Chapter 10

Dynamic Co-Evolutions of Peace Frames in the United States, Mainland China, and Hong Kong: A Semantic Network Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This chapter employs semantic network analysis to investigate the online database LexisNexis to study the dynamic co-evolutions of peace frames embedded in the news coverage from the Associated Press (AP—United States), Xinhua News Agency (XH—Mainland China), and South China Morning Post (SCMP—Hong Kong). From 1995 to 2014, while the war and harmony frames were relatively stable in AP and XH respectively, there was a trend toward convergence of the use of war frames between AP and XH. The convergence of semantic networks of coverage of peace in AP and XH may have left more room for SCMP to develop a unique peace frame, and the divergence of semantic networks of coverage of peace in AP and XH may lead SCMP to develop strategies of balancing the frames employed by AP and XH, thus creating a hybrid peace frame.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3032-9.ch010
INTRODUCTION

The concept of global peace culture has been developed to achieve a more humane world and enhance human well-being. Global peace culture examines different societies as they develop diverse cultural arrangements to solve the problem of how people can get along with one another and cope with environmental challenges. Although progressing toward the ultimate goal of a peaceful global culture is essential to the existence of human beings and the sustainable and healthy development of human society, it is not easy to promote a general culture of peace in different societies that have unique cultural backgrounds and civilizations. “Cultural realism” (Henderson & Tucker, 2001, p. 318) suggests that different nations portray the culture of peace differently. One way to explore these differences is to examine how the news texts portraying peace produced by media outlets situated in different cultural and media systems embody different words related to peace. Demonstrating such a difference calls upon framing formulations of news texts, especially the one that focuses on the cultural dimensions of framing, as its theoretical background (Jiang & Barnett, 2014). Moreover, at the macro level, since the world media have provided arenas for various nations and cultural groups to negotiate the dominant world culture, the longitudinal cross-cultural comparison of news coverage of peace from different international news agencies presents a good case study to examine not only the dynamics of peace frames embedded in news, but also the negotiation of world peace culture among different nations.

Semantic network analysis describes a wide variety of “computer supported solutions” that enable scholars to “extract networks of concepts” from texts and discern represented meanings (Diesner & Carley, 2005, p. 83). Based on a literature review of cultural frames of news, related framing dynamics at the international level, and the peace culture in the United States, Mainland China and Hong Kong, this chapter presents the results of a computer-assisted semantic network analysis examining how different cultures shape international peace news in the United States, Mainland China, and Hong Kong, and how the peace frames in these nations and regions have co-evolved from 1995 to 2014 through (a) the analysis of salience of semantic concepts through their network centralities and frequency of concept associations, (b) concept cluster analysis, and (c) correlation analysis of semantic networks.

Literature Review

- **Culture and News Framing in an International Context**: News reporting can be conceived of as a set of structured interpretive packages giving meaning to news events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Each package is composed of various associated symbols. Certain packages have a natural advantage since their ideas and languages resonate with larger cultural themes and narratives that are part of the majority of a group’s cultural heritage (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) and (Snow & Benford, 1988). The potency of frames to influence the receivers lies in the fact that they are closely tied with the public’s cultural assumptions (Van Gorp, 2007). Therefore, culture, which refers to the collective pattern of thoughts “distinguishing the member of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 1984, p. 260), might be manifested as the stock of “common frames exhibited in the discourse and thought of most people in a social grouping” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). At the national level, despite the similarities (and dissimilarities) of mass media institutions across societies, media production is a reflection of national interests (McQuail, 1994), and the media have to maintain a culturally specific orientation in their coverage to reach the local audience (Gurevitch, Levy, & Roeh, 1991).