s friendly and supportive attitude towards immigrants. In contrast, when depicting Republicans and other opponents, Text 2 employs such verbs as “trumpeted

(conspiracy theory) and “targeted (the blame towards)”, which carry explicit negative connotations.

Table 1: The Choices of Verbs in Text 1 and Text 2

Text 1 (<i>USA Today</i>)		Text 2 (<i>World Journal</i>)	
Obama/ White House	Republicans/ Opponents	Obama/ White House	Republicans/ Opponents
hosted(3), notes(3), wants(2), called on (to show), pressed(2), said(3), threatened, repeated, laud, stepped up, used, echoed	said(2), criticized	expected, hosted, delivered (a speech), urged, issued a statement, pointed out(2), hoped, promoted, said (5), led, praised, switched his tone, demanded, expressed, anticipated, supported, proposed a bill, shouted, responded to, felt pleased	trumpeted (conspiracy theory), target (the blame towards), asserted, said (2), thought(2), opposed

(The numbers in the parentheses indicate the frequencies.)

Another major difference in word choices between the two texts is the presence/absence of modifiers. In Text 1, no adverbs as modifiers are used in conjunction with verbs; a few qualifiers used to describe certain people are only for identification purposes, which provide information about the position or party affiliation of those people. However, in Text 2, adverbs and adjectives are frequently used in conjunction with verbs and nouns, which usually convey certain judgment to the readers. For instance, one sentence goes “Obama uncommonly hosted the naturalization ceremony at the White House”; and the other says this event carries “exceptional political meanings”. Similar cases include such phrases as “issue the clearest statement”, “strongly responded to” etc. In addition, repetitious and synonymous words meaning “as soon as possible” are used once and again in Text 2. The modifiers used to describe the Republicans include “who always criticize his colleagues”, “sensationally asserted”, etc.

Modality

Modality is expressed in different degrees and scales. The speaker or writer may signal a higher or lower degree of certainty about the validity of a proposition, a higher or lower degree of pressure on others to carry out a command, or a higher or lower commitment to fulfilling a promise. The speaker or writer imply their social and economic relationship with the people they address through modality. Between the positive and negative poles, there exist different degrees of modal expressions. The paper examines the modal words in the two texts that indicate probability, usuality, and obligation.

When talking of the news event, Text 2 says, "President Obama uncommonly hosted the naturalization ceremony". The adverb "uncommonly", which expresses a low degree of usuality, indicates the special political implication of this event. In comparison, Text 1 does not offer any further description of the event.

When talking of the immigration bill, Text 1 employs a number of modal words to qualify the possibility of its emergence. Such instances include: "*is likely to* introduce a bill next month", "*is likely to* unveil a plan in April", "Obama's hopes to get a bill done quickly *might be hard to meet*". When talking of the same topic, Text 2 employs such words as "has/have already" and "will". For instance, "[t]he immigration bill *has been* almost accomplished. The bill *will greatly change* the employment situation of the immigrants in the United States, and *will offer* 11 million illegal immigrants a path to citizenship. The bill *will also allow* thousands of high-skilled and low-skilled labor into the United States." In comparison with Text 1, words and phrases such as "has/have already" and "will" carry a more affirmative tone.

The verbs, including but not restricted to modal auxiliary verbs, that express modality in terms of willingness and obligation in the two texts differ in degrees. In Text 2 generally, higher degrees of pressure and commitment are shown, especially when talking about Obama's attitude towards the immigration overhaul. Sentences as such include: "urged the Congress to consolidate political courage and to complete (the reform) as soon as possible"; "hoped that the Congress could discuss the bill so that he (Obama) could sign it as soon as possible"; "must complete the work"; "demanded the Congress to discuss the bill immediately"; "as long as the political courage is shown"; "felt pleased about it"; and "expected them to come up with the details". Many words in Text 2 carry more positive and emphatic tones than those in Text 1 and thus show the urgency of the matter.

News Sources and Discourse Representation

In terms of news sources, both the texts include the remarks from Obama and Republican Senator Ted Cruz, who hold conflicting views on immigration reform. In addition, Text 1 also quotes Democratic Senator, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee Patrick Leahy when he criticized Obama and the lawmakers, questioning the possibility of an immediate immigration overhaul. The source is seen as reliable when he cast a relatively objective doubt on Obama's immigration reform. For one thing, Leahy is a Democratic Senator, so his reservation about Obama's work is not based on partisan interest; for another, he is the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who is in a better position to comment on this matter and whose remarks might be considered more credible.

The other news sources in Text 2 include White House and its spokesman Earnest as well as the immigration reform activists. Their quotes follow the comments made by Ted Cruz, as

direct refutations to what Cruz said. For instance, “[t]he immigration reform activists think the key to the reform is allowing illegal immigrants to become citizens”. “White House strongly responded to the criticism from Cruz”. “Spokesman Earnest said, ‘no evidence proved their argument could stand’”.

Fairclough (1988) uses “discourse representation” in preference to speech reportage in that he thinks:

[W]hen one reports discourse, one necessarily chooses to represent it in one way rather than another; and what is represented is not just speech, but also writing, and also . . . its circumstances, the tone in which things were said, and so forth.

(Fairclough, 1992b: 281)

From the modes of discourse representation, or speech reportage, we can see how the two texts employ quotes from various sources to support their latent judgment and perspective. Below is a chart that compares the news sources and modes of discourse presentations (indirect speech or direct speech) in the two texts.

Table 2: News Sources and Discourse Representation in Text 1 and Text 2

Text 1			Text 2		
<i>Source</i>	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Direct</i>
Obama	5	3	Obama	5	4
Cruz	1	1	Cruz	3	1
Leahy	2	0	Activists	1	0
			White House/Earnest	2	1

Generally speaking, by using indirect speech, the reporters/editors have more freedom in processing or interpreting the information from the news sources. The boundary between the news sources’ discourse and the reporter/editor’s narration is less distinct. There are more indirect quotes than direct quotes from Obama in both texts. However, it is noteworthy that the direct speeches in Text 2 are translations of the original remarks; during translation, the information is still processed by the reporter/editor.

When it comes to the quotes from Cruz, Text 2 uses predominantly more indirect speeches than direct speeches. Text 2 labels what Cruz said as “conspiracy theory”, which was “sensationally” asserted. It sets the tone for his remarks, and portrays him in a negative light. After his remarks come the direct refutations from other news sources such as the immigration reform activists and White House spokesman Earnest. Besides, immigration reform activists can be a rather ambiguous source, whose credibility is subject to doubt.

In comparison, Text 1 uses indirect speeches twice when it comes to the quotes from Leahy. His comments directly support the attitude or judgment of the reporter/editor because the quotes come right after the sentence: “Obama’s hopes to get a bill done quickly might be hard to meet”. This sentence signals the doubt that the reporter/editor casts on Obama’s immigration reform.

Social Background Analysis

Immigration has always been one of the central topics of debate between Democrats and Republicans. Obama, with his affirmative stance on immigration reform, has drawn support from many ethnic groups, especially the Latina/o voters. He promised to implement an immigration overhaul after he took office, and to solve the problem of a large number of illegal immigrants in the country. However, as challenges including economic recession, the decline of employment rate and the fiscal crunch continue to impact the U.S. economy and society, it is even more difficult for Obama to tackle the issue of immigration. The Republicans also set barriers to Obama’s plan for immigration reform. The issue has been treated as a bargaining chip for the two parties during negotiations. Hence, immigration reform is reported by U.S. mainstream media within a discourse framework that emphasizes the rivalry between the two parties. The report from *USA Today* is no exception. There is one sentence that introduces the background where the news event took place: “Monday’s ceremony offered Obama a backdrop to press his views on the issue as the debate in Washington intensifies”. In this sense, Obama was expressing his political stance to rally political support in the news event.

However, *World Journal* places the news event in another discourse framework that is more concerned with the immigrants’ welfare. For instance, the report says the event was held “uncommonly” and carried “exceptional political meanings”, emphasizing the importance of the event. When describing the immigrants who attended the naturalization ceremony, the report clearly mentions that some of them were Chinese immigrants. Besides, the photo that accompanies the report on the front page shows Obama shaking hands with an Asian American marine, which might seem suggestive of Chinese immigrants.

With the increasing population of Chinese immigrants in the United States, the immigration policies have attracted more attention from the Chinese diaspora. When they are making sense of relevant policies, they care more about the policy implications regarding their immediate interests rather than the partisan rivalry.

In 2012, Republican Congressman Lamar Smith of Texas proposed a bill that made it easier for graduate students from foreign countries to remain in the United States after getting a degree in one of the so-called STEM areas—science, technology, engineering, or math. The bill designated up to 55,000 visas to qualified graduate students by eliminating diversity visas, which was generally considered very beneficial to Chinese diaspora, who are known for their excellence in STEM areas. However, when the bill was first proposed, it met with the opposition from many Democrats, including Chinese American congresswoman Judy Chu. Her partisan move sparked criticism among the Chinese sojourners, especially those receiving graduate education in the United States. In Chinese diasporic media’s reports and Chinese diaspora’s discussion, Chu’s ethnic identity rather than her party affiliation became the centre of attention to the extent that she had to clarify the reasons for her decision later, which were not considered convincing by many Chinese sojourners who voiced their anger online. In a second voting, she voted for both bills put forward by the two parties.

Discussion and Conclusion

Fleras argues that the stereotyping is intrinsic to the dynamics of media operation because the industry is built “around simplifying information for audiences to consume by tapping into a collective portfolio of popular and unconscious images, both print and visual, each of which

imposes a readily identifiable frame or narrative spin” (2001: 318). Basically the more one gets exposed to such an “identifiable frame” or “narrative spin”, the more the stereotypes become “real” to her/him; “while not ‘real’ in the conventional sense, they become real in their social consequences” (Ibid).

The paper finds out that *World Journal*, compared with mainstream media, displays a different value judgment when narrating U.S. news events, especially those closely relevant to the interests of Chinese diaspora. In the “social myth” that *World Journal* pictures in the reports analyzed above, Obama is portrayed as concerned and friendly to Chinese immigrants; the immigrants are depicted as highly valued and praise-worthy. The immigration reform is narrated as almost ready to materialize. Those opposing the immigration reform are portrayed as malicious and aggressive.

Hence it can be argued that the Chinese diasporic media represent a similar “social myth” as Frazier (1965) described in his book. Media, as key manufacturers of representation(s) in society, play a constitutive role rather than a reflexive one (Hall, 1996). In this process of constitution, identities are formed within media as a product of the fashioning of certain subject positions, often through story-telling; for displaced subjects, the media can provide points of identification by marking symbolic boundaries and by fulfilling the desire for myth (Shi, 2005). In the context of Chinese diasporic community, the diasporic media help shape collective aspirations and imaginations, which give full play to the commonly shared aspects of individual identities, thereby uniting individual subjects into an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983). The political implications of diasporic community formation and the role of diasporic media in this very process should not be overlooked.

Such a mediated social myth, conducive to promoting Chinese immigrant’s positive self-image, meets the need of the “face culture” shared by the members of the immigrant community, who come from a relatively high power-distance cultural context where the role of the political leaders is highly valued and the people generally tend to rely on the leaders for information and guidance. By portraying the president’s positive attitude toward Chinese immigrants, the reports ease the pain that they might experience during the assimilation process largely because Obama’s friendly gesture reflects more than just an individual’s or a party’s will to them, but rather can be generalized to embody the wider acceptance from the mainstream society represented by him as the president, a spokesperson for the centre of power in the U.S. society. The reports tap into the cultural reservoir shared by Chinese immigrants and in turn meet their needs.

In this sense, diasporic media enhance the “communal voice” on issues of utmost significance and relevance to their intended audience or readership, providing rich cultural resources to the community they serve insofar as they “facilitate cultural citizenship in ways that differentiate it from other media” (Meadows, Forde & Foxwell, 2002: 3). By increasing the saliences of vital ethnic issues, the diasporic media actively engage in “agenda setting”, alerting ethnic audiences to their immediate interests and possible external threats. As the community booster, they may provide more information on the involvement of ethnic community members in American politics and more coverage of community members’ success in American society and their contribution. All these eventually encourage the immigrants to realize their goals of social mobility and acculturation. In comparison, the mainstream newspapers are too often constrained by a “strict compliance with professional standards of objectivity”, which largely limits their “capacity to represent, and thus to adequately serve, minority audiences” (Awad, 2011: 515). It seems tempting to argue that misrepresentation can be rectified by objective

journalism; however, the minority audiences' social and cultural needs simply cannot be satisfied by impartial reporting because "crucial issues concerning the representation of cultural minorities cannot possibly be registered" (Ibid: 518) in news reports allegedly subject to objectivist professional norms of journalism practices, which treat minority audiences as objectified others from a latently normalized mainstream perspective.

The discourse practice of the Chinese diasporic media, on the other hand, moves away from objectivist norms of representation, and remains in close and constant interaction with the ethnic group's perception of social expectation and inter-group relations. As Chinese immigrants' political participation and incorporation remains at a relatively low level, and their prioritized mobility goals are basically making a living, owning a home, and educating their children (Zhou, Chen & Cai, 2006), it could be tentatively argued that fixed patterns of partisan identification or affinity are not notably evident in the discourse framework of Chinese diasporic media. Rather, the attitudes towards different party officials manifested in their reports are based on a much more flexible and pragmatic judgment on the practical and tangible interests of Chinese immigrants, which might be changeable if the preconditions sustaining such judgment change. Thus, the diasporic media's own agenda and corresponding discourse framework are characterized by a reasonable degree of flexibility and pragmatism. This framework in turn continually shapes or reshapes the diasporic readers' understanding and expectation about themselves as well as other social actors or groups.

That being said, diasporic media's role among immigrants should never be exaggerated. On the one hand, their capability of mobilizing audience or readers for political campaigns or activities is yet to be examined systemically; on the other hand, they are generally much less competitive than mainstream media and their influence rarely stretch beyond the diasporic communities they serve. They are far not powerful enough to change the stereotypes that mainstream society assigns to ethnic groups, or to set the political/policy agenda in national politics on their own. However, nor should their influence be underestimated especially when the earlier view of assimilation as a one-way linear process is being constantly questioned (e.g., D'Innocenzo & Sirefman, 1992; Nash, 1989), which means the intensity of ethnic identification appears likely to remain robust for long, and diasporic media will continue to function as important sources of information and guide for their respective ethnic groups, hence likely to keep playing an important role in the U.S. society.

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