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# The Role Of Media In Promoting Good Governance And Building Public Perception About Governance: A Comparison Of China And The United States

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**THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND BUILDING  
PUBLIC PERCEPTION ABOUT GOVERNANCE: A COMPARISON OF CHINA AND  
THE UNITED STATES**

by

**JUAN LIU**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2017

MAJOR: COMMUNICATION

Approved By:

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Advisor Date

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband, Wenyang Gao. I give my deepest expression of love, and appreciation for the encouragement that you gave. There is something so powerful about having you who support me, love me and comfort me during this graduate program. Thank you for your constant love, push for tenacity, and company during numerous late nights of typing.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Zhiying Liu and Zhenhong Yan, for their endless love. Thank you for all your kinds of sacrifices to support me.

I also dedicate this work to my wonderful grandfather, who passed away the month when I finished this dissertation. Thank you for being a constant inspiration and continuing to be so.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Today the world encounters remarkable challenges in promoting governance, democracy, transparency, press freedom and economic development. Good governance is essential for a nation's long-term and sustainable development. The media, as an important information source, play a crucial role in shaping a healthy democracy and bolstering good governance. It is worth noting that there exists a dilemma in conceptualizing good governance. Actors involved such as scholars, government officials, and international development organizations confront such challenges by defining and analyzing governance within their interests and scope of work. For instance, Fukuyama (2013) refers to governance as a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver public services, regardless of whether the government is authoritarian or democratic. From the viewpoint of the United Nations Development Programme, good governance, in conjunction with democracy and the rule of law, is essential for sustainable development including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger (UNDP, 2014). Given that the concept of governance means different things to different actors, it is useful to clarify how the media define and promote good governance.

There has been little systematic effort to explore the empirical relationship between the media and governance. With the spread of modern communication technologies and the existence of an unfettered and independent press, the media are essential for democratization and guaranteeing good governance through freedom of expression, transparency, accountability, rule of law and providing a pluralist platform for political expression about controversial issues (Norris, 2010; Scholte, 2002). For instance, what are the roles that the media play in

strengthening good governance, democracy and human development in contemporary societies?  
How do citizens evaluate governance based on media reports?

This dissertation aims to examine how the media frame and influence public perception of governance in both China and the United States. China has a long historical tradition of strong centralized governance with the absence of democratic accountability and rule of law (Fukuyama, 2014). By contrast, the United States has traditionally had a weaker central state, compared with the other developed democracies, but it has established powerful legal and democratic institutions (Fukuyama, 2014). Some scholars advocate democracy as a necessary condition for better governance since democratic and participatory governance is considered as the preminent model of political order. However, Fukuyama (2013, p. 351) contends, “an authoritarian regime can be well governed, just as a democracy can be mal-administered.”

Definitions about both governance and good governance are varied. Governance is variously considered as an end in its own right. For instance, international assistance agencies state the goal of good governance is to protect and advance human rights. According to UNESCO (2005), good governance includes notions of greater participation by civil society in decision-making, instituting the rule of law, anti-corruption, transparency, accountability, poverty reduction and human rights. As for political scientists or international relations scholars, good governance is often seen as a means to sustainable development and the reduction of poverty. For instance, rule of law is beneficial for economic growth (Reed, 2004); reducing corruption is considered an effective strategy for increasing the assets and therefore wealth of the poor (Gupta, S., Davoodi, & Alonso-Terme, 2002). The concept of governance is contested. In terms of the usage of good governance, scholars usually express approval not only for a type of government (often democracy) and its related political values (e.g. respect for human rights), but



also for additional components (e.g. political policies in the economic sphere). In fact, good governance is not merely about government itself, but usually means government plus additional components. For instance, the United Nations (2012) defines good governance as policies for sustainable human development; government that is democratic, decentralized, empowering and accountable, which includes functioning legislatures, legal and judicial systems to protect the rule of law, the adoption of human rights and various electoral processes.

In spite of the fact that there are conflicting views about defining governance, there is consensus among all actors on the importance of achieving and promoting good governance at the national and international levels. As a matter of fact, governance is not a new term, but its appearance in discussions about the links between the media and good governance is a comparatively recent phenomenon.

#### *Why Media Matters in Guaranteeing Good Governance*

Scholars acknowledge the idea that democracy and a free media are necessary for good governance. Free press and civic freedom are core Western values that are strongly promoted by international development organizations such as United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). For instance, the theme of 2005 UNESCO World Press Freedom Day focuses on “Media and Good Governance” and emphasizes the role of the media in bolstering good governance around the world (UNESCO, 2005). It calls on member states to spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law at the international level (UNESCO, 2005). Although media and democracy are widely recognized as essential guarantors of good governance in the developing world, countries such as China obviously appear not to fit the mold. The question remains, regardless of political system, how do the media portray governments as effective, responsive and accountable to citizens’ social needs in both

democratic and authoritarian states? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to acknowledge that the media play three key roles in contemporary society.

First, the notion of the press as watchdog has lasted for more than 200 years old (Coronel, 2010). A vigilant press is capable of monitoring political officials and institutions that are supposed to remain transparent and accountable, because citizens believe that the press should inform them about government wrongdoing (Graber, 2009). In the same way, Norris (2010) contends media act as the watchdog, which provides a check on powerful sectors of society, in particular political leaders within both the private and public domains. Schudson (2008) contends the media provide six important functions in a democratic society, including information, investigation, analysis, social empathy, public forum and mobilization. The media may potentially fulfill one, all or none of these functions.

The media playing the watchdog role is a recent trend in many parts of the world. For instance, in countries where democracy is embryonic or even in those like China where democracy and a free press have yet to take root, the notion of the press as a watchdog of power has already been deeply embedded in the self-definition of journalists (de Burge, 2003) as well as in public expectations of the media. The press acting as watchdogs is expected to promote government accountability and transparency by exposing corruption, maladministration and abuse of power. At the same time, some scholars who challenge this view contend that too much exposure or disclosure will undermine public trust in government institutions and generate instability (Norris & Odugbemi, 2010). Therefore, the question arises as to what is the impact watchdog role has on government accountability. To put it differently, even if the press is a watchdog instead of a lapdog or an attack dog, can it actually contribute to good governance, in

particular in societies such as the United States that is full of imperatives of profit-obsessed markets or in China that is resistant to change?

The second important role of media is to function as a civic forum for political debate, facilitating informed citizens' political knowledge and political efficacy (Dahlgren, 1995). The media provide a public sphere where citizens can discuss issues and events, acting as a channel between the governors and the governed (Habermas, 2006). Viewed in this manner, the media play a critical role in connecting the state and citizens via debates and discussions about major political issues as well as informing the public about the stand of their leaders on such issues. If channels of communication reflect the cultural and social pluralism and diversity of society, then various opinions and different voices could be represented and heard in public sphere (Habermas, 1996). For Habermas the ideal public sphere facilitates reasoned deliberation, critical discussion, and tolerance of alternative arguments and viewpoints (Habermas, 1996). In this sense, a free and independent press plays a vital role in providing a public realm, public domain or public sphere, and it encourages the development of a rational and informed public opinion, which is also helpful to check state power.

Lastly, as agenda setters, the media have the power to set a nation's agenda and divert public attention to certain key political issues. Not only do citizens acquire information about public affairs from the media, but also they learn how much importance to attach to an issue, according to the emphasis the news media have placed emphasis on specific issues or events. The media playing the agenda-setting role in democracies are ideally expected to inform elected officials about public concerns by raising their awareness on such issues. In terms of developing countries, the press is considered to play a more important role in highlighting crucial issues, which require urgent action taken by the national government or the international community

(Odugbemi & Norris, 2010). For instance, when encountering a dramatic or emergent issue such as natural disasters, the media serve as a vital channel of information for policy-makers, helping to make government more effective and responsive to the social needs. Moreover, the role of the media as an agenda-setter may also pressure the government to quickly respond and take effective actions to solve certain dramatic political controversies such as scandals, corruption and political crises, etc. Thus, as Cohen (1963, p. 13) states that the media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.” As agenda-setters, the media emphasize urgent social issues and channel public concerns to policy-makers in government (Norris, 2010).

Ideally, the three vital roles that the media play, watchdog, civic forum and agenda-setter, promote good governance by facilitating government transparency and accountability, checking of the abuse of power, strengthening the public sphere and highlighting policy failures, maladministration, scandal and corruption by decision-makers within both the public and private domain. However, scholarship about the role of the media in promoting democracy and good governance is primarily explored from a normative perspective, namely, how the media ought to perform in order to achieve good governance. The normative perspective, however, reflects little about the day-to-day reality about whether the media is capable of fulfilling the identified roles; under what conditions the media perform these roles most effectively, and under what conditions the media fail to live up to the three ideal roles.

In sum, the watchdog role requires the media to monitor the performance of the government and protect the public interest from incompetence, corruption and maladministration. Serving as a public forum and agenda-setter, the press opens up the public sphere to a diversity of voices, and facilitates the citizens to be empowered and informed about their government,

which in turn could make political leaders more responsive and accountable. Despite the fact that the media play three key roles in building good governance, the question about how to evaluate media performance really matters. A good way to measure and assess the media performance in promoting good governance is to look at how the media shape the public perceptions on such issues.

### *The Media, Public Opinion and Good Governance*

Despite the multiple definitions of governance, a vast amount of research in recent years has focused on examining the relationship between democracy and good governance. For instance, democracies that have greater transparency, accountability and rule of law may improve the quality of governments. Governance nowadays emerges as a central stage in the development discourse, but is also often considered a normative standard that is only applied to advanced democracies. However, this dissertation assumes good governance is not a luxury deserved only by democratic societies rather it is one characteristic of modern politics. All governments whether democratic or authoritarian have to deliver public goods or services in order to avoid social unrests and stabilize regime legitimacy.

On the other hand, scholars contend that independent media or a free press is necessary but not sufficient to strengthen good governance, particularly if the public viewpoints or marginalized groups' opinions are excluded in the process of checking abuse of power. For instance, Norris (2010) suggests that states ought to satisfy two conditions in order to achieve these goals: first, channels of mass communications are free and independent of government censorship; second, citizens have widespread access to these media. In this context, the independent and free press serves as a prerequisite to maintain the government effectiveness and to promote the potential for better governance. Another question that confronts scholars is the

restricted awareness of public perception of good governance, because public opinion plays an important role in the process of governance.

Much of the power of the media comes from the simple fact that media can tell people things that they would not otherwise know. The media inform people about government actions and decisions, one purpose of public opinion is to inform public policymaking. For instance, opinion polls in a democracy provide a succinct means to present mass public views to political leaders, since the decisions they make will greatly affect citizens' lives, liberty, and property. Moreover, government leaders are usually in touch with the pulse of the mass public because they pay close attention to public opinion when making laws and formulating policy.

In an ideal society, a free public sphere encourages individuals to think through their views and have a clearer understanding of why they hold those opinions. It is necessary to the formation of public opinion include challenging the predominant political institutions, a fully informed, critical public opinion is essential for good governance. In democracies that establish political orders via electoral procedures and the consent of the governed, a watchful public that is supported by media is capable of scrutinizing decisions made by political leaders. Accountability, transparency, rule of law, political engagement as well as a free press all make governments work better and become better public service providers. Therefore, both the media and public opinion are central to ensuring good governance, since the media provides a public sphere where public opinion can be assembled, articulated and debated, which in turn would nourish democratic debates. What is more, the media can exert an important impact on public opinion in several ways. One important impact is to frame events and issues in the manner that affect public interpretation of politics or social issues.

There are a number of studies that try to identify various media frames of issues from poverty to terrorism, because frames are useful in defining problems, identifying causes, making evaluations and providing solutions (Entman, 1993). So ordinary citizens understand governance mostly from the media coverage, since the media highlight and reflect the regular actors, events and issues in societies in certain manner. In order to capture how media frame governance in the political process as well as how such media frames influence public perception and evaluation of good governance, this study applies framing theory and the theory of spiral of silence to examine the evolution of media frames about governance in the past decade and how such media frames can influence individuals' understanding of governance issues.

The media as an important political institution in democracies provides a source of information for citizens. One influential way the media could shape public opinion is by selecting and presenting information in a particular manner (Iyengar, 1994). Previous scholarship on public opinion has revealed that citizens' attitudes can be influenced significantly by how media frame political controversies (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; 2007b; de Vreese, 2005). Although there are debates among scholars about the conceptualization of framing, the notion of framing makes it appropriate to examine the dynamic between media frames and audience perception. The vast majority of framing research is mainly concerned with identifying a variety frames in news media, and there has been very little research about the framing effects on the democratic process. The key question is about whether framing has important political consequences. For instance, it is believed citizens usually make their preferences over social policies based on arbitrary information and are subject to extensive elite manipulation. However, scholars have found that citizens can use frames in a competent and well-reason manner

(Druckman, 2001). Framing provides an essential context for understanding the formation of public opinion about the policymaking of political leaders.

Public opinion, as a concept and as a process, can also play a positive role in policy making. Citizens continually receive new information about public policies and political officials. Modern democratic institutions allow public opinion to influence government policies (Erikson, Wright & McIver, 1993). In terms of the relationship between the media and public opinion, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's (1984) seminal work put forth the theory of spiral of silence, suggesting that one's perception of the distribution of public opinion motivates one's willingness to express political opinions (Noelle-Neumann, 1977). The theory holds that mass media have an enormous impact on the formation of public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). Recent tests of the theory have explored the spiral of silence phenomenon in a variety of social media contexts (Gearhart & Zhang, 2014; Kwon, Moon & Stefanono, 2014). Those studies reveal that the majority opinion remains dominant on social media platforms, which indicates social media do not diminish the fear of social isolation that keeps individuals from expressing a minority opinion online.

Given the concept of framing and the theory of spiral of silence, this dissertation aims to examine how controversies or issues framed by the media can be employed to initiate debates among citizens to enhance their own understanding of the political process, in particular the performance of the government. So the question becomes whether media help to define the question of what good governance is; how such media frames can actually affect individuals' opinion about governance issues as well as whether social media provides a new context to promote public deliberation.



*Comparing Good Governance in China and the United States*

Governance in the United States and governance in China have completely different structures and processes. In many respects, western scholars are inclined to define good governance with attributes of liberal democracy such as political rights, the rule of law, accountability and state capacity (Smith, 2007). There is evidence that democracies are better at achieving both economic and social development than autocracies. For instance, scholars have observed the statistical correlations between democracy and human development for 19 Latin American states between 1970 and 2002, and the results indicate that democracies contribute greatly to human development (Acuna-Alfaro, 2005). However, it is difficult to establish a clear relationship between types of regime and economic development. For instance, the success cases in Asia such as China shows that the autocracy could achieve economic and social development.

However, it is widely believed that liberal democracy can generate good governance, because scholars agree the idea that democracy is an essential part of good governance. The more transparent and accountable the political institutions are, the better quality the government is. This is the reason why many international development organizations promote good governance via the promotion of greater transparency, rule of law, and democratic accountability such as the World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). For instance, in terms of government effectiveness, WGI (2016) ranked China with a score of 68 and the United States with a score of 90 on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest). China has a long tradition of relatively high centralized bureaucratic government, and it is a lack of democratic accountability that allows the Chinese government to make fast decisions and achieve greater capacity and coherence across a large society (Zhao & Peters, 2009). Too often, scholars equate elections with democracies, democracy with political development. It is necessary to separate political

development from economic development, and to take a much more nuanced view of how the discourse of modernity can promote accountability and effectiveness of the state to benefit the citizen's social needs. Viewed in this way, both China and the United States have established different political systems, but they share at least one major governance problem, namely how to balance the power between policy-making and implementation systems as well as how to deal with significant accountability problems associated with poor performance and corruption, etc (Zhao & Peters, 2009). In the United States, these problems arise from delegation to both subnational governments and nonstate providers, while in China, these issues originate from the low capacity of local governments (Zhao & Peters, 2009; Zhao, 2013).

On the other hand, the political and cultural system of a nation usually determine the relationships among the media, the governments, and the citizens. In light of comparing good governance in both authoritarian and liberal democratic regimes, this dissertation places emphasis on examining strengths and weaknesses of media in promoting good governance as it is defined in a specific culture and political system. Ideally, the media ought to act in the public interest and are capable of holding political officials accountable to the citizens. The comparison of governance in China and the United States provides an appropriate context to further identify the relationship between media and public opinion.

Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is threefold: first, it compares governance issues in two political systems and focuses on how the media frame and describe those controversies. The political realities in authoritarian regimes like China are quite different from established democracies such as the United States, but the media play a key role in shaping good governance in both. Second, it examines how media frames of governance issues could influence the public opinion, and whether the rise of social media could improve political deliberation

about such issues in particular in the context of the United States. Third, it explores how a variety of factors such as political system, media system, political discussion and new communication technologies etc. interact to influence public perceptions and evaluation of governance. Ultimately, utilizing the concept of framing and the theory of spiral of silence, this dissertation will look specifically how media works for governance and how it affects the citizens' assesment of good governance especially in the United States

## CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the relationships among the media, public opinion and good governance in two different nations requires a thorough examination of several key theoretical concepts. This literature review includes the evolving debates on defining governance and a discussion of good governance and its relationship to democracy, corruption and the media. In particular, previous research about framing theory and the spiral of silence theory is also included to explore how the news media frame governance issues as well as how the public develops its opinions on the quality of governments. Research questions concerned with how the media define and frame governance issues as well as how people talk about good governance in both China and the United States are presented.

### *What is Governance?*

The term governance is not new. It is as old as human civilization. In fact, this concept can be traced as far as back to Aristotle (484-425 B.C.) in his seminal work “Polity” or even further back to Confucius (511-479 B.C.), who considered good governance as a wise government that acted meritoriously, satisfied the citizens’ public demands and responsibly promoted harmony in society (Palmer, 1997). The notion of “governance” or “good governance” has been widely discussed in the past decades by international development organizations, scholars, politicians and public administrators, since good governance has remained a global challenge. Given the rising awareness about the importance of governance at both the national and local level, it is necessary to trace the evolving debates over the definition of governance.

With its intrinsic vagueness and inherent lack of specificity, research about governance generates multiple efforts to define it and measure it in different ways and directions (Ahrens,

1999). The term, governance, is like a flexible carrier, which can be employed to convey various meanings. In this process, two paths of definitions have gradually been emerging. The first is a process and policy-oriented discourse and second a power and development-oriented stream (Doornbos, 2001). It is worth mentioning that academics and international agencies conceptualize governance within their interests and specific contexts. Some scholars interpret governance as an outcome in itself, while others consider governance as a theoretical construct, an analytical frame or a means to promote sustainable development (Kjaer, 1996).

First of all, the concept of governance is not to be equated with government. Scholars define governance by emphasizing the process of decision-making or the process by which decisions are implemented. For instance, Plumptre and Graham (1999) define governance as a concept distinct from government. They claim government is a set of institutions, while governance is about how governments and other social organizations interact, how they relate to citizens, and how decisions get made in an increasingly complex world (Plumptre & Graham, 1999). As for Stoker (1998b), he asserts that whereas government refers to the formal institutional structure and the location of authoritative decision-making, the essence of governance is the “interactive relationship between and within government and non-governmental forces” (Stoker, 1998b, p.38). Fukuyama (2013) refers to governance as government’s ability to make and enforce rules and to deliver public services, regardless of whether the government is authoritarian or democratic. Frischtak (1994, vii) describes governance capacity “as the ability to co-ordinate the aggregation of diverging interests and thus promote policy that can credibly taken to represent the public interest.” Similarly, in Rhodes’ (2000) viewpoint, governance is a new process of governing as well as the new method by which society is governed. As for Bovaird and Loffler (2003), they describe governance within specific

contexts in order to distinguish between countries and stakeholders, and they understand governance to be the ways in which stakeholders interact with each other in order to influence the outcomes of public policies. Kjaer (1996, p.6) states that governance signifies “the capacity to define and implement policies.” As for Boeninger (1991, p.1), governance means “identifying economic and social objectives....charting a course designed to move society in that direction.” Obviously, scholars have not formulized a clear and operational definition of governance, and they describe governance in terms of the government’s capacity to deliver public services and enhance the development of civil society.

Secondly, although governance plays a key role in promoting sustainable economic, political and social development, a vast body of literature examines governance from the viewpoint of power or authority relations within various contexts (Doornbos, 2001). In this sense, the concept of governance fosters a new understanding of the practice and exercise of political power. For instance, Hydén (1992, p. 7) states, “governance ...is the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm.” Apart from increasing the legitimacy of the regime, Bratton and van de Walle (1992, p. 30) define governance as “an interactive process by which state and social actors reciprocally probe for a consensus on the rules of the political game.” In the same way, Chazan (1992) holds the purpose of governance is to ensure the coordination between the state and the civil society. He states that governance has the capacity to establish and maintain workable relations between individuals and institutional actors in order to achieve collective goals. Similarly, Hydén and Mease (2004) state governance is concerned with how political regimes protest, amend or sustain rules for policy. They believe governance is “the formation and stewardship of the rules that regulate the public realm---the space where state as well as economic and societal actors interact

to make decisions” (Hydén & Mease, 2004, p. 5). Swilling (1997) further simplifies the meaning of governance and asserts governance is about how power structures and civil society interrelate to produce a civic public realm. Thus, governance is carried out by the state, the private sector and the civil society in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

There are differences between the two discourses. For instance, the policy-oriented stream defines governance focusing on enhancing policy effectiveness, while the power-oriented discourse emphasizes relations among the state, civil society and development. In fact, when conceptualizing governance, scholars differ by taking different issues, problems or goals into account. Even though scholars highlight several substantive characteristics of a governance concept, they describe governance without providing any universal conceptualization (Ahrens, 1999). What makes such issue more problematic and complicated is the emerging use of the concept of good governance (Smith, 2007; Kareivaite, 2014).

Many approaches seek to conceptualize the term good governance by addressing several key attributes of governance, however, the underlying definitions and mechanisms remain vague and minimally operational. Moreover, much scholarly attention to governance has concentrated on the World Bank’s efforts to measure good governance around the world as well as on the multifaceted responses to the World Bank’s use of the concept (McCarney, 2010). For instance, the World Bank’s (1989) report claims that the crisis on African continent is one of governance. More specifically, the World Bank refers to such phenomena as “the extensive personalization of power, the denial of fundamental human rights, widespread corruption, and the prevalence of unelected and unaccountable government” (Hydén, 1992, p. 5). Implicitly, from this perspective, the World Bank actually calls for liberalization and democratization. In other words, it indicates

that good governance and sustainable development will occur only when policy-makers abandon their authoritarian practices (Hydén, 1992; George & Sabelli, 1994).

As a matter of fact, the World Bank first utilizes the term governance with regards to Africa (McCarney, 2010). In the World Bank's document, *Long Term Perspective Study---Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, it declares that good governance is “a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to its public (World Bank, 1989, xii).” The World Bank (1989, p.60) defines governance as “the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs.” It is interesting to note that one element of this definition is power and another is management, where the former is used to achieve the goal of the latter (McCarney, 2010). Later in 1992, the World Bank (1992, p.1) published a booklet, *Governance and Development*, which defines governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.” Viewed in this manner, the World Bank's early thinking about governance is primarily concerned with establishing political power by improving institutional efficiency, accountability and sound development management. However, governance has been viewed critically as an important factor in a global-hegemonic neo-liberal discourse (Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992). As Schmitz (1994) contends, good governance is like a global vehicle to deliver political sustainability for neo-liberal policies. Thus, the World Bank employs governance to disseminate Western liberal democracy in the Third World with the purpose of maintaining a free global market (Leftwich, 1993). The World Bank takes this opportunity both to instill Western political values in the developing countries and to sanction them if these countries did not meet the World Bank's standards of good governance (George & Sabelli, 1994).



In addition, in 1997 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) put forward its definition of governance, which is very similar to the World Bank. UNDP publishes a report, *Reconceptualizing Governance*, which defines governance as “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs (1997b, p. xi)” In another key report, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, UNDP (1997a) contends that good governance is of great significance not only to ensure the rule of law and protect against international organized crime, but also to maintain and expand a nation’s social and economic infrastructure. Meanwhile, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (1996, p.6) defines governance as “the process whereby elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, economic and social development.” All these connotations from international agencies suggest that governance is involved with leadership toward societal development, and the concept is indeed a product of the late twentieth century when development becomes the priority of both states and international community.

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a broadening interest in governance from both international agencies and scholars. Academic studies about governance outside the World Bank are many and varied. More importantly, the meaning of governance which has tended to be broader in scope and research about governance has expanded across a variety of issues, including the interface between civil society and good governance (Roy, 2007), the relation between governance and development (Baland, Moene, Robinson, 2009; Khan, 2006), public management (Huque, 2013), decentralization (Bardhan, 2002), and democratic governance and policy reforms (Brinkehoff, 2000). In fact, the academic literature on governance is eclectic and interdisciplinary. The theoretical roots about governance connect to institutional economics,

international relations, political science, public administration, organizational studies, development studies, public administration and Foucauldian-inspired theorists (Jessop, 1995).

However, only a few and limited studies examine governance from the viewpoint of media and communication. For instance, Khazaeli and Stockemer (2013) evaluate the impact of Internet use on governance quality through analysis of Internet penetration rates in more than 170 countries and find that Internet penetration has a positive influence on governance practices regardless of regime types. The authors suggest authoritarian countries are likely to censor dissenting information online, but such practices will become increasingly difficult to maintain over time due to the development of anti-filter tools (Khazaeli & Stockemer, 2013). Hassid and Brass (2014) investigate the role of media in government responsiveness to scandal as one aspect of governance in Kenya and China. Contrary to expectation, authoritarian China is more responsive to public pressure addressing scandals than democratic Kenya, which indicates democracy and free media are important for government responsiveness to scandal, but free usually is necessary but not sufficient (Hassid & Brass, 2014). More studies are needed to explore governance from the field of communication studies.

Overall, as a complex concept, there is no consensus on the definition of governance. Previous research about conceptualizing governance emphasizes the political nature of governance (Baland, Moene, & Robinson, 2009; Boeninger, 1991; Bratton & van de Walle, 1992; Hope 2002; Hydén, 1992; Plumptre & Graham, 1999; World Bank, 1992). On the other hand, various conceptualizations of governance reveal the confusion among academics, since the term “governance” is often defined and interpreted based on the interests and prepositions of researchers, scholars, politicians and international agencies. This highlights governance as a contested term, and research about governance is fragmented. It is necessary to develop a

“governance perspective” (Stoker, 1998a) to address the confusion, complexity and uncertainty over the changing world of government. Bratton and Rothchild (1992) consider governance, democracy, accountability and legitimacy together as defining characteristics of governance, and they state governance is broader than government. Before going further into the discussion, it is necessary to review the relationships among good governance, democracy, corruption and the media as well as how scholars, researchers or international agencies measure governance.

*Good Governance and Its Relationship to Democracy, Corruption and the Media*

A broader review of the literature suggests that the term governance has been employed in a variety of ways and has diversified meanings (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998b; Hyden & Bratton, 1992). Although debates over governance have never stopped, there ought to be a baseline agreement over the theoretical work on governance. Conceptual frameworks of governance may provide a simplifying lens to examine the complicated reality, since the world of governing is changing dramatically but is worthy of study. Among scholars, Stoker (1998b) put forth five propositions to summarize a number of attributes of governance for research.

“1) Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government; 2) governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues; 3) governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action; 4) governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors; 5) governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide (1998a, p. 18).”

Among the five propositions, the last assertion suggests that even though governments operate in a good way to lead collective actions, the likelihood of governance failure may occur

(Stoker, 1998a). In the same way, Fukuyama (2013, p. 351) contends, “an authoritarian regime can be well governed, just as a democracy can be mal-administered.” However, scholars from the West consider the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of good governance as both an objective of and a condition for sustainable development (Moore & Robinson, 1994; Santiso, 2001b;Stokke, 2013). The link between democracy and good governance remains unclear.

While democracy mainly refers to the legitimacy of government, good governance means the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of the government. Santiso (2001a) argues that the quality of governance is ultimately attributed to its democratic content. In other words, democracy and good governance are reciprocal, namely neither democracy nor good governance would be sustainable without the other (Santiso, 2001a). Indeed, democracy is the most favored political system in Western countries, but in some cases democracy does not lead to good governance. An apt example is India, which gradually established democracy in the process of institutionalization and accommodation. By contrast, Kohli (2001) argues that among the poor countries of the world, India stands out as the most significant country that suffers from poor governance, mass poverty, systemic corruption, and limited access to education.

Ideally, democracy and good governance can go hand in hand, and the positive consequences of this will be fast economic growth, effective rule of law, higher political stability, etc. A transparent, open and participatory democracy usually empowers citizens to monitor and assess the performance of government as well as to remove officials who cannot meet the public interest. This increases the possibility that public sources will be utilized to produce public goods, which will stimulate economic growth, investment as well as enhance the quality of life. This causal relationship seems to work well in theory. However, in reality, some countries could achieve good governance without establishing democracy. For instance, China and Malaysia

today developed quickly without democracy. Although previous research has suggested there is a strong correlation between democracy and good governance within Africa, only two African countries, Botswana and Mauritius, have kept a relatively good development performance in the past three decades (Center for Democratic Development, 2005).

As a matter of fact, authoritarian regimes may provide high-quality governance, as evidenced by Russia and China. For instance, according to the World Bank's Governance Indicators, China's governing performance has not varied significantly since 1996 and roughly ranked between the 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Saich (2012) conducted a survey examining the general levels of satisfaction with government in implementing public policy as well as dealing with corruption. The result indicates citizens are largely dissatisfied with the performance of local governments, but are content and have faith in central government (Saich, 2012). Another example is Dubai, which is considered by citizens as an affluent and well-managed state with good governance (Hetherington & Najem, 2003). But Dubai is undoubtedly an authoritarian regime, an emirate with no democracy. Furthermore, Singapore is also considered to be one of the best-governed countries in the world, even better than many European countries. However, most academics and political scientists do not consider Singapore to be an electoral democracy, since the state deploys a consultative approach to governance that does not meet the criteria of Western democracy. Policy implementation and enforcement are taken more seriously in Singapore than many other democracies, let alone the open and friendly business environment as well as the fair and effective judicial system (Subramaniam, 2001). Pakistan is established as a representative democracy. Regrettably, the elected representatives regard elections as a means of plundering national wealth, and they violate the public mandate through corruption with a result of poor governance (Talbot, 2009). Many countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Turkey, Thailand

and Indonesia all establish their form of democracy, but experience the consequences of poor governance such as political violence, corruption, and slow economic growth (Leftwich, 1993).

Past research about democracy and governance is based on partial statements and limited examples. It is true that the introduction of democratic institutions is beneficial for political rights, civil rights and freedom of press. The question, overall, becomes whether the quality of governance is helped or hurt by the advent of institutions of democratic accountability. Although scholars debate the relationships between good governance and democracy, both are imperative for social and economic progress. As Doornbos (2001) argues, after the cold war, the attention about good governance shifted to democratization, as evidenced by good governance has been achieved among many democracies.

Apart from democracy, what is interesting and important is how good governance is employed in a range of issues such as corruption and press freedom. In the past, scholars have increasingly recognized the important role of good governance in influencing economic performance, combating corruption and facilitating press freedom (Apaza, 2009; Pillay, 2004; Gupta & Abed, 2002; Kaufman, 2005). In the words of Transparency International (2015), corruption undermines good government, fundamentally distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector development and particularly hurts the poor.

The term corruption, both conceptually and in practice, can be a matter of considerable dispute. By definition, corruption is broadly defined as the abuse of public office for private gains (Heidenheimer, 1970; Gronbeck, 1989; Nye 1967; Quade, 2007; Dai, 2013). One definition of corruption that is well acknowledged by scholars is Heidenheimer's (1970) definition of political corruption as deviation from legal and public duty norms for the purpose of private gain. Similarly, Joseph Nye (1967) states corruption is behavior, which deviates from the

normal duties of a public role because of private-regarding gains, or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. In the same way, Gronbeck (1989) states political corruption encompasses those acts whereby private gain is made at public expense.

There are important differences among corruption as it is defined in the official laws of nations, defined by public opinion, and by the people who are authorities in democratic nations (Gardiner, 2011). Indeed, discussion of the definition of corruption has never stopped since Heidenheimer's (1970) groundbreaking distinction between definitions centered on public opinion, public office and public interest. Variations in definitions among nations guarantee that no definition of corruption will be equally accepted in every nation. These variations can be found whether definitions are based on statutory criteria, on the impact of corruption on public interest, or public opinion (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2011). First, different nations have different legal definitions of corruption. It is difficult to compare socialist and capitalist nations. Some nations feel that gift-giving is acceptable while other nations' laws only deal with the most blatant bribery. Second, scholars dispute the effects of corruption on the public interest. Corruption usually has harmful impacts, but there are some nations where corruption is relatively harmless or even healthy. Finally, the indication of differences among nations in their definitions of corruption comes from variations in public opinion about corruption issues. For example, there are nations where official corruption has been widespread for many years with no visible sign of public outrage (Heidenheimer, 2011).

In terms of corruption, the more transparent a government is, the less corrupt it is likely to be at an institutional level. Previous studies suggest that there is a significant relationship between more press freedom and less corruption in a large set of countries (Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Chowdhury, 2004). According to Transparency International, most of the countries that

have successfully constrained corruption are developed democracies such as Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland (Cai, 2013). This is not surprising given those nations have strong prevention measures such as legal system, checks and balances plus robust press freedom. The media can serve as watchdogs, agenda setters and a public forum for monitoring government behavior (Ahrend, 2002). In addition, through disclosures and investigations, the media can expose cases of misadministration and abuse of power, which helps to ensure accountability and transparency. Good governance is closely related to control of corruption, and past research has suggested that good governance is beneficial in reducing corruption. In sum, good governance in this respect could not only help to combat corruption, but also provides an ideal framework to examine other key development efforts such as democracy, rule of law, accountability, press freedom and public deliberation. The next task is how to draw on the concepts of governance proposed by various scholars to create an effective framework to measure governance.

### *Measuring Good Governance*

Good governance is believed to be beneficial to a state's political development, while poor governance is among the most important causes of state failure and underdevelopment. In terms of good governance, Smith (2007) contends that it corresponds to four attributes of the polity: constitutional, political, executive and the content of public policy. For instance, at the constitutional level, good governance requires changes to the fundamental principles and rules on which government is based (Smith, 2007). The political dimension of good governance includes pluralism, participation and control of corruption (Smith, 2007). The executive requisite of good governance includes the government's capacity to establish an accountable, transparent and effective public administration (Smith, 2007). The policy dimension of good governance



responds to governments' efforts to promote economic growth, free markets, welfare and human development (Smith, 2007).

Good governance is also difficult to measure, since the quality of government within each country varies tremendously. Fukuyama (2014) proposes three approaches to measure the quality of government, namely procedure, capacity and outputs. However, the three measures are unlikely to capture the real quality or strength of government across nations. Recently, a number of international agencies have sought to measure some aspects of the quality of governance. The most cited and employed is the World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). These indicators measure six dimensions of governance for a wide range of countries, including voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Kaufmann, et al., 2010). However, it is questionable about whether the WGI numbers actually capture the variance and strength in the quality of government. Any proxy for governance is by definition an imperfect measure of broader concepts of governance (Kaufmann & Kraay, 2007). For instance, the absence of violence in a state might not mean that there is effective policy implementing such as North Korea. Frankly speaking, it would be very difficult to create a rational framework to measure governance, since there is tremendous degree of variance in the quality of governments across the globe (Fukuyama, 2013 & 2014). It is easier to criticize the existing frameworks of evaluating governance than to propose new solutions. For purposes of this dissertation, and in light of the literature of several fields, the following definition of good governance will be used in this research.

This definition does not favor for a single type of government such as democracy, instead it suggests that regardless of regime types, good governance is characterized by establishing an

effective administration, promoting political values, as well as encouraging political accountability, legitimacy, transparency and participation.

Indeed, from the perspective of communication studies, one possible way to measure and evaluate good governance is to look at how media frame and describe governance issues and thereby influence citizens' perception of the performance of government officials. Thus, framing theory and the spiral of silence theory will be examined.

### *Framing Theory*

One of the most famous conceptualizations of the communication process is Harold Lasswell. He (1948, p. 216) is well known for his model of communication, namely, "who says what through which channel to whom with what effect." Scholars have examined all of these components including the communicator (who), media content (says what), the medium (through which channel), the audiences (to whom), and the effects (with what response). Communication research has mainly concentrated on audiences and effects. However, media content is the basis of media effects (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). If the media are capable of providing most of the reality that individuals know outside their own personal experiences, then analyzing media content will help to evaluate what that reality it is. Framing analysis is the most common approach used by scholars to examine the media content of certain issues. It is based on the premise that journalists or reporters are capable of selecting some attributes to describe some specific issues and making such attributes or elements more salient than others, which can influence audiences' opinions.

Framing is the way in which information is presented to its audiences. The origin of framing research is generally attributed to the seminal work of sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). Based on his ethnographic study about how individuals make sense of their environments

and interpersonal communications, Goffman (1974) describes frames as “schemata of interpretation”, which individuals can employ to identify, perceive, classify, and interpret issues, events and topics in a meaningful way. In other words, the theory indicates that frames are not only sensitively and carefully established to achieve a communicative purpose, but also frames highlight the innate attribute of all social processes. He describes frames as “the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify” (Goffman, 1974, p.11). So the initial meaning of framing is not just a specific description of one’s experience in communicative context, but an organization of experience.

Another intellectual root of framing research in the 1970s and 1980s is attributed to cognitive psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1979), who employ experiments to examine framing about perception of choices and risk judgments. For example, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) found that if participants are given an ambiguous choice to make, the different responses rest on the way in which the message is framed or presented to describe the situation.

One big difference between sociological and psychological construction of framing is the “frames in communication”, which are emphasized by sociologists (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2007b), and refer to the “words, images, phrases, and presentation styles” (Druckman, 2001, p.227), which media usually can use to produce news stories. The psychological construction of frame focuses on the effects of media frames on those who receive them. The choices that people make are influenced by media creation of a frame. Clearly, framing is not a simple communicative discourse about perceived reality, but rather it can influence people’s perceptions and attitudes towards specific issues.

### *What is Framing?*

When scholars attempt to conceptualize the frame or framing, there are pitfalls. First, frame or framing has been widely applied in a variety of disciplines from communication studies, political science, psychology to sociology, etc. It has been utilized in different ways to mean different things. Thus, it might be difficult for scholars to generate a universal statement of framing theory and to demonstrate exactly how frames are embedded across contexts as well as how frames influence human thinking. Second, the theoretical controversy involved with framing is assumed to yield different empirical outcomes. In other words, the effect of framing could be various based on different conceptualizations of framing. Third, the majority of framing studies interchangeably employ these key terms, “frame” and “framing”, without clearly distinguishing the exact meaning of each concept.

Therefore, the major challenge of conceptualizing framing theory is that scholars can define or interpret it from a variety of perspectives, which could result in multiple implications or considerations. On one hand, lack of clear conceptualization has led framing research to a fragmented field (Entman, 1993). On the other hand, numerous viewpoints and innovative ideas allow for diversity and creativity, which in turn might contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the framing process (Borah, 2011; D’Angelo, 2002; Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Moreover, framing is considered as both a macrolevel and a microlevel construct (Scheufele, 1999b). For instance, Gamson (1992b, p. 67) implicitly calls on research for framing ought to be based on multiple levels of analysis, namely “the interplay between two levels---between individuals who operate actively in the construction of meaning and socio-cultural processes that offer meanings that are frequently contested.”

In fact, scholars have conceptualized framing in a number of ways. According to Entman (1993), framing is primarily focused on “selection” and “salience”. Framing mainly deals with how message producers select or highlight some features of events or issues and make those features or elements more prominent than other aspects of events, which can lead audiences to have different responses. Druckman (2001, p. 227) refers frames to the “words, images, phrases, and presentation styles”, which the media usually can use to construct news stories. By virtue of placing emphasis on certain elements of an issue, a frame provides an approach to understand or interpret certain events or issues.

In terms of the accounts of the concept of frames or framing, scholars promote a social constructivist approach to characterize frames. For instance, Gitlin (1980, p. 6) defines frames as “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters.” Frames, according to Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 143), are “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frames suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue.” In this sense, frames act to facilitate individuals’ interpretations about the event or issue by making certain attributes of an event salient, or by making certain aspects of a political controversy visible. Like Gamson and Modigliani (1989) consider frames as “interpretative packages”, which provides meaning to an issue, Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997, p.568) state that frames could “shape individual understanding and opinion concerning an issue by stressing specific elements or features of the broader controversy, reducing a usually complex issue down to one or two central aspects.” Viewed in this manner, the media play a central role in framing issues for general public. For instance, Tuchman (1978) considers news as frame and news as a constructed reality. In her opinion, a frame is “the principles of organization

which govern events---at least social ones---and our subjective involvement in them” (Tuchman, 1978, p.192). Frames organize strips of the everyday world. The news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part of everyday reality. Tuchman’s notion of news frame is from the perspective of social constructionism, and she views news frames in a broad sociocultural context (Tuchman 1978). However, Edelman (1993, p. 232) argues that the elements or characters of media frames become different as changes are displayed in “a kaleidoscope of potential realities...in which observations are framed and categorized.”

In addition, Gross and D’Ambrosia (2004, p. 3) argue, “when a given frame dominates, certain considerations are highlighted and certain considerations fall behind” (Gross & D’Ambrosia, 2004, p. 53). Evidently, in the process of defining frames, scholars focus on the functional dimension of frames, such as what frames deal with; why the frames matter in making sense of an issue; who or what might be responsible for problems associated with the issue as well as what should be done about the issue (Druckman, 2001; Entman 1993; Van Gorp, 2007; Weaver, 2007).

On the other hand, scholars are inclined to conceptualize framing as a process (Chong & Druckman, 2007b; de Vreese, 2005; Entman, 2007; Scheufele, 1999b). For example, Chong and Druckman (2007b, p. 104), refer to it as “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue.” As for de Vreese (2005, p. 51), he defines framing as a process, because “communication is not static, but rather a dynamic process that involves frame-building (how frames emerge) and frame-setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions).”

In terms of the contexts where framing occurs, Entman (1993) classifies frames within several locations, including the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. Viewed in

this manner, frames can be employed by audiences as “interpretative schema” to interpret and discuss an event or issue; by journalists to reduce a complex issue into interesting news story; by politicians to define policy stances and reach potential voters; by experts to exchange viewpoints with citizens (Nisbet, 2010). After reviewing the multiple meanings of the term “frame” and “framing”, it shows that scholars conceptualize frame or framing in a sense of “shaping”, and relatively little attention has been paid to the broader cultural context under which framing occurs. This dissertation will try to take culture into account. The diversity of viewpoints makes framing studies an appealing field for both researchers and scholars, but an absence of an unequivocal conceptualization leads to its persistent vagueness for decades.

#### *Previous Research on Framing Theory*

In recent years, research on framing theory has gained momentum in the field of communication science (Bryant & Miron, 2004). A vast number of framing studies focus on identifying various frames from news content as well as how frames influence audiences’ understanding and interpretation of various issues (Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Iyengar, 1990; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012; Nacos, 1996; Norris, 1995; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond, & Vig, 2000). By means of selecting and presenting some elements of issues or events in a salient and specific way, journalists have the ability to filter or withhold information, which could influence or change the way citizens interpret the events or issues.

Given framing as a concept is mainly embedded in the large body of media effects research, the first generation of framing research placed emphasis over the influence of frames on public opinion (Iyengar, 1989; Iyengar, 1990; Iyengar, 1994; Jacoby, 2000; Kim, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2002; Kuypers, 2002). For example, Shanto Iyengar (1989) identified episodic and

thematic frames as two essential types of political news reporting and these frames could influence citizen's attributions of responsibility. Recently, Lene Aarøe (2011) has extended the research over episodic and thematic frames by investigating frame strength. By means of experiments, Aarøe found that the relative strength of episodic and thematic frames is conditioned by the intensity of citizens' emotional reactions (Aarøe, 2011). Meanwhile, Major (2011) employ the experiment to investigate the effects of thematic and episodic and gain and loss frames on both emotional responses and attribution of responsibility, and the findings suggest that emotions mediate the effect of frames on attribution of responsibility.

Previous research suggests that frames can affect public opinion in a predictable and systematic ways (e.g., Entman, 2004; Kinder & Sanders, 1990; Mendelberg, 2001; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Nelson & Kinder, 1996). These studies indicate that frames have influential effects. However, with regards to explaining how media frames affect public opinion, scholars consider accessibility, applicability and appropriateness as the main theoretical explanations for framing effects (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Higgins, 1996; Shen & Edwards, 2005). Individuals are believed to have limited capacity to interpret the messages (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Due to the limited cognitive capacities, individuals rarely conduct a comprehensive search for all related information in making evaluations (Shen & Edwards, 2005). Instead, individuals are likely to shorten the process of searching or retrieving relevant information, and they make decisions or judgments usually based on what is most accessible, appropriate and applicable (Schwarz, Bless, Wanke & Winkielman, 2003). This also means that when a subset of relevant information about issues or events has been covered or emphasized in the media, such salient information is possible to be



activated and accessible to audiences, which in turn affects' the individuals' opinions and attitudes (Shen & Edwards, 2005).

For instance, when asking for one's opinion on President Barack Obama's foreign policy about ISIS, individuals usually are unable to recall and review all the foreign policy decisions of the Obama administration. Instead, people will only consider a few pieces of relevant messages, news or information. What goes into this subset of information is often that is easily retrieved. What is easily retrieved is what is accessible in one's mind (Zaller and Feldman, 1992). They claim that people do not hold a single "attitude", but rather possess "opposing considerations on most issues" (Zaller & Feldman, 1992, p. 586). In other words, when asking for an opinion about an issue, people are more likely to retrieve information or considerations that are accessible in their mind. Thus, frames serve to activate such process of accessibility (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). As Chong and Druckman (2007a) argue, repeated exposure to a frame induces frequent processing, which in turn will increase the accessibility of the frame. In contrast, an accessible consideration or a frame may have no important impact if other chronically accessible considerations are deemed more salient (Shen & Edwards, 2005). For instance, a frame in the media may not greatly affect one's overall opinion if the individuals hold strong prior positions on the issue or event.

On the other hand, past research about framing is also focused on identifying specific frames such as media frames, audience frames, game frames, strategic frames and partisan frames (de Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001; Lawrence, 2000; Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Nelson & Oxley, 1999; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; Scheufele, 1999b; Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele, 2007). Recent studies pay attention to identifying both moderators and mediators of framing with the purpose of better understanding how and under which conditions news can affect public

opinion, and have thus begun to complement theoretical base for framing research (Boulianne, 2011; Brewer, 2003; Brewer & Gross, 2010; Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012). For instance, Brewer (2001) finds that previous knowledge and opinion about gay right influences individuals' responses to alternative gay rights frames. Another example is Boulianne's (2011) study about media use shaping one's interest and attitude toward politics and he further suggests that media use activates those who are already interested in politics, and the relationship between media use and political interest is reciprocal. Moreover, scholars identify belief importance and belief content as mediators in the process of framing and the level of political knowledge play a moderating role in framing effect (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012).

Apart from an examination of the psychological attributes involved in framing research such as beliefs, political interest, or ideology, scholars in recent years have addressed a broader issue about the implications of framing effects for the operation of a democratic political system (Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Druckman, 2001; Entman, 2007). For instance, Chong & Druckman (2007b) examined the effect of democratic competition on the power of elites' ability to frame public opinion. In their viewpoint, competition ensures that potential voters are not restricted to a single position, but rather have access to alternative arguments representing opposing perspectives (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). The authors (2007b) examine whether such competition between leaders and institutions in a democratic system facilitates citizens' capacity to evaluate and choose among alternative frames by utilizing experimental data about college students on two policy issues: the management of urban growth and the opinion about a hatred group rally. Their findings reveal that the one's value priorities and motivations to think about politics are the two major factors affecting the magnitude of framing effects (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). More importantly, the authors contend that competing frames tend to

stimulate individuals to deliberation on the merits of alternative interpretations (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). In other words, exposure to democratic competition involving multiple frames will reduce the chance that individuals make their judgments about an issue merely based on skewed subset of beliefs.

Meanwhile, Druckman (2001) focused on the relations between framing effects and citizen competence. For instance, public opinion often relies on the frames elites choose to use. People's judgments about a Ku Klux Klan rally may depend on whether elites frame it as a free speech issue or a public safety issue (Druckman, 2001). By using two experiments, Druckman (2001) found that framing effects may occur, not because elites seek to manipulate citizens, but rather because citizens seek guidance from credible elites. The perceived source credibility acts to be a prerequisite for successful framing (Druckman, 2001). As for Entman (2007), he looks at slant and bias underlying framing process, which provides new insight into how media influence the distribution of political power in current political system. Specifically, these studies suggest that framing effects work in a relatively systematic and reasoned manner, since people make judgments by accessing a subset of relevant information and seek guidance from sources they perceive as credible.

After reviewing the previous research about framing, the way that communication scholars use the term frame can be generally classified into two main categories. First, a media frame refers to the words, images, metaphors, phrases and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g., a political elite) or an organization (e.g., a media outlet) uses when disseminating information about an event or an issue to citizens (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989; Chong & Druckman, 2007a). Tuchman (1978, p. 193) provides a similar definition for media frames, namely "the news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part of parcel of everyday

reality...is an essential feature of news.” This concept of media framing represents the intent of the sender.

Second, an individual frame refers to an individual’s cognitive understanding of a given situation or an event (Goffman, 1974). Entman (1991, p.53) defines individual frames as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information.” Scholars often employ the concept of individual frames to analyze how citizens interpret and evaluate political issues (McLeod, Kosicki, Pan, & Allen, 1987). Unlike media frames, individual frames mean what an individual believes to be the most salient attribute of an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007a). This view of media frames implies the intent of receiver. Thus, Kinder and Sanders (1990, p. 74) conceptualize that media frames as “devices embedded in political discourse”, and the individual frames as “internal structures of the mind.”

Other key terms involved with framing theory are integral to the distinct stages of framing, namely framing-building, frame-setting, and individual and societal level consequences of framing (D’Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 1999b; Scheufele, 2000; de Vreese, 2003; de Vreese, 2005; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Frame building is usually considered the first stage in the dynamic process of framing, and it refers to the internal factors that influence the news forms and contents (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; de Vreese, 2005). The key question about frame building is what kinds of structural factors of a media system or which individual characteristics of journalists can exert influence on framing of news contents (Scheufele, 1999b). Frame setting is concerned with the interactions between media frames and audience frames. In other words, this part of the framing process emphasizes on to which degree and under what circumstances audiences are able to recall and reflect frames available to them (de Vreese 2005).

The analysis of the outcomes of framing is classified into two levels: individual vs. societal levels. As for individual level consequence, the process could result in altered attitudes toward issues based on exposure to various frames (Hwang, Gotlieb, Nah & McLeod, 2007). For instance, Iyengar (1991) examined the effects of episodic and thematic media framing of issues over attributions of personal or societal responsibility. By contrast, societal level outcomes focus on how frames shape and influence citizen competence, democratic deliberation and political socialization (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Sorting out the differences among key components of the framing process is of great significance for scholars to better understand the link between the production of the news content (frame-building) and the uses and effects of frames (frame-setting). Ultimately, scholars need to clarify the relationship between framing and other concepts before employing framing in their work. Failing to do this will leave framing theory with a confusing set of terminologies. Although these components of the framing process are important, the focus of this dissertation is on how the presence of media frames concerned with governance issues affect the audiences' frames and, in turn, their attitudes toward the performance of the government. Thus, this study compares the processes such as frame building, frame setting and individual-level effects in two different states.

In order to examine how the media frame and describe the governance issues, a study of media content alone is not sufficient. However, to understand either the forces that create such media content or the nature or extent of its effects, framing research is a start. Understanding how media frame governance issues is crucial in understanding the importance of good governance's effects on people and society. Previous research has explored what factors inside

and outside media organizations affect the process of framing as well as media content such as media routines, social institutions and forces, ideological positions and psychological factors etc. (Tuchman, 1978; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

In order to capture how the media frame governance in the political process, two studies will be conducted to better understand the relationship between media and good governance in contemporary societies. The first study aims to examine how media frame the dimensions of governance in both China and the United States. According to Hydén (1992), governance is concerned with how rules affect political action and the prospect of solving given societal problems. An understanding of how the media cover and describe the governance issues requires attention to media frames. Thus, based on literature about governance and the literature in media framing, the first study will examine how media frame the dimensions of governance including degree of political participation, degree of political stability and absence of violence, degree of adhere to rule of law, degree of public services, the degree of control of corruption, and the degree of respect for human rights. The objective of the first study is to identify the use of media frames regarding good governance in China and the United States and to consider whether there are important similarities and differences between the two states. Therefore, the first research question is:

RQ1: How do the news media frame governance in both China and the United States?

A second aim of this study is to compare the use of frames in the media covering issues that are concerned with the qualities of good governance.

RQ2: Do the news media frame governance issues more favorably in China than those in the United States or vice versa?

The last purpose of research question is to consider the potential elements influence the different manner that the media portray and frame governance in both states.

RQ3: What kinds of factors can account for the differences in terms of media framing governance issues between China and the United States?

Therefore, the first study is concerned with how media define and frame good governance in both China and the United States. The second study focuses on the effect of media framing governance controversies over the public's perception and evaluation of the quality of government in the context of the United States.

#### *Looking At Spiral of Silence Theory*

Apart from investigating how the media frame and describe good governance issues in both China and the United States, one objective of this dissertation is to explore how the framing of governance issues influence public perception and citizens' evaluation of the quality of governments. With regards to public opinion research, one of the most frequently used theories among communication scholars is the theory of spiral of silence. In fact, both framing theory and spiral of silence share a concentration on explaining public opinion and the processes through which the media shape citizens' view of the politics. However, both theories have a different focus. For example, framing refers to how an issue is described in news reports can have an important influence on how audiences interpret that issue. Spiral of silence theory attempts to explicate how mediated and interpersonal communication work together to silence some voices in society and thus influence the ebb and flow of public opinion.

The theory of spiral of silence is first introduced by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann to study public opinion. Noelle-Neumann argues, "as we better understand public opinion, we better understand the social nature of human beings" (1984, p. 182). Noelle-Neumann contends that

public opinion is dominated by a “spiral of silence”, which means that people will not express their opinions openly unless they can get sufficient support from their followers. Since individuals are inclined to seek widespread support for their opinions, silence may falsely indicate that a position has fewer followers. The more support for the opinions, the more openly individuals will express their views, which in turn, reinforces the impression that such opinions may be stronger or more widely shared than actually they are. Similarly, the theory suggests that people are more likely to remain silent if they perceive their positions are in the minority due to a fear of social isolation. In other words, the theory states a perception of the opinion climate exerts influences on individuals’ willingness to voice their viewpoints.

The theory assumes that fear of isolation plays a vital role in the social process of the public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). Inherent in this is the idea that individuals continuously assess the climate of opinion by means of the “quasi-statistical sense” in order to avoid social isolation. This assessment affects the public behavior of individuals, for example, people in the minority are more likely to refrain from the public expression of opinion or people in the majority are more confident in voicing their positions. In this way, those opinions expressed as dominant tend to grow more robust, while the minority opinions become weaker and weaker, which creates the process of spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1974, 1977, 1984).

According to Noelle-Neumann (1984), public opinion develops as a result of an interaction between individuals and the environment, in which the environment is actually restricted to individuals’ assumptions that others are responding in the same way. She argues, “The fear of isolation in public is one of several factors determining the processes of public opinion. Reference groups also play a role (Noelle-Neumann, 1984, p. 214).” Thus, Noelle-Neumann considers public opinion as a process instead of a situation. In the model, she (1979)



claims the concept of public opinion is correlated with sanction and punishment. In fact, as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, classical philosophers such as John Locke, David Hume and Jean-Jacques Rousseau introduce the concepts of climate opinion, law of opinion and reputation, and public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1979). All of them place an emphasis on the social controls, or social pressure dimension of the phenomenon, namely all governments rest on opinions, and public opinion can be utilized by governments for social control due to individuals' fear of isolation himself (Noelle-Neumann, 1979). Splichal (1999) states that Noelle-Neumann's concept of public opinion is reminiscent of Bentham's and Foucault's idea of Panopticon, namely to bring large numbers of citizens under permanent surveillance.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of public opinion as social control, which Noelle-Neumann employs, is different from the rational concept of public opinion (Habermas, 1962), which focuses on democratic participation and the exchange of different viewpoints, along with the demand that governments ought to pay attention to the concern that the opinion-formation process may be manipulated by the power of the state, by the mass media and modern technology. As for Noelle-Neumann (1984), public opinion as social control is centered on maintaining a sufficient level of consensus within society on the community's values and goals. Base on this reasoning, the power of public opinion is so enormous that either the government or individual members cannot overlook it. This power originates from the threat of isolation that society directs at deviant individuals, and from the fear of isolation, which stems from human beings' social nature (Noelle-Neumann, 1984; 1993).

However, testing the theory is complicated because spiral of silence is based on the several dimensions or assumptions:

1. Society threatens deviant individuals with isolation;

2. Individuals continuously experience fear of isolation, which usually makes people willing to heed the opinions of others and to suppress expressions of their own opinions;
3. Because of this fear of isolation, individuals are constantly trying to assess the climate of opinion. They are able to realize what opinions are held by others and when public opinions grow in strength or weaken with a sort of “quasi-statistical organ”;
4. The results of this estimate affect people’s behavior in public, leading them to more confident speech or to silence: public opinion serves as an important source of social orientation for individuals;
5. The mass media present a consonant portrayal of trends in the climate of opinion, which has powerful effects over opinion formation: the media are consonant because all journalists share the same values, which limits the possibility of a selective perception of media contents and, consequently, of autonomous opinion formation (Noelle-Neuman, 1980, p. 62; 1993, p. 202).

As mentioned in the five assumptions above, Noelle-Neumann (1984, 1991, 1993) considers the spiral of silence theory as an all-encompassing theory of public opinion that connects disparate processes of social psychology, interpersonal communication and mass communication theory.

#### *Major Components of Spiral of Silence Theory*

Noelle-Neumann employs a number of major constructs and processes in describing the spiral of silence. Some of these are psychological concepts, some interpersonal, and some clearly sociological. It is necessary to consider the major components of spiral of silence theory as well

as discuss empirical investigations of the theory. The cornerstones of the spiral of silence theory are individuals' fear of isolation, using "quasi-statistical sense" to assess the climate of opinion and one's willingness to speak out.

#### Fear of isolation

Fear of isolation is a major component of Noelle-Neumann's foundation for her arguments. She contends that individuals have a strong need to be connected to a social collective (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). She derives such reasoning from the experiments conducted by Solomon Asch (1951) and Stanley Milgram (1961). Both social psychologists found that participants are inclined to express opinions and behave in the way that they know are wrong in order to avoid social criticism and remain part of the group (Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1961). Noelle-Neumann (1984) considers this force as the one driven by fear of ostracism or fear of isolation rather than by the desire to be part of the winning team or the bandwagon effect. Noelle-Neumann (1984, p. 57) argues, "society demands quick conformity over issues that are undergoing change. It must require this to maintain a sufficient degree of unity to remain integrated." In addition, Halleman (1986) found that the fear of isolation increases with the size of the public.

#### Assessing the Climate of Opinion

Due to this fear of isolation, individuals have the capacity to gauge the climate of public opinion in order to fit in on a particular issue. Noelle-Neumann invokes several statements about one's assessment of the climate of public opinion. First, she puts forward the term, quasi-statistical sense i.e. that individuals have a natural ability to evaluate the climate of public opinion. The willingness to make an assessment is an indication that people continually attempt to judge the strengths of opposing sides on a given issue (Noelle-Neumann, 1984; 1993).

Actually, other scholars examine the concept of the opinion climate. For instance, Floyd Allport (1937) has described the climate of opinion as the pressure that can be brought to bear on householders in a community to shovel the snow from the sidewalk.

On the other hand, Noelle-Neumann (1978, 1984) also discusses a dual climate of opinion, namely the climate the population perceives directly contrast to the climate as portrayed by the media. This only happens when the climate of opinion among the people diverge from the dominant among the media. Noelle-Neumann (1993) acknowledges that individuals' assessment of opinion climate is not always accurate. She attributes such inaccuracy of assessment to pluralistic ignorance, "a situation in which virtually all members of a group privately reject group norms, practices, or policies or have concerns about them, but believe that virtually all other group members accept them (Miller, Monin & Prentice, 2000, p. 103)." To put it simply, the people have a mistaken idea about how most people feel. What is more, Noelle-Neumann (1984) states that mass media affect one's assessment of climate opinion because the media tend to speak in one voice, almost monopolistically. For instance, various media sources present the same image of a given issue. But because of processes such as framing, the media can also distort the distribution of opinion in society, as media are biased to some degree. Thus, these media representations affect one's sense of prevailing public opinion and sometimes result in an inaccurate assessment of the climate of public opinion.

#### Willingness to Speak

Fear of isolation and the assessment of the climate of opinion are the two key predictors of spiral of silence theory. Noelle-Neumann (1993) claims most people live in perpetual fear of isolation and are constantly sensitive to the climate of opinion assessing the distribution and strength of opinions for and against their own. If individuals find their viewpoints to be dominant

or on the rise, they are to be willing to express their viewpoints publicly. If they consider that their views are in the minority or on the decrease, individuals choose to be silent. Noelle-Neumann (1984) utilizes the train test to account for the differences in the willingness to speak. In the survey questions, participants are asked to imagine that they are in a train compartment for a long ride with an individual who voices a particular opinion on a given issue (e.g. abortion). The participants are then asked whether he or she would be willing to express a contrary opinion in that situation. Other operationalizations of “willingness to speak” include willingness to wear a campaign button, willingness to participate in a media interview, or willingness to attend a protest. Spiral of silence theory asserts that individuals will be unwilling to express a viewpoint if they perceive current opinion is contrary to their own (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). This effect will be more prominent in terms of the dynamic perception of public opinion, which will heavily rely on future development of opinion especially when current and future assessments do not agree (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

When Noelle-Neumann proposes the spiral of silence theory, she does not consider it a universal process. However, Noelle-Neumann points to several factors that limit the applicability of the theory to certain issues or situations. First, the given issue must bear a strong either moral or emotional component for individuals to support or oppose a given subject and the distribution of public opinion (majority vs. minority) on a given subject can be determined and measured based on the climate of public opinion. Second, Noelle-Neumann (1993) proposes the “unwillingness to speak” will be less pronounced in highly educated and more affluent proportions of the population. Third, there are a few “hard core” individuals, who will always be willing to speak out on a given issue, regardless of assessment that prevailing opinion is in contrast to their own viewpoints (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). In summary, Noelle-Neumann’s

spiral of silence theory proposes a marginal case of individuals who are relatively isolated socially and are reluctant to talk publicly about some subjects or issues. As Noelle-Neumann (1984, p. 199) argues, “the spiral of silence is not compatible with the democratic ideal”; the theory presupposes a nondemocratic polity that spurs the spiral of silence.

#### *Previous Research on the Theory of Spiral of Silence*

Despite the fact that spiral of silence is a straightforward model of public opinion formation, to some degree it is very complicated. One complication that the theory involves is a multi-level analysis in psychological, sociological, interpersonal and mass media domains. Thus, scholars have attempted to test the components of the theory such as whether individuals do really make assessments of prevailing public opinion, whether the media are indeed inaccurate in many portrayals or whether perceptions about currently prevailing and future public opinion affect one’s willingness to express an opinion on a given issue.

Previous studies indicate that individuals do indeed make assessments and are less likely to express their opinions publicly if individuals find they are in the group of minority opinion (Gonzenbach, King & Jablonski, 1999; Katz & Baldassare, 1994; Moreno-Riaño, 2002; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1999; Scheufele, 1999a; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Lee, 2001). There is also evidence that the mass media influence the assessment of public opinion. An apt example is a study of public opinion during the first Persian Gulf War (Eveland, McLeod & Signorielli, 1995). The authors found that perceived public support for the war was influenced by mainstream media portrayals (Eveland, McLeod & Signorielli, 1995). Although a vast majority of research efforts focus on examining whether willingness to express opinion is influenced by perceived support for public opinion, these studies in general have revealed consistent but weak effects. For instance, Glynn, Hayes and Shanahan (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of survey studies

exploring the relationship between people's perceptions of support for their opinions and their willingness to express those opinions. This meta-analysis finds that an overall correlation between perceptions of current support and willingness to speak out is  $r = .048$ , while an overall correlation between future support and willingness to speak is  $r = .053$  (Glynn, Hayes, & Shannahan, 1997). As a result of these small effect sizes for a key component of the theory, scholars have paid more attention to examining moderator variables that could account for the prediction of more robust effects.

Specially, Noelle-Neumann (1984) contended reference group also plays a role in the process of public opinion. Krassa (1988) suggested that some opinions are valued more than others and that the spiral of silence will rely on the opinions of relevant valued reference groups. In the same way, based on the same theoretical explanation, Jeffres, Neuendorf and Atkin (1999) examine opinion about the O.J. Simpson murder trial by predicting that blacks and whites would exhibit different patterns of opinion expression relying on the race of the interviewer.

A second area of looking at spiral of silence has involved further examination of the characteristics of those who are silent and those of who still speak out in the face of contrary opinion. Noelle-Neumann (1984) originally posited that the effect of spiral of silence would not be as strong for highly educated and affluent proportions of the population. Lasorsa (1991) found that political outspokenness is affected not only by one's perception of the climate of opinion and one's gender, age, education and income, but also by one's interest in politics and level of self-efficacy, the obtrusiveness of the issue, extent of media use, and by certainty of views held. Several additional variables have been identified as factors that predict willingness to speak out in the fact of opposing public sentiment. These include strength and certainty of opinion (Lasorsa, 1991; Oshagan, 1996), perceived opinion climate (Bodor, 2012; Glynn, Mcleod, &

McLeod, 1984; Matthes, 2014; Willnat, 1996), willingness to express opinions (Glynn, Hayes, Shanahan, 1984; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Lee, 2001), willingness to self-censor (Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005a; Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005b), attitude certainty (Matthes, Rios Morrison, & Schemer, 2010), fear of isolation (Ho & McLeod, 2008; Kim, 2012; Kim, Han, Shanahan, & Berdayes, 2004; Moy, Domke, & Stamm, 2001; Neuwirth, Frederick, & Mayo, 2007), issue importance (Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Camot, 1993), communication setting (Ho & McLeod, 2008), and media use (Gonzenbach, King, & Jablonski, 1999; Kim, Han, Shanahan, & Berdayes, 2004; Slater, 2007).

Indeed, previous studies testing the spiral of silence theory provide certain empirical support for the framework. However, research about spiral of silence is fragmented and the findings are incongruent. Despite its theoretical deficiencies, since its publication in 1973, the spiral of silence has undergone a number of empirical replications, tests and critiques mostly in Europe and the United States. Its wide popularity is the reason scholars are attracted to extending and refining the theory. A variety of empirical critiques mainly focus on the probability of the spiraling process existing, the specific conditions and circumstances that reinforce or decrease its validity and the lack of evidence of its universality. Scholars from a variety of disciplines have concentrated on the four major dimensions of Noelle-Neumann's model, namely 1) individuals' fear of isolation; 2) individuals' ability to assess trends in public opinion; 3) the existence of a generalized public opinion as represented in the media; 4) validity of research methods utilized to empirically test the theory (Splichal, 1999).

In addition, nowadays with the presence of social media altering the environmental landscape of public opinion, new research questions have yet to be examined. For instance, the appearance of social network sites that emphasizes interconnectivity and interactivity allowing



citizens to express their opinions even when they find they are in minority positions. Nevertheless, studies addressing this specific question are rare with only a few empirical investigations (Gearhart & Zhang, 2014; Kim, Kim & Oh, 2014). Thus, after reviewing previous studies about spiral of silence, theory is not adequately tested in the social media environment. This dissertation joins the scholars who test the dynamic process of public opinion formation in social media contexts.

### *Spiral of Silence in Social Media Contexts*

The theory was originally conceptualized within traditional face-to-face communication settings. However, nowadays communication scholars find both computer-mediated communication and social media contexts may have the potential to create a new context beneficial for public deliberation, given the conditions of anonymity and lack of nonverbal communication social cues (Connolly, Jessup, & Valacich, 1990; Jessup, Connolly & Tansik, 1990; Straus, 1996).

A limited number of empirical studies have tested the theory of spiral of silence in computer-mediated communication contexts. For instance, Wanta and Dimitrova (2000) employ chat rooms to test the phenomenon of spiral of silence during the final debate of the 1996 U.S. presidential election. They track the discussion of candidates based on timed intervals, and their findings reveal that there are no statistically significant changes in candidate support during the debate (Wanta & Dimitrova, 2000). However, they found that participants post more messages about the winning candidate than the losing candidate over the time (Wanta & Dimitrova, 2000). The implication from the study is that the phenomenon of spiral of silence can occur in the online contexts (Wanta & Dimitrova, 2000).

In the same way, McDevitt, Kiouisis and Wahl-Jorgensen (2003) utilized an experiment to test of the spiral of silence theory, which was based on observations of actual discussions about the abortion in both face-to-face and the chat room settings. Then they compared the findings of opinion expression between face-to-face and computer chat room contexts. The study revealed that both majority and minority opinion holders in chat room groups are perceived to be more moderate compared with participants in face-to-face groups, but the spiral of silence model failed to account for the moderation tendency of minority participants in online forums (McDevitt, Kiouisis & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2003). According to McDevitt et al. (2003), the nature of anonymity can explain why the computer-mediated communication is not necessarily conducive to encouraging the expression of minority views. On one hand, anonymity in computer-mediated communications could provide a comfortable context for people to voice their minority opinions. On the other hand, the same anonymity can also create a hostile communication environment, where individuals may receive direct and potentially disagreeable feedback that may further constrain individuals from talking about an unpopular opinion (Yun & Park, 2011). Thus, the role that computer-mediated communication plays in the process of spiral of silence is to both enhance and dismiss people's willingness to express their minority views.

Furthermore, Ho and McLeod (2008) examined the effect of face-to-face and online chat room discussion on individuals' willingness to express opinions. Their findings reveal that chat room settings can moderate the effect of social-psychological factors such as fear of isolation on opinion expression specified by the spiral of silence theory (Ho & McLeod, 2008). Similarly, Yun and Park (2011) employed an experimental method to test the spiral of silence theory in an online discussion forum. The findings indicate that participants are equally willing to speak out in an online forum regardless of their perception of opinion climate as in the majority or in the

minority (Yun & Park, 2011). Their findings also reveal that lack of physical presence in an online forum would reduce people's fear of isolation and enable people to express opinions (Yun & Park, 2011).

However, only a few studies have examined the phenomenon of spiral of silence on social networking sites. For instance, Gearhart and Zhang (2014) conducted the empirical investigation of the spiral of silence phenomenon in social media contexts such as Facebook. The study used the gay bullying issue and found a significant negative relationship between willingness to self-censor and the likelihood of publicly commenting on the discussion in a friendly context. In other words, individuals who are more willing to self-censor are less likely to post messages on Facebook. Thus, their study extended the research of spiral of silence to social networking site contexts and also broadened the theoretical scope of spiral of silence. Similarly, Kwon, Moon and Stefanone (2014) conduct a survey investigating individuals' political expression on Facebook. By revisiting the theory of spiral of silence, their study reveals that maintaining relationships on social networking sites influences individuals' willingness to self-censor political expression and political posting behavior (Kwon, Moon & Stefanone, 2014). Since a larger social network produces a greater level of social surveillance, the bigger the online social network is, the more one would be willing to self-censor and the less one will post political messages online (Kwon, Moon & Stefanone, 2014).

Meanwhile, scholars such as Fox and Warber (2015) used interviews to explore individuals' political self-expression about believing LGBT issue on social networking sites like Facebook. Their study revealed that participants who never considered themselves coming out to large parts of their network; a major issue on Facebook is the risk of exposure and its accompanying social costs (Fox & Warber, 2015). As the spiral of silence states, these

participants feel their networks are largely anti-LGBT and are unlikely to change in the future, and thus they are unwilling to voice a minority opinion, such as participants are unwilling to respond to homophobic comments or political debates about LGBT issue, so they remain silent (Fox & Warber, 2015).

In 2014, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey about public opinion of the Edward Snowden controversy. The findings suggest that the phenomenon of spiral of silence about people's willingness to speak up in various settings also applies to social media users (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, Dwyer, Shin & Purcell, 2014). What is more, the survey revealed that those are less willing to discuss the Snowden-NSA issue in social media than they are in person, which indicates that social media do not provide an alternative platform for those who are reluctant to discuss the issues in person (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, Dwyer, Shin & Purcell, 2014).

A review of the literature above suggests that a spiral of silence might spill over from in-person contexts to social media contexts, and previous research reveals that individuals would be less willing to speak out if they think their Facebook friends or Twitter followers disagree with their point of view. However the findings are inconsistent in terms of whether the pressure of opinion climates and fear of isolation influence individuals' expression of minority opinions in social media context. Past studies have demonstrated the phenomenon of spiral of silence can occur in social media, and social media do not offer an alternative outlet for individuals who are in the minority opinion group and less willing to discuss a given issue in face-to-face settings.

However, other studies suggest that online opinion expressions are less subject to the spiral of silence effect because participants are more likely to express whether majority or minority views in an online chat room setting than in a face-to-face context (Ho & McLeod, 2008). Their findings also suggest that one's fear of isolation is less influential in an online chat room setting

than in a face-to-face context, which enables participants to freely speak out in online contexts (Ho & McLeod, 2008). In contrast, by using a survey, Liu and Fahmy (2011) further reveal a lack of support for the prediction that individuals would be more likely to speak out their opinions online compared to an offline setting. Their finding is inconsistent with previous research (Ho & McLeod, 2008) that the effect of spiral of silence might not be as pronounced in the online setting as it does in the offline context (Liu & Fahmy, 2011).

In addition, Yun and Park (2011) used an experiment to test willingness to speak out on an online forum. Their experiment indicates that anonymous online message posting can produce a significant spiral of silence effect. Kim, Kim and Oh (2014) also found that expressing an opinion on the Internet is subject to the spiral of silence, and they suggest that the Internet in South Korea may not serve to diminish the social pressure that keeps citizens from expressing a minority view, which is inconsistent with the idea that the Internet can provide a new communication environment, where people can speak out against majority views without being worried about negative social sanctions (Ho & McLeod, 2008). Kim et al. (2014) claim the Internet may play a role as a factor working for rather than against the spiral of silence.

In sum, previous studies about whether online opinion expressions are less subject to the spiral of silence effect are inconsistent. One purpose of this study is to address how social media fit in the spiral of the silence theory and the role social media play in shaping individuals' willingness to express their opinions on the quality of governments.

Noelle-Neumann (1984) states there is dual climate of opinion. One climate is the one that citizens perceive directly; the other is the climate as portrayed by the media. Thus, the second study examines whether media coverage of governance will influence individuals' willingness to speak out. Moreover, the context of examining the theory of spiral of silence has focused from

mass media to social media (Liu & Fahmy, 2011; Willnat, 1996; Gearhart and Zhang, 2014; Fox & Warber, 2015; Kwon, Moon, Stefanone, 2014). The question remains whether social media diminish the effect of spiral of silence.

Three research questions are advanced.

RQ 4: How do news media influence citizens' evaluation of governance in the United States?

Additionally, past studies reveal that social media will not act as an alternative platform against spiral of silence effect (Gearhart and Zhang, 2014; Fox & Warber, 2015; Kwon, Moon, Stefanone, 2014). What social media provide is a social space where the visibility of others creates social influence (Kwon, Stefanone, & Barnett, 2014). Scholars suggest that social networking site-based communication is characterized by four attributes, namely reduced anonymity, increased peer-to-peer monitoring, networking opportunities with offline social contacts, and immediacy (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011). The more interactivity and the bigger social networking size that social media provide, the greater social influence is. In other words, there is a possibility that individuals' opinion expression on social media may facilitate the spiral of silence. The mechanisms underlying how social media influence individuals' opinion expressions has not yet been fully examined.

RQ 5: Do the emergence of social media serve to facilitate or diminish the effect of spiral of silence when talking about governance issues in the United States?

In addition, previous research has already tested several components related with spiral of silence theory. For instance, by using an international online survey, scholars examine whether people relatively high in trait of fear of isolation are more likely to self-censor their opinions in hostile opinion environment (Matthes, et al, 2012). The study reveals that there is positive

correlation between fear of isolation and willingness to self-censor in eight of the nine countries except for China (Matthes, et al. 2012). One reason is that cultural and political dimensions can affect one's willingness to speak out. Scholar contend that, compared to western countries, people living in cultures that emphasize harmony instead of individualism are more inclined to withhold their personal opinions in hostile opinion climates and they are likely to be susceptible to fear of social isolation (Lee, Detenber, Willnat, Aday, Graf, 2004). Moreover, Bond and Smith (1996) state there is high conformity in Asian compared to western countries.

On the other hand, past studies suggest that there is limited support for Noelle-Neumann's assertion that individual who perceive that their opinion is congruent with that of the majority will be more willing to engage in conversation about the issue with a stranger holding an opposing viewpoint (Bodor, 2012; Willnat, 1996; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1990). Most studies have looked at the main effect of attitude certainty on opinion expression (Matthes, Morrison & Schemer, 2010). Previous research has repeatedly demonstrated that individuals who are generally certain in their opinions are more likely to voice their opinions than those who are less certain (Baldassare & Katz, 1996; Lasorsa, 1991; Matthes, Morrison & Schemer, 2010).

Since several studies have shown that issue importance or salience is an important predictor of public expression of opinions (Mutz, 1989; Rimmer & Howard, 1990; Willnat, 1996). This study includes issue importance as a predictor of public expression of opinions. RQ6 is advanced in the following.

RQ6: Will issue importance affect individuals' opinion and perception of good governance?

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

For both researchers and scholars, selecting an appropriate research method is crucial. Theory acts to provide an intellectual lens through which scholars can define and derive research questions while method serves to conduct the actual execution of the research to answer those questions.

Since the current study investigates media portrayal of good governance through the lens of framing and spiral of silence theory with the goal of examining the relationship among good governance, the media and public opinion, two studies will be conducted to capture how media frame governance as well as how individuals respond to media frames and thus evaluate the quality of governance. Study one utilizes quantitative content analysis to explore how the news media frame good governance in both China and the United States. Study two employs an experiment to test how the media influence public perception and evaluation of good governance in the United States.

### *Study One*

*How Media Inform Good Governance: A Comparative Analysis of News Framing Governance*

*Issues Between China and the United States*

Content analysis is one of the most frequently used research method for scholars to examine the process and effect of communication. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014, p.3) define content analysis as “the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods.” According to Krippendorff (2012), content analysis is a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context.



In the first study, content analysis is employed to examine whether a variety of governance frames are present in news stories. This effort aims to examine how media frame the dimensions of governance in both China and the United States.

#### *Sampling Strategies and Data Sources*

Newspapers will serve as the focus of media framing of good governance. While the study intends to cover the variation in each country's media market as comprehensively as possible, more importantly, this study aims for sample equivalency across two countries; that is, the content analysis examines comparable units. Therefore, while television news has the potential to be included as the sample, the main dynamics that drive the selection of newspapers is consistency and the newsworthy information about governance issues across both Chinese and American newspapers.

In order to identify what newspapers qualify as major newspapers, the most recent edition of the World Press Trends Report (2014), published by the World Association of Newspapers, was employed to seek a list of top national daily newspapers for sample inclusion in the study. Based on circulation, the World Press Trends Report (2014) reveals that the top three national dailies in China are respectively *Cankao Xiaoxi*, *People's Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*. However, although *Cankao Xiaoxi* is the number one daily newspaper in China, it was not available in the Chinese Core Newspaper Database. In this way, *Nanfang Daily* ranking fourth was included in the study.

According to the World Press Trends Report (2014), *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* and *USA Today* rank as the top three circulated newspaper in the United States in 2014. The study also includes *The Washington Post* in sample with the purpose of collecting sufficient American news stories related to governance issues.

Therefore, three major Chinese newspapers, namely *People's Daily*, *Guangzhou Daily* and *Nanfang Daily*, and four major American newspapers, namely the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *The Washington Post* were examined to identify how the newspapers frame good governance in both China and the United States. All seven newspapers are considered to be major national media outlets as well as local ones, making them roughly comparable on this dimension. While some of these newspapers may not be the largest papers in terms of circulation within the country, they are read by the nation's elite, which makes them influential. In addition to large daily circulation, these newspapers are considered to exert important influence across both countries. For instance, *People's Daily* is a national, serious and quality newspaper in China. Similarly, with the reputation as an elite newspaper, the *New York Times* sets the agenda for television networks (Reese & Danielian, 1989). *USA Today* acts as the general interest newspaper in the United States.

Apart from employing content analysis to examine how newspapers frame governance issues in both China and the United States, this study also utilizes the case study method. According to Gerring (2001), studies of crucial cases are important not only because they can confirm existing theory, but also because they provide chances to identify variables that are missing by deeply delving into some typical cases (George and Bennett, 2005). One reason the method of case study is included is that it can reflect the performance of governance in both a democracy and an autocracy about a significant event. Case studies allow further comparison of the performance of both governments' responsiveness to both social and political issues. Lijphart (1971, 1975) considered the case study as a single case that is closely associated with the comparative method. Viewed in this manner, the case study is an appropriate method to compare the differences of news framing governance in both China and the United States.

*Case Studies: Identifying Governance Issues in China and the United States*

In an effort to gain a better understanding of how newspapers describe good governance in two nations, the study identified two important political or social controversies in each country. The new two-child policy and the anti-corruption campaigns are two important social and political issues in China which provide a good opportunity to examine how Chinese media frame governance issues in China. Similarly, the controversy over accepting Syrian refugees into U.S. as well as the Flint water crisis serve as parallel cases to explore how the American newspapers describe governance issues.

Behind the choice of four cases were several considerations. First, the four different cases capture variance in four dimensions of good governance, the concept which is used and explored in this dissertation. Each issue or case focuses on one or two of four dimensions of governance. Taking the case of anti-corruption campaigns for example, this case focuses primarily on the political dimension of good governance. However, the new two-child policy addresses both the constitutional and executive dimensions of governance. Meanwhile, the Syrian refugee issue in U.S. addresses the constitutional dimension and regime stability of good governance, but the Flint water crisis focuses on the executive dimension of governance. Second, and related to the first consideration, the two cases selected in China differ from the two issues in the United States, but they can be compared in parallel with regarding to the four dimensions of governance. For instance, the new two-child policy in China can be compared with the Syrian refugees issue in U.S., since both cases involve the constitution dimension of good governance, such as human rights issue. In a similar way, the anti-corruption campaigns in China can be compared with Flint water crisis, since both cases are engaged with political dimension of good governance such as control of corruption and political participation.

This study intends to include cases that cover the four dimensions of good governance as much as possible (i.e., the cases were identified that vary on the four dimensions of governance). By investigating the four cases, this study is able to examine how the media describe governance issues in two countries.

### *Unit of Analysis*

The unit of analysis for this study is the news story. The study includes news stories mentioning the issues, but excludes the news stories whose theme is unrelated to the focus of this study and letters to editors. Also, the study excludes news articles that were shorter than five lines of text, unless they were major front-page headlines.

### *Sampling period*

Since the study includes four different cases, the study uses different key terms and sample periods to locate news articles.

#### 1) Syrian refugee crisis in U.S.

By employing the key term “Syrian refugees in U.S.” to search news articles published between August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 in the database of LexisNexis, the author retrieved 105 news stories in the sample of U.S. newspapers (*The New York Times* [n=28], *The Wall Street Journal* [n=17], *USA Today* [n=4], *The Washington Post* [n=56]). The study examines the controversy over accepting Syrian refugees into U.S. for one year.

#### 2) Flint water crisis

By employing the key term “Flint water crisis”, the dissertation identified 99 news articles in the sample of U.S. newspapers (*New York Times* [n=33], *Wall Street Journal* [n=18], *USA Today* [n=8], *The Washington Post* [n=40]) published between September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The Flint water crisis is an ongoing issue, so this study examines this issue over the past seven months.

### 3) Two-child policy

For the sample of Chinese newspapers, the study employed the key term “two-child policy” to search news articles published between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 in the Chinese Core Newspaper Database. The author retrieved 156 news articles (*People’s Daily* [n=80], *Nanfang Daily* [n=52], *Guangzhou Daily* [n=24]). In October, 2015, national leaders announced that married Chinese couples may have two children. The new two-child policy took effect in January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. So this study examines the changes in media coverage of China’s two-child policy in the past sixteen years.

### 4) Anti-corruption campaigns

In the same way, by employing two key terms “corruption” and “anti-corruption campaign”, the dissertation identified 268 news articles in the sample of Chinese newspapers (*People’s Daily* [n=162], *Nanfang Daily* [n=82], *Guangzhou Daily* [n=24]) published between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 between December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The dissertation explores the news coverage of China’ anti-corruption campaign in the past year.

### *Operationalization of Key Construct: Good Governance*

After discussing the sampling procedure, it is necessary to start with defining and clarifying the main constructs used in this study.

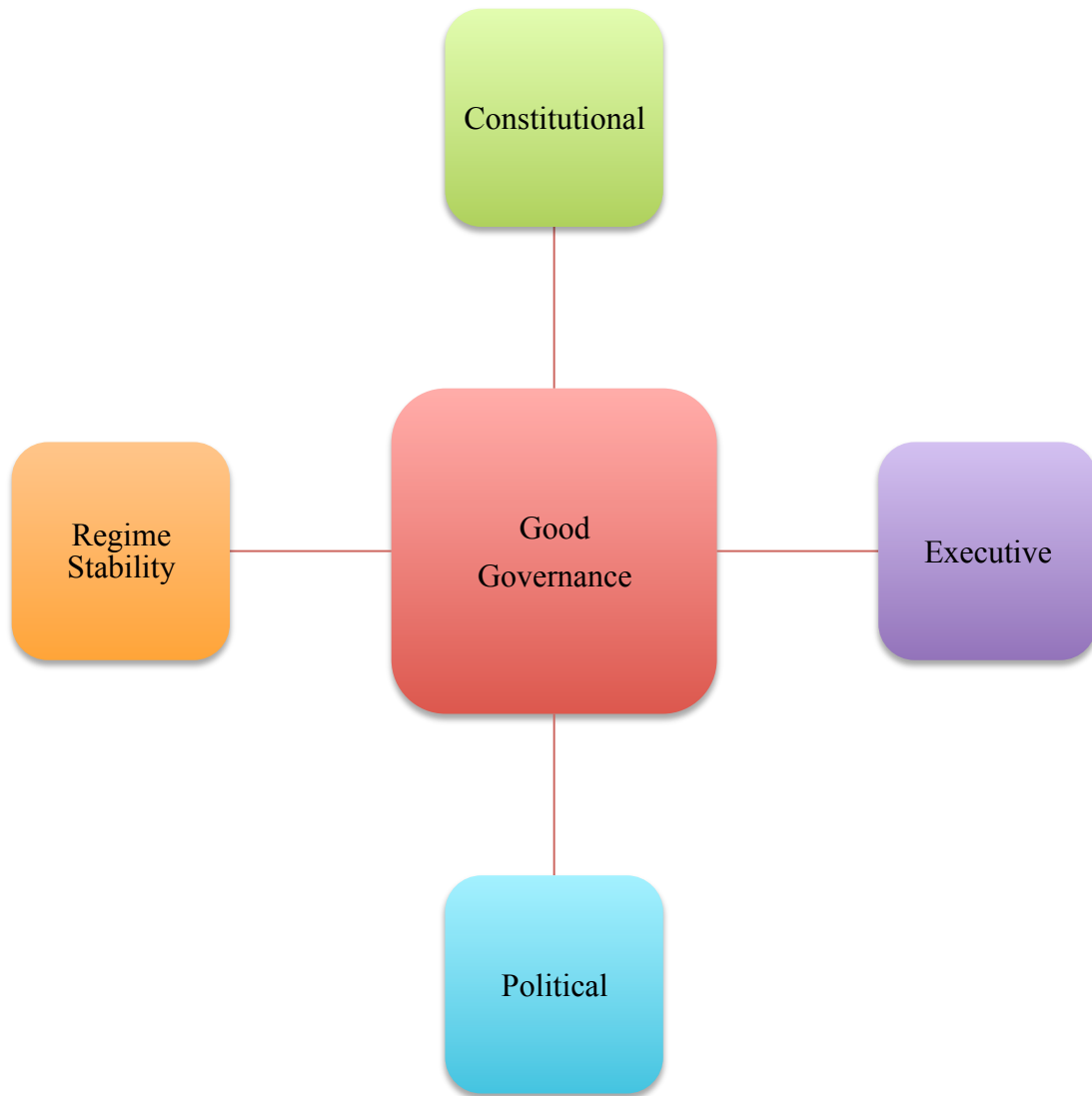
The common elements of good governance, as defined by Smith (2007), fall into four dimensions: constitutional, political, administrative, and the content of public policy. For instance, at the constitutional level, good governance is considered requiring changes to the fundamental principles and rules on which government is based (Smith, 2007). The political

dimension of good governance includes pluralism, participation and control of corruption (Smith, 2007). The executive requisite of good governance includes the government's capacity to establish an accountable, transparent and effective public administration (Smith, 2007). The policy dimension of good governance responds to governments' efforts to promote economic growth, welfare and human development (Smith, 2007).

Moreover, by summarizing the characteristics of good governance, Hope (2002, pp. 126) further provides an elaborate and detailed description that suggests good governance encompasses a variety of components, including "political accountability, bureaucratic transparency, the exercise of legitimate power, freedom of association and participation, freedom of information and expression, sound fiscal management and public financial accountability, respect for the rule of law, a predictable legal framework encompassing an independent and credible justice system, respect for human rights, an active legislature, enhanced opportunities for the development of pluralistic forces, including civil society and capacity building." Both Smith's and Hope's definitions identify a similar framework to describe the important components of good governance such as political accountability, rule of law, pluralism and respect for human rights, etc.

The cross-national measures of government performance employed by the World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) includes voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Kaufmann, et al., 2010). Therefore, by combining six WGI indicators and the attributes of good governance as defined by Smith (2007) and Hope (2002), this study employs a typology of good governance (see Figure 1 and Table 1). It classifies the dimensions of good governance into four domains: constitutional, political, executive and regime stability.

Figure 1 Four Dimensions of Good Governance



#### *Operational Definitions of Key Components of Governance*

Based on literature about governance, the key components of governance were operationalized into the following variables:

1) the constitutional dimension includes rule of law and human rights; establishing rule of law is an important part of a polity to support good governance. Fukuyama (2014) holds rule of law is essential for a state's economic development and the protection of property rights. When the rule of law is challenged by "arbitrary and capricious state action", political officials can

place themselves above the law (World Bank, 1997a, p.45), which may affect social stability. When defining rule of law, Smith (2007) states laws are administered consistently under various circumstances, and arbitrary power gives way to the supremacy of laws. Moreover, rule of law has multiple attributes of justice such as regularity, equality, ubiquity and natural justice (Smith, 2007). The law should be imbued with the rules of natural justice, which means rules ought to be followed in the administration of the law (Smith, 2007). Rule of law is a necessary condition for good governance. It consists of 1) a series of projects established to modernize the body of legislature in many fields such as commercial, civil and environmental law; 2) projects for capacity-building in the judicial sector, modernizing legal institutions such as courts, ombudsmen, police forces, prisons, ministries of justice as well as training judicial personnel such as judges, court officials and public prosecutors; 3) reforms for the judicial system by advancing its accessibility to all citizens, in particular to the poor (Rawls, 1972; Smith, 2007).

Apart from rule of law, the constitutional dimension of good governance also includes human rights. However, the concept of human rights is controversial and complicated. Its controversy lies in whether it is necessary to extend human rights claims from civil and political rights to economic, social, collective and other domains. For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights claims that in addition to political and civil rights, right of the everyone to economic, social and cultural rights includes social security, work, equal pay, just remuneration, periodic holidays with pay, education, and a standard of living providing health and well-being (Smith, 2007). One of the ways that states protect human rights is to support the rule of law, so that law serves citizens all equally especially citizen encounters with the state (Benhabib, 2004).

2) the political dimension includes pluralism, participation and control of corruption. As one component of good governance, political pluralism might be the most difficult set of



principles to define. Pluralism is supposed to be important for a state's political development. According to Diamond (1997), democracy is dependent on the existence of a plurality of political groups, organized to influence policy-makers, mobilize public opinion, hold governments at all levels to account, and make governments responsive to citizens' political demands and social needs. Furthermore, a plurality of autonomous political associations could encourage both political participation and political leadership, which makes it more difficult for political elites to manipulate public opinion and political institutions (Luckham and White, 1996). For instance, by offering an alternative to clientelism, the autonomy of free associations empowers the people, in particular the poor, to change from being clients of political elites to being true citizens (Diamond, 1997). By mobilizing citizens, pluralism allows social groups, especially the marginalized members in society to challenge the authority of the government. Pluralism thus provides opportunities for the poor and the marginalized to redress injustices (Diamond, 1992). Pluralism implies political equality among political associations. A two-party or multi-party system provides electoral choices for citizens. However, the mobilization of civil society through a variety of political associations might not guarantee that all interests in societies will have the equal power. Thus, good governance requires that countries be responsible to political participation. In contrast, authoritarian regimes usually have low levels of social mobilization, because the goal of authoritarian regimes is to facilitate stability. Although authoritarian regimes are often characterized by single or dominant one party rule, there is limited political pluralism in society.

Political participation refers to the interaction between government and civil society through different mechanisms such as consultations, city hall meetings, modern communication media (e.g. email, online forums); citizens are able to engage and take collective actions in civil

society. The goal of political participation is to increase state capacity (World Bank, 1997). In other words, participation facilitates state capacity by endowing it with credibility when citizens can freely express their own opinions and demands and taking an active part in the process of making and implementing decisions.

With regards to corruption, all leading international assistance agencies have recognized that corruption serves as a big obstacle in the process of maintaining good governance. For instance, the World Bank (2001) emphasizes the harmful effect of corruption on economic growth, while the UNDP (1999) states corruption will further widen the gender gap because corrupt payments are an exchange for breaking the rules of fairness in employment and procurement. Understanding how to control and reduce corruption is of great significance to the development of democratic policies, social equality, economic growth and administrative capacity. Thus, control of corruption refers to what extent the abuse of government power is for private gain as well as a country's determination to reduce or eliminate corruption in order to maintain a transparent and just government.

The executive dimension of good governance includes effective public management and public policy. Poorly functioning bureaucracies impede efforts to promote economic growth and governance reforms. For instance, if civil servants lack technical expertise, to a large degree, the public services they provide will be inaccessible, unaffordable, disorganized and of low quality (Smith, 2007). Public policy refers to the quality of policy formulation and implementation as well as the credibility of the government's commitment to improve policies and public services.

The fourth dimension of good governance is regime stability, which mainly refers to the absence of violence. This captures the perceptions of the possibility that the government will be overthrown by violent means, including domestic violence and terrorism. Political stability acts

as a necessary condition under which good governance flourishes (Norris, 2005). Political stability includes a variety of factors such as the risk of a major urban riot, major insurgency or rebellion, military coup, acts of political terrorism, political assassination or civil war (Norris, 2005).

In short, good governance encompasses a variety of elements. Table 1 summarizes the operational terms concerned with good governance. These concepts constitute the frames that the media can use to describe the governance issues within a state. Each construct of good governance provides the guidelines for a coding sheet that aims to examine how the media frame and describe the components of good governance in both China and the United States.

Table 1 Operational Framework of Good Governance

Dimension	Category
Constitutional	Rule of Law
	Human Rights
Political	Pluralism
	Political Participation
	Control of Corruption
Executive	Public Management
	Public Policy
Regime Stability	Absence of Violence

### *Codebook and Levels of Measurement*

Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 show the coding scheme with operational definitions of key variables in each case. It is worth mentioning that some consistent frames across four cases, such as news framing (episodic vs. thematic framing), media political orientation, attribution of responsibility frame, causes, effects and sources in news articles were coded. The list of consistent frames was acquired from prior studies on framing that have consistently examined these frames and applied them to various issues. On the other hand, each case has certain specific or unique frames that were also identified by the coders. Those specific or unique frames were generated from the reading of the news articles in the sample.

Table 2 Codebook: Operational Definitions of Constructs In the Case of Syrian Refugee Crisis

<p><b>News framing Cohen's Kappa=.886</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Thematic framing</u>: places an event in a larger and more abstract social context. The primary goal is to provide background and big-picture information. May use officials' opinions and comments over the event.</li> <li>• <u>Episodic framing</u>: employs storytelling, and the event is presented in a specific case. The primary goal is to tell personal stories or present individual cases in a detailed and specific manner. It may use individuals' experiences to interpret the event.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Attribution of responsibility</b></p> <p><b>Individual cause Cohen's Kappa=.980</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opposition from political officials: governors opposed President Obama's plan to accept Syrian refugees into US.</li> </ul> <p><b>Societal cause Cohen's Kappa=.855</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National security concern: treating Syrian refugees as a national security threat.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Solution responsibility</b></p> <p><b>Societal solution Cohen's Kappa=.800</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. humanitarian assistance in response to the Syrian Crisis: i.e. The United States will give money, food etc. in humanitarian aid to assist Syrian refugees.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Types of sources cited Cohen's Kappa=.883</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government officials such as President Obama, presidential candidates, governors, members of Congress, etc.</li> <li>• Academic researchers</li> <li>• Syrian refugees outside U.S.</li> <li>• Syrian refugees in U.S.</li> </ul>

- Individual citizens
- International organizations or agencies

Table 3 Codebook: Theoretical Constructs, Operational Definitions in the Case of Flint Water Crisis

**News framing Cohen's Kappa=.912**

- **Thematic framing:** places an event in a larger and more abstract social context. The primary goal is to provide background and big-picture information. May use officials' opinions and comments over the event.
- **Episodic framing:** employs storytelling, and the event is presented in a specific case. The primary goal is to tell personal stories or present individual cases in a detailed and specific manner. It may use individuals' experiences to interpret the event.

**Causal responsibility**

**Personal cause Cohen's Kappa=.843**

- EPA officials overlook water issue in Flint

**Societal cause Cohen's Kappa=.912**

- Switching water supply from Detroit to Flint River

**Solution responsibility**

**Personal solutions/help Cohen's Kappa=.826**

- Virginia Tech researchers: they helped to investigate aging pipes and water contamination in Flint.
- Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha from Hurly Medical Center: she helps to expose lead poisoning in Flint
- Corporations & Organizations: volunteering to help Flint residents
- Volunteers

**Societal solutions/help Cohen's Kappa=.867**

- Financial solution: seeking federal and state fund
- Emergency declaration: Gov. Rick Snyder and President Obama declared an emergency in Flint.
- National Guards: they help to distribute drinking water in Flint

**Types of sources cited Cohen's Kappa=.909**

- Government officials such as President Obama, Gov. Rich Snyder, Flint Mayor Karen Weaver, Senators & Representatives, etc
- Researchers
- EPA staff
- Doctors
- Flint residents

Table 4 Codebook: Theoretical Constructs, Operational Definitions in the Case of Two-child Policy

<p><b>News framing Cohen's Kappa=.808</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Thematic framing</u>: places an event in a larger and more abstract social context. The primary goal is to provide background and big-picture information. May use officials' opinions and comments over the event.</li> <li>• <u>Episodic framing</u>: employs storytelling, and the event is presented or portrayed in a specific case. The primary goal is to tell personal stories or present individual cases in a detailed and specific manner. It may use individuals' experiences to interpret the event.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Factors or Citizens' Anxiety</b></p> <p><b>Personal factors Cohen's Kappa=.847</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical conditions</li> <li>• Needing more parents' care for infants</li> </ul> <p><b>Societal factors Cohen's Kappa=.841</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial costs</li> <li>• Urbanization: rapid urbanization increases the living costs and pressure on public resources.</li> <li>• Lack of education resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Solutions/Government Actions</b></p> <p><b>Societal solutions/help Cohen's Kappa=.864</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing or revising relevant regulations, rules, laws and policy.</li> <li>• Building more public facilities (e.g. breast-rooms in public areas)</li> <li>• Providing more education and public health resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits/Positive impacts Cohen's Kappa=.817</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boosting economic growth</li> <li>• Improving social development</li> <li>• Increasing China's labor</li> <li>• Promoting balanced population growth</li> <li>• Tackling the issue of an aging population</li> </ul> <p><b>Emerging problems/Negative impacts Cohen's Kappa=.849</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting women's rights</li> <li>• Employment discrimination against women</li> <li>• Controversies over elderly pregnant women</li> <li>• Increasing pressure on public services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Types of sources cited Cohen's Kappa=.871</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government officials</li> <li>• Individual citizens</li> <li>• Doctors</li> <li>• Researchers and academic professors</li> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Business entrepreneurs</li> </ul>

Table 5 Codebook: Operational Definitions of Constructs in the Case of Anti-corruption Campaigns

<p><b>News framing</b>    <b>Cohen's Kappa=.841</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Thematic framing</u>: places an event in a larger and more abstract social context. The primary goal is to provide background and big-picture information. May use officials' opinions and comments over the event.</li> <li>• <u>Episodic framing</u>: employs storytelling, and the event is presented in a specific case. The primary goal is to tell personal stories or present individual cases in a detailed and specific manner. It may use individuals' experiences to interpret the event.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tone/Manner</b>    <b>Cohen's Kappa=.947</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative: criticize the corruption phenomena and negative consequences from corruption</li> <li>• Neutral: news articles with mixed messages</li> <li>• Positive: presents the society as improving due to anti-corruption achievements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anti-corruption Strategies</b>    <b>Cohen's Kappa=.817</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Making or revising laws, rules, regulations and policy</u>: combating corruption according to law and incorporating it into the improvement of legal system</li> <li>• <u>Relying on support and participation of the public</u>.</li> <li>• <u>Checks on officials</u>: enhancing management and supervision over public servants with emphasis on leading officials and leading organs.</li> <li>• <u>Building up the style of CPC</u>: cleaning up the undesirable work styles of Communist Party of China.</li> <li>• <u>Strictly governing and managing the Chinese Communist Party</u>: implementing strict party discipline.</li> <li>• <u>The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection</u>: Party's Commissions for Discipline Inspection mainly organize, conduct and coordinate the work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Level of corruption occurred in China</b>    <b>Cohen's Kappa=.867</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central/national government</li> <li>• Officials in province level</li> <li>• Officials in municipal level</li> <li>• Officials in county level</li> <li>• Officials in township/village level</li> <li>• Military</li> <li>• Corporations</li> <li>• Colleges &amp; universities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cause of anti-corruption campaign (Cohen's Kappa=.878)</b>: i.e. improve economic development, and repair current legal system to combat corruption, domestic and international challenges, etc.</p>
<p><b>The influence of anti-corruption campaign (Cohen's Kappa=.908)</b>: i.e. the consequences of anti-corruption campaigns as well as the impact over society, party, government, and public, etc.</p>

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**Types of sources cited Cohen's Kappa=.911**

- Government officials
  - National People's Congress Representatives
  - Academic researchers
  - Business entrepreneurs, executives, etc.
  - Experts
  - Individual citizens
- 

*News framing.* As used by Zhang, Jin and Tang (2015), this variable was measured on a 1 to 5 ordinal scale (1=*only episodic framing*, 2=*combination of episodic and thematic with emphasis on episodic framing*, 3=*equal emphasis on episodic and thematic framing*, 4=*combination of episodic and thematic with emphasis on thematic framing*, 5=*thematic framing only*).

*Media political orientation.* As for American cases, i.e. Syrian refugee issue and Flint water crisis, this variable was measured on a 1 to 4 nominal scale (1=*liberal*, 2=*conservative*, 3=*central*, 4=*unknown*). Coders searched online about a media outlet's ownership, control, distribution channels, and target readership to code the media outlet's political orientation. However, in terms of Chinese cases, i.e. two-child policy and anti-corruption campaign, this variable was measured on a 1 to 3 nominal scale (1=*national party press*, 2=*local party press*, 3=*other*).

*Attribution of responsibility.* This variable which captures a series of actions that government has taken to solve the issue were also identified by coders. Following Kim and Willis (2006), attribution of causal and problem-solving responsibilities was measured at either the individual or societal level. For example, in the case of Syrian refugee crisis, individual cause refers to opposition from political officials. Societal-level cause refers to national security concern about accepting Syrian refugees into America. Societal-level solution refers to humanitarian assistance programs. Similarly, in the event of Flint water crisis, individual cause



refers to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials overlooking the water issue, and societal cause refers to switching the water supply from Detroit system to Flint River. Personal solutions or help were categorized into (1) Virginia Tech researchers; (2) Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha from Hurly Medical Center; (3) Volunteers; (4) Organizations and Corporations. Societal level-solutions or help included three categories: (1) Financial solutions; (2) Emergency declaration; (3) National Guards distributing drinking water. With regards to the two-child policy, *solutions* were categorized into (1) Establishing or revising accompanying regulations, rules, laws and policy; (2) Building more public facilities; (3) Providing more educational resources. However, in the case of the anti-corruption campaigns, the dissertation derives strategies by reading news articles from samples, and coded six anti-corruption strategies, which include (1) Making laws; (2) Relying on people; (3) Checks on officials; (4) Building up the style of the Party; (5) Strictly governing the Party; (6) The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) team.

*Causes.* This variable captures the causes underlying the four issues. For instance, in the case of the Flint water crisis, individual cause refers to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials overlooking water issue, and societal cause refers to switching water supply from Detroit system to Flint River. This variable was also measured on a nominal scale of 0 (absent) or 1 (present). As for the two-child policy, *factors or citizens' anxiety* was categorized into individual factors and societal factors. Individual factors were composed of (1) physical conditions, and (2) more parents' care for infants; societal factors were composed of (1) financial costs; (2) urbanization; (3) lack of educational resources.

*Effects.* This variable addresses the influence or responses about the issue. For instance, in the case of two-child policy, this variable refers to benefits and emerging problems. *Benefits*

*or positive impacts* of two-child policy include (1) Boosting economic growth; (2) Improving social development; (3) Increasing China's labor force; (4) Promoting balanced population growth; (5) Tackling the issue of an aging population. *Emerging problems* of two-child policy include (1) Protection for women's rights; (2) Employment discrimination against women; (3) Controversies over elderly pregnant women; (4) Increasing pressure on public services.

*Sources.* Content of all news articles were also coded for type of authority or individuals cited. For instance, in the case of Syria refugees crisis, sources included five categories: (1) Government officials; (2) Academic researchers; (3) Syrian refugees outside U.S.; (4) Syrian refugees in U.S.; (5) Individual citizens; (6) International organizations or agencies.

With regards to Flint water crisis, sources included five categories: (1) Government officials; (2) Researchers; (3) EPA staff; (4) Doctors; (5) Flint residents. In the case of two-child policy, sources included six categories: (1) Government officials; (2) Individual citizens; (3) Doctors; (4) Researchers and Academics; (5) Experts; (6) Business entrepreneurs. In terms of anti-corruption campaign, Sources included six categories: (1) Government officials; (2) National People's Congress Representatives; (3) Academic researchers; (4) Business executives; (5) Experts; (6) Individual citizens.

#### *Unique frames for anti-corruption campaign*

*Tone of news coverage.* The tone of media coverage of anti-corruption campaign was operationally defined into three categories. Positive tone presents the success of anti-corruption campaign and presents the society or country as improving. Negative tone criticizes the corruption phenomena and discusses the adverse consequences from corruption. Neutral tone refers to news articles with mixed messages. The tone of news coverage is measured on 1 to 3 ordinal scale (1=negative tone, 2=neutral tone, 3=positive tone).

*The level of corruption* was categorized into (1) Central government (2) Officials in province level; (3) Officials in municipal level; (4) Officials in municipal level; (5) Officials in county level; (6) Officials in township/village level; (7) Military; (8) Corporations; (9) Colleges and universities.

#### *Inter-coder Reliability across Countries*

Ensuring inter-coder reliability in comparative research is a major challenge across different languages (Peter & Lauf, 2002). In this study, two coders---a native speaker of English and a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese---were responsible for coding the U.S. and Chinese newspapers, respectively. A third coder fluent in both English and Chinese served as the primary coder. Two coders first examined whether each news article mentioned any one or more of the benefits, factors and solutions, etc. mentioned above. Each media frame was coded as “not present” (0) or “present” (1). In many cases, the same media frame (e.g. factor or solution) was mentioned more than once in a single news story. Counting them as multiple mentions will unnecessarily inflate the number of total mentions. Thus, by counting how many news articles mentioned each media frame (e.g. solution, benefit, factor) instead of how many times they were mentioned in the news articles, which was able to count those multiple mentions of the same media frame as one mention.

To calculate intercoder reliability, a sample (20%) from each case was randomly selected. Intercoder reliability of each case was calculated using Cohen’s Kappa. As for Flint water crisis, intercoder reliability for all categories ranged from .826 to .914 with an average reliability of .879. In the case of Syria refugees controversy, intercoder reliability for all categories ranged from .800 to .980 with an average reliability of .881.

Similarly, in the two-child policy case, intercoder reliability for all categories ranged from .808 to .871 with an average reliability of .842. In the event of anti-corruption campaigns, intercoder reliability for all categories ranged from .817 to .947 with an average reliability of .881.

### *Study Two*

#### *Exposure to Governance News and Readers' Comments: The Spiral of Silence and Public Opinion on Governance Issues*

Experimental methods are particularly advantageous for determining causal relationships. They also are ideally suited for specifying systematic relationships among sets of isolated and rigidly controlled variables (Crano & Brewer, 2002). While the very control that marks the advantage of experimental technique places limitations on the representativeness of the phenomena that are studied, experimental methods are helpful in controlling independent variables for the experiments and controlling extraneous influences.

The online experiment was conducted in the United States to examine how the governance frames used by news media influence people's willingness to speak out on governance issues as well as whether readers' comments serve to facilitate or diminish a spiral of silence when people talk about good governance. In particular, the experiment aims to examine how individuals evaluated U.S. government's performance in dealing with Syrian refugee issue and Flint water crisis, which were two ongoing contemporary social and political issues in the United States and address the constitutional, regime stability and executive dimensions of good governance in the former content analysis study.

The study applied a full-crossed 2×2×3 factorial design. The three independent variables being examined by this design were governance issues (Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee

crisis), governance frames (good governance news frame and bad governance news frame), and conditions of readers' comments (supportive, neutral, and oppositional).

### *Manipulation*

(1) *Frames of Governance Issues Manipulation.* Participants will be randomly assigned to one of four experimental governance news stories. Each news story was created to frame the performance of government in solving Flint water crisis as positive or negative, or frame the government's dealing with Syrian refugees issues as good or bad. At the bottom of each news story was a graphic icon showing the logo of Facebook, Twitter and Google Email, which indicates the news story could be forwarded using email, shared or posted on social networking sites. It is common to have such social media sharing functions on many news websites.

(2) *Perceived Opinion Climate Manipulation.* Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental opinion climate conditions, which were created to look like a real news comments' section. First, participants were shown a list of six individuals' comments about the topic and the news story. The text of the comments were followed by a graphic icon showing a finger pointing up, which indicates that the comment was liked by someone else. The three conditions of news comments were as following,

**Supportive:** The six comments were all supportive of the government's performance in dealing with either Flint water crisis or accepting Syrian refugees issues into U.S.

**Oppositional:** In this condition, the six comments were constructed to oppose or criticize U.S. government's performance in dealing with either Flint water crisis or Syrian refugees' issue.

**Neutral or Mixed:** This climate condition was constructed from three comments from the supportive condition and three comments from the oppositional condition.

The detailed experimental procedure will be discussed in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER 4 HOW MEDIA INFORM GOOD GOVERNANCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NEWS FRAMING GOVERNANCE ISSUES BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES**

The objective of the first study, the content analysis, is to identify media frames regarding good governance in China and the United States and to consider whether there are important similarities and differences between them. Therefore, four issues, i.e. the Syrian refugee crisis in U.S., the Flint water crisis, China's two-child policy, and China's anti-corruption campaigns were identified as case studies in this dissertation. In particular, the four cases address the different dimensions of good governance as outlined in Chapter 3, and aim to identify the general mechanisms that news media utilize to frame governance issues.

The first study utilizes framing theory to examine how media frame political issues. One reason is that framing is the most common approach employed by journalists or reporters to choose certain attributes to portray some specific issues and make such attributes or elements more salient than others, which can influence audiences' opinions. More importantly, understanding how media frame governance issues is crucial in understanding the importance of good governance's effects on people and society.

### **Research Questions & Hypotheses**

#### *Case Study One: How Media Frame Syrian Refugee Controversy*

Syrian immigrants and refugees have frequently been covered in American mainstream media in the past year. In particular, newly elected President Donald J. Trump proposed barring Muslims from entering the United States (Park, 2016). The debate over whether Syrian refugees should be allowed to resettle in the United States intensified after the Islamic State's attack on Paris. On one side, the GOP-controlled House passed a bill to halt the Syrian and Iraqi refugee programs, saying the federal government should upgrade its screening of refugee applicants to

ensure that terrorists aligned with the Syria-based Islamic State don't sneak into the U.S. On the other side, the Obama administration said U.S. ought to remain open to refugees and argued the current vetting process is sufficient (The Guardian, 2015). This dissertation employs the Syrian refugee crisis as an initial case study, which captures the constitutional and regime legitimacy dimension of good governance, to examine how news media portray and frame governance issues.

The first hypothesis tests whether newspapers will employ thematic framing to cover the Syrian refugee issue. According to Iyengar (1991), thematic framing focuses on broader trends and background information of issues. Previous literature suggests that newspapers were more likely to employ thematic frames than television news (Iyengar, 1990, 1991, 1996). Episodic news stories are usually illustrations of issues. The thematic frame, by contrast, describes political issues more broadly and abstractly by placing them in historical or social context. H1.1 is stated as follows,

H1.1: Newspapers rely on more thematic than episodic framing in coverage of the Syrian refugee controversy.

The second hypothesis tests whether newspapers attributed the reason for barring Syrian refugees to societal-level reasons, i.e. national security threats or individual-level factors such as opposition from political officials.

H1.2: Newspapers will be more likely to attribute responsibility for barring Syrian refugees to societal-level reasons than individual opposition.

The last hypothesis tests whether newspapers will rely predominantly on official sources.

H1.3: Newspapers will rely on official sources to frame the Syrian refugee debate.

The answers to these hypotheses will provide some insight on the constitutional and regime legitimacy dimensions of good governance.

*Case Study Two: How Media Frame Flint Water Crisis*

The Flint water crisis is engaged with the attributes of both executive and political dimensions of good governance such as public management and political participation. The case of Flint water crisis is used to provide insight on media frames over the two dimensions of good governance. As is similar to the first hypothesis in Syrian refugee issue, H2.1 tests thematic framing in coverage of Flint water crisis,

H2.1: Newspapers rely on more thematic than episodic framing to describe the water crisis in Flint.

The first research question examines who is responsible for Flint water crisis.

RQ2.1: How did the newspapers present the causes and solutions for the Flint water crisis?

Previous literature about the discussion of responsibility involves two conflicting views (Weiner, 1995). One view contends that a social issue is caused primarily by the deficiencies of individuals, and change efforts tend to focus on modifying the individuals' behaviors such as depression (Zhang, Jin, & Tang, 2015), obesity (Kim & Willis, 2007), school bullying (Kim & Telleen, 2016). In the other view, a social problem results largely from flaws in social conditions, such as unsafe environments, unequal distribution of economic resources and unethical business practices (Kim, 2015). Solutions require societal-level interventions, including changes in government policies, and other social forces. Thus, based on the previous literature, the case study tests whether the newspapers will present more societal-level cause and solutions in attributing the responsibility for Flint water crisis.



H2.2: Newspaper coverage of Flint water crisis will present societal causes more often than individual causes in discussing who is responsible for the crisis.

H2.3: News coverage of Flint water crisis will present more societal solutions/help than individual solutions/help.

In addition, Kim et al. (2010) compared liberal and conservative newspapers, and investigated whether the overall political orientation of news organizations (i.e., the view of the publisher) could affect the manner in which newspapers framed the responsibility for poverty. They reiterate that conservatism in general focuses on individual responsibility and advocates limited government interventions. In contrast, liberal papers usually advocate for greater involvement and societal approaches (Kim et al., 2010). So it is expected that liberal newspapers are more likely to refer to societal solutions than conservative newspapers when framing Flint water crisis. In this study, since *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* endorsed Democratic candidate in the 2016 presidential election, and thus were categorized as liberal newspapers. The Wall Street Journal's editorial page has long been anti-tax and anti-government, and thunder with conservatism (Page, 1996), and thus was categorized as conservative newspaper.

H2.4: Liberal newspapers are more likely than conservative newspaper to mention the societal solutions.

A second goal of this case study is to examine how the newspapers use sources in reporting Flint water crisis.

RQ2.2: How did the newspapers use the sources in coverage of Flint water crisis?

Previous research indicates that journalists inevitably favor certain voices, such as government officials, over others in the process of source selection. The last hypothesis aims to

test whether newspapers rely much on official sources and overlook individual citizens' voice in coverage of Flint water crisis.

H2.5: Flint residents' voice will be marginalized in news coverage of Flint water crisis.

*Case Study Three: How Media Frame Two-child Policy in China*

The new two-child policy in China as the third case study captures the executive dimension (i.e. public policy) of good governance. The objective is to identify media frames regarding good governance in China. In the same way, the first hypothesis tests whether thematic framing is dominant in coverage of two-child policy. H3.1 is stated as follows,

H3.1: Chinese newspapers will rely on more thematic than episodic framing in coverage of the two-child policy.

According to Levin (2014), after three decades of a policy that restricts most families to one child, many families say they will not take advantage of the new two-child policy allowing a second child because of the rising cost of child-rearing. Additionally, individual factors such as age or physical conditions of women will result in high-risk pregnancy, which might be one reason affects' one's willingness to have a second child. Therefore, the first research question asks how newspapers frame the factors influencing individuals' choice to have a second child. In this study, it is hypothesized that newspaper will be more likely to attribute factors to societal-level reasons (e.g. rising cost of living).

RQ3.1: How newspapers frame and describe factors influencing individuals' willingness to have the second child?

H3.2: Chinese newspapers focused more on societal factors than individual ones when describing citizens' willingness to have a second child.

A second aim of this case study is to examine how the frames in the news reflect or account for elements of good governance.

RQ3.2: How did Chinese newspapers present the solutions to address potential problems associated with implementing two-child policy?

RQ3.3: How did the newspapers present the impact of implementing new two-child policy?

The third hypothesis tests whether Chinese newspapers were more likely to refer to positive effects when framing two-child policy.

H3.3: Chinese newspapers will be more likely to refer to positive impact of two-child policy rather than negative impact.

The purpose of the last research question is to examine how newspapers use the sources when covering two-child policy?

RQ3.4: How did the newspapers use the sources in coverage of two-child policy?

#### *Case Study Four: How Media Frame Anti-corruption Campaigns in China*

The last case study, i.e. anti-corruption campaign, captures the political dimension (control of corruption) of good governance. As presented in previous case studies, the first hypothesis tests whether thematic framing is dominant in news coverage of anti-corruption campaign. A thematic news story on anti-corruption might present information about recent trends in the rate of corruption and the achievement in combating corruption.

H4.1: Newspapers will employ more thematic than episodic framing in coverage of anti-corruption campaign.

Two research questions aim to examine media frames in coverage of anti-corruption campaign. They are proposed as follows,

RQ4.1: How did newspapers frame and describe anti-corruption campaign in China?

RQ4.2: What are the differences between city press and national press in framing anti-corruption campaign in China?

The second hypothesis tests whether the tone of news coverage of the anti-corruption campaign will in a favorable manner.

H4.2: Newspapers will frame the anti-corruption campaign issue positively.

In addition, the study also tests whether media coverage of the corruption issue will focus more on the anti-corruption strategy than the causes of a comprehensive anti-corruption campaign across the nation.

H4.3: Newspapers will be more likely to refer to strategies of combating corruption than causes of launching anti-corruption in China.

Previous research indicates that journalists favor certain voices, such as government officials, over others in the process of source selection. The last hypothesis aims to test whether newspapers rely much on authority sources in coverage of anti-corruption campaign.

H4.4: Newspapers will heavily rely on official sources when reporting the anti-corruption campaign issue.

## Results

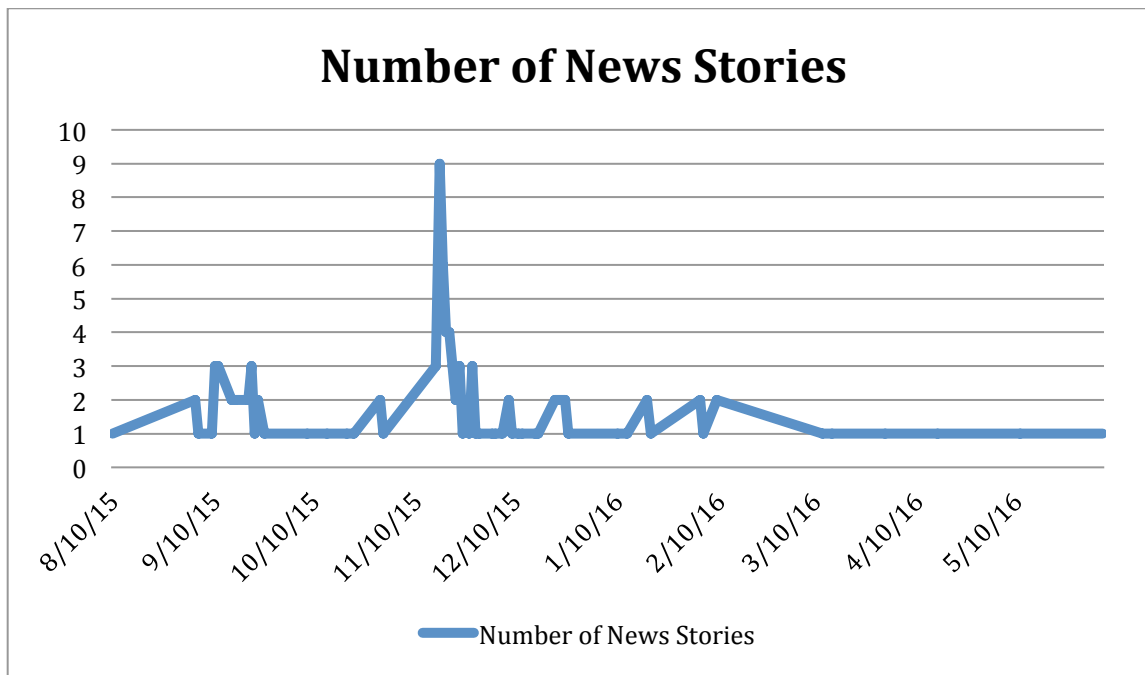
The previous section detailed the research questions, hypotheses and the experimental research design used to investigate how news media frame governance issues as well as influence individuals' perception and evaluation of good governance. Moreover, the preceding

section described the research questions and hypotheses in the four cases studies. This chapter reports the findings of the content analysis as well as the experimental design. It is organized in two sections. First, it reports the result from the content analysis of the four cases with regard to the frames that news media employ to describe and portray good governance. Second, it tests the roles of media frames on individuals' opinion over governance issues.

### *Case Study One: Syrian Refugee Crisis in the United States*

Syrian refugee crisis as the initial case study captures the constitutional and regime legitimacy dimensions of good governance. The findings of the Syrian refugee controversy is presented as follows,

Figure 2 The Amount of Newspaper Coverage of Syrian Refugee Issue



*Note.* The amount of newspaper coverage included articles from *New York Times* and *the Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* between Aug.1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and Aug.1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

Figure 2 shows the total number of news stories covering Syrian refugee issue between August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Figure 2 shows there were many inflections over the news coverage of Syrian refugees. In particular, the number of news stories peaked on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015, when a number of governors, presidential candidates and members of Congress opposed President Obama's plan to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees.

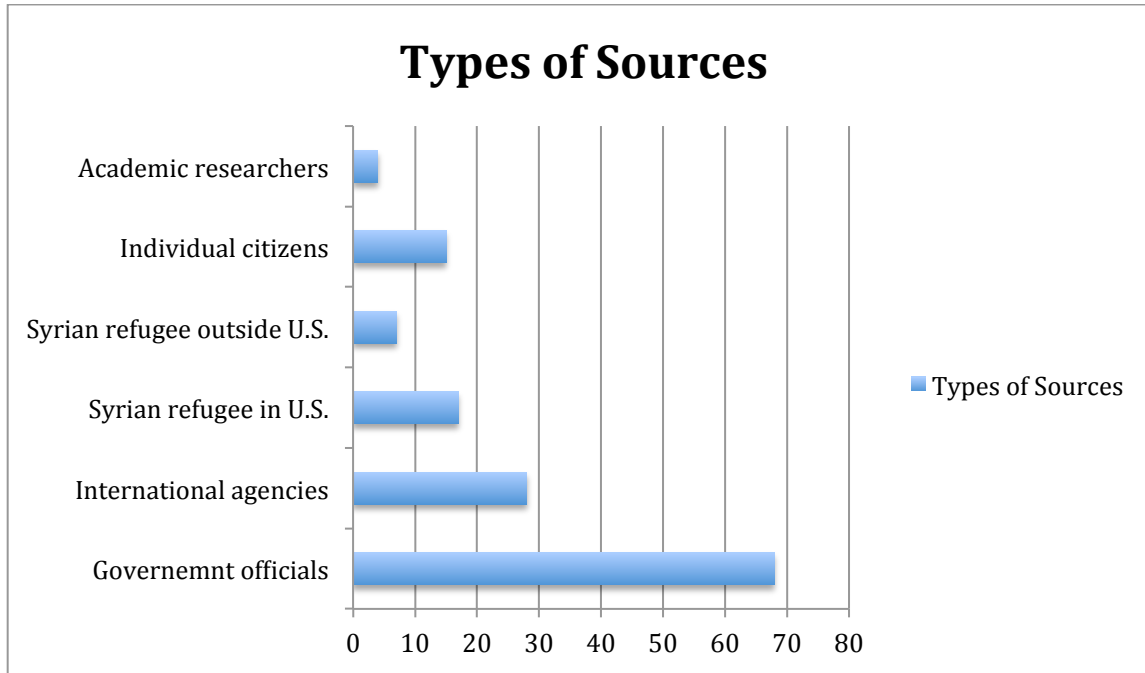
The first hypothesis (H1.1) investigates whether newspapers will rely more on thematic framing to cover Syrian refugee crisis in the United States. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean framing score was 3.83. A one-sample t-test indicated that this mean was higher than the neutral test value of 3 ( $t(104)=5.241, p<.000$ ). Consistent with H1.1, newspaper coverage of Syrian refugee crisis was framed thematically.

The second hypothesis (H1.2) examines whether newspapers will be more likely to attribute responsibility for barring Syrian refugees to a societal-level reason than to individual opposition. The societal-level causes include national security threats to the United States, which was mentioned in 37 (35.2%) news stories, while the individual opposition is related about a group of politicians such as governors, presidential candidates and members of Congress opposed accepting Syrian refugees, appearing in 57 (54.3%) news stories. The paired-sample t test indicated newspapers were more likely to attribute responsibility for barring refugees to societal-level reason ( $M=1.65, SD=.480, t(104)=13.256, p<.000$ ) than individual-level cause ( $M=.54, SD=.501$ ). H1.2 was supported.

In addition, the study also identified a humanitarian assistance frame ( $n=46, 43.8%$ ) as a social-level solution to Syrian refugee crisis. A paired sample t-test was conducted to test the differences between using security frame and humanitarian assistance frame in news coverage of the refugee crisis. The result of t-test shows the difference was statistically significant, which

means newspapers were more likely to refer to security frame ( $M=1.65$ ,  $SD=.480$ ,  $t(104)=19.188$ ,  $p<.000$ ) than humanitarian assistance frame ( $M=.44$ ,  $SD=.499$ ).

Figure 3 Types of Sources Cited in Coverage of Syrian Refugee Crisis



The last hypothesis (H1.3) examines the differences between official and unofficial sources in coverage of Syrian refugee crisis. The results of t-test indicated that public official sources ( $M=.65$ ,  $SD=.480$ ) outnumbered mentions of individual citizens ( $M=.14$ ,  $SD=.352$ ,  $t(104)=9.289$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Moreover, a paired-sample t test was conducted to explore whether newspapers employed more official sources than Syrian refugees. The result of t-test showed that newspapers heavily relied on government officials' sources ( $M=.65$ ,  $SD=.480$ ,  $t(104)=6.484$ ,  $p<.000$ ) than refugees ( $M=.22$ ,  $SD=.416$ ). Taken together, the study reveals that public official voice was dominant in covering Syrian refugee crisis (See Figure 3).

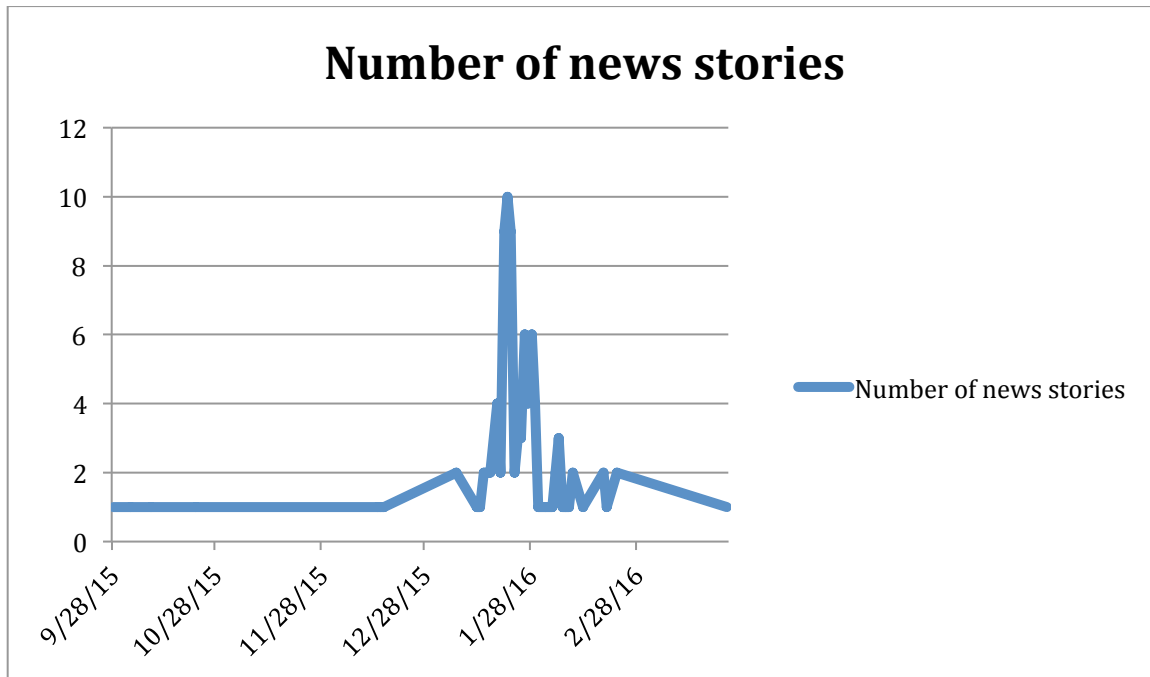
In sum, according to the results of the Syrian refugee crisis, newspapers rely on both thematic framing and official sources to describe the Syrian refugee issue. Moreover, the case of Syrian refugee issue identifies two main media frames, i.e. security frame and humanitarian

assistance frame. The difference between the two frames was significant, which means that newspapers were more likely to refer to security frame when covering the Syrian refugee crisis.

### *Case Study Two: Flint Water Crisis*

The Flint water crisis captures mainly the executive dimension of good governance. This case study aims to examine who is responsible for Flint water crisis as well as how newspapers attribute the individual and social solutions in Flint water crisis. The results of the Flint water crisis are presented as follows.

Figure 4 The Amount of Newspaper Coverage of Flint Water Crisis



Note. The amount of newspaper coverage included articles from *New York Times* and *the Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* between Sep.1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

Figure 4 shows the total number of four newspapers covering Flint water crisis between September 2015 and March 2016. Figure 4 shows there were many inflections over the news coverage of Flint water crisis. In particular, the number of news stories reporting the crisis



peaked on January 21, 2016, when Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was accused of failing to address the crisis, including water testing, distribution of filters and providing medical care. This event attracted much criticism over the way the EPA's handled the lead contamination in Flint.

With regards to H2.1, it was expected that newspapers would rely more on thematic framing to describe the water issue in Flint. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean framing score was 4.61. A one-sample t-test indicated that this mean was higher than the neutral test value of 3 ( $t(98)=14.463, p<.000$ ), indicating newspapers tended to describe the water crisis by employing thematic framing.

Table 6 Attributions of Causal and Solution Responsibility in the Case of Flint Water Crisis

<b>News Coverage of Flint Water Crisis (n=99)</b>			
<b>Personal Cause</b>		<b>Personal Solutions</b>	
EPA overlooking water issue	17 (17.2%)	Virginia Tech researchers	12 (12%)
		Doctor	6 (6%)
		Corporations	and 3 (3%)
		Organizations	
		Volunteers	4 (4%)
Total	17 (17.2%)	Total	25 (25.2%)
<b>Societal Cause</b>		<b>Societal Solutions</b>	
Switching water supply	49 (50%)	Financial solution	35 (35.4%)
		Emergency declaration	26 (26.3%)
		National Guards	13 (13%)
Total	49 (50%)	Total	74 (74.7%)

*Note.* Entries are the number of articles mentioning each cause or solution of Flint water crisis.

RQ2.1 addresses how the newspapers presented the causes and solutions for Flint water crisis. The first two hypotheses (H2.2 and H2.3), in particular test whether the newspapers have focused more on individual-level causes and solutions than societal-level ones. Table 6 shows that the newspapers mentioned switching water supply most often as a cause of lead contamination in Flint (49 out of 99 news articles, 50%), while the individual cause, i.e. EPA

officials overlooking water issue, has appeared in a total of 17 (17.2%) articles. A one-sample t-test showed that the difference was significant, which indicated that newspapers were more likely to present societal cause ( $M=.49$ ,  $SD=.503$ ) than individual cause ( $M=.17$ ,  $SD=.379$ ,  $t(98)=9.88$ ,  $p<.000$ ).

When it comes to dealing with the crisis, the newspapers again assigned responsibility predominantly to government. Three societal solutions were mentioned frequently, i.e. the financial solution, i.e. seeking federal and state fund, 35 (35.4%), the declaration of emergency 26 (26.3%), and activating the national guard 13 (13%). When combined, references to personal help in solving Flint water crisis were only in 25 articles (25.2%). A one-sample t-test showed that the difference was significant, which indicated that newspapers were more likely to present societal solutions/help ( $M=.47$ ,  $SD=.502$ ) than individual solutions/help ( $M=.28$ ,  $SD=.453$ ,  $t(98)=6.217$ ,  $p<.000$ ).

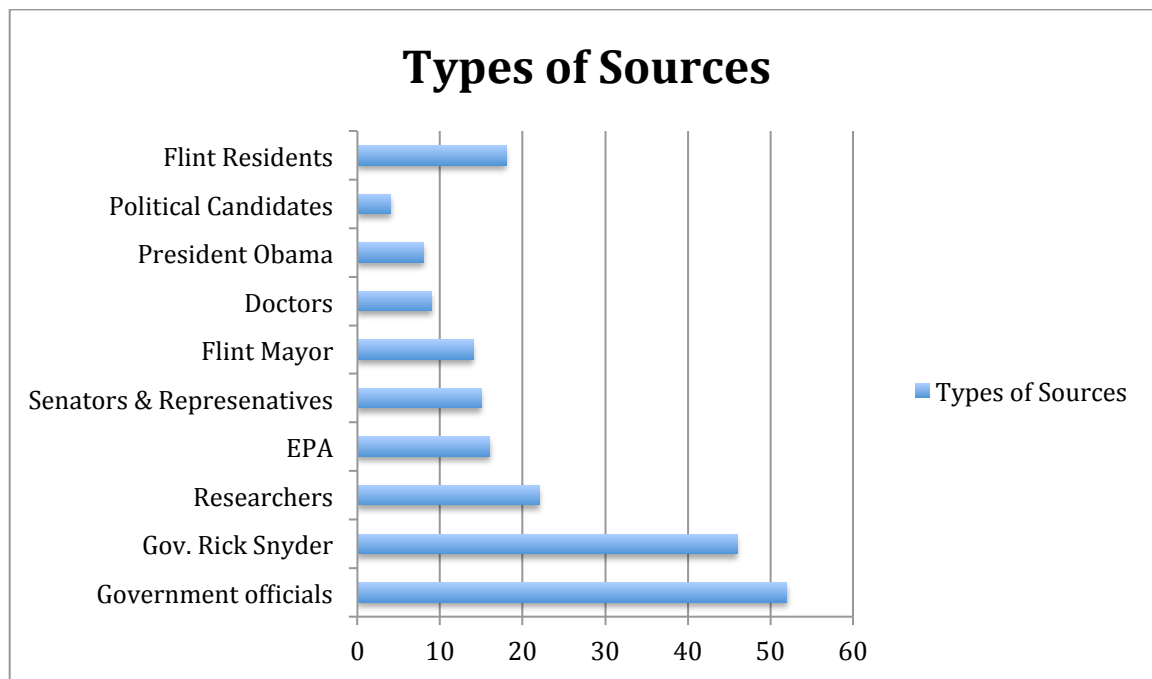
Table 7 Differences about Solutions in Flint Water Crisis Coverage between Conservative and Liberal Newspapers

Media (n)	Financial solution	Emergency declaration	National Guards	Total
Liberal (n=73)	20	16	9	45
Conservative (n=18)	12	7	2	21
Central (n=8)	3	3	2	8
Media total (n=99)	35	26	13	74

Note. Entries are the number of articles mentioning each solution of Flint water crisis. Liberal media includes *New York Times* and *the Washington Post*; Conservative media includes *Wall Street Journal*; Central media includes *USA Today*.

H2.4 examines whether liberal newspapers (i.e. *New York Times* and *the Washington Post*) has presented societal solution more often than conservative newspaper (i.e. *the Wall Street Journal*). The independent t-test showed that conservative newspapers ( $M=.72$ ,  $SD=.461$ ) were more likely than liberal newspapers ( $M=.41$ ,  $SD=.49$ ,  $t(89)=-2.419$ ,  $p=.018$ ) to mention societal solutions in coverage of Flint water crisis (see Table 7), which contradicts H3. However, the difference about mentions of societal causes between liberal and conservative newspaper was not statistically significant.

Figure 5 Types of Sources Cited in Coverage of Flint Water Crisis



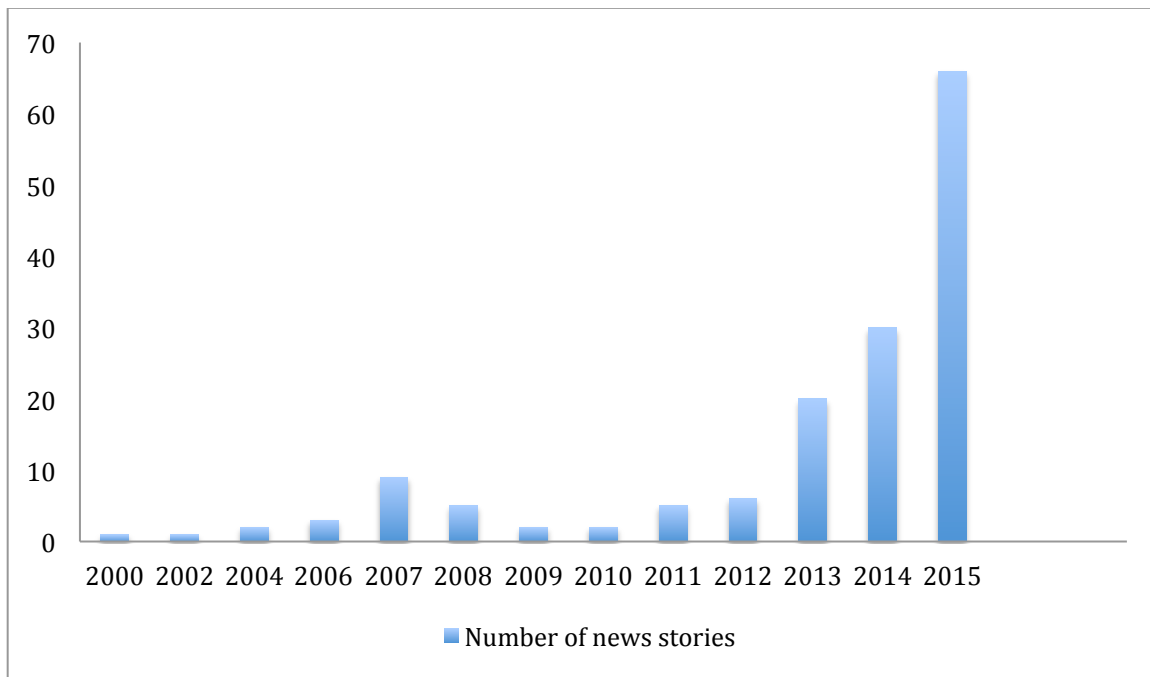
RQ2.2 examines how newspapers use sources in coverage of the Flint water issue. In particular, H2.4 examines whether there were differences in sources between public officials and Flint residents. The results of t-test indicated that mentions of official sources ( $M=.87$ ,  $SD=.339$ ) outnumbered mentions of Flint residents ( $M=.19$ ,  $SD=.396$ ,  $t(98)=4.824$ ,  $p<.000$ ), as shown in Figure 5.

In sum, the results of Flint water crisis show that newspapers rely mainly on thematic framing and official sources in covering the crisis. When describing who is responsible for Flint water crisis, newspapers were more likely to refer to social cause (switching water supply) rather than individual cause (EPA officials overlooking the lead issue). Moreover, newspapers made more reference to social solutions than individual ones.

### *Case Study Three: Two-child Policy*

The third case study, China's two-child policy, also captures the executive dimension (public policy) of good governance. This case study examine how Chinese newspapers frame the causes and solutions of two-child policy. The results of the case of two-child policy are presented as follows.

Figure 6 The Amount of Newspaper Coverage of Two-child Policy between 2000 and 2015



*Note.* The amount of newspaper coverage included articles from *People's Daily*, *Nanfang Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*, between Jan.1<sup>st</sup>, 2000 and Dec.31<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

Figure 6 shows the total number of news stories of three Chinese newspapers (i.e. *People's Daily*, *Nanfang Daily*, and *Guangzhou Daily*) covering two-child policy between January 2000 and December 2015. Figure 1 shows the amount of news coverage of two-child policy has been increasing slowly over the years with a dramatic increase between 2012 and 2015.

With regards to H3.1, it is predicted that the newspapers will rely more on thematic framing to describe the issue about two-child policy. Consistent with H3.1, Chinese newspapers employed more thematic framing to cover two-child policy issue. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean framing score was 4.39. A one-sample t test suggested that this mean was significantly higher than the neutral test value of 3 ( $t=14.352$ ,  $p<.000$ ), indicating a strong emphasis on thematic framing.

Table 8 Attributing Factors, Solutions and Impacts in News Coverage of the Two-child Policy

	Newspapers		
	National Party Paper (n=80)	Local Party Papers (n=76)	Newspapers total (n=156)
<b>Factors</b>			
<i>Personal Factors</i>			
Physical conditions	6 (7.5%)	5 (6.6%)	11 (7%)
Needing parents' care	11 (13.8%)	7 (9.2%)	18 (11.5%)
<i>Societal Factors</i>			
Financial costs	15 (18.8%)	12 (15.8%)	27 (17.3%)
Urbanization	4 (5%)*	0 (0%)	4 (2.6%)
Lack of education resources	7 (8.8%)	3 (3.9%)	10 (6.4%)
<b>Solutions</b>			
<i>Societal Solutions</i>			
Rules and laws	29 (36.2%)	20 (26.3%)	49 (31.4%)
Public facilities	20 (25%)*	2 (2.6%)	22 (14.1%)
More education resources	22 (27.5%)*	2 (2.6%)	24 (15.4%)
<b>Positive Impacts</b>			
<i>Benefits</i>			
Economic development	10 (12.5%)	10 (13.2%)	20 (12.8%)
Social development	10 (12.5%)*	1 (0.1%)	11 (7%)
More labor resources	15 (18.8%)	7 (9.2%)	22 (14.1%)
Balanced population structure	18 (22.5%)*	6 (7.9%)	24 (15.4%)
Tackling issue over aging population	18 (22.5%)	11 (14.5%)	29 (18.6%)
<b>Negative Impacts</b>			
<i>Emerging problems</i>			
Women's rights	14 (17.5%)*	4 (5.3%)	18 (11.5%)
Employment discrimination	14 (17.5%)*	4 (5.3%)	18 (11.5%)
Elderly pregnant women	5 (6.3%)	2 (2.6%)	7 (4.5%)
Increasing pressure over public services	21 (26.3%)*	6 (7.9%)	27 (17.3%)

*Note.* Entries are the number of news articles mentioning each factor, solution and impact of two-child policy. National party newspaper includes *People's Daily*. Local party newspapers include *Nanfang Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

RQ3.1 explored how newspapers framed factors which affected Chinese citizens' willingness to have a second child. Table 8 shows that needing personal care was the most frequently mentioned personal factor, appearing in 18 (11.5%,  $M = 12$ ) news stories. When it comes to societal factors, Table 8 shows that the newspapers, both national and local party

newspapers, mentioned financial costs most often as the factor (27 out of 156 articles, 17.3%,  $M=.17$ ) affecting Chinese citizens' choice to give birth to the second child. Taken together, references to personal factors were made a total of 22 times (11 mentions of physical conditions and 18 mentions of needing parents' care, see Table 2,  $M=.14$ ), and reference to social factors were made a total of 29 times ( $M=.19$ ). A paired-sample t-test indicated that the difference was statistically significant ( $t=-1.959$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Consistent with H3.2, when framing factors influence citizens' choice to have a second child, Chinese newspapers were more likely to attribute to the social factors than individual ones. Additionally, the t-test shows that the national party newspaper ( $M=.05$ ,  $SD=.219$ ,  $t(154)=1.987$ ,  $p<.000$ ) is more likely to mention urbanization as a factor affecting one's willingness to have a second child than local party newspapers ( $M=.00$ ,  $SD=.000$ ).

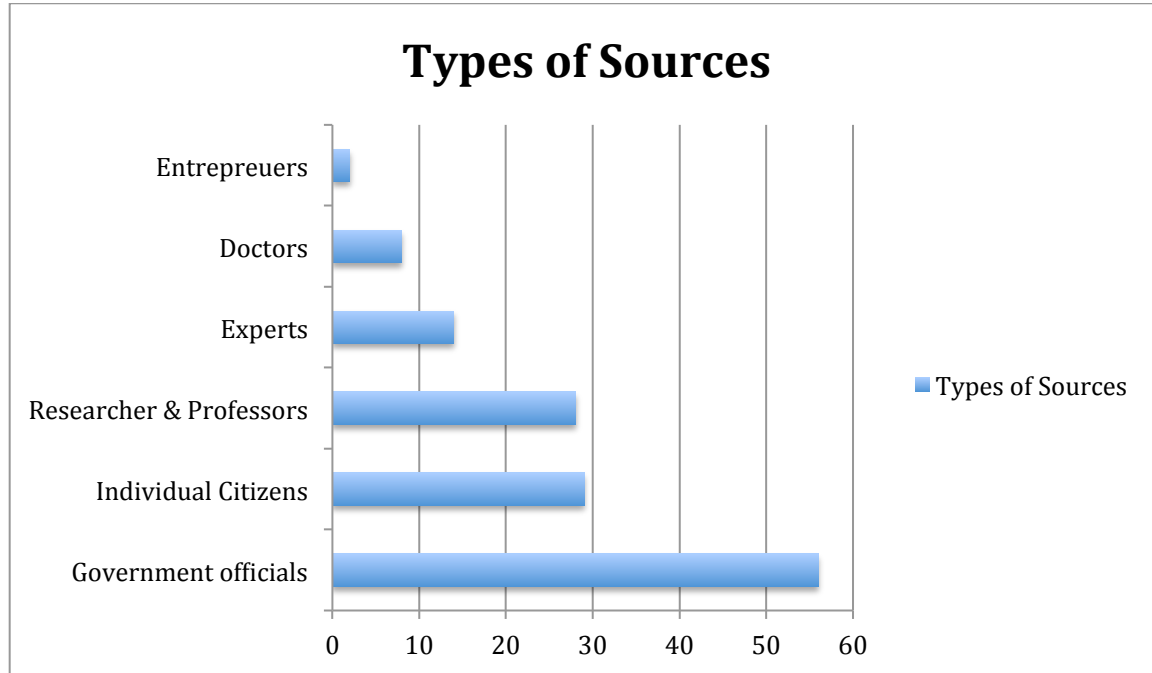
RQ3.2 examined how newspapers presented the solutions to address potential problems after implementing two-child policy. The study didn't identify individual solutions, and Table 2 shows that the most frequently mentioned societal solution was establishing or revising rules and laws, appearing in a total of 49 (31.4%) news articles, followed by providing more education resources ( $n=24$ , 15.4%), and building more public facilities ( $n=22$ , 14.1%). Among societal solutions, the national party press made 20 mentions of building public facilities ( $M=.25$ ) and 22 mentions of providing education resources ( $M=.28$ ). The local party press, however, made only two mentions of building public facilities ( $M=.03$ ) and two mentions of providing education ( $M=.03$ ). The independent t-test showed that this difference between the national party press and local party press in mentioning solutions is statistically significant ( $t=4.210$ ,  $p<.000$ ), ( $t=4.554$ ,  $p<.000$ ). In other words, the national party press was more likely than the local party press to mention building more public facilities and providing more educational resources as social

solutions compared with local party press. The t-test also indicated there was no difference between the national and the local party press in referring to establishing or revising laws, rules and regulations as the social solution.

RQ3.3 asked how Chinese newspapers presented the impact of implementing two-child policy. Table 3.2 shows that tackling the issue of an aging population was the most frequently mentioned benefit of the two-child policy, appearing 29 (18.6%) times, followed by other benefits such as achieving balanced population structure (n=24, 15.4%), more labor resources (n=22, 14.1%), economic development, (n=20, 12.8%), and social development (n=11, 7%). On the other hand, among the negative impacts or problems of implementing two-child policy, increasing pressure on public services was the most frequently mentioned problem, followed by protecting women's rights (n=18, 11.5%) and employment discrimination against women (n=18, 11.5%), and then high-risk pregnancy problems about elderly pregnant women (n=7, 4.5%). Taken together, reference to positive impact appearing together in 43 times, while mentions of negative impact were made a total of 52 times. A paired-sample t-test indicated that the difference was not statistically significant. Contrary to what is predicted in H3.3, Chinese newspapers referred equally to both the positive and negative impacts when framing two-child policy.



Figure 7 Types of Sources Cited in Coverage of Two-child Policy



RQ 3.4 asked how Chinese newspapers employed sources in coverage of two-child policy. According to Figure 7, government officials ( $n=56$ ) were most frequently quoted in Chinese newspapers, followed by individual citizens ( $n=29$ ), researchers and professors ( $n=28$ ), experts ( $n=14$ ), doctors ( $n=8$ ) and business entrepreneurs ( $n=2$ ). A paired-sample t-test showed that the difference was not statistically significant when comparing government officials with individual citizens. In other words, individual citizens' voice were equally likely to be included in news coverage of the two-child policy issue. Additionally, the independent t-test indicated that national party press ( $M=.28$ ,  $SD=.449$ ) was more likely to quote sources from citizens' than the local party press ( $M=.09$ ,  $SD=.291$ ,  $t(154)=3.000$ ,  $p=.003$ ).

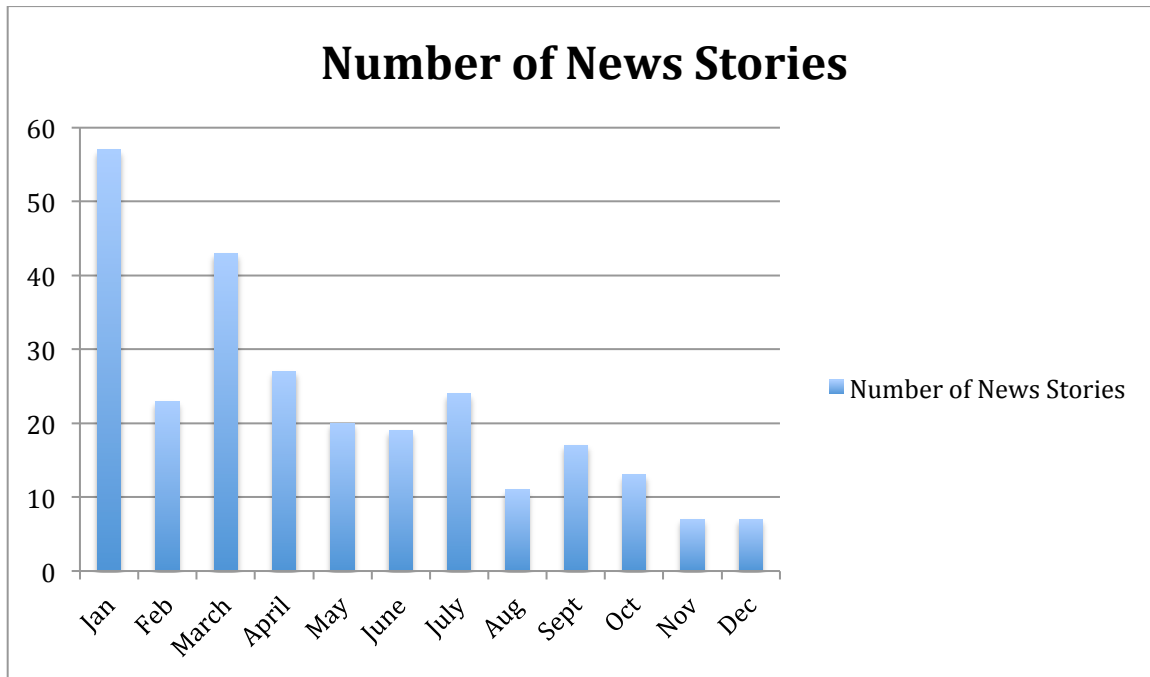
In sum, the results of China's two-child policy suggested that Chinese newspapers rely more on thematic framing to cover the two-child policy. When framing the factors influencing citizens' choice to have a second child, newspapers were more likely to attribute to the social

factors than individual ones. It was worth mentioning that there is no difference when newspapers described the positive and negative effects of two-child policy. Furthermore, the results of two-child policy indicated that there is no difference when citing sources between government officials and individual citizens.

#### *Case Study Four: Anti-corruption Campaign*

The last case study, anti-corruption campaign, captures the political dimension of good governance. The results of the anti-corruption campaign are presented as follows.

Figure 8 The Amount of News Coverage of Anti-corruption Campaign in 2015



*Note.* The amount of newspaper coverage included articles from *People's Daily*, *Nanfang Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*, between Jan.1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and Dec.31<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

Figure 8 shows the total number of three newspapers stories covering anti-corruption campaign between January 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Figure 1 shows the anti-corruption

campaign was a very stable issue in the year of 2015, with January captured the most media attention within one year.

Table 9 Media Frames in News Coverage of Anti-corruption Campaign

	Newspapers		
	National Party Paper (n=162)	City Party Papers (n=106)	Newspapers total (n=268)
<b>Causes</b>	4 (2.5%)	0	4 (1.5%)
<b>Influence</b>			
Positive effect	71 (43.8%)	66 (62.3%)	137 (51.1%)
Negative effect	0	1 (1%)	1 (0.4%)
<b>Strategies</b>			
Rules & laws	47 (29%)	33 (31.1%)	80 (29.9%)
Public support	5 (3.1%)	1 (0.9%)	6 (2.2%)
Checks on officials	24 (14.8%)	16 (15.1%)	40 (14.9%)
Party style building	41 (25.3%)	24 (22.6%)	65 (24.3%)
Strict party discipline	53 (32.7%)	35 (33%)	88 (32.8%)
CCDI team	26 (16%)	18 (17%)	44 (16.4%)

*Note.* Entries are the number of news articles mentioning each cause, strategy of anti-corruption campaigns. National party newspaper includes *People's Daily*. Local party newspapers include *Nanfang Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*.

In testing H4.1, it is expected that the newspapers will rely more on thematic than episodic framing to describe the issue about anti-corruption campaign. Consistent with H1, Chinese newspapers employ more thematic framing to cover anti-corruption campaign. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean framing score was 4.78. A one-sample t test suggested that this mean was overwhelmingly higher than the neutral test value of 3 ( $t=42.941$ ,  $p<.000$ ), indicating a strong emphasis on thematic framing.

RQ4.1 examined what frames that newspapers employed to describe anti-corruption campaign in China. Table 9 shows that the strategy frame was overwhelmingly presented in newspaper coverage. Among the six strategies identified in the study, *strictly governing the party*

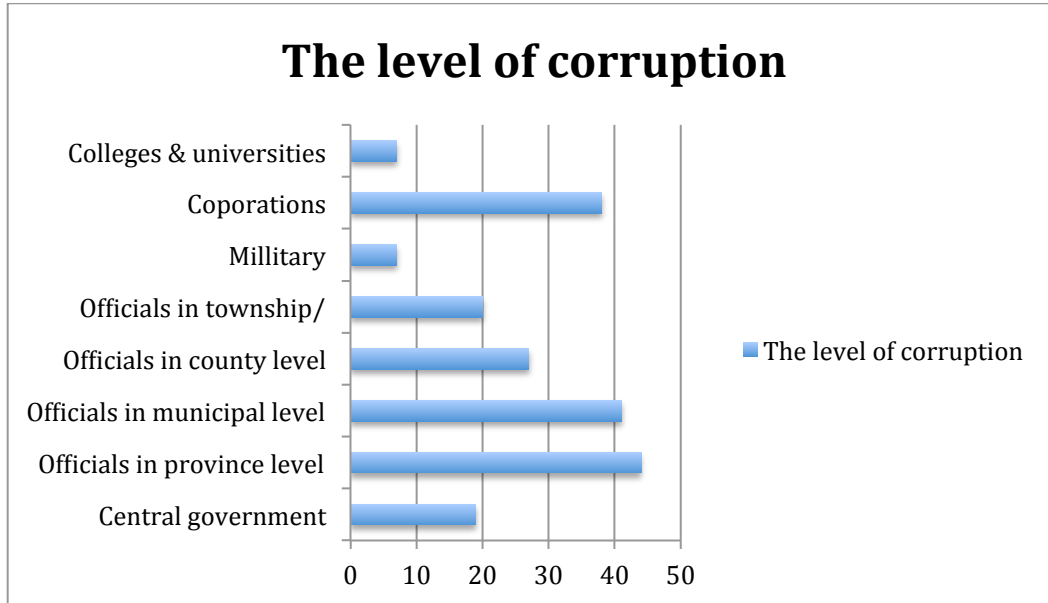
and *making rules and laws* mentioned most often, appearing eighty-eight (32.8%) and eighty (29.9%) times, while *relying on public participation* was found less often (six times), accounting for about 2.2% of the news stories. With regards to the impact of anti-corruption campaign, Table 9 showed that positive effects (n=137, 51.1%) were mentioned significantly more than negative effects (n=1, 0.4%).

In addressing RQ4.2, an independence t-test was conducted to test whether there were differences in mentioning impact of anti-corruption between national and city press. The result of t-test shows that city party press (M=. 61, SD=. 508,  $t(266) = -2.79$ ,  $p = .006$ ) was more likely than national party press (M=. 44, SD=. 498) to refer to the influence in coverage of anti-corruption campaigns. The study only identified 4 news stories mentioning the cause of anti-corruption campaign. Taken together, newspapers employed three main news frames, i.e. strategies, cause and impact to describe the anti-corruption campaigns.

H4.2 aims to test whether newspapers will be more likely to frame anti-corruption campaign in a favourable way. Consistent with H2, newspapers used a very positive tone to portray anti-corruption campaign issue. On a scale of 1 to 3, the mean framing score was 2.56. A one-sample t test suggested that this mean was significantly higher than the neutral test value of 2 ( $t = 18.284$ ,  $p < .000$ ), which indicates the tone of newspapers coverage of such issue is very positive.

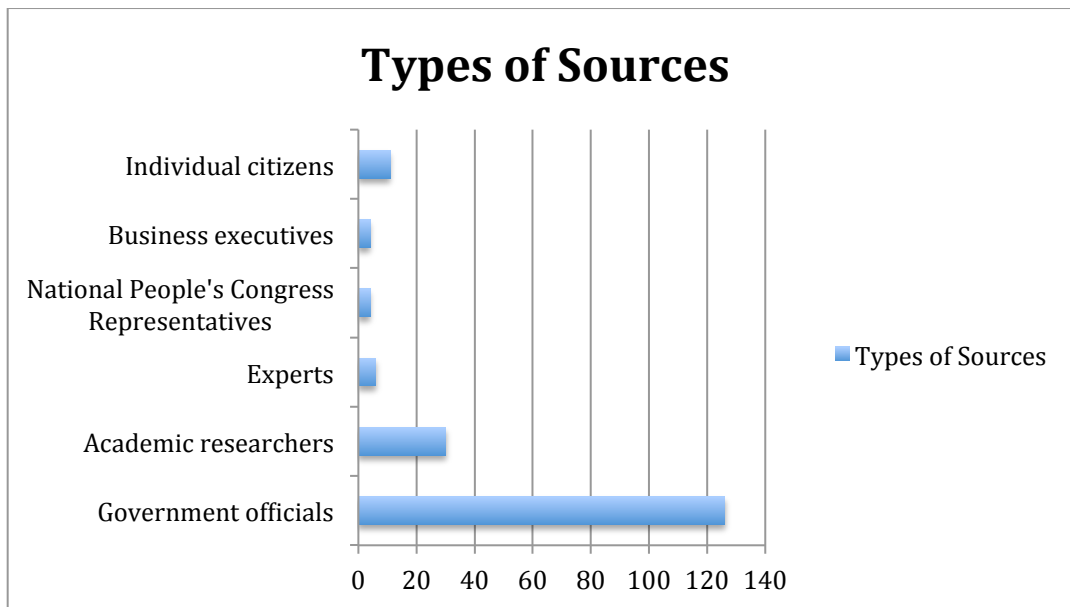
With regards to H4.3, a paired sample t-test was used to test whether newspapers will be more likely to refer to strategies than causes when covering anti-corruption campaign. As predicted, the result shows that newspapers framing of anti-corruption campaign referred to more strategies (M=. 68, SD=. 469,  $t = -21.876$ ,  $p < .000$ ) than causes (M=. 03, SD=. 16), supporting H4.3.

Figure 9 The level of corruption in newspaper coverage of anti-corruption campaign



*Note.* The amount of newspaper coverage included articles from *People's Daily*, *Nanfang Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*, between Jan.1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and Dec.31<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

Figure 10 Types of sources cited in newspaper coverage of anti-corruption campaign



*Note.* The amount of newspaper coverage included articles from *People's Daily*, *Nanfang Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*, between Jan.1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and Dec.31<sup>st</sup>, 2015.

According to Figure 9, the corruption cases were most mentioned in three levels, i.e. province level (n=44, 16.4%) and municipal level (n=41, 15.3%), followed by corporations (n=38, 14.1%). The last hypothesis (H4.4) tests whether newspaper will use more official sources than individual citizen's voice. According to Figure 10, government officials (n=126) were most frequently quoted in Chinese newspapers, followed by academic researchers (n=30), and sources from individual citizens were only mentioned eleven times. A paired-sample t-test shows that the difference was statistically significant when comparing sources from government officials ( $M=.47$ ,  $SD=.500$ ,  $t=13.026$ ,  $p<.000$ ) with ones from individual citizens ( $M=.04$ ,  $SD=.199$ ).

In sum, the results of the anti-corruption campaign showed that newspapers rely on thematic framing and official sources in describing the control of corruption in China. The strategy frame was most frequently mentioned in coverage of anti-corruption campaign compared with causes. The newspapers portrayed the anti-corruption campaign in a very favorable tone. Moreover, city party press was more likely to mention the influence of anti-corruption campaigns than national party press.

### Discussion

The previous section presented the main results from the content analysis of the four cases about the frames that news media employ to portray good governance in both China and the United States. This section reviews the findings from four cases in more depth and discusses their implications within the theoretical context in which they were originally conceived and discussed. Second, it also summarizes the commonalities and differences in media framing governance issues between China and the United States as well as the implications about good governance.

### ***Case Study One: Syrian Refugee Crisis in the United States***

The Syrian refugee controversy captures both the constitutional and regime legitimacy dimension of good governance. The constitutional dimension of good governance deals with human rights, and human rights violations during the Syrian civil war have been numerous and serious (United Nations, 2015). However, certain G.O.P governors have argued asylum-seekers would be recruited by extremist and posed a potential threat to U.S. national security. The results reveal certain implications for the role of media in framing and promoting good governance, in particular for the constitutional dimension of good governance.

The first finding indicates that newspaper coverage of Syrian refugee crisis was framed mostly in a thematic manner. Although episodic stories are relatively easier to prepare, thematic stories usually require a significant amount of background research and data collection (Kim, 2015). In fact, the newspapers' frequent use of thematic framing, where a topic or issue is presented in a more abstract social context, leads the audience to a more socially oriented interpretation of the cause and solutions (Kim, 2015). As Iyengar (1991) points out, thematic framing focuses on the big picture by providing statistics, expert analysis or other information to help the public view and interpret the event in a broader context. Examples of thematic framing included providing statistics, contexts, facts, or referring to refugee history in U.S., and debates about the U.S. refugee resettlement programs, etc. The thematic frame usually depicts social and political issues more broadly and abstractly by placing them in historical or societal context. For instance, when framing Syrian refugee crisis, a total of 22 news stories from the sample mentioned previous history of immigrants and refugees in the United States, including Irish, Italian, Jews, Vietnamese and Cubans. By means of thematic framing, newspapers were more

likely to focus on the larger context to give multi-dimensional information to audiences and present the causes and solutions in the societal level.

Furthermore, thematic and episodic frames might influence media users' perception of the Syrian refugee issue differently. While thematic frame stories evoke more structural attributions, episodic frame stories evoke more individualistic attributions (Iyengar, 1990). For instance, episodic framing of Syrian refugee issue includes individual refugee's story about entering into U.S. and many difficulties facing Syrian refugees, while thematic framing is focused on national policy, and debates about Syrian refugee issues. How the news is framed has a significant influence on how people come to understand social, cultural and political realities (Gamson, 1992a). More thematic framing of Syrian refugee issue will lead the media and citizens to attribute the responsibility for blocking Syrian refugees to societal-level cause, which leads to the second finding, i.e. Syrian refugee crisis was framed as a national security problem by newspapers.

When discussing the causes of Syrian refugee debate, newspapers as predicted in H1.2, focused significantly more on societal-level (national security concern) than individual-level (politicians' opposition) responsibilities. The study identified the presence of considerable national security frames in portraying the Syrian refugee issue. First, newspapers employed more thematic framing to portray controversy over Syrian refugee crisis, which might attributed the causal responsibility for stopping refugees into U.S. to social-level reason, i.e. accepting Syrian refugees might pose great threat to national security (Homeland Security Committee, 2015). As previous framing-building studies indicate (e.g. Kim et al., 2010), certain professional routines, such as being thematic or issue-oriented, seem to affect the media's selective use of one frame over another.



Second, according to securitization theory, no issue is essentially a menace. Something becomes a security problem through discursive politics (Balzacq, 2010). For instance, one reason that Syrian refugee crisis gradually was framed as a security problem is due to the news organizations' willingness to use a term by political actors in its own voice. As Vultee (2010) said, whether the issue or concept has been considered as a security threat was dependent upon the degree to which a news organization transmits the reality of an issue defined by political actors or how the news organizations interpreted and defined the threat in its own terms, etc. Third, political figures were able to invoke security, not only on issues of political violence, but also on other social issues such as immigration or public health (Vultee, 2010). In the case of the Syrian refugee crisis, many officials contended that bringing in 10,000 Syrian refugees carried a terror risk (Fox News, 2015). It is in this context of referring to a national security threat the media may unintentionally create the impression that accepting Syrian refugees into U.S. will pose a great threat to American national security and interests.

Apart from the security threat frame, the results also found a humanitarian assistance frame in news coverage. Since security concern is the main social-level cause for Syria refugee crisis in the United States, it makes sense that newspapers focused more attention on social-level solution such as providing humanitarian assistance or relief to refugees. On the other hand, frequent reference to the security frame and the humanitarian assistance frame downplayed the human right issue discussed in the case of Syrian refugee crisis. And this finding also reflects that the case of Syria refugee crisis addresses matters more on the regime legitimacy dimension (i.e. security frame) than constitutional dimension (i.e. human rights) of good governance.

The last finding from this case study suggested that the official voice such as government officials or politicians was predominantly employed in both U.S. newspapers. This finding is in

line with previous studies, and a heavy reliance on official sources is a part of news routines (Tuchman, 1978). One reason is that journalists and their editors believe that official sources have important things to say (Paletz & Entman, 1981) and tend to accept the things official sources say as being factual (Gandy, 1982). However, the fact that journalists tend to prefer official sources of information leads to a dominance of official viewpoints and problem definitions (Bennett, 1990; Sigal, 1973). This might be one reason that newspapers frequently mentioned Syrian refugee crisis as a security problem. In the case of Syrian refugee crisis, not only newspapers cited sources from individual citizens, but also they relied less on victims' or Syrian refugees' voice.

When reporting on governance issues, the media ought to improve the quality of experts and even citizens' input into the evaluation on government performance. In fact, the newspaper did frequently cite sources from international aid organizations or researchers, but compared with dominant official voice, individual citizens' voice and Syrian refugees' voice was heavily marginalized. Therefore, the media ought to give voice to the refugees and victims, and presenting a much broader picture for public to better understand and interpret the current Syrian refugee crisis occurred both in and outside the United States.

In sum, this case study provides an analysis of how American newspapers have informed citizens about governance issues such as the Syrian refugee crisis. The content analysis of Syrian refugee issue reveals that newspapers employed more thematic than episodic framing, and frequently framed the current Syrian refugee issue as a security problem for the United States. Additionally, a heavy reliance on official sources and information deprives of victims and refugees' voice. The case of Syrian refugee crisis addresses both the constitutional and regime

legitimacy dimension of good governance, but it focused more on the regime legitimacy dimension of good governance.

### ***Case Study Two: Flint Water Crisis***

By analyzing news articles, the second case study explores how U.S. newspapers framed the governance issue, i.e. Flint water crisis. First, the Flint water issue is an ongoing drinking water contamination crisis currently under federal investigation. The *New York Times* states that crisis is a failure at all levels of government (Goodnough, Davey, Smith, 2016). Therefore, the Flint water crisis is a good test of public management in the United States. More specifically, the study examines how the news media employ frames to portray and describe the executive component of governance. The case study also explores the notion of frame building, looking at the factors that might affect the manner governance issue was framed.

The first research question (RQ2.1) explores how the newspapers framed the causes and solutions when covering water crisis in Flint. As hypothesized, mentions of the societal cause outnumbered the personal one. This finding is important given that the newspapers attributed the societal responsibility in presenting who is responsible for causing the crisis, which actually downplayed the role of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the disastrous chain of events in Flint. Similarly, the newspapers also made more references to government than individuals when discussing solutions or help for lead contamination in Flint. This finding is consistent with previous studies. For instance, according to Kim & Willis (2007), newspapers are more likely than television news to emphasize societal causes and solutions. Several explanations can account for this.

First, in the case of Flint water crisis, newspapers were more likely to describe the responsibility for crisis as due to societal causes such as the city switching its water supply from

Detroit's system to the Flint River rather than personal one such as EPA officials overlooking the lead contamination. As a matter of fact, in June 2015, Miguel del Toral, a regulations manager in the EPA's ground water and drinking water branch, sent a report to his agency superiors and stated there were elevated levels of lead in several Flint areas (Sanburn, 2016). The EPA, however, did not disseminate that information to the public. In this regard, it is interesting to note that although the newspapers mentioned EPA officials overlooking lead contamination quite often as a cause of water crisis in Flint (17 out of 99 total), they were more likely to describe switching water supply as a cause (49 out of 99 total). Therefore, when talking about the causes of water crisis, newspapers emphasized considerably on societal or objective cause, deflecting attention away from the individual factors.

Second, H2.1 suggests that thematic framing is the primary manner by which newspapers covered the Flint water crisis. In fact, the newspapers' frequent use of thematic framing, where a topic or issue is presented in a more abstract social context, leads the audience to a more socially oriented interpretation of the cause and solutions (Kim, 2015). As Iyengar (1991) points out, thematic framing focuses on the big picture by providing statistics, expert analysis or other information to help the public view and interpret the event in a broader context. Examples of thematic framing included information about the causes of and government solutions for Flint water crisis as well as the Flint residents' responses to the lead contamination. By means of thematic framing, newspapers were more likely to focus on the larger context to give multi-dimensional information to audiences and present the causes and solutions in the societal level.

In examining how conservative and liberal newspapers framed the solutions in coverage of Flint water crisis, H2.4 was not supported. One reason is that liberal newspapers were more likely to highlight a financial solution, such as seeking federal and state funds to fix the problem.

For instance, the Senate approved funding for Flint water crisis in September, 2016, and Michigan's senators, Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, both Democrats, spent months pushing for federal funds to help Flint recover from the water crisis (Daveport, 2016). Previous studies have found that the overall political leanings of news organizations might influence frame building (Kim, Carvalho, & Davis, 2010). Taken together, the findings suggest that newspapers were more likely to mention societal causes and solutions when framing this governance issues.

Apart from the attribution of responsibility frame, the results reveal that official sources, such as government officials or researchers, were predominantly employed in both U.S. newspapers. This finding is in line with previous studies and a heavy reliance on official sources is a part of news routines (Tuchman, 1978). Sources can reinforce or legitimize frames, since the real value of sources, especially credible source, lies in their ability to enhance framing effects. By relying on political officials, newspapers could add an air of credibility to news reporting governance issues. In the case of covering the Flint water crisis, the official position is often preferred by media organizations, which determines how the Flint water crisis is framed.

Ultimately, in the case of Flint water crisis, newspapers portray and evaluate government performance by using a variety of frames. For instance, the study shows that newspapers emphasized the causes, government solutions, and responsibility. Viewed in this manner, the Flint water crisis case actually captures one of four dimensions of good governance, the executive dimension. When describing governance issues, the attribution of responsibility frame appears particularly for the executive dimension of good governance.

### ***Case Study Three: China's Two-child Policy***

The third case study examines how Chinese newspapers framed the governance issue, i.e. China's two-child policy, between 2000 and 2015. As in the case of Flint water crisis, the two-child policy also captures the executive dimension (public policy) of good governance.

The new two-child policy is best understood as the latest step in a gradual policy relaxation instead of a sudden rescission. Chinese government's longstanding family planning policy has never been absolute. In 2013, the Chinese government announced the so-called "selective two-child policy", i.e. the couples would be allowed to have a second child if either of the prospective parents came from a single-child family. Therefore, the study employs the comprehensive two-child policy as a case study.

The two-child policy also reflects the performance of the Chinese government over the past sixteen years. The content analysis confirmed the theoretical propositions that newspaper coverage of two-child policy framed the issue more thematically than episodically and attributed factors about affecting citizens' willingness to have a second child more to the societal reason than the individual level reason.

For instance, Chinese newspapers frequently focused on broad themes such as policy, rules and regulations about the new-two child policy, doctors' suggestions for parents preparing for a second child, and societal benefits from the two-child policy such as increasing China's labor and promoting balanced population growth, etc. Typical news articles employed national policy, experts' opinions, facts and statistics, but less frequently quotes and stories from individual citizens. Despite the predominance of thematic framing, there was still episodic framing that was presented in newspaper coverage of the two-child policy. When stories focused on individuals, they were often presented as typical cases, those are willing to have a second

child or hesitate to do so. Various studies have identified thematic framing in news coverage of politics (Iyengar, 1987, 1991; Nelson, Clawson, et al., 1997). This finding is consistent with previous research. Indeed, thematic framing points to social trends and various characteristics of a broader issue and can invoke beliefs that government or society is responsible for those problems (Iyengar, 1991).

The results also show that newspapers attribute responsibility about affecting citizens' choice to have a second child more to societal factors than to individuals. This finding may not be surprising given the government's longstanding restrictive one-child policy. It is, however, important to notice that previous research has found that structural changes which is brought about by socioeconomic development played a key role in China's fertility reduction (Cai, 2010). Moreover, compared with social solutions, individual solutions were absent in news coverage of two-child policy.

It is interesting to note that although the newspapers referred to financial costs quite often as a vital reason affecting one's willingness to have a second child, but news stories were less likely to suggest economic development or government allowances as a financial solution to address citizens' anxiety about having a second child. Instead, the newspapers mentioned establishing laws, rules, and regulations as the primary solution to effectively implement the two-child policy. One reason might explain this phenomenon is that since many societal solutions can be considered too radical either politically or economically, they might be rejected in news coverage in favor of less drastic solutions (Salmon, 1989). Taken together, the findings are consistent with previous literature that news media placed unbalanced emphasis on societal solutions to various political and social issues (Iyengar, 1996; Kim & Telleen, 2016; Kim & Willis, 2007). The findings also support the idea that news framing governance issues,

particularly in print media, tends to focus on broader socioeconomic conditions rather than individual behaviors and motives, in portraying who is responsible for making policy decisions about the governance issues.

In addition, the study indicates that newspapers referred equally to both the positive and negative effects of implementing two-child policy. The new two-child policy is expected to promote the balanced development of the population, while the potential problems center on how to further protect women's rights and deal with the employment discrimination against women during pregnancy.

Additionally, both government officials and individual citizens' voices were equally likely to be included in news coverage of the two-child policy issue. It is well known that the media always heavily rely on public officials, which has both direct and indirect influence on coverage of politics and society in general (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Although this case study indicates that Chinese newspapers give weight to citizens' voices, there is still heavy reliance on official government sources, which indicates that the media frame is often set by government officials. This may lead to very intended consequences, i.e. namely providing the government with an opportunity to define the issue on its own terms. This is perhaps another reason why the individual responsibility frames were rarely presented in news coverage of the two-child policy. In other words, media employed responsibility frames to portray governance issues, but heavily relied on sources of public officials. The result is likely to be news reporting is highly restricted by the interpretations of national and political interests.

The case of two-child policy captures the executive dimension of good governance. Like Flint water crisis, the case study also identified three mechanisms that news media employed to frame governance issues, i.e. thematic framing, responsibility framing and heavy reliance on



official sources. Thematic framing and responsibility frames can make citizens to attribute the responsibility to societal factors, and the over-reliance on official sources will offer the government with an opportunity to define the issue on its own terms.

#### ***Case Study Four: Anti-corruption Campaigns in China***

The last case study examines how Chinese newspapers framed governance issues, i.e. anti-corruption campaign from Jan.1<sup>st</sup> to Dec.31<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Anti-corruption campaign is not only a hotly debated issue in China, but also an important element of good governance. The case of anti-corruption campaigns addresses the political dimension (control of corruption) of good governance.

Previous research states that the media play three vital roles, namely watchdog, civic forum and agenda setter to promote good governance (Norris, 2010), and results from this study provide certain evidence to substantiate this claim. However, this case study also demonstrates that the news media only employ very limited frames to inform public about governance, i.e. dominant strategy frame and positive effect frame in the case of anti-corruption campaign, as well as heavy reliance on authority sources, which might lead audiences to perceive good governance in much the same way as the media present it.

Findings of this case study provide support to Norris' (2010) statement that media act a watchdog, monitoring the performance of government, checking of the abuse of power, and highlighting scandal and corruption within both the public and private domain. For instance, the study revealed that the corruption cases presented in newspapers mostly occurred in province and municipal level. There are several explanations to this. First, although the mass media are assigned the important role of government watchdog, at the same time news coverage of official corruption is strikingly politically sensitive, since such news stories will be more likely to tarnish

the reputation and image of government, invoke public outrage, and cause social crisis (Zhu, Lu, & Shi, 2012). Viewed in this manner, it is unlikely that many investigative reports on official corruption will appear in Chinese media, and the majority of news stories on corruption have paid more attention to local governments and local officials (Zhu, Lu & Shi, 2012).

Second, directing media attention and public's resentment toward local public officials has offered the central government a chance to demonstrate its determination and effectiveness in punishing local officials for their wrongdoing (Chen & Zhang, 2016), which was also a salient frame in the study. In this regard, the central government is capable of restoring an image of reform as well as reducing and redirecting social grievances.

Third, reported corruption cases are usually considered as isolated incidents and corrupt officials are blamed for personal economic problems or lack of self-discipline. For instance, when dealing with high-profile cases such as the two biggest mega-tigers Xu Caihou and Zhou Yongkang, the newspapers are required to use the so-called standard draft (*tong-gao*) provided by party mouthpieces, like *People's Daily* and the national broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV). Pertinent content, format and in particular the tone of news reports are carefully synchronized by Chinese Communist Party (Gang & Bandurski, 2011). Most importantly, news coverage of high-profile officials was primarily framed as the success of the government's anti-corruption efforts. According to Zhao (2000), by means of sophisticated media control and news frames on anti-corruption achievements, the Chinese Communist Party was able to increase Chinese citizens' support for government's sincere and severe efforts against corruption and also lead citizens believing that cases of official corruption were isolated events rather than as the result of institutional deficiencies.

Furthermore, the findings also showed that a strategy frame was the dominant frame employed by newspapers. The study identified mainly six anti-corruption strategies. The primary three strategies were strictly governing and managing the party, rebuilding a transparent party style, and following the investigation efforts organized and coordinated by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). It is worth mentioning that the meaning of strategy frame identified in this study is very different from “strategy frame” defined by western scholars (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Fallows, 1997), who observed the media tend to frame elections as games, and political candidates as game players. In this study, newspapers used a strategy frame to describe the tactics for achieving political goals such as combating corruption. According to Guo (2016), strategy frame used in coverage by the *New York Times* of China’s anti-corruption campaign differs from the strategy frame used when covering American elections. For example, in the coverage of China’s anti-corruption campaign, incumbent leaders are free to make promises, to implement a policy, or to condemn the corrupt officials. By contrast, corrupt officials have no power to respond. The strategy frame may reinforce the image of the winners and increased public support for incumbent leaders to continue combating corruption (Guo, 2016).

On the other hand, as hypothesized, mentions of anti-corruption strategies significantly outnumbered the causes. With predominance of the strategy frame, newspapers rarely discussed the causes or solutions. What the media present are the efforts made by anti-corruption campaigns, however, what missing here is informing citizens about the cause, i.e. why the government and the party launched such a comprehensive anti-corruption campaign across the country.

Newspapers also made more references to positive influence than negative influence in discussing the impact of anti-corruption campaigns, in particular the constructive consequences such as the accomplishments from anti-corruption campaigns, and building a fair and clean-fingered image of Chinese Communist Party and government. Additionally, newspapers described the anti-corruption stories in a favorable tone. In other words, Chinese media often presented an anti-corruption campaign positively, given its emphasis on the success of anti-corruption efforts. The mass media in authoritarian regimes are always controlled and influenced to varying degrees by their governments so as to create supportive sentiment. Such regimes employ media not only to mobilize political support, but also to shape people's attitudes toward the government (Zhu, Lu, Shi, 2012). Following this logic, it is expected that the effect of formal media coverage of corruption in China is more likely to increase citizen's support for anti-corruption campaign.

In addressing the differences between city press and national press in reporting anti-corruption campaign, the findings showed that the only difference is that city party press was more likely to present the influence of anti-corruption campaigns than national party press. Indeed, the mainstream Chinese media tended to be homogeneous, as the Chinese government controls coverage of important issues, including the anti-corruption campaigns. Last but not least, the case study finds that thematic framing stories significantly outweighed episodic stories. From the perspective of the newspaper, corruption is portrayed as a social phenomenon rather than an individual-level phenomenon in China. Heavy reliance on official sources further indicates that media frame about anti-corruption campaign is set by government, which provides the government an opportunity to define the issue on its own terms or meet its own national and political interests.

### Chapter 4 Summary

The following section presents the combined results of four case studies, which were purposefully selected to examine how news media frame the four dimensions of good governance. After individually reviewing the finding of each case study, an important purpose of chapter four is to integrate the concept of good governance and framing theory, especially to assess implications of how news media frame governance issues and why the media matters in promoting and guaranteeing good governance in both democracies and authoritarian regimes.

#### Commonalities across Four Case Studies

This dissertation project began with identifying the concept of good governance as a vibrant and interdisciplinary field, where scholars and institutions usually define good governance within their own scope and field. In many respects, good governance is just another way of describing liberal democracy, with its normative prescriptions about rule of law, political rights, accountability, and state legitimacy (Smith, 2007). Previous scholars and institutions have proposed varying conceptualization of good governance (e.g. Bratton & van de Walle, 1992; Chazan, 1992; Hydén, 1992; Smith, 2007; Stoker 1998b; the World Bank 1989). In constructing the concept of good governance, this dissertation relied heavily on the conceptual framework advanced by Smith (2007) that argued for each attribute on the ‘good governance’ agenda is evaluated for its contribution to development and the cost to society of bad governance. Based on the original framework (Smith, 2007), the dissertation proposed the four dimensions of good governance (e.g. constitutional, political, executive and regime stability).

On the other hand, the dissertation mainly employed framing theory to identify media frames in portraying governance issues. Specially, the dissertation explored the ways in which the news media describe difference governance issues between China and the United States. The

findings in chapter four replicate previous framing research and also present new findings that help to clarify how the news media portray governance issues and promote good governance.

*News Media Employ Thematic Framing to Portray Governance Issues*

To begin, the content analysis was able to identify strong evidence that news media mainly employ thematic framing to describe governance issues. The results of four case studies reveal that both Chinese and American newspapers were more likely to frame the governance issues in a thematic manner rather than an episodic way. According to Iyengar (1991), thematic framing points to social trends and various characteristics of a broader issue and can invoke beliefs that government or society is responsible for those problems. For instance, frequent salience of ‘federal funds, emergency declaration, and National Guard helping with distribution of water and filters’ in the case of Flint water crisis can evoke the perception that government is responsible for solving water crisis in Flint. Similarly, Entman (1993, p.52) stated, “certain clusters of keywords provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” In other words, a certain cluster of words or symbols within news texts can invoke a particular meaning. For example, frequent use of phrases or words such as establishing rules and laws, providing public facilities and more educational resources in then case of China’s two-child policy, can also shape a perception that Chinese government ought to take actions to helping implementing the new two-child policy.

This finding is consistent with previous framing studies that have found news media, in particular newspapers, employ more thematic framing to describe social and political issues (Iyengar, 1991, 1996). Media coverage on political and social problems that use thematic versus episodic frames predisposes the audience toward a particular line of reasoning or outcome (see Iyengar, 1991). When portraying and framing governance issues between China and the United

States, newspapers' systematic reliance on thematic as opposed to the episodic depictions of governance issues elicits social attributions of responsibility for social problems such as Flint water crisis and China's two-child policy. News media employ more thematic framing to emphasize the actions of governmental actors rather than the private sector. In newspaper coverage of governance issues, news media highlights the connections between governance issues and the actions or inactions of public officials, which not only strengthen the accountability of elected government officials, but also underscore political discourse.

#### *Attribution of Responsibility Frame in Governance Issues*

Furthermore, based on the findings from four case studies, the attribution of responsibility frame is also salient in news coverage of governance issues in both China and the United States. For instance, the results reveal that newspapers attributed responsibility for barring Syrian refugees to social-level reasons (i.e., national security concern about accepting Syrian refugees into U.S.). Similarly, in the case of Flint water crisis, newspapers presented more social causes (i.e., switching water supply from Detroit to Flint) and social solutions in discussing who is responsible for crisis. Meanwhile, Chinese newspapers also focused more on social factors and social solutions to frame two-child policy. Although the four cases selected are not identical, the frames that news media employed to describe governance issues are similar. Attribution of responsibility frame emerges from the cases. Several explanations can account for this.

First, framing functions to shape the way the public thinks about an issue by suggesting what the issue is about, what the cause is and what should be done as a solution (Entman, 1993). The shared attribution of responsibility frame is related to the fact that the news media can frame the question of responsibility, leading the audience to determine important causes of and

solutions to social problems (Iyengar, 1991). In the three cases mentioned above, both U.S. and Chinese newspapers appeal to causes and government solutions, two crucial elements of attribution of responsibility frame.

Second, thematic framing is the primary manner in which governance issues are framed. Although episodic stories are relatively easier to prepare, thematic stories usually require a significant amount of background research and data collection (Kim, 2015). In fact, the newspapers' frequent use of thematic framing, where a topic or issue is presented in a more abstract social context, leads the audience to a more socially oriented interpretation of the cause and solutions (Kim, 2015).

Lastly, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) contend that the attribution of responsibility frame is most commonly used in elite newspapers. Given the credibility and nature of leading newspapers in both nations, it would be possible for newspaper coverage of governance issues to employ the shared attribution of responsibility frame.

#### *Relying on Official Sources in Framing Governance Issues*

Apart from thematic framing and the shared attribution of responsibility frame, the results of all four case studies reveal that official sources, such as government officials or researchers, are predominantly employed in both U.S. and Chinese newspapers. The role that source cues play in enhancing framing effects is equally important. This finding is in line with previous studies and a heavy reliance on official sources is a part of news routines (Tuchman, 1978). One reason is journalists and their editors believe that official sources have important things to say (Paletz & Entman, 1981) and tend to accept the things official sources say as being factual (Gandy, 1982). Secondly, media frames about governance issues do not occur in a vacuum. Instead, frames are associated with sources that vary in credibility. New media effectively use



official sources to promote frames about governance, and give legitimacy to political elites. Furthermore, journalistic norms of fairness and balance require source-oriented reporting in an effort to establish a sense of neutrality and add more credibility to news reporting (Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1986; Soley, 1992).

However, the fact that journalists tend to prefer official sources of information leads to a dominance of official viewpoints and problem definitions (Bennett, 1990; Sigal, 1973). Heavy reliance on official government sources suggests that the media frame is often set by government officials. This may lead to very intended consequences, i.e. namely providing the government with an opportunity to define the issue on its own terms. Therefore, in the case of covering governance issues, the official position is often preferred by media organizations. Indeed, official news sources have a natural advantage to manipulate the frame, which reinforces them the ability to identify and discuss the issues in certain manner (McLeod and Hertog, 1999).

When reporting on governance, the media ought to improve the quality of experts and even citizens input into the evaluation on government performance. In fact, compared to U.S. newspapers, Chinese newspapers were more willing to include citizens' opinions and voices in coverage of governance issues (i.e. two-child policy). Cultural differences might account for this difference. For instance, the Confucian ideal of harmony in Chinese culture is to maintain existing relationships among individuals and able to bring the contending sensibilities and voices of many people together. No matter whether the media rely on official sources in coverage of governance issues, the media must act as a civic forum to encourage citizens' voices (Norris, 2010).

Taken together, the results of content analysis identified three major mechanisms that news media employed to frame governance issues, i.e. thematic framing, responsibility framing

and heavy reliance on official sources. Thematic framing and responsibility frames can make citizens to attribute the responsibility to societal factors, and the over-reliance on official sources will offer the government with an opportunity to define the issue on its own terms. The result is likely to be news reporting that is highly restricted by the interpretations of national and political interests.

### **Unique Frames Reflect the Various Dimensions of Good Governance**

While the dissertation discovered the three mechanisms that both Chinese and U.S. newspapers utilize to frame governance issues, the author was able to identify unique frames emerging from each case, which captures and reflect the various dimensions of good governance. Each governance issue captures one or two dimensions of good governance, and each case tends to generate a unique set of frames. How does the unique set of frames associate with the varying dimensions of good governance?

The results from the four case studies showed that certain frames have the ability to dominate the news discourse to describe the governance issues. For instance, in the case of Syrian refugee crisis, newspapers use both the security frame and humanitarian assistant frame. However, a security frame dominates the news discourse about Syrian refugees can evoke perceptions of threats which justify Syrian refugees crisis is a security problem, and accepting Syrian refugees might pose a great threat to national security. Viewed in this manner, a security frame in Syrian refugee issue captures and reflects the regime stability dimension of good governance, and the security frame resonates with American political values.

In the same way, the solution frame dominates in news coverage of Flint water crisis, while the benefit frame is salient in the case of China's two-child policy, which all reflects the executive dimension of good governance. It is worth mentioning that the strategy frame is the

most dominant frame in news coverage of China's anti-corruption campaigns, which not only captures the political dimension of good governance, but also describes the actions that Chinese government take to combat corruption. A set of unique frames and the consistent frames were able to reflect how the news media describe governance issues and define good governance.

## **CHAPTER 5 EXPOSURE TO GOVERNANCE NEWS AND READERS' COMMENTS: THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE AND PUBLIC OPINION ON GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

The previous chapter detailed the content analysis of four case studies on how news media frame governance issues. Moreover, the preceding chapter identified the three mechanisms that news media utilized to frame governance issues. The governance frames that were identified from content analysis will be used as stimuli in the experiment to test whether news framing of governance issues and the opinion climate of readers' comments have an effect on individuals' willingness to talk about governance. By combining framing and the spiral of silence theory, the experiment aims to test whether media framing of governance issues influence individuals' opinion and evaluation on the performance of U.S. government in handling two important governance issues, namely the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee controversy. This chapter includes the hypotheses for the study, a review on the experimental method, following results section. Finally, a discussion of news framing governance issues, spiral of silence theory, and public opinion will be presented alongside the implications of broader public opinion on good governance.

Both framing and the spiral of silence theory share the same underlay of social norms: the contextual influence on individual behavior at group level (Fung & Scheufele, 2014). In other words, social norms provide information for individuals to follow, because the larger the crowd that engages in the same behavior, the more correct individuals will perceive the behavior to be (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Moreover, both framing and the spiral of silence theory suggest that media can exert an influence on public opinion, because the media serves one of the main sources for individuals to estimate the climate of opinion (Noelle-Neuman, 1993). The present study tests whether the governance frames that news media employ to describe social and

political issues will affect individuals' opinion over the performance of government. More specially, the study aims to test whether the good governance and bad governance frames used by news media to portray the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee issue will affect individuals' approval of the way that U.S. government handled such issues.

The first two hypotheses are:

H1: In the case of the Flint water crisis, individuals who read a news story with a good governance news frame would be more likely to approve of the way U.S. government handled the issue than individuals who read a news story with a bad governance news frame.

H2: In the case of the Syrian refugee crisis, individuals who read a news story with a good governance news frame would be more likely to approve of the way U.S. government in handled the issue than individuals who read a news story with a bad governance news frame.

Previous research suggests that certain social-psychological factors influenced public opinion. When an individual is concerned about an issue, the person is more likely to act on it and communicate about it out of civic duty (Moy, Domke, & Stamm, 2001; Gearhart & Zhang, 2013). The study also tests whether the effects of exposure to news frames would be moderated by attention to governance issues.

The following two hypotheses emerged:

H3: In the case of the Flint water crisis, attention to the Flint water issue will moderate framing effects so that individuals who pay low attention to Flint water crisis would be more likely to be affected by the news frame than individuals who pay high attention to Flint water crisis.

H4: In the case of the Syrian refugee crisis, attention to Syrian refugee issue will moderate framing effects so that individuals who pay low attention to Syrian refugee crisis

would be more likely to be affected by the news frame than individuals who pay high attention to Syrian refugee crisis.

When considering political issues, some are more important than others. This is true not only on a national or international level, but also on the personal level. Some governance issues may capture a great amount attention from news media, public officials and interest groups, etc, while other might be neglected (see Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). Previous research suggests that individual issue importance can be a crucial variable in how strongly a frame can affect attitudes and opinion (Lecheler, de Vreese, & Slothuus, 2009). This study tests whether attention to governance issues will affect individuals' willingness to speak out and their evaluation on the performance of U.S. government. H5 is as follows:

H5: Attention to governance issues will influence individuals' opinion and perception of U.S. governance with respect to (a) willingness to speak out, and (b) evaluation on the performance of U.S. government.

One of the most important measure studied in spiral of silence research is one's willingness to speak out (Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997). This study also tests whether the effects of different governance issues and the level of governance news frames will affect one's opinion expression as well as whether they will perceive the U.S. government handling of those governance issues as positively or negatively. Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H6: Different governance issues and the level of governance news frames will influence one's opinion and perception of good governance with respect to (a) willingness to speak out, and (b) evaluation on the performance of U.S government.

Previous research on the spiral of silence also finds that online readers' comments alone had an effect on one's evaluation of the message content, but no impact on attitudes toward the

issue (Walther, DeAndrea, & Anthony, 2010). In addition, previous research also finds the effect of individuals' willingness to self-censor on their propensity to express opinion online and offline (Hayes et al., 2005, Gearhart & Zhang, 2013). Taken together, these findings suggest opinion climate condition and one's willingness to self-censor might influence public opinion. Thus, the second aim of the study is to test whether different governance issues and conditions of readers' comments will interact to influence change in opinion and evaluation on U.S. government after controlling for one's willingness to self-censor. H7 is as follows.

H7: Different governance issues and the conditions of readers' comments will influence individuals' opinion change and evaluation of U.S. government after controlling for one's willingness to self-censor.

### **Methodology and Data Collection**

#### *Recruiting Experimental Participants*

Participants were recruited from an introductory communication class at a larger Midwestern university and were awarded with extra credit for participation. A total of 230 individual participants (71 male and 159 female,  $M_{age}=21.8$  years old, age ranging from 17 to 56) were recruited between December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017. In the sample, 58.3% identified as Caucasians, 18.3% as African Americans, 17.4% as Latinos, 17.4% as Arab, 9.6% as Asian/Asian American, and 13.9% as others. Participants were randomly assigned to one of 12 experimental conditions.

#### *Experimental Design*

The experiment examined whether the media framing of governance issue from newspapers affect individuals' willingness to talk about good governance. The study employs a 2 (governance issues: Flint water crisis vs. Syrian refugee issue)  $\times$  2 (governance frame: good

governance vs. bad governance)  $\times$  3 (news comment section: supportive vs. neutral vs. oppositional) factorial design to manipulate governance frames and the opinion climate of a news comment section. Table 10 shows the specific experimental design. There were three independent variables investigated in the study. First, the governance issues included the issue on Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee controversy. Second, governance frame was operationalized as good and bad, toward whether the Senate approved or vetoed funding for Flint water crisis or Syrian refugee crisis. Third, the conditions of news comments were operationalized as supportive, neutral and oppositional.

Table 10 Two by Two by Three Factorial Design

Issues	Governance frames	Readers' comments		
Flint water crisis	Good governance	Supportive comments	Neutral comments	Oppositional comments
Syrian refugees issue	Bad governance			

### *Stimuli*

The two governance issues were the debate about whether the United States ought to accept Syrian refugees and Flint water crisis. Media coverage provides participants with a broad range of potential information about the climate of opinion. The researcher generated four news stories about the two controversial issues and three conditions of readers' comments from the existing media sources for each news story.

Stimuli were constructed for this experiment focusing on three independent variables. First, with regards to the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee issue, the researcher developed all the four news stories by using the governance frame that was identified in content analysis.

The four news stories focused on the Senate approve/vetoed funding for Flint water crisis and the

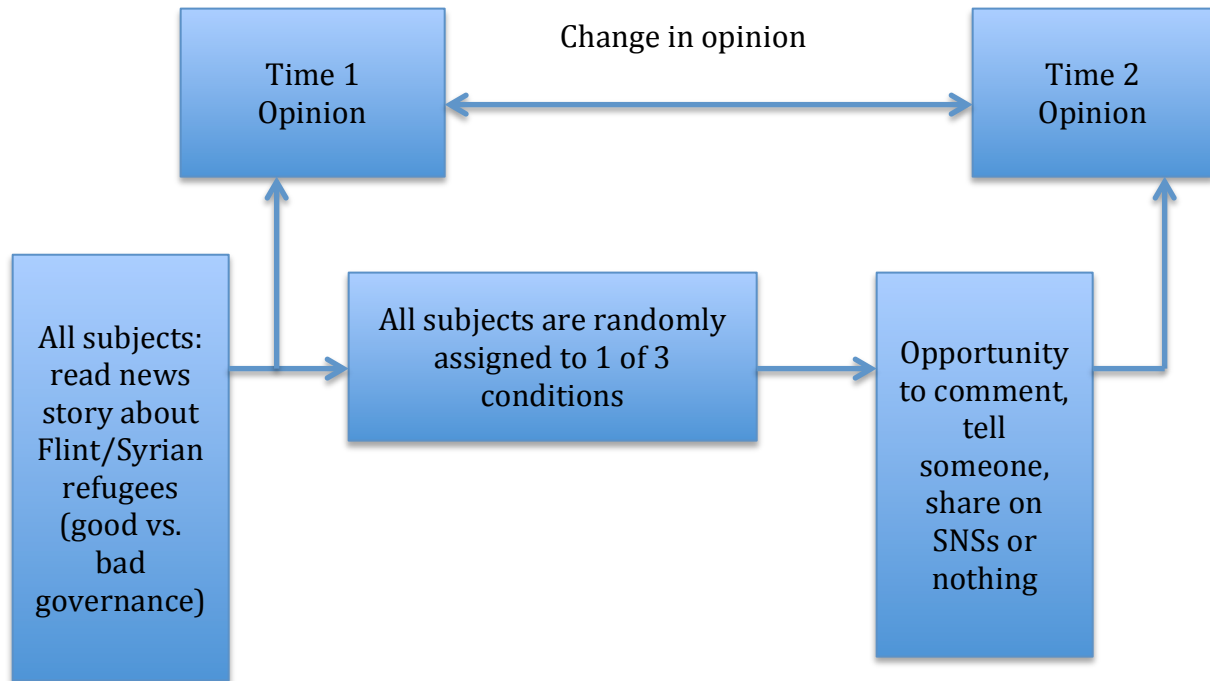


debate over accepting more Syrian refugees into U.S. Second, the three conditions of readers' comments were also created, and each condition is composed of a list of six comments. The six comments were designed to show a positive opinion climate, where all six readers' comments being satisfied with the U.S. government performance in dealing with Flint water crisis or refugee crisis, while the negative opinion climate was composed of six comments criticizing U.S. government. The neutral opinion climate included three supportive comments and three oppositional comments.

### *Procedure*

Participants in the study were told that they were going to give their opinions on certain political issues in the United States. Participants began by answering some questions about their media use and news consumption on a daily basis. Then participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. Participants read one piece of four news articles, which described the Senate approved/vetoed funding either for Flint water crisis or Syrian refugee issue. Immediately after reading the news article, participants were asked their opinion on the issue. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three comment opinion climate conditions. Participants were exposed to six comments in each condition. Next, participants were told they had five choices. They could either: 1) reply to one of the comments they saw or 2) tell someone else about the topic or 3) share this news story on your social networking sites or 4) post your comment about the news topic on your social networking sites or 5) do nothing to further engage with the news comment section. Then, participants' opinion on the news issue was collected for the second time (see Figure 11). Each news story and each reader's comment followed the same format. The total word count of each news story ranged from 114 to 117.

Figure 11 Experimental Procedure



Then, at the end of the experiment, demographic information was collected and participants were debriefed about the deception used in the experiment. The author received IRB approval for the study.

#### Measures of Relevant Constructs

##### *Independent Variables*

The three independent variables being examined by this design were governance issues (Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee crisis), governance frames (good governance news frame and bad governance news frame), and conditions of readers' comments (supportive, neutral, and oppositional). Moreover, participants were asked to indicate how much attention they pay to the issues such as Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee issue (0=no attention to 10=full attention;

M=4.82, SD=2.583) The result of reliability test of issue importance using Cronbach's Alpha is .726.

### *Covariate*

Furthermore, one covariate was measured: willingness to self-censor. Developed by Hayes et al. (2005a, 2005b), this composite measures one's willingness to withhold their own opinion in interpersonal contact when it could cause disagreement. Matthes et al. (2012) suggests that this scale works cross-culturally and emerges from the spiral of silence. Hayes, Glynn and Shanahan (2005a, p. 319) define it as "a person's general reticence to express an opinion to an audience that is likely to disagree." Hayes, Glynn, and Shanahan (2005a) introduce the willingness to self-censor scale as a measure of the extent to which a person uses cues about the climate of opinion when deciding whether to publicly express opinions. They demonstrate the scale's reliability and validity in several studies. What is more, Hayes, Uldall and Glynn (2010) reveal that the effect of the climate of opinion on one's opinion expression is moderated by willingness to self-censor. Participants were asked on a 5-point scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The scale employs eight statements summarized as: 1) difficult to express; 2) others were wrong, but I didn't let them know; 3) I would rather go along with others when I disagree with others; 4) express opinion easily; 5) uncomfortable when opinion asked; 6) speak opinion to trusted others; 7) keep quite in public; 8) tell when disagree (M=2.77, SD=.768, Alpha=.813) This covariate was only employed for Hypthesis 7, due to the fact that one's willingness to self-censor might affect one's opinion change.

### *Moderator*

Attention to governance issues. This variable assessed how much attention individuals pay to the governance issues. Issue attention was measured with two questions: “how much attention do you pay to the following issues such as (1) Flint water crisis (M=4.94, SD=2.825) and (2) Syrian refugee issue (M=4.69, SD=3.004, 0=no attention to 10=full attention). The variable of attention to both governance issues (M=4.84, SD=2.583) was built by adding the attention to Flint water crisis and the attention to Syrian refugee issue and the Cronbach’s Alpha for issue attention is .726. To test the effect of attention on one’s opinion, the variable was recoded into four groups at the mean: (1) participants with high attention to Flint water issue, (2) participants with low attention to Flint water issue, (3) participants with high attention to Syrian refugee crisis, and (4) participants with low attention to Syrian refugee crisis.

### *Control Variables*

Several questions about demographic information were gathered via questionnaire for control purposes. Questions include age, gender, level of education, race, income, political interest, political efficacy, political knowledge, political ideology, and media use, etc. Psychological variables such as fear of isolation and attitude certainty were also asked in the experiment.

### *Dependent Variables*

The five dependent variables in the study were respectively: personal opinion time 1, personal opinion time 2, change in personal opinion, approval of U.S. government dealing with governance issues, and evaluation on the performance of government. The opinion expression variables were key variables in the spiral of silence theory, and the approval and evaluation of U.S. government is particularly important for this study.

**Personal Opinion Time 1** (*Willingness to Speak*): The opinion of the participants about the news issue was collected during Time 1 immediately after the participant read the news article. Serving as one of the primary dependent variables, this variable examines the way participants express their opinion on a given issue. Adapted from Gearhart and Zhang (2013), participants will be asked to indicate the likelihood of engaging each of the five strategies using a 5-point scale (1= not likely at all to 5= very likely) in terms of five choices. The question asks, “if you were actually in this situation, how likely is it that you would” 1) comment on the topic of the news story; 2) tell someone else about the news topic; 3) share the news story on social networking sites; 4) post your comment about the news topic on social networking sites; 5) ignore the topic and the news completely (M=3.03, SD=.965). The Cronbach Alpha of reliability test of this variable was .799.

**Personal Opinion Time 2** (*Willingness to Speak*): The opinion of the participant about the news issue was collected for the second time after the participant has seen the readers’ comments about the news article that were manipulated to reflect the opinion climate condition the participants were assigned. The scale was the same and the wording of the question was the same as it was shown in Time 1. The mean score for Time 2 opinion was 2.98, S.D.=.963. The Cronbach Alpha of reliability test of this variable was .843.

**Change in personal opinion:** Change in personal opinion was calculated by finding the difference between Time 2 and Time 1. The resulting variable ranged from 2 to -3, where one’s score higher than 0 indicate a move toward being more likely to discuss the governance issues, while one’s score lower than 0 means that a move toward being silent about discussing the governance issues. A score of zero means there was no movement in personal opinion. The mean

in change of opinion was .06, S.D.=.713. Forty percent (N=91) of the participants changed their opinion on the news issue between Time 1 and Time 2.

**Approval of the way that U.S. government dealing with governance issues:** This variable gauged the degree to which participants agree with the way that U.S government handled the governance issues such as Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee crisis. Participants were asked “how much do you approve of the way U.S. government in handling the following issues such as (a) Syrian refugee issues and (b) the Flint water crisis (1=strongly disapprove to 5=strongly approve). The mean score for approval of the way that U.S. government dealing with Flint water crisis is 1.99, S.D=. 976, and dealing with the Syrian refugee issue (M=2.41, SD=. 919).

**Evaluation on the performance of U.S. government** (perception of U.S. governance): this variable was operationalized using two questions asking, “how do you rate the performance of U.S. government’s in handling the following issues such as (1) Flint water crisis and (2) Syrian refugee issue” (1=extremely bad to 5=extremely good; M=2.18, SD=. 731).

#### *Randomization Check*

A series of Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine whether the method of randomization produced comparable groups of participants across experimental conditions. None of *F*-values were statistically significant at the .05 level. Thus, the researcher was reassured that the only feature that differentiates participants in each condition is the one that experimentally triggered.

#### *Manipulation Check*

The manipulation check aims to verify whether participants had followed the instructions. Several questions were used to perform manipulation checks. The first manipulation check was

conducted to establish that participants could remember the governance issues to which they were assigned. For the Flint water crisis condition, the question asked the participants, “what was the topic of the news story you read” (1=Flint water crisis, 2=Rise of gun violence, 3=Police brutality), while for the condition of Syrian refugee crisis, the question asked the participants, “what are the topic of the news story you read” (1=Syrian refugees, 2=Rise of gun violence, 3=Police brutality).

A second manipulation check was used to assess the level of governance news frames that were perceived by participants. Two questions asked the participants, “(1) Did the Senate approve funding for Flint water crisis (1=Yes, 2=No, 3=I am not sure)”; “(2) Did the Senate approve funding for Syrian refugees (1=Yes, 2=No, 3=I am not sure)”. In addition, it was used to assure that participants read the news story and perceived the media opinion on two issues.

The last manipulation check was to assess whether participants perceived the opinion of climate to be mostly positive or mostly negative. One question asking, “the online readers’ comments about the news story you just read are (1=mostly negative, 2=mixed, 3=mostly positive).

## Results

The study employs independent samples t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) for statistical analysis. For predicted effects, significant omnibuses tests are further examined by univariate tests, where appropriate by post-hoc analysis.

H1 posited that participants who read the Flint water news story with a good governance news frame (i.e., the Senate approved the funding for Flint residents) would be more likely to approve of the way U.S. government in handling the Flint water issue than participants who read

the Flint water news story with a bad governance frame (i.e. the Senate vetoed the funding for Flint residents).

With regards to H1, an independent sample T-test was conducted to test the participants' approval of U.S. government in dealing with Flint water crisis in the good governance news condition compared with the bad governance news condition. The results of t-test showed that when reading the Flint water crisis news story, participants in the good governance news frame condition ( $M=2.23$ ,  $SD=1.079$ ) were more likely to approve the way U.S. government handled the Flint water issue than did participants in the bad governance news frame condition ( $M=1.71$ ,  $SD=.731$ ),  $t(114)=3.010$ ,  $p=.003$ . H1 was supported.

Similarly, H2 predicted that those who read the Syrian refugee crisis news story with a good governance frame would be more likely to approve of the way U.S. government dealing with Syrian refugee issues than participants in the bad governance news frame condition. The t-test indicates that when reading the Syrian refugee crisis news story, participants in the good governance news frame condition ( $M=2.71$ ,  $SD=.889$ ) were more likely to approve the way U.S. government handling the Syrian refugee controversy than did participants in the bad governance news frame condition ( $M=2.33$ ,  $SD=.998$ ),  $t(112)=2.182$ ,  $p=.031$ . Thus, H2 was also supported.

H3 predicted that attention to Flint water crisis would moderate the framing effects. A two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the main effects of governance frames and attention to Flint water crisis and the interaction effect between governance frames and the issue attention on one's opinion over the performance of U.S. government in dealing with the Flint water crisis. Governance frames included two levels (good governance frame and bad governance frame) and issue attention consisted two levels (high attention and low attention to Flint water issue). All effects were statistically significant at .05

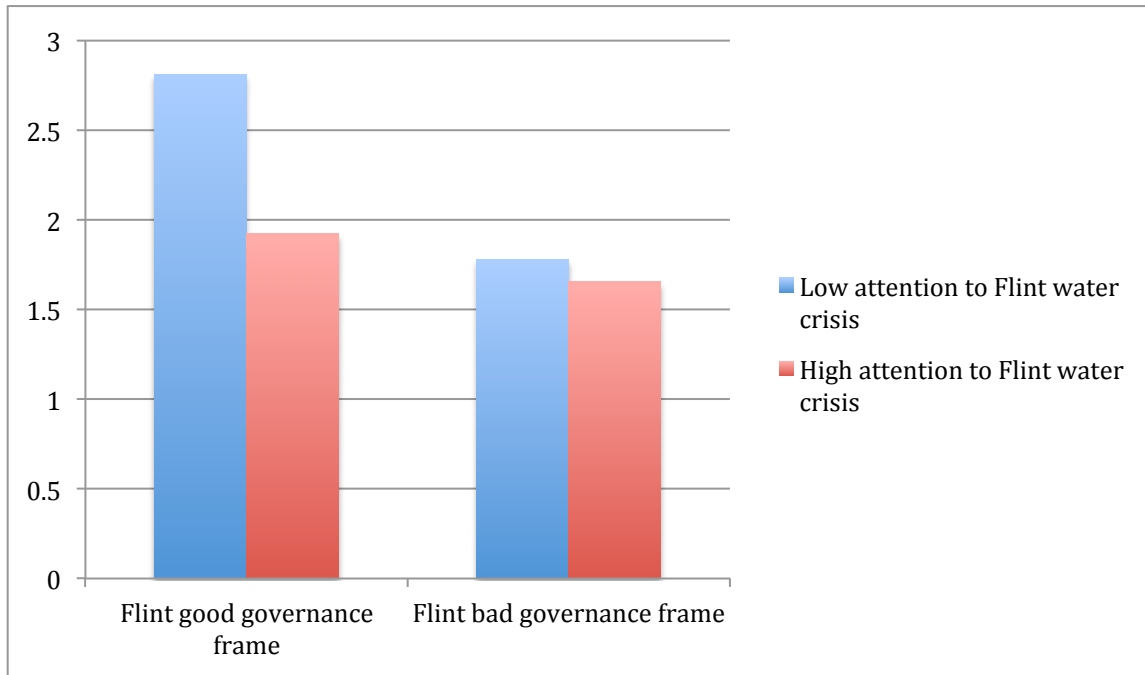


significance level. The main effect for governance frames yielded an F ratio of  $F(1, 112)=14.980$ ,  $p<.000$ , partial eta squared =.118, power =.97, and the main effect for issue attention yielded an F ratio of  $F(1, 112)=9.03$ ,  $p=.003$ , partial eta squared=.075, power=.846.

An interaction model was tested and it is found a significant interaction effect for issues attention and levels of governance frames ( $F(1,112)=5.175$ ,  $p=.025$ , partial eta squared=.044, power=.616) controlling for main effects. Figure 12 shows different levels of approval for high and low attention participants in both conditions. Approval of U.S. in dealing with Flint water issue among participants with low attention in the Flint good governance frame was higher ( $M=2.81$ ,  $SD=.928$ ) ( $N=21$ ) than for participants with high attention ( $M=1.92$ ,  $SD=1.036$ ) ( $N=39$ ). Participants in the Flint bad governance frame condition who paid low attention to Flint water crisis ( $M=1.78$ ,  $SD=.934$ ) ( $N=27$ ) still showed a slightly higher degree of support for U.S. government compared to participants within the same condition and with high attention ( $M=1.66$ ,  $SD=.484$ ) ( $N=29$ ).

Taken together, individuals who paid low attention to Flint water issue were strongly affected by the news frames. Participants who paid less attention to Flint water crisis were especially affected by the good governance news coverage. Individuals who paid more attention responded similarly in the good and bad governance frame conditions, and were thus not as affected by the good governance frame as those who paid less attention to Flint water crisis. Thus, H3 was supported.

Figure 12 Approval of U.S Government in Dealing with Flint Water Crisis for Participants Who Paid High and Low Attention in Good and Bad Governance Frames Condition



*Note:* Bars show the mean scores of approval of U.S. government in dealing with Flint water crisis of participants who paid low and high attention on a ten-point scale in the good governance and bad governance frame conditions.

Similarly, H4 tested whether attention to Syrian refugee issue also moderated the framing effects. The results of two-way ANOVA only found the main effect for governance frames, which yielded an F ratio of (1,110)=4.212,  $p=.043$ , partial eta squared=.037, power=.530. Neither the main effect for attention to Syrian refugee issue nor the interaction effect was significant. Therefore, H4 was not supported.

H5 predicted that attention to governance issues would affect individuals' willingness to speak out and their perception of the performance of U.S. government in dealing with those issues. As for H5, a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), using Wilks' Lambda, was conducted for major effects. The results showed a significant multivariate effect

for the variable about issue attention (high attention versus low attention:  $F(2, 225) = 12.962$ ,  $p < .000$ , partial eta squared = .103. Power to detect the effect was .997)

Univariate analyses for the effect of one's attention to governance issues in the experiment significantly predicted *one's willingness to speak out* ( $F(1, 226) = 19.225$ ,  $p < .000$ , partial eta squared = .078, power = .992), with participants who paid high attention to both governance issues ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = .893$ ) being more likely to speak out than participants who paid less attention ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = .970$ ) (See Figure 13). The effects of issue attention also reached a significant level on *one's evaluation on the performance of U.S. government* ( $F(1, 226) = 12.652$ ,  $p < .000$ , partial eta squared = .053, power = .943) (See Figure 14). The post-hoc analysis showed that participants who paid less attention to both governance issues ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = .654$ ,  $t(228) = 3.77$ ,  $p < .000$ ) rated the performance of U.S. government more positively than participants who paid more attention ( $M = 2.02$ ,  $SD = .754$ ). Therefore, H5 was supported, and Table 11 summarized the results of the one-way MANOVA.

Table 11 One-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of Issue Attention on One's Willingness to Speak Out and Evaluation of U.S. government

Independent Variables	Wilkins' Lambda	Value	F	Hypo. df	Error df	Sig.	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	Wilkins' Lambda	.037	2922.098	2.00	227.00	.000	.963
Issue Attention	Wilkins' Lambda	.893	13.602	2.00	227.00	.000***	.107

Note. The above statistics in MANOVA results are computed using alpha = .05. Design of the test: Intercept + Issue Attention.

Figure 13 One-way MANOVA Predicting One's Willingness To Speak Out (Time 1 Opinion)

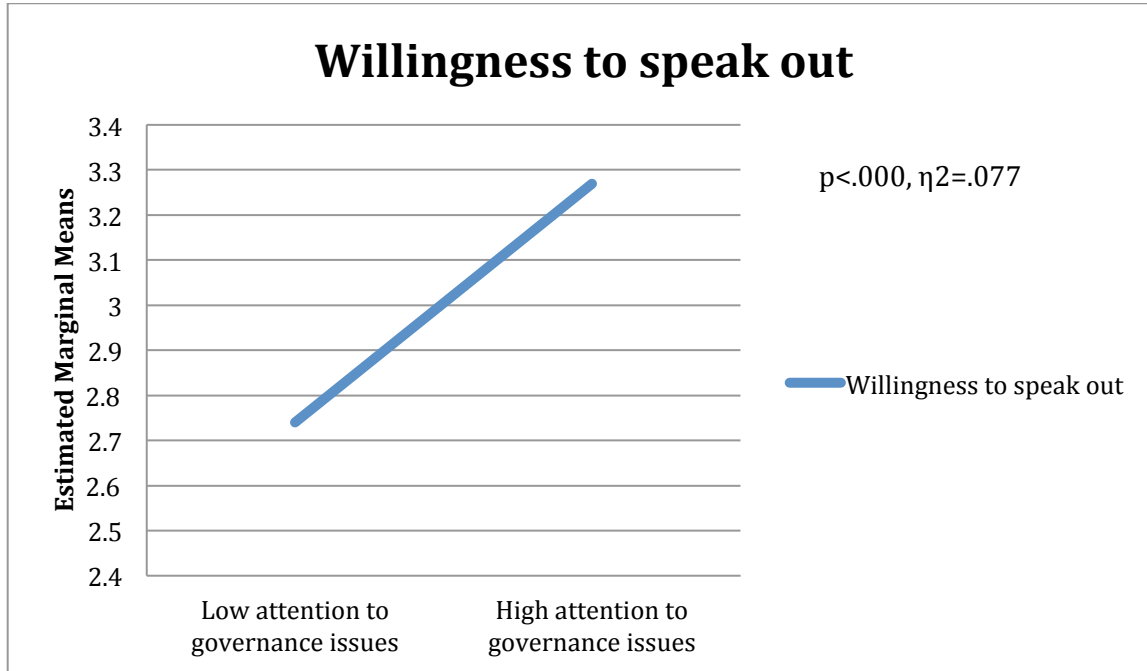
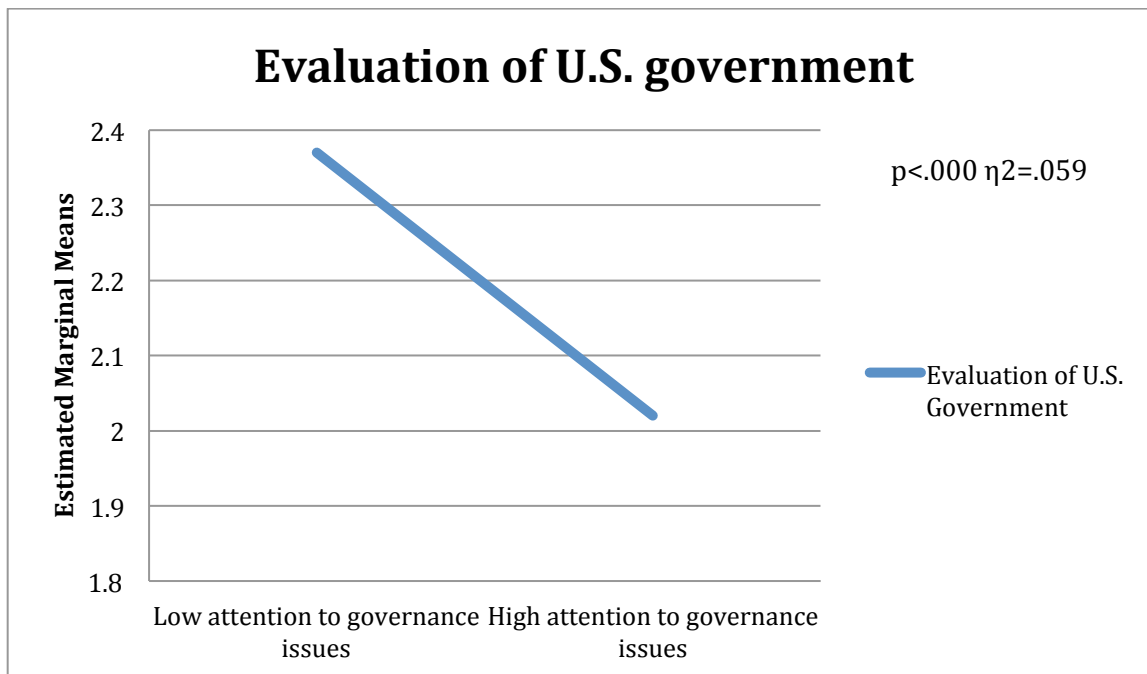


Figure 14 One-way MANOVA Predicting one's Evaluation On The Performance of U.S. Government



H6 explored whether different governance issues and the level of governance frames interact to influence one's opinion and perception of good governance including (a) one's willingness to speak out and (b) evaluation on the performance of U.S. government in dealing with those governance issues.

In terms of H6, a two-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), using Wilks' Lambda, was conducted for major effects. The 2×2 factorial analysis of variance tests, with two independent variables-governance issues (Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee crisis) and level of governance news frames (good and bad)-were examined on the dependent measures of one's opinion and perception of U.S. governance, namely one's willingness to speak out and one's evaluation on U.S. government. The results showed a significant multivariate effect for the two latent variables as a group in relation to the governance issues in the experiment (Flint water crisis versus Syrian refugee crisis:  $F(2, 225) = 4.015, p = .019$ , partial eta squared = .034. Power to detect the effect was .713) and the condition of governance news frames (good versus bad governance news frame:  $F(2, 225) = 3.765, p = .025$ , partial eta squared = .032. Power to detect the effect was .683). However, the interaction between governance issues and conditions of governance news frames in the experiment was not statistically significant ( $p = .525$ ).

Univariate analyses for the effect of governance issues in the experiment significantly predicted *one's willingness to speak out* ( $F(1, 226) = 7.901, p = .005$ , partial eta squared = .034, power = .799), with participants reading Flint water issue ( $M = 3.21, SD = .907$ ) being more likely to speak out than ones in the condition of Syrian refugee crisis ( $M = 2.85, SD = .992$ ) (See Figure 15).

Figure 15 Two-way Interaction Predicting One's Willingness to Speak Out (Time1 opinion).

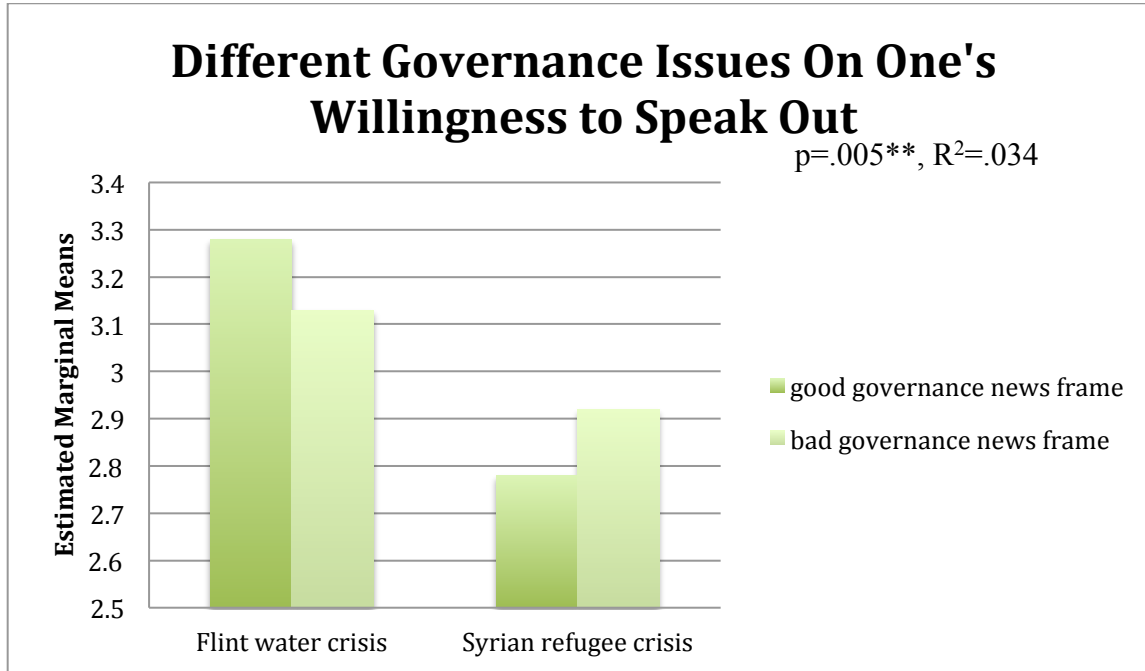


Table 12 Multivariate Test of Independent Variables on Public Opinion and Perception of U.S. Governance

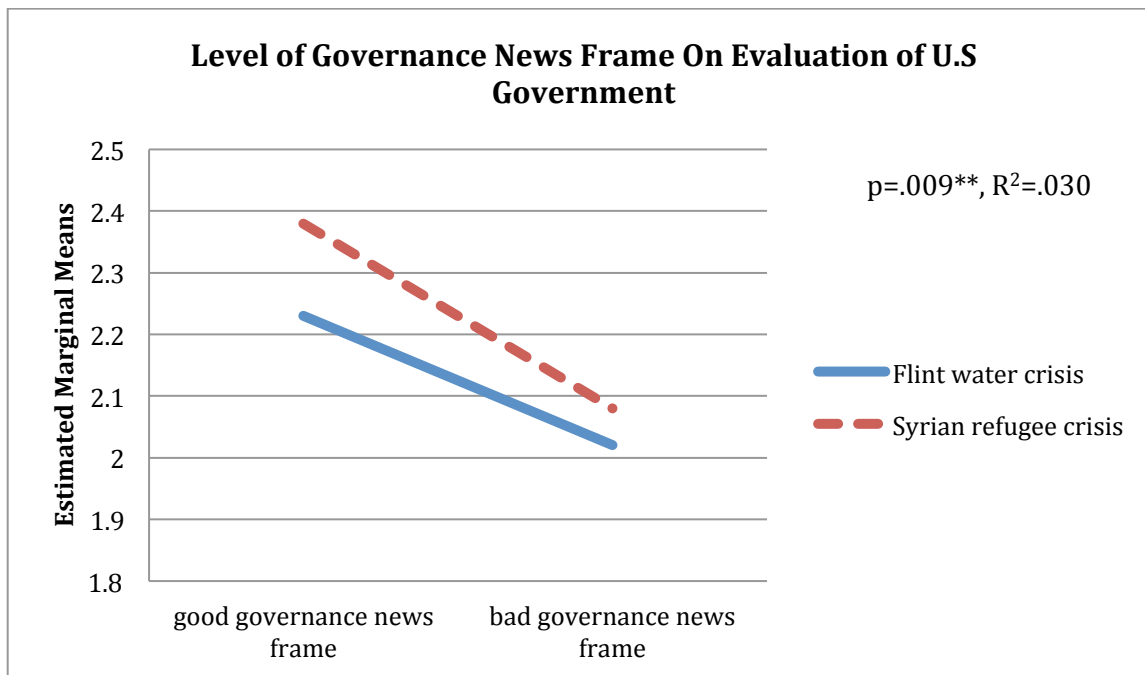
Independent Variables	Wilkins' Lambda	Value	F	Hypo. df	Error df	Sig.	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	Wilkins' Lambda	.036	3011.119	2.00	225.00	.000	.964
Gov. Issues	Wilkins' Lambda	.966	4.015	2.00	225.00	.019*	.034
Gov. Frames	Wilkins' Lambda	.968	3.765	2.00	225.00	.025*	.032
Gov. Issues*Gov. Frames	Wilkins' Lambda	.994	.646	2.00	225.00	.525	.006

Note. The above statistics in MANOVA results are computed using  $\alpha=.05$ . Design of the test: Intercept + Governance Issues + Level of Governance Frames + Governance Issues\*Level of Governance Frames

In the same time, univariate analyses for level of governance news frames significantly predicted *one's evaluation on the performance of U.S. government* ( $F(1,226)=6.973$ ,  $p=.009$ ,

partial eta squared=.03, power=.748), namely participants in the condition of good governance news frame (M=2.30, SD=.712) rated the U.S. government more positively than participants in the condition of bad governance news frame (M=2.05, SD=.732) (See Figure 16). The results indicated that the participants' opinion and perception of U.S. governance varied depending on the governance issues they encountered and the governance frames to which they are exposed, H6 was supported, and Table 12 summarized the results of the two-way MANOVA.

Figure 16 Two-way MANOVA Predicting One's Evaluation On the Performance of U.S. Government



H7 posited that different issues and the conditions of readers' comments would affect one's change of opinion and evaluation of U.S. government after controlling for one's willingness to self-censor.

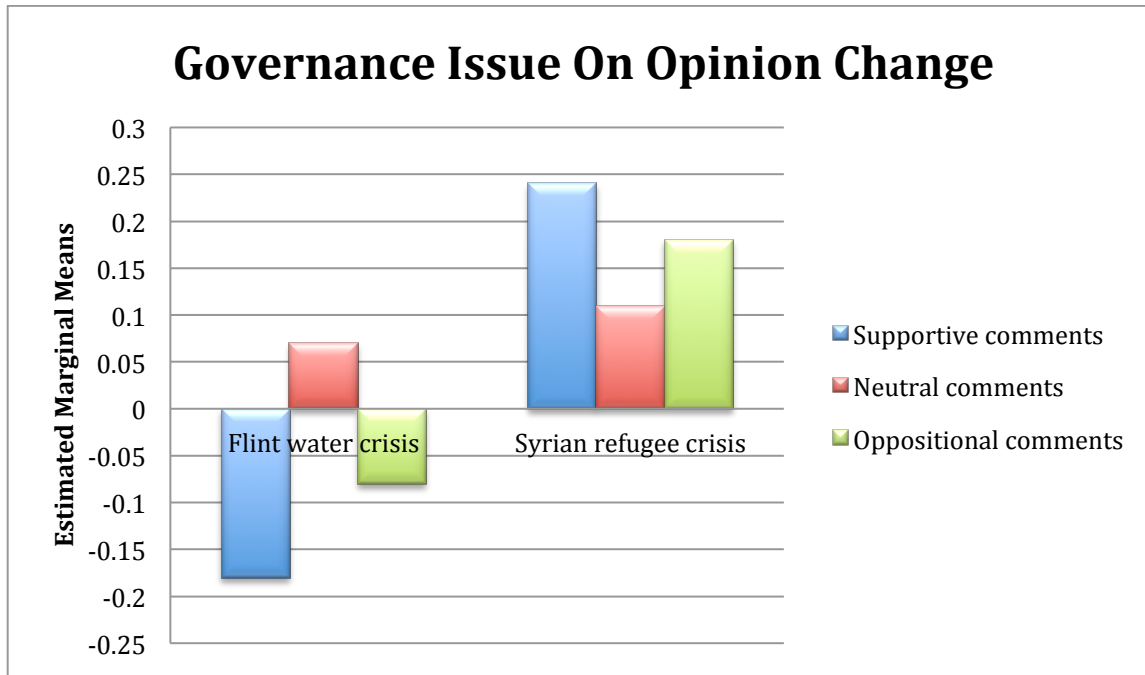
With respect to H7, Omnibus Multivariate Analysis of Covariate (MANCOVA) tests, using Wilks' Lambda, were conducted for major effects. The  $2 \times 3$  factorial analysis of

covariance tests, with two independent variables-governance issues (Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee crisis) and conditions of readers' comments (supportive, oppositional, and neutral) and one covariate-one's willingness to self-censor were examined on the dependent measures of one's opinion change and evaluation on the performance of U.S. government.

In general, the omnibus MANCOVA revealed significant outcomes involving the independent variable of two different governance issues,  $F(2, 222)=3.518$ ,  $p=.031$ , partial eta squared=.031, power=.651. To follow up on the significant omnibus MANCOVA results, univariate tests were performed. The predictor, governance issues had only a significant impact on one's opinion change  $F(1, 223)=6.520$ ,  $p=.011$ , partial eta squared=.028, power=.720, and no any significant effect on one's evaluation of U.S. government (See Figure 17). The post-hoc analysis showed that participants in the Flint water crisis group ( $M=-.06$ ,  $SD=.701$ ,  $t(228)=-2.539$ ,  $p=.012$ ) were less likely to speak out and became more silent, than participants in the Syrian refugee crisis ( $M=.18$ ,  $SD=.701$ ). The post-hoc analysis offers additional support for the relationship between governance issue and one's opinion change.



Figure 17 Two-way Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) Predicting One's Change of Opinion



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated as the following values: willingness of self-censor=2.77

However, the omnibus MANCOVA didn't show any statistically significant main effects for conditions of readers' comments. In addition, the omnibus MANCOVA indicated a significant result for the covariate of one's willingness to self-censor,  $F(2,222)=6.576$ ,  $p=.002$ , partial eta squared=.056, power=.907. Univariate tests for one's willingness to self-censor indicated significant outcome for dependent measures of evaluation on U.S. government  $F(1,223)=13.171$ ,  $p<.000$ , partial eta squared=.056, power=.951 but no statistical effect on opinion change.

Table 13 Summary of MANCOVA Omnibus Results and Correlations among Factors:  
MANCOVA Omnibus Results

Effect	Value	F	Hypo. df	Error df	Sig.	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Intercept	.740	38.938	2.000	222.000	.000	.260
Willingness to self-censor	.944	6.576	2.000	222.000	.002**	.056
Governance Issues	.969	3.518	2.000	222.00	.031*	.031
Comments	.996	.213	4.000	444.00	.931	.002
Gov. Issues* Comments	.985	.839	4.000	444.00	.501	.008

Correlations

		Gov. issues	Comments	Willingness to self-censor
<b>Gov. issues</b>	Pearson's	1	-.011	.017
	Sig.		.872	.803
	N	230	230	230
<b>Comments</b>	Pearson's	-.011	1	-.044
	Sig.	.872		.510
	N	230	230	230
<b>Willingness to self-censor</b>	Pearson's	.017	-.044	1
	Sig.	.803	.510	
	N	230	230	230

Note. The above statistics in MANCOVA omnibus results are using Wilks' Lambda and computed using alpha=.05. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significant level. Design of the test: Intercept + willingness to self-censor + governance issues + conditions of comments +governance issue\*comments.

The above statistics in correlation matrix are using Pearson's correlation coefficients. The abbreviations of each factor are as follows.

Gov. issues: Governance Issues

Comments: Conditions of Comments

The omnibus MANCOVA also showed no interaction effects of governance issues and conditions of readers' comments. Table 13 revealed the omnibus results of MANCOVA and correlations among all factors.

### **Discussion**

As exploratory research, the second study using an experimental method aims to integrate the theories of framing and the spiral of silence, in particular, to investigate implications of media framing governance issues for public perception and evaluation of U.S. good governance, especially the way that U.S. government in dealing with certain governance issues such as the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee crisis. By doing so, the present study was able to identify the relationship between news framing governance issues and public perception of good governance with regard to individuals' willingness to discuss governance issues as well as their evaluation on the performance of U.S. government. Media framing may have significant implications for the research on the interrelated relationships among good governance, news media and public opinion.

In addition, the phenomenon of the spiral of silence is also found when individuals encounter two different governance issues. In this sense, the application of spiral of silence theory adds more evidence to show better governance requires more public opinion expression. As a part of the movement to good governance, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of news media as important sources and a means to enable citizens to openly discuss social and political issues that shape and affect their lives. Increasingly, it is recognized that media in governance processes helps empower citizens to discuss and evaluate the public services as well as the manner in which the government deals with those governance issues.

Finally, from the theoretical perspective, combining framing and the spiral of silence theory could be a bridge between micro and macro levels of analysis on public opinion, because social norms as the contextual influence of opinion formation and alteration remain the theoretical foundation underlying both two theories (Fung & Scheufele, 2014). In other words, both the spiral of silence and framing theory share the same assumption that people live in a social society and that a social milieu exerts influence on individuals' perception, opinion and behavior. On the other hand, both framing and spiral of silence theory are situated in media effects research, which means some assumptions of two theories can be tested simultaneously. Therefore, an investigation of the synthesis of framing and spiral of silence theory not only contributes to study about media and public opinion, but also bridges micro and macro levels of analysis.

The core research question of this dissertation is: can media framing of governance issues influence one's perception and evaluation of good governance? Based on the overall findings, the study has discovered that news framing of governance issues does have an effect on individuals' opinion and evaluation on the performance of government. In particular, how media frame the governance issues influences the way individuals perceived and evaluated the U.S. government. Additionally, issue attention moderates the governance framing effects. Individuals who pay less attention to governance issues are more likely to evaluate the performance of U.S. government dealing with such governance issue in a positive manner than people who pay more attention. At the same time, the more people are willing to self-censor, the more they will perceive and rate the performance of U.S. government in a positive way.

*The Effect of Media Framing Governance Issues on Public Opinion and Perception of Governance*

The study was able to find the effect of “good governance” and “bad governance” framing on individuals’ public opinion. The experimental study revealed a significant effect of the governance framing manipulations on public opinion. The first two hypotheses examined, in the cases of the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee crisis, the effect of governance frames on participants’ approval of U.S. government dealing with those issues. In each case, participants were affected by the exposure to either good governance or bad governance news framing. For instance, if U.S. government dealing with Syrian refugee issue was presented as a good governance news story, participants were more likely to approve the way that the U.S. government in handling the Syrian refugee issue than if it was presented as a bad governance news story. Moreover, the results in both Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 suggested that regardless of the governance issues they received, participants who were exposed to the good governance frame were more likely to approve of the way that the U.S. government is dealing with those issues than individuals who were exposed to a bad governance frame. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence for the effect of governance frames on public support for government dealing with governance issues and this finding is consistent with previous research on the effect of framing on individuals’ cognitive responses (e.g. Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997; Rhee, 1997; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006).

Furthermore, the governance framing effects is not fully independent, and it is moderated by individuals’ issue attention, especially in the case of Flint water crisis. As shown in H3, individuals who paid less attention to Flint water crisis were generally more influenced by the experimental manipulation and more susceptible to good governance news framing. This finding

supports previous research, which found a relationship between low issue importance and higher susceptibility to framing effects (e.g. Lecheler, de Vreese & Slothuus, 2009). Participants who paid high attention to Flint water crisis had stronger attitudes toward the Flint water issues and therefore were less likely to be affected by news frames. In turn, participants with low attention to Flint water issue were more likely to be altered by the news frames, as this happened by adding new information to the individuals' depot.

However, issue attention in this study was found to moderate framing effects only in the case of Flint water crisis rather than the Syrian refugee issue, as shown in H4. This difference was not fully attributable to individuals' attention to both issues. Rather, the extent to which the two governance issues differed may be attributed to the contextual characteristics and the importance of certain issue nature. There are a few explanations to the study. First, the choice of two different governance issues (i.e., Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee crisis) in the experiment was determined by the different dimensions to which the two issues addressing the concept of good governance. As examined in the section of content analysis, the Flint water crisis mainly captures the executive dimension (public management) of good governance, while the issue of Syrian refugee crisis addresses both the constitutional (human rights) and the regime stability dimension of good governance.

Second, participants in the experiment mainly came from the surrounding areas in Michigan, and they could have given, by default, a less positive judgment about the Flint water crisis, when exposed to a biased (good governance or bad governance) frame message. For issues that are congruent with existing perceptions (at all levels), the effect of framing is readily achieved and accepted. For example, responding to governance issues (e.g., Flint water crisis) fits the parameters of the existing framework that indicates that Flint water crisis reveals

government failures at every level. However, when certain issues do not fit preexisting notions, generating a smooth process of information dissemination and support for national policy might become more difficult.

Third, American public attention rarely keeps sharply focused on any one domestic issue for a very long time, even if it is a continuing problem of vital importance to society (Downs, 1996). The Flint water crisis is a domestic issue while Syrian refugee crisis is considered to be a foreign issue to American citizens. In terms of foreign issues, citizens' response to foreign policy events does not always follow a logical progression (Petersen, 2009). This indicates that even if issue attention acts as a moderator between framing effects and public opinion on U.S. domestic issues, there might be still other important factors and implications for public opinion formation especially in terms of foreign issues. Future research involving different issues might provide more insight. Taken together, the results of two different governance issues partially support the moderating effect of issue attention on individuals' approval of the way U.S. government in dealing with those governance issues.

Furthermore, the present study not only discovered the moderating effects of issue attention between the level of governance frames and the approval of U.S. government, but also found a significant positive relationship between issue attention and willingness to speak out, as shown in H5. This means that individuals who pay less attention to governance issues are more willing to be silent than individuals who pay more attention to those issues. Therefore, this finding reveals the tendency of individuals to be silenced, if they were less concerned with those governance issues. This finding is in line with previous research, which suggests importance can cause individuals to accumulate greater and more accurate knowledge about an issue and to employ that information as well as one's attitude in making relevant decision, and to take actions

in consistency with that attitude (Boninger et al., 1995). Thus, when confronted with an issue to which individuals paying a great deal of attention, individuals can be more easily to retrieve stored information relating to this issue (Lecheler, de Vreese & Slothuus, 2009; Jacks & Devine, 2000), and become more willing to speak out and discuss such issue.

Additionally, an important finding from this study is that issue attention also has a significant negative relationship with one's evaluation on the performance of U.S. government, as predicted in H5. In other words, individuals who pay low attention to governance issues are more likely to rate the performance of U.S. government in handling those issues more positively than individuals with high attention to those issues. Levels of issue attention are not independent from the information and opinion climate where citizens lived. Individuals pay high attention to some contested issues, while other issues might receive little attention. As Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) argued, the salience of an issue (e.g. gun policy) stems from high personal importance among citizens as well as the heightened interest of politicians and ongoing discussion on the issue. Therefore, governance issues that capture heightened attention from citizens may cause citizens to attach more personal importance to those issues, to lead citizens to possess more issue-relevant considerations, and cause citizens tend to be more critical on assessing the performance of government in dealing with those issues. Viewed in this manner, the higher attention to a particular issue, the more critical of government policy, and the more negatively that citizens will evaluate the performance of U.S. government in handling such issue.

Unlike previous studies in spiral of silence and public opinion research, the present study analyzed the effect of two different governance issues and levels of governance frames with explicit valence on public opinion and perception of U.S. governance. As revealed in H6, the nature of governance issues affects willingness to speak out, with individuals in the group of



Flint water crisis being more willing to speak out than participants in the condition of Syrian refugee issue. Further, the study observed opinion changes and found that 40 percent of participants changed their opinion about the governance issues featured in the news story after exposure to readers' comments. In particular, participants in the condition of Flint water crisis were more likely to change their opinion and became more silent, while participants in the group of Syrian refugees were more likely to speak out, no matter what conditions of readers' comments (positive, neutral, and negative) they were assigned to.

Last but not least, the results also indicate that willingness to self-censor has a significant positive relationship with one's evaluation of U.S. governance. Previous research on the construct of willingness to self-censor has multiple applications in research areas such as public opinion expression, political participation, group decision-making and interpersonal communication, etc. This finding adds nuance to this construct, as H7 suggested individuals who were more willing to self-censor were more likely to positively evaluate the performance of U.S. government. Freedom of expression, as a core value in democracies, offers citizens' an important right to express their opinions via any channel without constraints. This finding suggests an alternative mechanism for evaluation of U.S. government at work. Willingness to self-censor in turn encourages citizens to less engage in public discourse, and more positively assess the performance of government. However, better governance requires public opinion expression as a civic duty, not only as a fundamental right in general.

In sum, to uncover the relationships among the media, good governance, and public opinion, special attention has been given to the level of governance frames. As the results suggest individuals who were exposed to good governance frames were more likely to perceive and evaluate the performance of U.S. government in a positive manner than participants who

were exposed to bad governance frames. Distinguishing between “good governance” and “bad governance” framing, the present study was a first step to analyze governance framing within a political communication context and to develop an operationalization of governance frames. The study does not consider “good governance” and “bad governance” frames as only inherent to certain governance issues, i.e. as issue-specific frames. Instead, it is expected that those governance frames can be part of a broader range of topics within political communication, as governance framing in this study derives its theoretical foundation in different disciplines such as political science and communication studies. This study has demonstrated empirical results on the potential effects of governance framing on individuals’ perception and evaluation of good governance with strong theoretical implications. To put it simply, how the media portray and frame governance issues did influence individuals’ perceptions and evaluations of good governance. The current study advances research on framing effects and emphasizes the need for further exploration of governance frame as an important concept within the political communication.

The author purposely selected Flint water crisis and Syrian refugee controversy as two important governance issues in the context of the United States, and the results from this study emphasize the potential impact that good and bad governance frames can have on the public evaluation on the performance of U.S. government. According to the results, it is possible to believe that public perception and evaluation about U.S. government could alter in one or the other direction, if either of the governance frames received more salience in news coverage. As a recent example, the new executive order signed by President Donald Trump, which bans immigration from six Muslim-majority countries, actually reinforced a temporary blanket ban on all refugees (de Vogue, Diamond, & Liptak, 2017). The new travel ban has triggered a debate

and protests among multiple publics, including a Hawaii judge blocked the new travel ban. Such event provides an apt example of how governance framing in the context of the United States might suddenly play a key role in formation and alteration of public opinion and evaluation of U.S. governance. The strong potential effect of governance framing together with low attention to governance issues might make individuals more susceptible to governance framing, in particular the good governance frame, which also indicates that good governance framing can have a considerable impact on citizens who pay less attention to governance issues and lead them to more positively evaluate the performance of U.S. government. By contrast, a highly attentive public can be less likely to be affected by governance framing effect, but are more critical of the U.S. government. Therefore, not only did the media promote good governance, but also public opinion can play an important role in guaranteeing good governance.

The study examined the effect of governance frame only within one national context and only based on two governance issues. Additionally, the study relied on college students as convenience sample in the experiment. Future research can explore the governance frames employed by other media outlets or within authoritarian regimes (i.e., China). Notwithstanding the limitations, both the content analysis and the experiment on two governance issues revealed a consistent and empirically grounded picture of news coverage of the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee crisis in the United States, and it also discovers the important effect of governance framing on public perception and evaluation of U.S. governance.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Previous chapters presented the main results of the content analysis of four case studies and an experiment in the context of the United States. This chapter first summarizes the key findings: the relationships among the media framing, public opinion and the government in terms of good governance. Following this a discussion of the theoretical implications derived from the theoretical conceptualization of good governance, framing and the spiral of silence theory, which explores the role of the media, including the social media, in promoting good governance as well as performing their functions (i.e., watch-dog, agenda setter, and civic forum) in contemporary society. As a final point, limitations of the study research design are discussed with recommendations for future research.

### Summary of Key Findings

The starting point of this dissertation project is to compare good governance in China and the United States, as governance in both nations has completely different structures and processes. The other objective is to identify governance framing as part of a political communication process by examining the effect of governance frames on citizens' public opinion and assessment of good governance, an issue which has been perplexing political scientists and communication scholars for decades. Scholars and international institutions define and analyze governance within specific interests and scope of work (Bratton & van de Walle, 1992; Chazan, 1992; Fukuyama 2013; Smith, 2007; Stoker 1998b; the World Bank 1989; UNDP 2014). When conceptualizing good governance, it is very difficult to create a rational framework to define and evaluate good governance, since governance is a contested term, and research about governance is fragmented. For the purpose of this dissertation, the author employed the

following definition of good governance, which is not biased against a single type of government such as authoritarian regime.

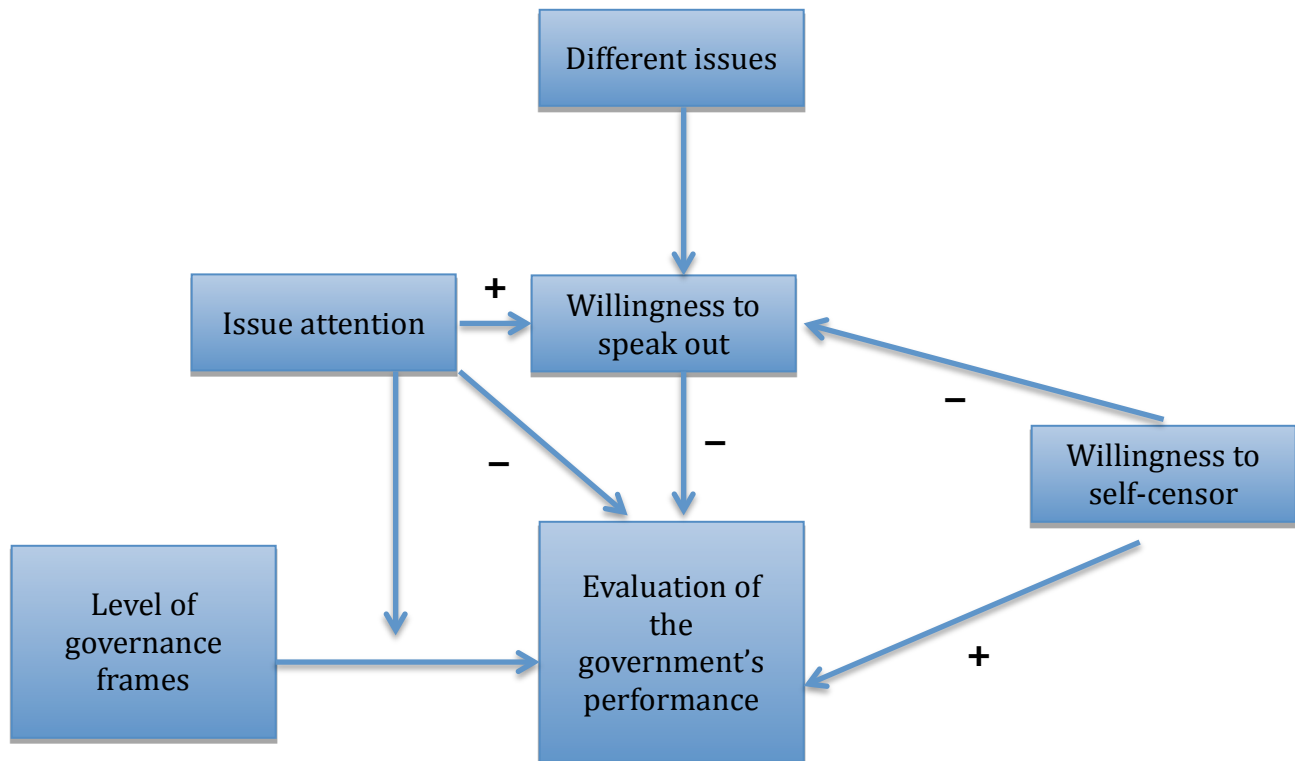
“Regardless of regime types, good governance is characterized by establishing an effective administration, promoting political values, as well as encouraging political accountability, legitimacy, transparency and participation.”

Prior to a discussion of good governance, it is important to contextualize this definition by first acknowledging the fundamental principle underlying this concept. The dissertation aims to explore the relationship between media and good governance based upon the three roles that media play in promoting good governance (Norris, 2010). This definition of good governance is well situated to the relationship between institutions and the media, which emphasizes the process by which those in authority are monitored by the media to better serve public interests. Indeed, the definition aforementioned did not tap into the economic dimension, namely the government’s capacity to implement sound policies to achieve sustainable economic development (Fukuyama, 2014; World Bank, 1992). The reason that the author excludes economic development from the definition of governance is that the dissertation aims to theorize the relationship between media framing and public opinion over governance. By exploring good governance from the perspective of the media, the dissertation did uncover a series of governance frames that the media use to fulfill the roles.

Previous scholarship states that good governance is equal to liberal democracy. However, critics of the assumption contend that a number of countries have achieved considerable economic growth and social development under authoritarian regimes. As Fukuyama said (2013, p.351) contends, “an authoritarian regime can be well governed, just as a democracy can be mal-administered.” Furthermore, when measuring and evaluating good governance, this dissertation

resorted to the conceptual framework advanced by Smith (2007), who stated each attribute on the ‘good governance’ agenda be evaluated for its contribution to development and the cost to society of bad governance. Therefore, the author adjusted Smith’s (2007) original framework and proposed the four dimensions of good governance (i.e., constitutional, political, executive and regime stability). To this end, the author purposefully selected two issues in each country to address the four dimensions of good governance, and conducted a comprehensive content analysis of four cases studies and an experimental study that manipulated news stories about governance framing. Specially, the dissertation was able to discover the three mechanisms that the news media employ to portray and frame governance issues in both China and the United States. More importantly, the dissertation also generated a model about the effect of governance framing on citizens’ perception and evaluation of good governance (see Figure 18).

Figure 18 Model: Governance Framing Effect On Public Evaluation of Good Governance



First of all, the content analysis of four case studies revealed that the news media mainly utilized thematic framing to portray governance issues. Both Chinese and American newspapers tended to frame the governance issues in a thematic manner. This finding is consistent with previous framing studies that have found news media, in particular newspapers employ more thematic framing to describe social and political issues (Iyengar, 1991, 1996). Thematic framing points to social trends and various characteristics of a broader issue and can invoke beliefs that government or society is responsible for those problems (Iyengar, 1991; 1993; Kim, 2015). Previous scholarship argues that a thematic framing makes audience more supportive of public policy changes (Coleman, Thorson, & Wilkins, 2011), attributes responsibility to social actors, and leads citizens to hold the government responsible for those social and political issues, which thereby increasing support for government programs designed to address those governance issues. An apt example is the news coverage of China's two-child policy, which employed thematic framing by frequently mentioning establishing rules and laws, providing public facilities and more educational resources. In this way, the news media shapes a perception that the Chinese government ought to be responsible for helping implement the new two-child policy. The similar phenomenon is also found in the case of Flint water crisis. Frequent use of phrases or words such as emergency declaration, seeking federal fund, and the National Guard distributing water bottles can also lead citizens to hold American government responsible for the water crisis in Flint. On the other hand, in terms of the contexts where framing occurs, the media employ thematic framing to portray governance issues, which can be employed by audiences as "interpretative schema" to interpret and discuss those issues; by journalists to reduce a complex issue into interesting news story; by experts to exchange opinions with citizens; by politicians to define their policy stances (Nisbet, 2010). One implication of thematic framing is that the news

media generate a broader picture and understanding of governance problems by holding the government responsible for those issues, which indicates the news media perform the function of watchdog.

Second, the attribution of responsibility frame is also salient in news coverage of governance issues in both China and the United States. This frame is originated from Shanto Iyengar's (1991) study of responsibility framing and Bernard Weiner's (1995) work on attribution theory, which states that news media can frame the question of responsibility, leading the audience to assess important causes and solutions to social and political issues. In fact, individual frames mean what an individual considers to be the most salient attribute of an issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007a). For instance, the news media are often criticized for reducing important social issues to individual-level reasons, and especially certain issues primarily caused by the deficiencies of individuals such as depression (Zhang, Jin & Tang, 2015), obesity (Kim & Willis, 2007), and school bullying (Kim & Telleen, 2016), while social-level responsibilities are largely ignored (Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan, & Themba, 1993). It is true that newspaper coverage of certain issues used episodic frames to attribute the responsibility to individual-level reasons. For instance, in the case of Flint water crisis, newspapers indeed mentioned the individual causes of water crisis, namely the failure of EPA employees to report the lead contamination. However, the mention of switching the water supply from Detroit to Flint system as the social cause significantly outnumbered the individual-level cause. Furthermore, previous research indicates that individual level framing can alter citizens' attitudes toward issues (Hwang, Gotlieb, Nah & McLead, 2007), while societal level outcomes of framing influence citizen competence, democratic deliberation and political expression (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chong & Druckman, 2007a; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Therefore, episodic framing did occur in



news coverage of governance issues, however, the analysis of four case studies found the media's attribution of responsibility for governance issues were primarily societal, placing greater emphasis on the causes and solutions at a societal level, in particular holding the government responsible for those issues.

Third, the content analysis indicates that government officials or researchers were cited or referenced most often as an important source of news coverage of governance issues. This finding supports the idea that news media tend to heavily rely on established routine sources for information, whereas less established or unreliable sources are rarely used (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Indeed, media frames about governance issues do not occur in a vacuum. As stated by Druckman (2001), framing effects may occur, not because political elites seek to manipulate citizens, but rather because citizens seek guidance from credible elites. Thus, frames are closely connected with sources that vary in credibility. News media effectively use official sources to promote frames about governance, and give legitimacy to political elites. Additionally, journalistic norms of fairness and balance require source-oriented reporting in an effort to establish a sense of neutrality and add more credibility to news reporting (Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1986; Soley, 1992).

However, the fact that journalists prefer official sources of information leads to a dominance of official viewpoints and problem definitions (Bennett, 1990; Sigal, 1973), which in turn suggests that government officials often set the media frame. This may lead to very intended consequences, i.e. namely providing the government with an opportunity to define the issue on its own terms. No matter whether the media rely on official sources in coverage of governance issues, the media must act as a civic forum to encourage citizens' voices (Norris, 2010). This finding reveals that when covering governance issues, news media ought to give weight to

citizens' voices in order to well perform the role of civic forum. Better governance requires the media to provide a public sphere for political deliberation and discussion.

While the content analysis of four different governance issues did uncover the unique frames, which tap into four parameters of good governance, the dissertation finds more similarities than differences given different government structures, media systems and press freedom between U.S. and China. Those similarities further support that achieving good governance is a shared goal between democratic and non-democratic countries. As Fukuyama (2013) said, "the quality of governance is different from the ends that governance is meant to fulfill (p.350)." In other words, good governance is about the performance of institutions in carrying out the wishes of authority in the country, and not about the goals that authority sets (Fukuyama, 2013). On the other hand, content analysis further illustrates that the news media in U.S. and China take the role of accountability in covering governance issues, informing public about good governance, and holding the government accountable, which implies the interdependence between media systems and political systems can be explored on an empirical basis.

Apart from discovering the three mechanisms that news media employ to frame governance issues, this dissertation provides strong evidence of a governance framing effect on individuals' perception and evaluation of good governance. For instance, the experiment reveals the effect of "good governance" and "bad governance" framing on individuals' evaluation on the performance of U.S government. Participants exposed to a news story with a good governance news frame were more likely to approval the way that the government handled those governance issues and also were more likely to rate the performance of government in a positive manner. The good vs. bad governance framing is theoretically derived from valence framing introduced

by de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), who considered some frames to be neutral while others appear to be inherently valenced. Valence framing was understood that some frames are indicative of ‘good and bad’, or implicitly carry positive and/or negative features. Moreover, “only a few studies in political communication have investigated the appearance and effect of frames with an inherent valence, i.e., depicting an issue in clearly positive or negative terms (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003, p. 362).” Therefore, the dissertation makes a contribution to the study of valenced framing literature. More importantly, the finding provides empirical evidence for the effect of valenced governance frames on public support for government dealing with governance issues and this finding is consistent with previous research on the effect of framing on individuals’ cognitive responses (e.g. Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997; Rhee, 1997; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). Just as important, currently this is the first study to document the effect of valenced governance framing on individuals’ evaluation of U.S. governance. Viewed in this manner, the media did play a significant role in informing and affecting the public about good governance.

In addition, the governance framing effect is not fully independent, and it is moderated by individuals’ issue attention. For instance, participants who paid less attention to the Flint water crisis and were exposed a good governance news story were more likely to approve the way that U.S. government handled the Flint water issue. This finding supports previous research, which found a relationship between low issue importance and higher susceptibility to framing effects (e.g. Lecheler, de Vreese & Slothuus, 2009). In this study, low issue attention was identified as a moderating construct in strengthening the relationship between levels of governance frames and one’s approval of government policy. The importance of issue attention indicates that individuals who pay less attention to governance issues are more susceptible to good governance frames, and

will be more likely to support the government policy. This in turn can provide a chance for political elites to manipulate low-attention publics to support the government policy, as public opinion serves as a political basis of support for contemporary politicians.

Another important finding is that one's willingness to self-censor has a significant positive relationship with one's evaluation of U.S. governance. Freedom of expression, as a core value in democracies, offers citizens' an important right to express their opinions via any channel without constraints. However, this finding suggests an alternative mechanism for evaluation of U.S. government at work. Therefore, from this logic, willingness to self-censor in turn encourages citizens to engage less in public discourse, and they more positively assess the performance of government. However, in an ideal society, a free public sphere encourages individuals to think through their views and have a clearer understanding of why they hold those opinions. It is necessary to the formation of public opinion include challenging the predominant political institutions, and criticizing the public policy, because a fully informed, critical public opinion is essential for good governance.

### **The Study's Potential Value for Good Governance**

This dissertation employed multi-methods to examine how governance issues framed by the news media can be employed to initiate debates among citizens to enhance their understanding of the political process, in particular the evaluation of good governance. With the implementation of governance framing in the spiral of silence process, not only is governance framing affected by issue attention, but also individuals' willingness to self-censor leads people to assess the performance of government in a positive manner. The results reveal a potential value for further emphasizing the vital role of media playing in promoting good governance in contemporary society.

*The Perspective of Governance Framing Within Political Communication*

Distinguishing between “good governance” and “bad governance” framing, the dissertation was a first step to examine valenced governance framing within a political communication context and to operationalize governance frames. The study does not consider “good governance” and “bad governance” frames as inherent only to certain governance issues, i.e. as issue-specific frames. Instead, it is expected that those governance frames can be part of a broader range of topics within political communication. If either of the governance frames attracted more news coverage, it is possible to believe that public perception and evaluation about the government could alter in one or the other direction. In other words, it is reasonable to assume that how the news media choose to frame governance issues will greatly influence individuals’ interpretation of those issues and their evaluation on government’s performance. This dissertation argues that media’ potential to contribute to good governance not only depends on the frames that the media choose to portray issues, but also relies on the extent the media reflect and enforce the principles of good governance and help citizens to better understand those governance issues that greatly shape and affect their social life.

*The Model of Governance Framing and Public Opinion Affecting Perception of Good*

*Governance*

In theory, the role of media in supporting democratic development and promoting good governance is increasingly recognized in current scholarship. However, in practice, compared with the media, public opinion remains a relatively under-prioritized area in studying good governance. Some attribute the reason to a lack of robust evidence demonstrating public opinion’s impact on governance outcomes; others argue that public opinion research is an area perplexing scholars for decades. What is clear is that the available research on the empirical

relationships among the media, public opinion and good governance is modest. At the same time, there has a dearth of practical guidance available to policy makers on understanding and in particular using public opinion in governance reform.

By investigating the effect of governance framing on public evaluation of the performance of U.S. government, this dissertation provides an initial model for research on the role of the media and public perception of good governance in democracies where the media has become extremely critical for smooth functioning of democracy as well as improving good governance (see Figure 18). As expected, people who are exposed to a good governance news frame are more likely to approve the way the government handled the issue and positively evaluate the performance of government. Issue attention acts as a moderator in strengthening the governance framing effect, namely low-attention publics are the most susceptible to good governance framing effect. On the other hand, issue attention is positively related to one's willingness to speak out, but negatively related to one's evaluation on the performance of government. One reason is that issue attention can cause individuals to accumulate greater and more accurate information about an issue and to use that information to express their opinion and make relevant decisions (Boninger et al., 1995; Lecheler, de Vreese & Slothuus, 2009). In turn, the more attention to specific issues, the more critical of government policy, which lead citizens to have a negative perception and evaluation of the performance of government.

The experiment also reveals a positive relationship between willingness to self-censor and evaluation of the government's performance. This highlights willingness to self-censor in turn encourages citizens to less engage in public discourse, and more positively assess the performance of government. By contrast, if citizens were more willing to discuss governance issues and actively engage in the political deliberation, they would more critical of the

performance of the government in dealing with such issues. In democracies, a watchful public that is supported by media is capable of scrutinizing decisions made by political leaders.

Overall, the existence of an unfettered press and an attentive public within each nation is essential in the process of promoting good governance by enforcing the principles of good governance, strengthening transparency and accountability of governments, and providing a pluralist platform for multiple voices in public sphere and channels of political deliberation for highlighting governance problems to inform the policy agenda.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although some hypotheses in this dissertation has proven to be statistically significant based on data analysis, it is acknowledged that having the media is necessary but not sufficient to resolve all governance issues in terms of guarantying good governance in contemporary society. As with any research, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, as a comparative study, analyzing only traditional media (e.g. newspapers) limits the external validity of the findings. It is conceivable whether other media (e.g. TV, or internet) may yield the consistent results. So future studies should continually examine how other news media outlets such as television, radio, and magazines frame governance issues. In particular, when politicians are increasingly utilizing social media as a way to promote political policy, an analysis of social media content will provide a better understanding whether social media provides a new context to promote public deliberation about good governance.

Second, the statistical significance supported by data analysis does not necessarily indicate that the same research design might generate the same magnitude of effectiveness in the real-world practices. This methodological clarification is in particularly important given the nature of the sample used in the study. The use of college students' sample for the experiment

was employed for convenience but also encompassed practical concerns. While it is common for communication researchers and scholars to rely on college students enrolled in communication classes as the sample population, one must be very cautious in generalizing the findings. However, some scholars argue that student subjects are not an inherent problem to experimental research (Druckman & Kam, 2009). While there is nothing inherently wrong with using a student sample, future studies need to make more effort to improve external validity by examining the population beyond college students. More importantly, since better governance requires more reasonable reality practices, statistical significance must be combined with practical effectiveness in order to achieve the intended goals.

Third, to some degree the use of fabricated news story about real governance issues may have increased media message effectiveness and lead to stronger overall results. Even though participants might not be aware of the news article was fictitious, the absence of a real news story creates some potential concerns that require further elaboration. Compared with fabricated news articles, authentic news stories are written by journalists to inform citizens about current issues while the use of fabricated news story aims to manipulate the message and maximize effects within an experimental research design. The use of online news stories in the study represents a very common way in which individuals, in particular young adults, read the news. It is worth mentioning that the online news in the experiment simulates the real online news environment typically by featuring a graphic icon showing the logo of Facebook, Twitter and Google Email, which suggests the news story could be forward using email, shared or posted on social networking sites. Featuring a section of user-generated feedback, where participants can see how other readers made comments to the news story, also enhances the experiment's ecological validity. For internal validity, this study used the same scale to measure personal



opinion on governance issues in time 1 and time 2. Thus, the study was able to capture the change of opinion after participants were exposed to these readers' comments.

Next, an important characteristic of the experimental design was the use of a dual frame for each governance issue. Given the current media landscape where news is omnipresent, individuals could be exposed to a variety of competing frames beyond just the good and bad governance frame, because media attention and resources are not always distributed equally (Pan & Kosicki, 2001). The selection of media frames greatly depends on how media organizations access the resources in order to spread the message out. Although the study intends to balance the use of good governance and bad governance frames, in reality the news media are more likely to cover negative news.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The current study is exploratory research. As a first attempt, the study integrates the concept of good governance, framing and spiral of silence theory to uncover the complicated relationships among the media, public opinion and good governance. Many theoretical and methodological questions still need to be further addressed and examined.

First, the finding from this study is based on previous framing and spiral of silence research, and expands knowledge about governance framing and its effect on public opinion. For instance, the dissertation finds the media utilize governance frames and the three mechanisms to define good governance, which in turn affect public opinion and public perception of good governance. Furthermore, issue attention was identified in this study as an important moderator affecting the relationship between governance frames and evaluation good governance. Yet, less empirical attention has been given toward examining behaviors as outcome measures of interest in both framing and public opinion research. In other words, it is questionable whether media

framing governance issues will not only influence one's perception and evaluation of the government, but also bring about strong behavior outcomes such as increase of political participation. An apt example is 2017 Women's March, which highlights the importance of strengthening citizen participation in both local and national governance. Since framing and spiral of silence research relies on willingness to speak out, future research could consider incorporating behavioral dependent measures as a way to gauge how strong governance framing effect truly is.

Second, the experiment using two American governance issues was conducted in the context of a democracy. Future research might replicate the study in authoritarian regimes in order to examine whether the same patterns could be generalized into different cultural and political contexts. At least, the content analysis in this dissertation shows that the news media in both China and the United States employ the same three mechanisms to portray and frame governance issues. On the other hand, achieving good governance is the same goal shared between democracies and authoritarian regimes, regardless of political systems. Future research needs to examine whether the process to achieve these goals will be similar or different in both democratic and authoritarian countries.

Third, this dissertation also looked at the role of social media in terms of the governance framing effect. Compared the issue of Syrian refugee crisis, individuals were more likely to share the news of Flint water crisis and post their comment about Flint water crisis on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Previous research has revealed that social relational environment on social media creates not only normative pressures that resemble offline conversational settings, but also exert informational impacts on one's political opinion expression (Kwon, Moon, & Stefanone, 2014). Future research could assess how the differences

among the nature of governance issues influence the spiral of silence phenomenon on social media.

Last but not least, the study did observe the change of opinion but did not reveal any relationships between readers' comments and public opinion and evaluation on the performance of government. Previous research has shown incongruent opinion climate can result in reluctance to share political comments due to possible negative consequences (Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Kwon, Moon, & Stefanone, 2014). In particular, audiences today also use a variety of opinions in news comment sections to form their perceptions of public opinion on related issues (Lee, 2012). So future research should pay more attention to how these user-generated comments affect individuals' opinion, perception and evaluation of good governance. Doing so would enable researchers to differentiate the effect of governance framing and impact of user-generated comments on individuals' opinion and evaluation of good governance.

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**ABSTRACT****THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND BUILDING PUBLIC PERCEPTION ABOUT GOVERNANCE: A COMPARISON OF CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES**

by

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The media plays three key roles in promoting good governance: watchdog, civic forum and agenda-setter. Despite decades of scholarship, there is little systematic effort to examine the empirical relationship between the media and governance. Moreover, scholars conceptualized governance with their interests and scope of work. Regardless of political system, this dissertation puts forth a new definition of good governance, and explores how controversies or issues framed by the media can be employed to initiate debates among citizens to enhance their own understanding of the political process, in particular the performance of the government.

The first study utilized framing theory to identify media frames in portraying four U.S. and Chinese governance issues which address the different dimensions of good governance. Results from the content analysis suggest that both Chinese and U.S. newspapers employed three major mechanisms to frame governance issues, i.e. thematic framing, responsibility framing and heavy reliance on official sources. The second study employed an experimental method by integrating the theories of framing and the spiral of silence, in particular, to investigate the effect of media framing governance issues on public perception and evaluation of U.S. good

governance, especially the way that U.S. government handled two governance issues such as the Flint water crisis and the Syrian refugee crisis.

The core research question of this dissertation is: can media framing of governance issues influence one's perception and evaluation of good governance? Based on two studies, this dissertation has found news framing of governance issues does have an effect on individuals' opinion and evaluation on the performance of government. In particular, how media frame the governance issues influences the way individuals perceive and evaluate the U.S. government. Additionally, issue attention moderates the governance framing effects. Individuals who pay less attention to governance issues are more likely to evaluate the performance of U.S. government in a positive manner than people who pay more attention. At the same time, the more people are willing to self-censor, the more they will perceive the performance of U.S. government in a positive way. Implications for future trajectory of research are discussed.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Juan Liu received her Bachelor of Arts in English at China University of Mining and Technology and her Masters of Arts in English from University of International Business and Economics. In 2013, She began her doctorate studies at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. Her research interests include media framing, public opinion, social media and political communication.